

VSIN PRO

KENTUCKY DERBY

BETTING GUIDE

PRO EDITION

SMELLS LIKE ROSES

TIPS & STRATEGIES FOR BETTING CHURCHILL DOWNS

OUR PRO GUIDE INCLUDES

- HOW TO BET ON HORSE RACING
- BEST BETS FROM TOP HORSE EXPERTS
- PREVIEWS OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY AND KENTUCKY OAKS

VSIN

Greetings, everyone!

The most exciting two minutes in sports is nearly upon us, as the Kentucky Derby is on Saturday, May 3. We've gotten together horse racing experts, analysts, and handicappers from VSIN and 1/ST BET to assist with our 2025 Kentucky Derby Betting Guide.



The Run For The Roses is the start of the Triple Crown, but it is hardly the start of our horse racing coverage and it surely won't be the end. Our friends at 1/ST BET and our in-house friends Mike Somich, Dave Tuley and Ed Sehon write about the ponies and Mike is joined by Aaron Halterman on our VSIN At The Track podcast. Speaking of which, we'll have a YouTube livestream of VSIN At The Track on Friday beginning at 2:10 p.m. ET and then have a Saturday live show from 4-8 p.m. ET on our VSIN broadcast channel.

You can find VSIN on SiriusXM Channel 158, on the [VSIN Watch App](#), on YouTube TV as part of the Sports+ package, on our YouTube page, on radio affiliates and regional sports networks across the country, wherever you get your podcast content, and through VSIN.com.

In this Guide, you can find:

- Expert picks for the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks from Somich, Halterman, Tuley, Sehon, and 1/ST BET contributors Jeremy Plonk and Millie Ball
- Tips for How To Bet On Horse Racing
- A full Kentucky Oaks preview from Adam Burke
- Kentucky Derby horse profiles from Ed Sehon
- A pace and post position report for the Derby from Mike Somich

Be sure to share our May subscription offer with your friends, colleagues, family, acquaintances, and anybody else who believes in the value of getting a good deal. Right now, you can get 14 months of a VSIN Pro subscription for the price of 12 AND get a special price of \$199, a \$41 savings off the annual price, plus two months for free!

Thank you for your support of VSIN and good luck with your plays on the ponies this weekend!

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KENTUCKY DERBY PROGRAMMING

FRIDAY - 2:10 P.M. ET
VSIN At The Track (YouTube stream)

SATURDAY - 4-8 P.M. ET
VSIN At The Track (broadcast stream;
simulcast on Mad Dog Radio SiriusXM Ch. 82)

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ALL ODDS AND ENTRIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

VSIN EXPERT KENTUCKY DERBY

BEST BETS

DAVE TULEY

The Kentucky Derby, which is limited to 3-year-old race horses, is as much of an American rite of spring as the start of the baseball season and the Masters.

This is the 151st Run for the Roses has traditionally been run on the first Saturday in May, but that hasn't always been the case. The inaugural Derby was run in 1875 on May 17 (the third Saturday in May) and was mostly run on the second or third Saturday of the month (with the notable exception of the fourth Saturday in April on April 29, 1901) for more than 50 years. 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).

It's probably obvious, but the top contenders are generally considered to be the winners of the major prep races that have been run this spring. However, the favorite has failed to win the last six Derbys since Justify in 2018.

For the purposes of this VSIN Betting Guide, I'm going to break down the horses I'm considering into the most likely winner (for those who like to bet the favorites or top contenders and who aren't as adverse to chalk like yours truly), then the top value plays I'm considering at this guide's deadline earlier this week. Later in the week, I'll return to VSIN.com with my final "takes" on the Derby with expanded analysis and more exotic tickets as we try to blow up the tote board at Churchill Downs.

