

Featuring:

- Profiles of the entrants
- Best Bets from Dave Tuley & crew
- How to bet horses primer





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WELCOME TO VSIN'S 2023 KENTUCKY DERBY BETTING GUIDE

By Dave Tuley

The Derby, which is limited to 3-year-olds, is as much of an American rite of spring as the start of the baseball season and the Masters. This is the 149th Run for the Roses which has traditionally been run on the First Saturday in May, but that hasn't always been the case. The inaugural Derby was run on May 17, 1875 (the Third Saturday in May), and was mostly run on the second or third Saturday of the month for more than 50 years (with the notable exception of the Fourth Saturday in April on April 29, 1901). It's been run on the First Saturday in May since May 7, 1932, except for when the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic pushed it back to Sept. 5 (the First Saturday in September).

The Derby is also known as the first jewel in the Triple Crown – which also includes the Preakness Stakes at Pimlico and the Belmont Stakes at Belmont – but that also wasn't always the case. Daily Racing Form's Charles Hatton is credited with coining the phrase in the 1930s that led to owners and trainers aiming for those races with their 3-year-olds, but it wasn't officially recognized until 1950. The previous Triple Crown winners were grandfathered in, even though the series didn't actually exist when those horses actually accomplished the feat. But in all of our lifetimes, it's been well-established and a field of 20 will enter the starting gate Saturday to add to the illustrious history.

As a marquee sporting event, the Derby is often the only horse race that most people pay attention to during the year. While this Betting Guide is certainly for our regular horse-playing subscribers at VSiN, it's also meant as a primer to help the casual fans catch up on this year's Derby field and offer advice on how to bet the race as well as Friday's Kentucky Oaks for 3-year-old fillies, and the undercards on each day.

It's probably obvious, but the top contenders for the Derby are generally the winners of the major prep races that have been run this spring. #15 Forte is the 3-1 morning-line favorite off his win in the Florida Derby at Gulfstream Park on April 1. (He also won the Fountain of Youth at that same track on March 4.) #5 Tapit Trice is the second choice at 5-1 after winning the Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland on April 8 (and the Tampa Bay Derby on March 11). The third choice is #14 Angel of Empire at 8-1 off of his win in the Arkansas Derby on April 1 while co-fourth choice #10 Practical Move is 10-1 after winning the Santa Anita Derby on April 8.

If you're most concerned about making a profit on the race, the winner is most likely coming from that group. The last four Derbys have been won by horses paying double-digits, but the 2010s had several winners with single-digit payouts under \$10: eventual Triple Crown winners American Pharoah in 2015 (\$7.80 on a \$2 Win bet at odds of 5-2) and Justify in 2018 (also \$7.80), as well as California Chrome in 2014 (\$7) and Nyquist in 2016 (\$6.60).

However, the thing that makes betting the Derby so great is that it's just as likely that we get a long-shot winner. These are young horses (think of them as teenage boys) that are still developing. The winner could be a colt with a lot of racing experience, or it could be one that's peaking at the right time come Derby Day. The best 3-year-old doesn't always win the Derby; it's often just the one that's best on the First Saturday in May.

Remember, these colts are running the 1 1/4-mile distance for the first time. They're contending with the biggest crowd they've ever heard, and then trying not to get taken out in the cavalry charge to the first turn, having to overcome the traffic in a 20-horse field. A lot can go wrong even if you've bet on the "best horse."

Just last year, #21 Rich Strike shocked just about everyone by winning at 80-1. He wasn't even in the official field until another colt withdrew from the race before the Friday scratch deadline, and he had to break from the far outside post. But he's far from the only bomb that's exploded the Churchill Downs tote board as Country House won in 2019 (65-1), I'll Have Another in 2012 (15-1), Animal Kingdom in 2011 (21-1), Mine That Bird in 2009 (50-1) and Giacamo in 2005 (50-1).

If you're looking for a longer price, you have the vast majority of the field to choose from. #3 Two Phil's won one of the lesser prep races, the Jeff Ruby Steaks, on an all-weather track at Turfway Park, but he appears to be the "wise guy" horse at 12-1. #9 Skinner was on the outside of the 20-horse field looking in like Rich Strike, but an early scratch put him into the main part of the field and is the relatively low price of 20-1, #11 Disarm snuck into the field in the very last prep race - the Lexington Stakes at Keeneland just 3 weeks ago on April 15 - by earning enough qualifying points with a third-place finish. The longest long shots of all are at 50-1 with #7 Reincarnate, #13 Sun Thunder, #16 Raise Cain, #20 Continuar and the also-eligible #23 King Russell. While many will scoff and say those odds are too short, we've already shown that plenty of similarly ignored long shots have won the Derby. It stands to reason that at least one will significantly outrun his odds and be in contention down the stretch. The problem is figuring out which long shot.

And because of the wide-open nature of the race and the huge field, the exotics can pay huge. If you're able to connect the dots, the Exacta (pick the first two finishers) usually pays in the \$100s – led by a \$3,009.60 Exacta in 2019 with 30-1 Country House, who actually ran second but was declared the winner after 9-2 Maximum Security was disqualified, topping 14-1 Code of Honor. Tacticus finished third at 5-1, but the Trifecta (pic the top three finishers) still paid \$11,475.30. The Trifecta usually pays in the \$1,000s (except in years when the chalk wins like with American Pharoah and Justify).

The Superfecta (pick the top four finishers) is even harder, but it can be life-changing money as the 2005 Giacomo super paid a record \$864,253.50 with the 2009 Mine That Bird super paying \$557,006.49 and the 2010 Super Saver super returning \$101,284.60.

So, while you're going through the profiles of this Saturday's contenders (note we've included the also-eligibles from #21 to #23 just in case one draws in like Rich Strike last year) and the picks of VSiN's hosts and handicappers to help mesh with your own handicapping, we hope we help you find the winner. But also – to borrow from baseball and the Masters – take this opportunity to swing for the fences and create your own Cinderella story.

