

SPORTS: 'Q' factors in Honeybee; unbeaten Cox filly favored, Page 1B

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Oaklawn presents Rebel after pause for weather



Oaklawn is shown on Feb. 13. (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/Thomas Metthe)

BOB WISENER
SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL-RECORD
A winter storm with Arkansas in its crosshairs affected Oaklawn racing this week plus other affairs statewide. Compensation comes with a thaw-out and accompanying warm-up over the rescheduled Rebel Stakes weekend.
From near record lows at night in midweek, highs are expected to reach the 60s on a rare Monday of racing at the track, that day normally dark on the calendar.
With company coming — big time horses and their connections — things should be hopping at 2705 Central Ave. A touch of the old South blended with modern technology has produced Oaklawn Racing Casino Resort from what was once just a pari-mutuel mansion in

late winter and early spring.
Five major races are scheduled today, two on Monday. Stakes buffet for the track's first Rebel Sunday includes the \$1.25 million Grade 2 Rebel and \$500,000 Grade 3 Honeybee — respective Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks qualifying races with 50 points to the winners and 55 more split among the next four finishers in each race.
The Grade 3 \$500,000 Razorback Handicap, which in 2017 produced Horse of the Year Gun Runner (also the race winner), is for older horses and like the other graded races at 1 1/16 miles. The \$150,000 Carousel, its conditions changing over the year but still six furlongs, is for older fillies and mares. The \$145,000 Trivista Overnight and a companion race Sunday, the Commodore Over-

night, are for non-stakes winners.
The Rebel, counting two Derby winners in the 2000s, is the second seven-figure race of the local season. The track's third million-grander for 3-year-olds is even richer with the Grade 1 Arkansas Derby purse March 29. (Mystik Dan, the 2024 Kentucky Derby winner, sat out the Rebel, won by Timberline.)
Speed King, owned by Hot Springs' Ted Bowman, won the Grade 3 \$1 million Southwest Jan. 25, a surprising outcome only that several contenders were troubled and did not run their best; meanwhile, Speed King got away with an uncontested lead and held on strongly under Rafael Bejarano. Ron Moquett trains the Volatile colt, trying to get
See **OAKLAWN**, Page 2A

Grand marshal: TV star Bertinelli 'excited' to lead St. Pat's parade

JAMES LEIGH
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Although this will be her first trip to the Spa City, Valerie Bertinelli is "excited" to serve as celebrity grand marshal of the First Ever 22nd Annual World's Shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade.

"I don't think I've ever been a grand marshal in a parade before," she said. "I'm looking forward to it. I love St. Patrick's Day. I'm like 16% Irish, so I've always loved it. I have a brother named Patrick."

Her son, Wolfie, "was supposed to actually be born on St. Patrick's Day, but he came the day before. So I just love this holiday. I love this time of year."

Bertinelli's son, Wolfgang Van Halen, shares a birthday with the parade's official starter, Flavor Flav.

"I'm so excited," she said when she learned of the hip-hop legend being part of the parade. "I've never met him. He's amazing. I'm so excited to meet him."

While she admits she is "going into this blind," Bertinelli is looking forward to spending more time in the South.

"I don't know anything about it, and I kind of like that a lot of times," she said. "I like being surprised by things. I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to going down to the South because I love the South. I lived in Louisiana for a while, and I love meeting new people."

The lifestyle expert for "The Drew Barrymore Show" is not put off by the quirky nature of the parade.

"I really want to get to know everybody in it and just enjoy the quirkiness of it," Bertinelli said. "My sister-in-law used to put on a parade for Mardi Gras in Arizona, and they literally live in this little, tiny cul-de-sac. So I love



TV star Valerie Bertinelli will be the celebrity grand marshal for the First Ever 22nd Annual World's Shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade. (Courtesy Ben Cope)

quirky little parades.
"We would like dress up our car — I think it was like two or three cars in the parade — but we did it for the neighbors because it's fun.