MOST LIKELY WINNER

#8 JOURNALISM (3-1 MORNING LINE)

The well-bred son of Curlin is certainly a deserving morning-line favorite with four straight wins, including three graded stakes in California topped off by his even-money victory in the Grade 1 Santa Anita Derby. I kind of have a rooting interest for him, as I've long considered myself an old-school journalist first/handicapper second in the horse racing/sports betting space. My "dog or pass" philosophy precludes me from betting him straight, but I will be using Journalism in my exotic wagers as I can't dismiss him despite the huge 20-horse field. He also has a great draw in the No. 8 hole that suits his off-the-pace running style and should help him avoid traffic problems, though you never know (again, see the last six years' results). The only other colts under 10-1 on the morning line are #18 Sovereignty (5-1) and #17 Sandman (6-1), but they'll be on much fewer of my tickets.

LONGSHOTS TO CONSIDER

#3 FINAL GAMBIT (30-1)

Last year, my early-week Derby choice was Dornoch. I loved him at 15-1, even though he was breaking from the rail. He ran into early trouble and finished 10th. I still believe I had the right colt, but just in the wrong race as he came back five weeks later and vindicated us with an upset win at 17-1. This year, I don't have any one 3-year-old that stands out, but several live long shots that I'm still deciding how I'm going to bet them. Our first price play - and with a 20-horse field I certainly think we can break our rule of betting just one horse to Win as it's helped us cash some nice tickets over the years, including (War Emblem and Giacomo - even when our top choice didn't fire is Final Gambit. He will be able to drop back well off what should be a torrid pace and save ground all the way around the Churchill track to set up his late drive down the stretch. Look at his victory in his last race in the Jeff Ruby Steaks at Turfway Park at 15-1 when he came from 11th place to win by three and a half lengths.

#14 TIZTASTIC (20-1)

This is another deep closer ridden by jockey Joel Rosario that started ninth of 10 in the Louisiana Derby but came out strong to win by two and a quarter lengths. He has been inconsistent, but of course it only matters for these Derby hopefuls and their connections how they show up on the first Saturday in May. Not many of these colts have a win at Churchill Downs (Sovereignty being a notable exception in the Grade 3 Street Sense last October), but at least Tiztastic has a second and a third in graded stakes last October and November, so we're hoping that keeps him from being one those who doesn't like the track.

#21 BAEZA (12-1)

If you're reading in the middle of the week, don't sleep on the "also-eligible" horse, #21 Baeza (who must have another scratch from the race for him to draw in), like nearly everyone did three years ago in 2022 when #21 Rich Strike shocked the world at 80-1. Baeza didn't earn enough points in prep races to make the 20-horse field, but is a late-developing colt that didn't race until December and took three races to break his maiden. However, his lone stakes race was a runner-up finish to Journalism in the Santa Anita Derby, only losing by three-quarters of a length, so he certainly has the right to take another big step forward. If Baeza does get in the starting gate, he won't be discarded as much as Rich Strike was, as evidenced by the morning-line maker putting 12-1 odds on him (but there will still be a lot of people who will still be clueless).

See you at VSIN.com with our updated "takes" later in the week, both for Oaks Day on Friday and of course Derby Day on Saturday when I finalize my top value play and other wagers. Happy Handicapping!

ED SEHON

I cannot recall a year with so many legitimate win candidates. I narrowed my top selections to these six for my column on Saturday: East Avenue, Publisher, Burnham Square, Journalism, Tappan Street (subsequently scratched) and Citizen Bull.

After further consideration, I reduced my number of win candidates to three. It was easy to include BURNHAM SQUARE among my top ones. His come-from-behind victory in the Blue Grass at Keeneland last month was excellent, convincing me he can handle the added Derby distance.

According to Beyer Speed Figures (BSF), every time he runs, he runs faster. I'm impressed. There's nothing difficult about including morning line favorite JOURNALISM among my top selections. Riding a four-race win streak vs. the best of the West, he also sports impressive BSF. If he had earned those credentials against tougher East Coast competitors, he'd be at the top of my list. There's nothing tough about a recovering journalist and hunch-playing grinder picking him.