HOW TO BET ON HORSE RACING

By Dave Tuley

Are you new to horse racing?

We know the lingo can be intimidating at first. So can trying to figure out the past performances of races that bettors use to handicap. But it's not as difficult as it first appears.

The first thing to know is that most horse racing wagering in this country is done pari-mutuel, which means "wagering among ourselves." Unlike sports betting, in which you might be used to getting the current odds at the time you place your wager at a sports betting counter or on an app, the odds in horse racing aren't finalized until all wagers are made. The track then takes out its hold percentage and returns the payoffs to the winners. So in this case, you're not betting against the track or casino but against the other bettors. Futures, such as those for the Kentucky Derby or Breeders' Cup, are handled the same way as sports futures.

Here's a quick list of the most common horse racing wagers:

SINGLE-RACE WAGERS (aka "betting vertically")

Win: Your horse has to win the race.

Place: Your horse has to finish first or second.

Show: Your horse has to finish first, second or third.

Across the board: You make three separate bets to win, place or show. Exacta (aka perfecta): You must pick two horses that finish first and second in the exact order (unless "boxed" or "keyed" – see below). Trifecta: You must pick three horses that finish first, second and third in the exact order (again, can be boxed or keyed).

Superfecta: You pick the top four finishers in order (again, can be boxed or keyed).

Hi 5 (aka Super 5): You pick the top five finishers in order (again, can be boxed or keyed).

Box: A bet in which you pick multiple combinations in a wager, so you cash if they hit the board in any order. Beware: This can get expensive, as you pay your wager amount times all possible combinations.

Key: A bet in which you pick a horse in a particular spot, usually to win, and then pay for the combinations going to the rest of the horses listed. This saves money by not paying for a lot of extra combinations, but if your horse doesn't finish in the specified spot, you lose.

MULTIPLE-RACE WAGERS (aka "betting horizontally")

Double: Pick winners in successive races. This traditionally used to be an early double on the first two races of the day and a late double on the last two races, but now tracks have "rolling doubles" throughout the card. **Pick 3 (aka "triple"):** Pick the winners of three straight races. **Pick four:** Pick the winners of four straight races.

Pick six: Pick the winners of six straight races. This is obviously very hard to hit. If no tickets have all six winners, the jackpot carries over to the next day, with that day's pick six wagers building the pool. Carryovers of several days can build huge pools that attract lottery-type crowds trying to hit it.

HOW TO BET

This has become easier for newbies who have already been betting on smartphones, as it's very similar to sports betting once you learn what all the wagers mean. You choose the track you want from the menu, find the race you want to bet on, choose the type of wager, choose your wager amount and then decide whether you're boxing or keying or not.

For those going to a betting counter, a certain protocol helps the ticket writer get your wager correct and helps the line run smoothly:

- Track name. Don't assume the ticket writer knows what track you're betting, even if it's the next live race.
- Race number. You don't have to give this if you're betting the next race, but it's a good habit to develop. On Kentucky Derby day, if you don't give a race number, the writer will just give you a ticket for the next race at Churchill Downs.
- Wager amount and type of bet (such as \$2 across the board, \$10 to win, \$2 exacta) and, if necessary, type of instructions like "box," "key," "10-cent superfecta box" or "\$1 trifecta key."
 - Numbers of horses. Don't say horse names; use betting numbers for that race. For straight bets like win, place or show, just give the number like "5." If a box, give all horses like "1, 3 and 5." If keying a horse, say "5 with 1 and 3.").

WHAT TO BET

The best advice for beginners is just to bet to win — or place and show, though the payoffs on those are much lower. In addition, the takeout on these types is usually lower, about 15% to 18% at most American tracks, while the takeout on the exotic wagers can be well above 20%. Besides, it's also very difficult to string together a bunch of horses in a race to get a big payoff or hit a string of winners in multiple races. It's hard enough to pick just one winner.

HOW TO HANDICAP

Tons of books are available to teach you how to handicap, and it's much too complex to attempt to do it here. But let me start you with a few things to look for when going over those complex past performances:

Look for lone speed: The easiest way for a horse to win is to go wire to wire as they go to the lead and never get caught. Often a race will have a lot of speed horses, and it's tough to single out a horse to dominate a field. But the more you look at races, the more you'll be able to identify when a race is absent a lot of horses that go to the front (with a lot of 1s in their running lines of the PPs). That will help you find the lone speed horse that has a chance to control a race from start to finish. Those will pay off in the long run — meaning they'll win enough to pay for the losing times.

Identify the top closer: Conversely, if a race has a ton of speed, look for a closer to be running late. You'll often have several to choose from (that's where a "box" can help), but you can use other handicapping factors to try to find the best choice.

Other handicapping factors: These would include things like class (a horse that has been running against tougher competition but drops into an easier level in today's race), breeding (this can be tied to class, but certain sires and dams produce runners who are better on turf or in sprints and so on) and current form (horses in "good form" will consistently run their best race).

Good luck in betting the ponies.

VSIN KENTUCKY DERBY ODDS TO WIN (as of May 3)

#	HORSE	ODDS
15	FORTE	3-1
5	TAPIT TRICE	6-1
10	PRACTICAL MOVE	9-1
14	ANGEL EMPIRE	10-1
17	DERMA SOTOGAKE	13-1
6	KINGSBARNS	15-1
2	VERIFYING	16-1
3	TWO PHIL'S	17-1
9	SKINNER	20-1
4	CONFIDENCE GAME	23-1
8	MAGE	23-1
11	DISARM	35-1
1	HIT SHOW	35-1
12	JACE'S ROAD	45-1
16	RAISE CAIN	45-1
7	REINCARNATE	45-1
19	LORD MILES	50-1
18	ROCKET CAN	51-1
13	SUN THUNDER	60-1
20	CONTINUAR	75-1