My sister-in-law, Stacy, is one of those people that's just so much fun, so I like people that do quirky things and have fun," she said.
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"I like being surprised by things. I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to going down to the South because I love the South."
— Valerie Bertinelli

Veterans service officer goes the extra mile for Garland County veterans

DAVID SHOWERS
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Listing duty assignments, rank, job specialties and service time, discharge papers are the coin of the realm when navigating the tortuous bureaucracy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Garland County Veterans Service Officer Mark Aho can help track down a copy of a misplaced DD Form 214, but sometimes even it's not enough to substantiate a service-connected disability claim.

Discharge papers don't include duties veterans get assigned to outside of their regular units. Such was the case for a veteran seeking benefits from asbestos exposure. He had been loaned out to a unit that had been exposed, but it wasn't reflected in his discharge records.

It took the thank you letter he received from the unit's commander to prove it. Aho submitted the

letter to a senior VA adjudicator after the claim had been denied multiple times, resulting in an estimated \$4,100 monthly benefit for the remainder of the veteran's life.

"The letter mentioned the unit and commander," Aho said. "That's why you always keep every document. One piece of paper can make a difference in a decision. They granted him his 100% special monthly compensation. This is going to greatly change his life and the life of his family."

A widow had discharge papers showing her husband was a veteran of the Vietnam War. His service and campaign medals were part of the record, but the VA said the decorations alone didn't prove he was there during the war. Aho found an order that authorized the woman's husband to travel from Oakland to De Nang, Vietnam, leading to \$25,000 in back pay.

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Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts student Kelvin Orduna stands in front of the ASMSA Creativity and Innovation Complex. Orduna was recently selected as a Coca-Cola Scholars-Select. (Submitted photo)

ASMSA senior named Coca-Cola Scholar

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts senior Kelvin Orduna was recently selected as a Coca-Cola Scholars-Select.

Orduna, a senior from Huntsville, was one of 150 high school seniors nationwide to be awarded a \$20,000 college scholarship. Recipients were selected from a pool of more than 105,000 applications.

As a Coca-Cola Scholars-Select, he will attend a Coca-Cola Scholars Weekend in Atlanta in early April where he will participate in the Coca-Cola Scholars Leadership Development Institute.

"Being selected as a Coca-Cola Scholar is an incredible recognition of the service I have done to create

positive change in my community. I am excited to join a network of leaders and visionaries who are just as committed to transformative change in their communities," Orduna said in a news release.

"The Coke Scholars Program is much more than a scholarship — it's a lifelong membership in a community of trailblazers. I'm eager to learn from diverse experiences and perspectives of my fellow scholars, who are spearheading advancements in research, policy, advocacy and entrepreneurship."

Sponsored by the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation, the Coca-Cola Scholars Program is a joint effort by The Coca-Cola Company and

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Israel delays prisoners' release, citing 'humiliating' handovers

WAFAA SHURAF, MOHAMMED JAHJOUH AND MELANIE LIDMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel says the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners is delayed "until the release of the next hostages has been assured, and without the humiliating ceremonies" at handovers of Israeli captives in Gaza.

The statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office came early Sunday as military vehicles that normally move in

advance of the buses carrying prisoners left the open gates of Ofer prison, only to turn around and go back in.

The release of 620 Palestinian prisoners had been delayed for several hours and was meant to occur just after six Israeli hostages were released on Saturday. It was meant to be the largest one-day prisoner release in the Gaza ceasefire's first phase.

Israel's announcement abruptly put the future of the truce into further doubt.
The Palestinian Authority's

commission for prisoners' affairs confirmed the delay "until further notice." Associated Press video in the West Bank showed prisoners' families, waiting outdoors in near-freezing weather, apparently dispersing. One woman was shown walking away in tears.

Five of the six hostages freed Saturday had been escorted by masked, armed militants in front of a crowd — a display that the U.N. and Red Cross have criticized as cruel after previous handovers.

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