My choice to win the Kentucky Derby is longshot EAST AVENUE, who appears to be sitting on the best effort of his brief lifetime. The 22-point leap in his BSF from the Risen Star to his Place finish in the Blue Grass especially caught my eye. In addition, he comes from the red-hot Brendan Walsh barn, which enjoyed an excellent recently-concluded Keeneland meet and is off to a fast start at Churchill. Finally, over the past few years, I've come to believe that East Avenue's rider, Manny Franco, is one of the finest and least-appreciated jockeys in the game. Mr. Ed's putting his money on the continually improving horse, hot barn and sharp jockey.

TOP 3

EAST AVENUE (20-1)
JOURNALISM (3-1)
BURNHAM SQUARE (12-1)

AARON HALTERMAN

TOP 4

#8 Journalism
#14 Tiztastic
#17 Sandman
#18 Sovereignty

Journalism has been number one on my list for several months now, and he's given me no reason to doubt him heading into the race. His Santa Anita Derby effort was great, and he seems to be a horse that will only get better as the distances get longer. He also drew a perfect post position for this one, which is very important in this race, especially when you are coming from off the pace.

Tiztastic is the long shot I like best in this year's running of the Kentucky Derby. He showed he can weave through traffic last time when taking home the Louisiana Derby, which is important for a horse that will be coming from behind. The horse also loved stretching out in distance last time out, which was no surprise, since he has a pedigree that suggests he can run all day long.

Sandman has a ton of raw ability, but has been a bit immature throughout his career. He finally put it together last time out with a nice Arkansas Derby victory, and is another horse that should love running longer today. However, I'm a tad concerned that this massive field size, and rowdy Churchill Downs crowd, might throw him off his game.

Sovereignty was disappointing in the Florida Derby, but I still believe he has a shot at running an improved race today, mainly because of trainer Bill Mott. He has a knack for getting his horses ready to run their best on the biggest day, so look for this one to be ready to roll once they hit the top of the stretch.

JEREMY PLONK (1/ST BET)

My dear friend and late NBC Sports reporter Bob Neumeier often reminded us that the Kentucky Derby can cause paralysis by analysis. Neumy knew that overthinking America's most important horse race was as dangerous as being unprepared.

My experience handicapping this race professionally for more than 30 years boils down to two scenarios. One, the best horse wins. Or two, the pace (tempo) of the race melts down and it becomes a late-running mad scrum with a winner hardly anyone saw coming.

Upsets almost never happen with front-running longshots, and pace meltdowns rarely are won by horses at low or mid-range odds. Do you trust the best horses in Kentucky Derby 151 this Saturday? Those would appear to be Journalism, the Santa Anita Derby winner, and Sovereignty, the Florida Derby runner-up. If the answer is no, advance to the wild longshots line. If yes, we're in the same camp this year.

Journalism stands out off four straight victories over three different tracks in California. He's been as good at Santa Anita as Del Mar and Los Alamitos and should handle the surface at Churchill Downs. He's trained well since arriving. His late pace figures are the best in the field, and he's not having to fire from

the clouds. Journalism's midpack style and finishing ability should see him already in lead contention around the far turn. Sovereignty should be rallying from farther back and could find more traffic to navigate. But he's a strong contender with a clean trip.

I'd never recommend win bets at shorter odds in the Kentucky Derby. Too many things can go wrong to take single-digit odds. The beauty of the Derby gambling is the trifectas and superfectas, where the 20-horse field and parimutuel betting system create massive payoffs due to the number of potential combinations. The losing tickets pay the winners in this game, and we hope to be on the winning end by keying Journalism in the top spot in the exotic wagers. Mix in Sovereignty, the Japanese runners Luxor Café and Admire Daytona, as well as the deep-closing longshot Final Gambit in the remaining spots of the trifectas and superfectas.

DERBY SELECTIONS

Journalism
Luxor Café
Sovereignty
Final Gambit

As for Friday's Kentucky Oaks, there's no major knock on the favorite Good Cheer as she eyes a seventh straight victory. But the pace doesn't look overly fast and front-running duties should be shared by Simply Joking and La Cara. Work in at least one of those speeds on top of the exacta, mingling with the favorite Good Cheer and the late-running Ballerina d'Oro.