KENTUCKY DERBY BEST BETS

DAVE TULEY VSIN SENIOR REPORTER/HANDICAPPER

There's no clear-cut front-runner in this field, but we expect some combination of Verifying, Confidence Games, Reincarnate, or especially Japanese import/UAE Derby winner Derma Sotogate to help set an honest pace to set it up for a stalker or closer. I'm calling #10 Practical Move (10-1) the most likely winner as I don't think he's being given enough credit for his Santa Anita Derby victory from just off the pace. A repeat of that performance would have him getting first run on the closers as they try to catch him down the stretch. But the Derby is always wide-open, so we have to include some long shots in our Exacta and Trifecta boxes to try for a really big score (and I'll also have Win bets on some of these if they go off higher than their morning-line odds – you can do that in a 20-horse field). #3 Two Phil's (12-1) has the highest prior speed figures in the field, though that was at unheralded Turfway Park. (But don't forget, Mine That Bird came from even less-heralded Sunland Park.) #9 Skinner (20-1) only has a maiden win, but his back-to-back third-place finishes show he can be close turning for home. #18 Rocket Can (30-1) is my big bomb, but he ran second to Forte in the Fountain of Youth and then lost as the Arkansas Derby favorite—a good sign as he would have had much shorter odds if he had won. His fourth-place finish isn't as bad as it looked, and Bill Mott adds blinkers to get him more focused. I should also mention that #21 Cyclone of Mischief (30-1) could be this year's Rich Strike from the also-eligible list, and I'll add him to my tickets if he draws into the field on Friday.

ED SEHON VSIN HORSE HANDICAPPER

One of my favorite Kentucky Derby bets actually starts on Friday with the Oaks-Derby Double. I savor the two-day action — especially when I'm alive going into the Derby. And, the payoffs often are generous. I like these four fillies in the Oaks in no particular order: #6 Botanical (4-1 morning line), #14 Pretty Mischievous (10-1), #7 Wet Paint (5-2) and #3 Gambling Girl (15-1). As for the Run for the Roses on Saturday, I like four sophomore colts in this order: #2 Verifying (15-1) to Win, #3 Two Phil's (12-1) to Place, #14 Angel of Empire (8-1) to Show and longshot #4 Confidence Game (20-1). BOTTOM LINE: I'll bet \$5 Oaks-Derby Doubles of 3, 6, 7, 14 with 2, 3, 4, 14 (cost \$80) — and my Kentucky Derby pick up is #2 Verifying.

DUANE COLUCCI RAMPART RACE AND SPORTSBOOK MANAGER

As always, Brad Cox is a trainer to watch! #14 Angel of Empire (8-1) crushed the Arkansas Derby field by 4.5 lengths, and he has no distance limitations. Breaking just inside his major threat Forte, post 14 should not be a problem; working well all systems go! Has to finish better than Mage and Forte to win. Bonus Kentucky Oaks pick #12 Dorth Vader (20-1).

JOHN LAURO TEAM TULEY CONTRIBUTOR FOR VSIN

In the Kentucky Oaks on Friday, #7 Wet Paint and #11 Defining Purpose continue to train full of vigor, so that's a strong Exacta box. In the Kentucky Derby, #5 Tapit Trice is a huge colt with a massive stride and is a strong Win bet. My Best Bet of the weekend – and maybe of the year – is an Oaks-Derby double of 7, 11 with 5, using Wet Paint and Defining Purpose paired with Tapit Trice.

MATT YOUMANS VSIN SENIOR EDITOR AND HOST

I bet Circa Sports' fixed odds of 24-1 on #3 Two Phil's (currently 12-1), which posted the best Brisnet speed figure in the entire field. With a stalking running style, which is what usually wins the Derby, Two Phil's is trending in the right direction by improving in each race. He's not the best horse, but he offers some odds value, and I'll play him along with #5 Tapit Trice, the Blue Grass Stakes winner.

WES REYNOLDS VSIN HOST AND HANDICAPPER

Brad Cox did not get to enjoy the spoils of the Kentucky Derby winner's circle in 2021 as his eventual winning horse Mandaloun was not declared the winner until the following year after Medina Spirit was officially DQ'd. #14 Angel of Empire (8-1), the Arkansas Derby winner, is athletic enough to navigate through traffic to win and allow Cox and jockey Flavien Prat, both with Derby wins by DQ, to finally be the clear Derby winner on race day.

CHRIS ANDREWS SOUTH POINT SPORTSBOOK DIRECTOR

I like #8 Mage. In only his third start in the Florida Derby, he broke last and had a troubled trip. Nonetheless, he made a huge move on the turn and took the lead in the stretch, but he got passed late and lost by only a length to Forte. Definitely eligible to improve.

VINNY MAGLIULO GAUGHAN GAMING/VSIN

There are more variables in the Kentucky Derby than in any other American race, which can hurt favorites and help more pricey horses. I'm wheeling these: #5 Tapit Trice, #10 Practical Move, #14 Angel of Empire and #15 Forte.

PATRICK MEAGHER VSIN HOST

The Todd Pletcher-trained Forte opened as your betting favorite at 3-1 to win the Kentucky Derby and rightfully so. The Dark bay colt led all 3-year-olds in qualifying points leading up to the derby and has more than doubled the career earnings of any horse in the field. We are going to beat Forte. Let's go with another Todd Pletcher-trained horse, Tapit Trice at 5-1. The Gray son of Tapit enters the Derby off a victory in the G1 Blue Grass at Keeneland on April 8th. Like many Tapit progeny, Tapit Trice has an unpredictable personality, so drawing the 5-hole inside is a little worrying. However, post 5 has produced the most Kentucky Derby champs and Tapit Trice is the best horse in the field. He'll relish the extra distance. Tapit Trice would be the first Gray horse to with the Kentucky Derby since Giacomo in 2005!

JOHNNY AVELLO DRAFTKINGS DIRECTOR OF RACE & SPORTS OPERATIONS

#14 Angel of Empire doesn't have numbers as good as #15 Forte, but he has a similar style to file and has been getting better every race. I like the Brad Cox-Flavien Prat combo as Cox gets his horses prepared for the big races, and Prat is one of the best jockeys right now. I hope Angel of Empire holds his price. You also have to use #5 Tapit Trice and Forte. Some might say you can't use the favorite, but he hasn't done anything wrong.

