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FINDING ‘COLORADO’S MOST WANTED THOROUGHBRED’

Aurora, CO (March 2, 2016) – Four horses will compete for the crown of “Colorado’s Most Wanted Thoroughbred” at the Rocky Mountain Horse Expo at the National Western Complex in Denver on Saturday, March 12. Colorado racetrack Arapahoe Park and two organizations that focus on the care of horses after their racing careers—Retired Racehorse Project and CANTER Colorado—will team to recognize the Thoroughbred residing in Colorado that best embodies the versatility of the breed that can be successful race, sport, and pleasure horses.

The finalists are veteran racer Seaside Links, young promising mare Churchita, a Colorado-bred who ran at Churchill Downs named Blackie Masamune, and precocious eventer Blurred Vision. The winner will be decided based on feedback from the audience and a panel of judges with \$1,000 in prize money on the line. The competition starts at 12 p.m. Coverage of it will air at a later date on the “Gates Open at Arapahoe Park” feature television show on Altitude Sports & Entertainment.

Seaside Links had a successful racing career from 2006 to 2014 that included 68 starts and 15 victories, including success in stakes competition. When the Ontraio-bred chestnut gelding retired at the relatively old racing age of 10, he had earned \$305,904 racing primarily in his home province and then in Nebraska. Now under the training of Sam Goione of Highlands Ranch, Colorado, for a career as a hunter/jumper, Seaside Links began competing in horse shows in Colorado in August 2015.

“When I first got Seaside I felt like I finally had a chance to be the jumper I want to be and go to the levels I want to go to,” Goione said in her application for her 12-year-old horse to be “Colorado’s Most Wanted Thoroughbred.”

By contrast, **Churchita** was bred in Texas for a career in racing but instead has shown an aptitude for eventing at a relatively young age after she was acquired by trainer Ashley Gubich of Parker, Colorado. The 5-year-old chestnut mare has won various classes at shows in Colorado, while also retaining an identity as a laid-back pony horse for Gubich’s 2-year-old son, Chase.

“The most special thing about Chita is her range and ability to take care of any level of rider,” Gubich said. “She is my favorite horse to ride—gallop around cross-country courses, through the woods. She has already taught multiple beginners how to ride tolerating their mistakes, and most importantly she is amazing with children.”

Blackie Masamune was bred in Colorado, and in a one-race career in 2009, he became one of the few Colorado-breds to race at Churchill Downs, the home of the Kentucky Derby. The 12-year-old dark bay has since competed over four-foot jumps, in polo, in barrel racing, and even at a charity cattle drive.

“He exemplifies what a Thoroughbred is,” rider Ali Neuens of Centennial, Colorado, said. “He is an all-around horse who may not have succeeded at racing, but he has done much more after his racing career.”

Colorado-bred **Blurred Vision** was trained for a career as a racehorse but deemed too slow by his original owners before he made it to the starting gate. Within a year of eventing training by Samantha Hougland of Lone Tree, Colorado, the 9-year-old dark bay gelding competing under the show name I Spy and nicknamed “Spyder” qualified for the 2015 American Eventing Championships in Texas.

“When we went to AECs in Texas, Spyder tackled questions on cross country that he had never seen before and without question he just went,” Hougland said. “He is a big goofball and has a Labrador retriever and always has a way to make me smile even if it is the worst day you could imagine.”

In addition to Colorado’s Most Wanted Thoroughbred, Retired Racehorse Project’s Steuart Pittman will host clinics about dressage, jumping, and riding Thoroughbreds at all skill levels with former racehorses from Arapahoe Park at the Rocky Mountain Horse Expo.