OAKS SELECTIONS

Simply Joking
La Cara
Good Cheer
Ballerina d'Oro

MILLIE BALL (1/ST BET)

I think we're going to have a wickedly fast pace this year with as many as six horses jostling early for the lead position. I've narrowed it down to four horses based on the pace we expect and those that can handle the mile and one-quarter distance. Rodriguez is the only early speed horse that I'll include, thanks in part to veteran jockey Mike Smith.

Luxor Cafe has the right pedigree from Japan and he's got the ability. Journalism has done absolutely nothing wrong and I loved his workout at Churchill Downs. His connections, jockey Umberto Rispoli and trainer Michael McCarthy, are light on Kentucky Derby experience if you're looking for any potential flaw.

Sovereignty is a sharper horse going into the Kentucky Derby than he was going into his second-place finish in the Florida Derby. Hall of Fame trainer Bill Mott backed off on his training a bit since he had already qualified for the Kentucky Derby on points. He will be finishing strongest of all and is my top pick. I'll box these four in the exactas.

DERBY SELECTIONS

Sovereignty
Luxor Cafe
Journalism
Rodriguez (*Fri. scratch*)

HOW TO BET HORSE RACING

by Adam Burke

Betting on horse racing can be intimidating for those without a background in the sport, but we're here to help with a comprehensive guide on how to bet on horse racing.

In this general overview, we will discuss popular horse racing bets and terms, as well as some of the statistics, characteristics, and attributes of the horses, trainers, and jockeys that you will want to analyze before placing your wagers.

UNDERSTANDING PARI-MUTUEL BETTING

Before diving into the types of bets you can place, it's crucial to grasp the concept of pari-mutuel betting, which is the foundation of most horse racing betting in the United States. In pari-mutuel betting, you're wagering against other bettors instead of against the track or casino. The odds in horse racing are only finalized once all bets are placed. The track takes out its hold percentage, and the remaining payoffs are returned to the winners. Futures, such as those for the Kentucky Derby or Breeders' Cup, are handled similarly to sports futures.

POPULAR HORSE RACING BETS EXPLAINED

When it comes to horse racing, there are several types of bets you can place. Let's break down the most common wagers into two categories: single-race wagers and multiple-race wagers.

SINGLE-RACE WAGERS

Win

Your horse must win the race.

Place

Your horse must finish first or second.

Show

Your horse must finish first, second, or third.

Across the board

You make three separate bets to win, place, or show. These are more commonly referred to as "Win, Place, and Show" bets or "WPS" bets.

Exacta

Pick two horses that finish first and second in the exact order (unless "boxed" or "keyed" – see below).

Trifecta

Pick three horses that finish first, second, and third in the exact order (can be boxed or keyed).

Superfecta

Pick the top four finishers in order (can be boxed or keyed).

Hi 5 (or Super 5)

Pick the top five finishers in order (can be boxed or keyed).

Boxed and keyed are terms used in horse racing betting to describe specific ways to place exotic wagers. These terms refer to the flexibility bettors have when making exacta, trifecta, superfecta, and other multi-horse bets. Let's take a closer look at what "boxed" and "keyed" mean.

BOXED

A boxed bet allows you to cover multiple possible finishing orders for the selected horses. When you "box" your wager, you're betting that your chosen horses will finish in the top positions, but the exact order doesn't matter. This increases your chances of winning but also increases the cost of the bet, as you're essentially placing multiple bets.

For example, if you want to place a boxed exacta bet on horses 3 and 5, you're betting that both horse 3 and horse 5 will finish in the top two positions, regardless of the order. So, you win the bet if horse 3 wins and horse 5 places or if horse 5 wins and horse 3 places. In this case, you're placing two bets: one for the 3-5 order and one for the 5-3 order.