SHAUN KING VSIN HOST

I haven't made my final decision, but trainer Todd Pletcher has three horses in the race — #5 Tapit Trice, #6 Kingsbarns and #15 Forte. If Pletcher is winning races early in the Churchill Downs card, he usually stays hot. If that happens, I plan to bet an exacta box with Pletcher's three horses. If Pletcher isn't winning early, then it's just not his day and I won't make that bet. I will bet #14 Angel of Empire to win and place. And I'm also planning to use Angel of Empire in a trifecta wheel with other horses. I also will bet the Oaks-Derby double with the field in the Oaks and Angel of Empire in the Derby.

BREAKING DOWN THE KENTUCKY DERBY FIELD

By Ed Sehon



1 HIT SHOW (35-1)

Record: 5-3-1-0 Trainer: Brad Cox Jockey: Manny Franco

Best Beyer Speed Figure: 93

Earnings: \$404,375

FAN FAVORITE: The public's betting choice in all five of his starts. One of four Brad Cox-trained colts going to post. Hit Show's biggest win was a romp in the Grade 3 Withers at Aqueduct in February prior to losing as a fast-closing second to Lord Miles in the Wood Memorial in final prep. A show finish would surprise.



2 VERIFYING (16-1)

Record: 6-2-2-0 Trainer: Brad Cox Jockey: Tyler Gaffalione Best Beyer Speed Figure: 99 Earnings: \$489,900

TRUST, BUT VERIFY: This colt figures to be near or on lead from the get-go. Lost a thrilling stretch duel by a neck to Tapit Trice in the Grade 1 Blue Grass at Keeneland. Impressive works indicate the son of Triple Crown-winning Justify will be near the front early. Cox-Gaffalione make a powerful duo. A morning line of 15-1 offers value. Verifying is fast – but can he last?



3 TWO PHIL'S (17-1)

Record: 8-4-1-1
Trainer: Larry Rivelli
Jockey: Jareth Loveberry
Best Beyer Speed Figure: 101
Earnings: \$683,450

BETTER THAN EVER: Winning half of his eight races, the hard-charging son of Hard Spun keeps improving under 35-year-old, rookie Derby rider Loveberry. He'll need to top his most recent 101 Beyer if he's to triumph here. Should be up close early from the inside post. Excellent chance.



4 CONFIDENCE GAME (23-1)

Record: 7-3-1-2

Trainer: Keith Desormeaux Jockey: James Graham Best Beyer Speed Figure: 94 Earnings: \$785,525

CON MAN: Confidence Game enters the Derby off a lengthy break. Winner of the Grade 2 Rebel at Oaklawn in slop, the son of Candy Ride attracts veteran Kentucky circuit rider James Graham. Not sure he's ready to score at a Grade 1 level, but if he's on top of his game, he could be there late. The wetter, the better. Game on, dude.



5 TAPIT TRICE (6-1)

Record: 5-4-1-0 Trainer: Todd Pletcher Jockey: Luis Saez Best Beyer Speed Figure: 99 Earnings: \$883,650

SECOND CHOICE: Winner of his last four – including the Tampa Bay Derby at Tampa Bay Downs and Blue Grass at Keeneland – this son of super sire Tapit is a stone-cold closer. His best race was his last at Keeneland when he nailed Verifying at the wire. One of four horses entered by Todd Pletcher, whose barn is as sharp as any. Calm, cool rider Luis Saez knows how to navigate a 20-horse field. This Colt was bred to benefit from the added distance. It's his time to shine.



6 KINGSBARNS (15-1)

Record: 3-3-0-0 Trainer: Todd Pletcher Jockey: Jose Ortiz Best Beyer Speed Figure: 95 Earnings: \$657,300

HAT TRICK: Kingsbarns is a perfect 3-for-3, including an easy front-running score in the tough Louisiana Derby, Todd Pletcher's trainee might try to wire the field under sharp gate jock Jose Ortiz, who climbs aboard for the first time. The late-blooming son of Uncle Mo appeals to wiseguys looking for a price play in exotic wagers. It will be Kingsbarns' toughest test yet. Not today, Jose.



7 REINCARNATE (45-1)

Record: 7-2-3-2 Trainer: Tim Yakteen Jockey: John Velazquez Best Beyer Speed Figure: 95 Earnings: \$345,650

BAFFERT'S BOY: Tim Yakteen takes over training for a suspended, high-profile West Coast conditioner. While this colt likes to finish in the money, his relatively low Beyer Speed Figures point to longshot status at 45-1. For Baffert fans only. victory would be another Rich Strike.



8 MAGE (23-1)

Record: 3-1-1-0

Trainer: Gustavo Delgado Jockey: Javier Castellano Best Beyer Speed Figure: 94 Earnings: \$247,200

SLOW STARTER: The son of Good Magic lacks a solid foundation with only three starts. His lone win came vs. maidens but showed promise, finishing only a length behind Forte in the Florida Derby. A bounce off that effort is possible. Castellano's return is a plus, but it might be better to look ahead to a shorter Preakness in two weeks.



9 SKINNER (20-1)

Record: 6-1-0-3

Trainer: John A. Shirreffs Jockey: Juan Hernandez Best Beyer Speed Figure: 99 Earnings: \$216,300

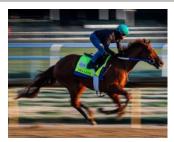
DRAWS IN: The son of Curlin gets in the field following the untimely death of Wild On Ice. The California invader sports a pair of closing Show finishes in the last two races, but appears to be in too deep.



