

By Bob Ehalt, Feb 11, 2020

# Gouverneur Morris Set for 2020 Debut at Tampa Bay Downs

*Connections opt for allowance race over Southwest Stakes (G3) for 3-year-old debut.*



It looks like Triple Crown hopeful **Gouverneur Morris** will be returning to the races a little sooner than expected.

Though it seemed as if the Grade 1-placed **Constitution** colt was on track to begin his 3-year-old campaign in the \$750,00 Southwest Stakes (G3) at **Oaklawn Park** Feb. 17, he will instead run for trainer Todd Pletcher Feb. 14 in

a five-horse \$27,500 allowance race at **Tampa Bay Downs**. The race also features **Untitled** and **Letmeno**, who also have stakes experience.

"We want to have a nice, non-killer race to get him started," said Team Valor International founder and CEO Barry Irwin, who owns Gouverneur Morris along with WinStar Farm.

Irwin said the plan is to run Gouverneur Morris in Friday's mile and 40-yard test and then target a yet to be determined race on the Road to the Kentucky Derby with a top prize of 100 points. How the colt performs in that start will determine whether he will have enough qualifying points and a valid reason to run in the May 2 Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (G1).

"(WinStar Farm president/CEO and racing manager Elliott Walden), Todd and I talked," Irwin said. "We've all won the Derby and just getting a horse in the Derby is not our goal. It's not the be-all end-all to us that it is to some people. We only want to run if we have a chance, and you need a fit, fresh horse to do that. If this works out right, he'll come up to the Derby the way we want and we'll feel good about going.

"He will have one normal, average race and then we'll go for the gold in a race like the Florida Derby or somewhere else and if we run well we'll go to the Derby."

Irwin said all options are on the table for Gouverneur Morris' final Kentucky Derby prep.

When **Gulfstream Park** was unable to card an allowance race for Gouverneur Morris and the others, Irwin said calls were made to Tampa Bay and the race was included on Friday's card.

"He needs to run. He's getting too strong," Irwin said.

Gouverneur Morris, who will be ridden by John Velazquez Friday and is based at Palm Beach Downs, began his career Sept. 2 with a nine-length maiden special weight win at **Saratoga Race Course** and finished second to **Maxfield** in the Oct. 5 Claiborne Breeders' Futurity (G1) at **Keeneland** in his final race at 2. He has four points on the Kentucky Derby leaderboard from the Breeders' Futurity, ranking him 23rd on the list headed into the weekend action.

Bred in Kentucky by Machmer Hall, Carrie Brogden, Craig Brogden and James F. Miller out of the Unbridled's Song mare Addison Run, Gouverneur Morris was purchased last year by Team Valor for \$600,000 from Eddie Woods' consignment to The Gulfstream Sale, Fasig-Tipton's Florida Select 2-Year-Olds in Training Sale. Phoenix Thoroughbreds originally purchased him for \$200,000 from Select Sales' consignment to the 2018 Keeneland September Yearling Sale.

Gary Barber and Michael B. Sebastian's Untitled was entered in Friday's race after finishing fourth in the seven-furlong Swale Stakes (G3) Feb. 1 at Gulfstream Park in his first start for trainer Mark Casse. In his only other start, the son of **Khozan** was an 11-length winner when he made his Dec. 14 debut at Gulfstream for trainer Ralph Nicks.

Randall L. Bloch and Six Column Stable's Letmeno, a son of **Twirling Candy**, will be making his 3-year-old debut for trainer Ian Wilkes after finishing

fourth in the Sept. 14 Iroquois Stakes (G3) and second in the Ellis Park Juvenile in his final starts at 2.

Pletcher also entered Siena Farm's **Dudley Square**, who won his debut Jan. 18 at Tampa Bay.

Town and Country Racing's **Sounion**, third in a Jan. 11 allowance optional claimer for trainer Brian Lynch at Gulfstream, rounds out the field.