KEYED

A keyed bet is a variation of an exotic wager that involves selecting one "key" horse to finish in a specific position, while other selected horses can finish in any order behind the key horse. This type of bet allows you to focus on one strong contender while still having the flexibility of including multiple horses for the remaining positions.

For example, if you want to place a keyed trifecta bet with horse 4 as your key horse to win, and horses 2 and 6 to place and show, you're betting that horse 4 will win, while horses 2 and 6 can finish in either second or third place. In this case, you're placing two bets: one for the 4-2-6 order and one for the 4-6-2 order.

In summary, boxed and keyed bets offer bettors more flexibility and options when placing exotic wagers. A boxed bet allows you to cover multiple finishing orders for your selected horses, while a keyed bet involves choosing one key horse to finish in a specific position, with other selected horses finishing in any order behind the key horse. Both boxed and keyed bets increase the cost of the wager but also improve your chances of winning by covering multiple possible outcomes.

MULTIPLE-RACE WAGERS

Daily Double

Pick winners in two consecutive races.

Pick 3 (or triple)

Pick the winners of three consecutive races.

Pick 4

Pick the winners of four consecutive races.

Pick 6

Pick the winners of six consecutive races. This is a challenging bet to win, and if no tickets have all six winners, the jackpot carries over to the next day.

The racetrack will determine which races are part of these multiple-race wagers.

BETTING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

If you're new to horse racing, start by betting to win or placing show bets, as the payoffs are typically lower, but so is the cost. Exotic wagers can have higher takeouts, making them more challenging for beginners. Focus on mastering the art of picking a single winner before trying to string together multiple winners in various races.

HOW TO HANDICAP HORSE RACES

Handicapping is the process of analyzing the past performances of horses to predict their chances of winning a race. It can be a complex and time-consuming task, but here are a few tips to help you get started:

Consider Post Positions

The post position is where the horse is slotted in the starting gate. Some racetracks may have a bias towards running on the inside at the rail or in the middle of the track depending on the conditions and the distance.

Horses starting from outside post positions may have to run a little bit longer of a race if they can't get to the inside because of traffic or a slow start, while horses at the rail can run the shortest distance possible.

Identify the Top Closers and Pace Setters

Horses have different profiles and skill sets. Some are going to run out early and set the pace. Others are "closers", meaning they will often stalk the horses at the front of the race and wait patiently for the chance to finish strong. Based on the length of the race, you may want to side with pace setters in shorter races and closers in others.

Consider Bloodlines and Connections

A horse's parents (sire - male; mare/dam - female) and the others in the bloodline may shed some light on how a horse will perform. Genetics are very important when it comes to horse racing. Some horses may be the offspring of parents that had success on dirt or turf, or had success in long-distance races or short sprints. That can be a factor in how a horse performs in a given race.

"Connections" include the jockey, trainer, owner(s), and others involved in the evolution of a race horse. Some jockeys and trainers will have success at certain tracks or in certain types of races and those are important handicapping angles.

Study the Past Performances

Familiarize yourself with the horses' racing history, including their recent races, workouts, and trainer and jockey statistics. Look for patterns or trends that could impact the outcome of the race.

Utilize Expert Opinions

Follow expert handicappers, read race analysis, and watch pre-race shows to gain insights into the race and potential contenders.

Monitor Track Conditions

The condition of the track can greatly affect a horse's performance. Keep an eye on the weather and any changes to the track surface, as certain horses may perform better under specific conditions.

Manage Your Bankroll

Set a budget for your bets and stick to it. Avoid chasing losses or increasing your bets after a win, as this could lead to larger losses in the long run.

As you gain experience in handicapping and betting on horse races, you'll develop your strategies and preferences. Remember that no system is foolproof, and even the most seasoned handicappers can experience losing streaks. Stay disciplined, continue learning, and most importantly, have fun while betting on the races.

ADDITIONAL HORSE RACING TERMS TO KNOW

As you become more familiar with horse racing betting, it's helpful to understand some key terms that are commonly used in the sport. Here's a brief glossary to help you navigate the world of horse racing:

Blinkers

A type of headgear worn by horses to limit their peripheral vision, helping them to focus and avoid distractions.