10 PRACTICAL MOVE (9-1)

Record: 7-4-1-2 Trainer: Tim Yakteen Jockey: Ramon Vazquez Best Beyer Speed Figure: 100 Earnings: \$884,200

ALWAYS THERE: The winner of the Santa Anita Derby by a nose, this colt has never been out of the money in seven starts. Well-tested in five consecutive graded stakes, Practical Move is the best the West Coast has to offer. Ramon Vasquez has been aboard for three straight stalking wins. His stamina is a question, but don't overlook him.



11 DISARM (35-1)

Record: 5-1-2-2 Trainer: Steve Asmussen Jockey: Joel Rosario Best Beyer Speed Figure: 90 Earnings: \$327,850

SON OF A GUN: The talented offspring of Gun Runner, Disarm's lone win came against maidens. However, he has never finished off the board. While winningest all-time trainer Steve Asmussen would love to capture his first Run for the Roses, he may have to wait another year. Having a top rider helps. A win at 35-1 would be disarming.



12 JACE'S ROAD (45-1)

Record: 6-2-0-2 Trainer: Brad Cox Jockey: Florent Geroux Best Beyer Speed Figure: 90 Earnings: \$238,050

LATE TO GATE: Jace's Road was added to the race when Blazing Sevens withdrew from the field, The Cox trainee prefers to run on the front end. Talented Florent Geroux retains the mount on the son of Quality Road. I prefer other Cox starters Hit Shot, Verifying or Angel of Empire. Strictly a longshot.



13 SUN THUNDER (60-1)

Record: 6-1-1-1

Trainer: Kenneth McPeek Jockey: Brian Hernandez Jr. Best Beyer Speed Figure: 89 Earnings: \$247,500

REGALLY BRED: Son of Into Mischief out of a Medaglia d'Oro mare, Sun Thunder shows three purse-earning finishes, but little else. He adds blinkers for the Derby. It would be great to see Kentucky trainer Kenneth McPeek in the winner's circle, but not likely today at 60-1.



14 ANGEL OF EMPIRE (10-1)

Record: 6-4-1-0 Trainer: Brad Cox Jockey: Flavien Prat Best Beyer Speed Figure: 94 Earnings: \$1,069,375

MONEY BAGS: Impressive winner of his last two – Risen Star at Fair Grounds and the Arkansas Derby at Oaklawn Park – the Classic Empire-sired colt hasn't finished out of the money in six starts. At 10-1, he appears to be the best of Cox's quartet. When the field turns for home, he'll be coming from the clouds. For one who likes deep closers, he offers the best shot.



15 FORTE (3-1)

Record: 7-6-1-0 Trainer: Todd Pletcher Jockey: Irad Ortiz Jr. Best Beyer Speed Figure: 100 Earnings: \$2,409,830

THE SCOOP: On paper, he's the one to beat. Winner of the 2022 Breeders' Cup Juvenile, Forte is the reigning 2-year-old Eclipse Award winner at the head of this class. He's proven himself worthy of the title by following that up with wins in the Fountain of Youth and Florida Derby at Gulfstream Park against talented Derby hopefuls. He usually sits closer to the pace but showed his versatility by coming from farther back in the Florida Derby. Those looking for a winner, look no further. Those looking for value, look elsewhere.



16 RAISE CAIN (45-1)

Record: 7-2-1-1

Trainer: Ben Colebrook Jockey: Geraldo Corrales Best Beyer Speed Figure: 91 Earnings: \$296,328

NOT TODAY: Long on experience, short on victories, this Colebrook-trained colt is in over his head at 45-1, though he moves up if the track comes up muddy as it did with his win in the Grade 3 Gotham at Aqueduct. Underrated rider Geraldo Corrales would need the ride of his life to score. Strictly a bomb.



17 DERMA SOTOGAKE (13-1)

Record: 8-4-0-2

Trainer: Hidetaka Otonashi Jockey: Christophe Lemaire Best Beyer Speed Figure: NA Earnings: \$1,162,164

TRAVELIN' MAN: This Japanese horse arrives in Kentucky following an impressive, front-running score in the UAE Derby. His connections are unknown to most in the American game, but backstretch chatter says the son of Mind Your Biscuits has a legitimate chance to light up the tote board in a wide-open Derby.



18 ROCKET CAN (51-1)

Record: 7-2-2-0 Trainer: William Mott Jockey: Junior Alvarado Best Beyer Speed Figure: 91 Earnings: \$383,413

MOTT'S MAN: Winner of the Holy Bull at Gulfstream in February, he later finished second to Derby morning-line favorite Forte in the Fountain of Youth. Trainer William Mott's lone entry has run in deep prep fields and offers value at 30-1 or better. Don't dismiss him.



19 LORD MILES (50-1)

Record: 5-2-0-1

Trainer: Saffie Joseph Jr. Jockey: Paco Lopez Best Beyer Speed Figure: 93 Earnings: \$451,000

ONE TRICK PONY: Bombs away winner of the Wood Memorial at 59-1, Curlin's offspring shows little else from five career starts. Journeyman jock Paco Lopez picks up the rare Derby start for likable trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. Easy to ignore.



20 CONTINUAR (75-1)

Record: 5-2-1-1

Trainer: Yoshito Yahagi Jockey: Ryusel Sakai Best Beyer Speed Figure: NA Earnings: \$337,889

OUTSIDE CHANCE: Breaking from the outermost post No. 20, the "other" Japanese horse appears to be here to keep stablemate Derma Sotogake company. Little to like. Pass.



AE 21 CYCLONE MISCHIEF (30-1)

Record: 7-2-0-3 Trainer: Dale Romans Jockey: Joel Rosario Best Beyer Speed Figure: 91 Earnings: \$246,350

PRICE PLAY: Trained by Louisville native Dale Romans, the underachieving son of Into Mischief offers little hope for local backers. Look for the longshot early if he makes the field.



AE 22 MANDARIN HERO (20-1)

Record: 6-4-2-0

Trainer: Terunobu Fujita Jockey: Kazshu Kimura Best Beyer Speed Figure: 100 Earnings: \$386,854

HIGH BEYER: The third Japanese entrant was awarded a 100 Speed Figure when finishing second in the Santa Anita Derby. Based on the limited data on the horse, jockey and trainer, he deserves to be labeled a longshot. Doubtful

contender.



