



## Arnold Hoping Funny Duck can Deliver an Indiana Derby to Calumet Farm

Story by Jennie Rees, Eclipse Award winning turf writer



SHELBYVILLE, Ind.; July 11, 2018 — Growing up in Lexington, Ky., as the son of a trainer, Rusty Arnold developed a strong respect and appreciation for the titans in horse racing and breeding. In a career that started in 1970, Arnold has been fortunate enough to train for some of them.

Most recently that includes iconic Calumet Farm, for whom he'll saddle Funny Duck in Saturday night's \$500,000, Grade 3 Indiana Derby at Indiana Grand. Calumet Farm — winner of a record eight Kentucky Derbys as an owner and nine as a breeder — is now owned by Brad Kelley, the Franklin, Ky., native who amassed a fortune in discount cigarettes and ranks among the largest land-owners in America. The Calumet silks no longer are devil's red and blue but Kelley's black with gold chevrons. But Kelley's investment in Calumet and horses illustrate his commitment to playing at the top end of the sport.

"I took a bus trip to Calumet Farm when we were in grade school," Arnold reflected recently in a phone interview. "We got to see the (horse) graveyard, the farm. To come back 40, 50 years later, training for them and winning graded stakes, it's special. It's not a whole lot different than training for Mr. (G. Watts) Humphrey or Mr. (Will) Farish. These old-time farms, I've been blessed

to train for several of them. It's very nice to do what I do and have horses for them.

"Calumet Farm looks unbelievable when you drive by now. He's preserved history, and not many people are going to do that."

Funny Duck, a son of Distorted Humor, needed five starts to win a race but after finishing seven in Keeneland's Grade 3 Transylvania over yielding turf, he overcame all kinds of trouble to win the Grade 3 Pat Day Mile on the Kentucky Derby undercard. That day, the chestnut colt stumbled at the start and hit the rail before rallying to win by 4 3/4 lengths in the slop at just under 40-1 odds.

That was followed up by a fourth-place finish in Churchill Downs' Grade 3 Matt Winn at 1 1/16 miles on a fast track, albeit checking home 13 lengths behind victorious King Zachary, the Indiana Derby's 6-5 favorite.

"His last race didn't go as planned," Arnold said. "I don't know if it was the difference of two turns. He got rank going into the first turn, which he's never been, and got up on horses' heels and kind of checked back. Obviously his best race was in the slop, and we didn't have slop that night. But he's done very since then. We're going to give him another chance."

The Pat Day Mile was Kelley's idea.

"You'd have to call it a surprise," Arnold said, alluding to the odds. "The way I've run this horse, we've obviously liked him, but we're finding what he wants to do exactly. He didn't run much his first race, but it was a sprint on the dirt. Put him on the grass and he got pretty good. His race at Keeneland in the Transylvania wasn't a bad race. He had traffic issues, didn't get beat that far, and Mr. Kelley said, 'Why don't we try him on the dirt one more time?' Obviously a great idea. We went back to the dirt, caught slop and he ran a huge race on Derby Day, ran a huge (handicapping) number. The Matt Winn didn't go as good, but he had some issues in that race. We're hoping we get a clean trip and see if he can repeat his Derby Day performance on fast dirt.

"We've got all the time in the world to go back to grass. The races are so huge right now for 3-year-olds on the dirt right now, the money is so good, that we want to give him another chance."

Brian Hernandez Jr. again has the mount on Funny Duck, who drew post 9 in the field of nine 3-year-olds in the Indiana Derby.

Arnold also has Skeptic in the \$200,000, Grade 3 Indiana Oaks and is well represented in the \$100,000, 1 1/16-mile undercard stakes with Awestruck in the Mari Hulman George for fillies and mares; Sweet Legacy in the Indiana General Assembly for fillies and mares on turf; and Convict Pike in the Warrior Veterans on turf.

Skeptic, owned by Humphrey and Ashbrook Farm, has won her last two races, at Keeneland and Churchill. A lung infection rerouted her from the Grade 3 Iowa Oaks to Indiana Grand.

"It put us back a couple of weeks, but that's OK," Arnold said. "We like her. This is her first stakes."

He also says he loves Awestruck, Humphrey's 4-year-old Tapit filly who finished fourth in Churchill Downs' Grade 2 Fleur De Lis last month after impressive allowance victories at Keeneland and Churchill.

"I just think she's a really nice filly," Arnold said. "At the end of last year, she had some issues that got to bugging her. Not major, but she just wasn't getting over the hump where I thought she should. We turned her out, she went to Shawnee (Humphrey's farm) for three months. They sent her back to me in great shape. She gained a lot of weight, and got off to a great start this year with a win at Keeneland and a win at Churchill. Quite frankly, I thought we were going to be the horse to beat in the (Grade 2) Fleur De Lis, and she right got up in the mix and didn't quite finish it off. She came out of it well and has trained well since. This will probably be a touch lighter in competition, and we hope she can become a stakes-winner. We're not looking at it as a step backwards. We're looking at it as a step to get her to the next level."

Arnold noted that last year he had the 5-year-old Romantic Vision for Humphrey last year. "She was not a stakes-winner in September and she was a Grade 1 winner in October," he said. "I'd like to repeat that."

The 16th season of Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing continues through Wednesday, Nov. 7. Racing is conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 2:05 p.m. EST with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 p.m. EST. Thursday racing will be held July 19 and Sept. 6 at 2:05 p.m. EST.

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Photos: Funny Duck winning the Pat Day Mile under Brian Hernandez Jr., and Rusty Arnold headshot after winning the 2017 Grade 1 Juddmonte Spinster with Romantic Vision. Coady Photography credits