Claiming Race

A race in which all horses entered are available for purchase at a predetermined price. Claiming races are a way to categorize horses based on their abilities, so they compete against similarly skilled opponents.

Furlong

A unit of distance used in horse racing, equivalent to one-eighth of a mile or 220 yards.

Gate

The starting mechanism used in horse racing, also known as the starting gate, where horses are loaded into individual stalls before the race begins.

Handicap Race

A race in which horses carry different weights based on their ability, as determined by a racing official, in an effort to equalize their chances of winning.

In the money

A horse that finishes in the top three positions (win, place, or show) in a race.

Jockey

The professional rider who steers the horse during a race.

Maiden

A horse that has never won a race.

Post Position

The numbered position from which a horse starts the race, assigned randomly or through a draw.

Purse

The total prize money awarded in a race, distributed to the owners of the winning, placing, and showing horses.

Stakes Race

A high-level race, often featuring large purses and top-quality horses, in which owners pay entry fees to participate.

Turf Course

A grass racing surface, as opposed to dirt or synthetic tracks.

Workout

A practice run by a horse, usually at a specific distance and under timed conditions, to prepare for an upcoming race.

Remember, the key to success in horse racing betting is to keep learning, stay disciplined, and have fun. As you gain experience, you'll develop your skills and preferences, becoming more adept at handicapping and wagering. With patience, practice, and a little bit of luck, you'll soon find yourself savoring the thrill of the races and celebrating your victories. Good luck, and happy betting!

PREVIEWING THE 2025 KENTUCKY OAKS

by Adam Burke

On a flower-filled weekend at Churchill Downs, everybody's focus is usually on the Run For The Roses, but how about the Lilies For The Fillies? Saturday's Kentucky Derby is the unquestioned main event in Louisville, but Friday's Kentucky Oaks brings together the top 3-year-old females for a 1 1/16-mile run under the twin spires.

Post time is set for 5:51 p.m. ET on May 2 and there are 14 horses currently slated for the starting gate. As is often the case in Louisville in the spring, weather is a consideration and we could have a muddy track with rain expected throughout the week and a decent chance into Friday, so be sure to check the latest on the surface and the precipitation forecast.

Two-time Oaks winner Brad Cox will look for his third win in this race since 2018 with the favorite, Good Cheer. Florent Geroux is usually Cox's go-to jockey, but Luis Saez draws the mount on the 6/5 price here. With such a short favorite, the next best prices on the morning line early in the week were 6-1 on La Cara and 8-1 on Quietside.

Good Cheer is unbeaten in six races and therefore a very deserving favorite, but we will see if an extra 1/16 of a mile is problematic for her, as she's run at 1 1/16 miles five times and one mile once. She's already won twice at Churchill Downs in the Rags to Riches Stakes and the Golden Rod. Her mom, Wedding Toast, was a six-time stakes winner and her dad, Medaglia d'Oro, was a stakes winner himself and has plenty more accomplished offspring out there.

The best of the rest, at least on paper and on the odds board, are La Cara and Quietside. La Cara for rapidly-rising jock Dylan Davis, who is just 30 years old, but has well over 1,500 career wins, and Mark Casse won the Grade 1 Ashland Stakes down the road in Lexington at Keeneland and checks a lot of boxes as a strong contender. So does Quietside, who ran second to Good Cheer in the Golden Rod and has won the Fantasy and Honeybee stakes in her last two starts with Jose Ortiz in the irons.

There are some compelling reasons to go outside the three single-digit prices. I think Ballerina d'Oro has a chance to take some money this week after winning the Grade 3 Gazelle by half a head. She was clearly the best horse, but got distracted and basically pulled up on the final stretch, only to get going again for the win. Flavien Prat gets the ride here for Chad Brown and this horse is extremely well-bred, which often draws some dollars.