AE 23 KING RUSSELL (50-1)

Record: 8-3-2-1 Trainer: Ron Moquett Jockey: Rafael Bejarno Best Beyer Speed Figure: 91 Earnings: \$436,095

OUTSIDER: Not much to recommend. His Beyer numbers improved but not enough to warrant in-the-money consideration. No King on Derby day, even if he gets in the starting gate.

ae = a horse officially entered in a race, but not permitted to start unless the field is reduced by scratches below a specified number.



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LILIES FOR THE FILLIES HIGHLIGHTS FRIDAY CARD AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

By Adam Burke

Race 11 of 14 on Friday at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky features some of the best three-year-old fillies in the racing world. The 2023 Kentucky Oaks is a 1 1/8-mile Grade I race with a purse of \$1.25 million and a first-place prize of \$750,000 to go along with a garland blanket of lilies for the winning horse.

The 129th running of the Oaks has a field of 14 and should feature plenty of excitement with a large crowd, as this race is annually outdrawn by only the Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes. Post time is at 5:51 p.m. ET on Friday, May

Here are the horses, trainers, jockeys, and odds for the 2023 Kentucky Oaks:

Wet Paint is the clear favorite at 5-2 from the 7 post, while Botanical is right next door in the 6 post at 4-1. Otherwise, the race appears to be wide-open with several double-digit shots. There is a 40% chance of showers on Friday, so the track could be a little muddy, but no rain is forecast up until Friday, so it could be dry and fast if Mother Nature holds up her end of the bargain.

The forecast matters a lot in any horse race, but especially this one, which has typically held a noticeable speed bias. Three of the last four winners were first or second at the half-mile. Abel Tasman came from well off the pace on a sloppy track in 2017, but she is the only filly since 2013 to come from more than five lengths back. That was also the only time since 2008 that the course has been noticeably sloppy.

Here are some quick handicaps on the 14 horses scheduled to be in the field.

1. MIMI KAKUSHI (20-1)
Mimi Kakushi last ran in the UAE Oaks back on Feb. 17 and won that Grade III race at Meydan as the 7-5 favorite by 1 1/4 lengths over the second favorite, Ami Please. It was a strong run on a 1 3/16-mile track, but the field is quite a bit stronger here. Also, she draws the No. 1 post from which Secret Oath won last year, but that was the first top-three finish from that post since 2004.

KENTUCKY OAKS FIELD

DOCT	DAGE HARD TRAINER LAGUEY AND									
POST	HORSE	TRAINER	JOCKEY	ODDS						
1	Mimi Kakushi	S. bin Ghadayer	M. Barzalona	20-1						
2	The Alys Look	B. Cox	J. Castellano	15-1						
3	Gambling Girl	T. Pletcher	I. Ortiz Jr.	15-1						
4	Southlawn	N. Casse	R. Gutierrez	8-1						
5	Wonder Wheel	M. Casse	J. Rosario	12-1						
6	Botanical	B. Cox	C. Landeros	4-1						
7	Wet Paint	B. Cox	F. Prat	5-2						
8	Promiseher America	R. Handal	J. Vargas Jr.	30-1						
9	And Tell Me Nolies	Peter Miller	R. Vazquez	15-1						
10	Flying Connection	T. Fincher	F. Geroux	15-1						
11	Defining Purpose	K. McPeek	B. Hernandez Jr.	12-1						
12	Dorth Vader	M. Yates	L. Saez	20-1						
13	Affirmative Lady	G. Motion	J. Velazquez	10-1						
14	Pretty Mischievous	B. Walsh	T. Gaffalione	10-1						
15	Taxed (ae)	R. Morse	R. Bejarano	20-1						
16	Julia Shining (ae)	T. Pletcher	L. Saez	15-1						
17	Hoosier Philly (ae)	T. Amoss	E. Morales	30-1						

ae = a horse officially entered in a race, but not permitted to start unless the field is reduced by scratches below a specified number.

2. THE ALYS LOOK (15-1)

Similarly, The Alys Look drew a tough starting position, as the No. 2 post has only hit the trifecta board once in almost 20 years of the Oaks. The Alys Look is overshadowed in a big way by favorite Wet Paint and second favorite Botanical from the Brad Cox stable. Cox won in 2018 with Monomoy Girl and in 2020 with Shedaresthedevil. She finished third in the five-horse Fair Grounds Oaks behind Southlaw and Pretty Mischievous at 4-1 odds, falling back late in the 1 1/16-mile race.

3. GAMBLING GIRL (15-1)

Todd Pletcher's lone entry (barring multiple scratches) is Gambling Girl, the daughter of Dialed In and Tulipmania. She ran a strong second in the Gazelle Stakes at Aqueduct at this length back on Apr. 8, coming up just short to Promiseher America, who won at 26-1 closing odds. Gambling Girl got a bad start and got caught in traffic, but she made a big move in the six-horse race with a great push from Jose L. Ortiz. She had a wide run around the final turn and finished a half-length behind. She looks like a strong closer with Irad Ortiz Jr. on the mount. Pletcher won in 2013 with Princess of Sylmar, a closer reminiscent of this filly, at 39-1.

4. SOUTHLAWN (8-1)

Trainer Norm Casse has found some success with fillies in stakes races. Southlawn won the Gr. 2 Fair Grounds Oaks and he also had winners with Super Quick in the Allaire DuPont Distaff Stakes at Pimlico last year on Preakness weekend and also a Gr. 3 Schuylerville Stakes win with Pretty Birdie in 2021. The son of Hall of Famer Mark Casse has a good speed horse here in the daughter of Pioneerof the Nile and Mo d'Amour. Pioneerof the Nile sired American Pharoah and Mo d'Amour ran in the 2016 Kentucky Oaks to a fifth-place finish at 30-1.

