

FREE DROP BILLY REROUTED TO GOTHAM

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“We just scratched to go in a different direction,” Romans said of the sudden change in plans for Free Drop Billy. “That’s it.”

Free Drop Billy made his 3-year-old debut in the Feb. 3 Holy Bull Stakes (G2) and placed second to commanding winner Audible. He ran a perplexing ninth in the Nov. 4 Sentient Jet Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (G1) at Del Mar to close an otherwise excellent 2-year-old campaign that included a victory in the Claiborne Breeders’ Futurity (G1) at Keeneland and a runner-up finish by a neck in the Hopeful Stakes (G1) at Saratoga Race Course.

Other than the Juvenile, Free Drop Billy has never been worse than second in six career starts while earning \$495,220. He was a \$200,000 purchase by his current connections from Gainesway’s consignment to

the 2016 Keeneland September yearling sale.

Free Drop Billy will cut back in distance from the 1 1/16-mile Fountain of Youth to the one-mile Gotham. He avoids, at least for now, another confrontation with Good Magic, the first maiden winner of the Juvenile and the Eclipse winner as the champion 2-year-old male. Good Magic trained sharply for his season debut in the Fountain of Youth and finished third with Jose Ortiz aboard.

The Fountain of Youth and the Gotham are part of the Road to the Kentucky Derby series and award the same number of points to the top four finishers on a 50-20-10-5 scale.

With 14 points, Free Drop Billy needs to add to his total to ensure a position in the May 5 Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (G1). The Gotham should offer less resistance in that regard.

“We just thought it was a better spot for him,” said Romans, who last year saddled Gotham winner J Boys Echo. **BH**

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