Fourteen of the last 16 fillies to win the Kentucky Oaks had won a graded stakes race previously and Southlawn fits the bill. She'll be a popular filly to win and also as a complement with Wet Paint in exotics.

(continued on next page)

WONDER WHEEL (12-1)

Mark Casse's lone entry draws the post just outside of his son's promising contender. Wonder Wheel, sired by Into Mischief, has gone O-for-2 since winning the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies at Keeneland last November. She was second in the Suncoast Stakes in Tampa and failed to hit the board last month in the Gr. 1 Ashland Stakes at Keeneland. That was with Tyler Gaffalione, but Casse will have Joel Rosario in the irons here. She was underwhelming in the Ashland and tried to make a push with a wide run on the final straightaway, but Gaffalione pulled her back. With the longer length here, it's a big ask to be in contention.

BOTANICAL (4-1)

The daughter of Medaglia d'Oro and Daisy has won four straight races by a combined 24 1/2 lengths, but she draws a much better field now and a fullfledged dirt track. Running out of Turfway Park, she started as a turf horse but moved to the synthetic surface to win the Cincinnati Trophy and the Bourbonette Oaks just three weeks apart. Chris Landeros was in the mount for both wins and assumes the position here as well. Botanical was the even-money favorite in the win in the Bourbonette and went wire-to-wire, but the surface and the potential weather are tricky elements of the handicap. She did run away from the field over the final furlong, which means the extra 1/8th mile may not bother her at all.

7. WET PAINT (5-2)
Godolphin owns a lot of winning horses and this could be another one to add to the list. The favorite is peaking at the right time off of a spectacular performance in the Gr. 3 Fantasy Stakes, which marked her third straight stakes win. She was the 3/5 favorite in the Fantasy and was 12 lengths back at the first quarter mile before winning running away. She swept all three filly stakes at Oaklawn, with wins in the Honeybee and also Martha Washington. The daughter of Breeders' Cup Classic winner Blame and stakes winner Sky Painter has run at 1 1/16 miles in each of the last three races and shown incredible speed late, so the distance upgrade should not be a problem. Trainer Brad Cox is also really good in this race.

8. PROMISEHER AMERICA (30-1)

Promiseher America was sired by American Pharoah, so we know she has the bloodline to win a big race. The Raymond Handal-trained filly came in at 26-1 in the Gazelle with a really strong run front-to-back and had just enough to hold off Gambling Girl's late charge. It was only her fourth race and her stakes debut. Her speed figures aren't on par with the top contenders in this race, but she's a late bloomer and she's one of the few in this race to have run at the 1 1/8-mile distance.

9. AND TELL ME NOLIES (15-1)

The daughter of Arrogate and Be Fair has regularly hit the board, finishing first or second in five of the last six races, with the lone miss being last year's Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies with a disappointing eighth-place finish. However, And Tell Me Nolies has finished second to Faiza in both the Santa Ysabel and the Santa Anita Oaks. She'll be back in bluegrass country for the first time since that trip to Keeneland last November after winning the Del Mar Debutante and Chandelier Stakes prior to facing off with the best two-year-old fillies in the nation. She was beaten badly by Faiza in both races and has topped out at 88 with her Equibase Speed Figure. The lowest winning mark in the last 20 years has been a 98.

10. FLYING CONNECTION (15-1)

It is interesting to see Florent Geroux on the mount for Flying Connection instead of one of the Brad Cox horses, given that Geroux and Cox teamed up in 2018 and 2020 for victories. Instead, he'll ride the Todd Fincher filly and daughter of Nyquist, who won the 2016 Kentucky Derby after winning the 2015 Breeders' Cup Juvenile. Her speed figures have gone up in each of the last three races and she's won four of the last five, including the Sunland Park Oaks back on Mar. 26, albeit over a weak field. She has only run one race over a mile and has a wider trip here with an outside post.

11. DEFINING PURPOSE (12-1)

Kenneth McPeek took this horse back to Kentucky after a couple of runs at Oaklawn Park that were won by Wet Paint. The move paid off, as Defining Purpose won the Ashland Stakes and came in at better than 20-1. She's a boom or bust horse for McPeek, who was second in 2020 at the Oaks with Swiss Skydiver, who then went on to win the Preakness Stakes. Her big run back at Keeneland was easily her top speed figure, but you wonder if she has it in her to level up again.

12. DORTH VADER (20-1)

Cashing at nearly 47-1 in the Davona Dale Stakes put Dorth Vader on the map, but she's a long shot for a reason in this one. Jockey Luis Saez is looking to be the first back-to-back winner in the Kentucky Oaks since legendary rider Eddie Arcaro won three straight from 1951-53. Saez won last year for D. Wayne Lukas aboard Secret Oath (6-1), but this horse doesn't have the same burst or closing speed. The only other really noteworthy win for Dorth Vader came at just six furlongs in the Sandpiper last December in Tampa.

13. AFFIRMATIVE LADY (10-1)

Sometimes all it takes is a change of scenery. Affirmative Lady went south for the spring and won back-to-back races at Gulfstream Park, including the Gr. 2 Gulfstream Park Oaks on April 1 at a 10-1 price. Saez had an excellent ride and, oddly enough, pulled away from Dorth Vader to win that race, but John Velazquez draws the mount here. Velazquez is elite in his own right and won on Malathaat in 2021 for Pletcher, but it is interesting to see Saez take Dorth Vader, while Velazquez returns to ride after running Affirmative Lady in all three races last year.

14 PRETTY MISCHIEVOUS (10-1)

Pretty Mischievous has hit the board in all six races, including a win in February in the Gr. 2 Rachel Alexandra Stakes. She couldn't keep pace with Southlawn during the final stretch of the Gr. 2 Fair Grounds Oaks, which undoubtedly lowered her perception here. The bloodline is good with Tapit-sired Pretty City Dancer and Into Mischief, who has certainly made a name for himself as a racehorse and as a sire. She has a long trip on the outside, but she's consistently run against good competition and has enough speed to be a factor.

ALTERNATES

If there are two defections from the race, Julia Shining might be a really interesting horse to throw into exotics or take as a long shot to win. She's kind of untested, but she's the sister of Malathaat with a sire you may have heard of named Curlin. She's a lightly-raced Todd Pletcher filly that was third in the Suncoast and the Ashland, but her pedigree is quite strong and Saez is expected to ride her if she gets in for the four-time Oaks winner Pletcher.

Botanical might be a last-minute call, as a wet and sloppy track feels like a huge downgrade to her chances. Wet Paint (7) and Southlawn (4) are the two I like the most, with a look at Pretty Mischievous (14) in exotics and as a longer shot to win. If the track holds up or the rain holds off, Botanical (6) should be included in exotics.

KENTUCKY DERBY HISTORY

ear	Winner	Time		fear	Winner	Time		Year	
22	Rich Strike	02:02.6	1	1972	Riva Ridge	02:01.8		1922	
21	Mandaloun	02:01.0	1	1971	Canonero II	02:03.2		1921	1921 Behave Yourself
20	Authentic	02:00.6	1	1970	Dust Commander	02:03.4		1920	1920 Paul Jones
19	Country House	02:03.9	sia 1	1969	Majestic Prince	02:01.8		1919	1919 Sir Barton
)18	Justify	02:04.2	1	1968	Forward Pass	02:02.2		1918	1918 Exterminator
017	Always Dreaming	02:03.6	1	1967	Proud Clarion	02:00.6		1917	1917 Omar Khayyam
016	Nyquist	02:01.3	1	1966	Kauai King	02:02.0		1916	1916 George Smith
015	American Pharoah	02:03.0		1965	Lucky Debonair	02:01.2		1915	
014	California Chrome	02:03.7		1964	Northern Dancer	02:00.0		1914	
2013	Orb	02:02.9		1963	Chateaugay	02:01.8		1913	
012	I'll Have Another	02:01.8		1962	Decidedly	02:00.4		1912	
		02:01.0		1961	Carry Back	02:04.0		1911	
011	Animal Kingdom							1910	
010	Super Saver	02:04.5		1960	Venetian Way	02:02.4			
009	Mine That Bird	02:02.7		1959	Tomy Lee	02:02.2		1909	
800	Big Brown	02:01.8		1958	Tim Tam	02:05.0		1908	
007	Street Sense	02:02.2		1957	Iron Liege	02:02.2		1907	
006	Barbaro	02:01.4		1956	Needles	02:03.4		1906	
005	Giacomo	02:02.8	· 1	1955	Swaps	02:01.8		1905	
2004	Smarty Jones	02:04.1	1	1954	Determine	02:03.0		1904	1904 Elwood
2003	Funny Cide	02:01.2	1	1953	Dark Star	02:02.0		1903	1903 Judge Himes
2002	War Emblem	02:01.1	1	1952	Hill Gail	02:01.6		1902	1902 Alan-a-Dale
2001	Monarchos	02:00.0	1	1951	Count Turf	02:02.6		1901	1901 His Eminence
2000	Fusaichi Pegasus	02:01.0	1	1950	Middleground	02:01.6		1900	1900 Lieut. Gibson
1999	Charismatic	02:03.2		1949	Ponder	02:04.2		1899	1899 Manuel
998	Real Quiet	02:02.2		1948	Citation	02:05.4		1898	1898 Plaudit
997	Silver Charm	02:02.4		1947	Jet Pilot	02:06.8		1897	
1996	Grindstone	02:01.0		1946	Assault	02:06.6		1896	
1995	Thunder Gulch			1945		02:07.0		1895	
		02:01.2			Hoop Jr.			1894	
994	Go for Gin	02:03.6		1944	Pensive	02:04.2			
993	Sea Hero	02:02.4		1943	Count Fleet	02:04.0		1893	
992	Lil E. Tee	02:03.0		1942	Shut Out	02:04.4		1892	
991	Strike the Gold	02:03.0		1941	Whirlaway	02:01.4		1891	
990	Unbridled	02:02.0	1	1940	Gallahadion	02:05.0		1890	•
989	Sunday Silence	02:05.0	1	1939	Johnstown	02:03.4		1889	1889 Spokane
988	Winning Colors	02:02.2	1	1938	Lawrin	02:04.8		1888	1888 Macbeth II
987	Alysheba	02:03.4	1	1937	War Admiral	02:03.2		1887	1887 Montrose
986	Ferdinand	02:02.8		1936	Bold Venture	02:03.6		1886	1886 Ben Ali
985	Spend A Buck	02:00.2		1935	Omaha	02:05.0		1885	
1984	Swale	02:02.4		1934	Cavalcade	02:04.0		1884	
1983	Sunny's Halo	02:02.2		1933	Brokers Tip	02:06.8		1883	
1982	Gato Del Sol	02:02.4		1932	Burgoo King	02:05.2		1882	
								1881	·
981	Pleasant Colony	02:02.0		1931	Twenty Grand	02:01.8		1880	
1980	Genuine Risk	02:02.0		1930	Gallant Fox	02:07.6			
979	Spectacular Bid	02:02.4		1929	Clyde Van Dusen	02:10.8		1879	
978	Affirmed	02:01.2		1928	Reigh Count	02:10.4		1878	•
1977	Seattle Slew	02:02.2		1927	Whiskery	02:06.0		1877	
1976	Bold Forbes	02:01.6	1	1926	Bubbling Over	02:03.8		1876	•
1975	Foolish Pleasure	02:02.0	1	1925	Flying Ebony	02:07.6		1875	1875 Aristides
1974	Cannonade	02:04.0	1	1924	Black Gold	02:05.2			
1973	Secretariat	01:59.4	1	1923	Zev	02:05.4			

Derby was run at 1 1/2 miles from 1875-1895. In 1896, the distance was changed to what it is today, 1 1/4 miles.