Tenma for Bob Baffert, who returns to Churchill Downs for Derby weekend for the first time since being suspended after the positive test for Medina Spirit, is a horse I am strongly considering. California shippers typically don't do well here, but Baffert's had two winners from Cali with Abel Tasman and Plum Pretty over the last 15 years and this is the one that he has in this field with five wins in six tries to her name.

Take Charge Milady is another one in that price range that will get some love because of the Kenny McPeck/Brian Hernandez connection that worked so well last year with Thorpedo Anna and Mystik Dan. Hernandez had the ride in the Ashland last time out and it was a pretty good showing. She had the chance to maybe run down La Cara had the race been longer...just like the distance for this one.

The most interesting long shot is undoubtedly Bless the Broken from the far outside post. Her last race came on the synthetic surface at Turfway Park, but she ran in the mud earlier this year if the Oaks track is sloppy. She's 3-for-3 in hitting the board and is arguably the best closer in the field in a long race where the sprint to the front could tire some horses out.

Good Cheer won't pay much for a win, but she's going to hit the board barring a disaster, so the play here is to either include her in exotics or key her in exotics. I like her keyed with Quietside, who has truly unlocked her potential with Jose Ortiz as the rider. Tenma, Bless the Broken, and Ballerina d'Oro are all horses I think could slot third or fourth at decent prices to fill out trifectas and superfectas.

PICKS FOR THE 2025 KENTUCKY OAKS

11 Good Cheer
14 Quietside
9 Tenma
13 Bless the Broken

KENTUCKY OAKS FIELD

POST	HORSE	TRAINER	JOCKEY	ODDS
1	Early On	E. Zayas	S. Joseph Jr.	30-1
2	Simply Joking	F. Geroux	W. Beckman	10-1
3	Fondly	I. Ortiz Jr.	H.G. Motion	20-1
4	Drexel Hill	B. Curtis	W. Beckman	30-1
5	Quickkick	U. Rispoli	T. Amoss	30-1
6	Ballerina d'Oro	F. Prat	C. Brown	10-1
7	La Cara	D. Davis	M. Casse	6-1
8	Five G	M. Franco	G. Weaver	SCR
9	Tenma	J. J. Hernandez	B. Baffert	12-1
10	Take Charge Milady	B. Hernandez	K. McPeck	12-1
11	Good Cheer	L. Saez	B. Cox	6/5
12	Anna's Promise	J. Alvarado	C. David	30-1
13	Bless the Broken	J. Velazquez	W. Walden	30-1
14	Quietside	J. Ortiz	J.A. Ortiz	8-1

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

DERBY DRAW

BREAKDOWN

by Mike Somich

Each year, the post position draw for the Kentucky Derby garners more attention than any other race and it is fitting. We will not see 20 horses break from the gate again until the Run For The Roses next year and where you are positioned can make or break a race. Before we jump into the winners and losers, let's take a look at the past results for each post.

One caveat to these numbers, the inside posts (1-4) amassed most of their numbers before we saw a full 20-horse field. The worst post is the #1; we have not seen a winner there in 28 years and it's been close to a decade since a horse has finished in the top 3. Two anomalies are the 6 and 17 posts. Being between #5 and #10 is widely considered to be the best starting position. The #6's 2%-win rate has more to do with the horses who have broken from that gate than the post. The dreaded #17 is still looking for its first win. While it is not a good post, I would argue it has yet to produce a winner due to variance rather than it being a death trap.

WHO LOST THE DRAW?

The speed, all the speed! In what was expected to be a pace-less Derby just six weeks ago, now we are almost guaranteed to have quick early fractions due to the additions of Owen Almighty and East Avenue. Then American Promise blitzed a lightning-fast workout tipping his hand. He wanted the front and then this draw happened. When you are speed on the inside or the outside, you must break with your hair on fire to go and get the lead if you want any chance of clearing the field.

The first thing I noticed when the draw was finished was where the speed was positioned. The #1 Citizen Bull, #2 Neoquos, #5 American Promise and #20 Owen Almighty all need to blast out of the gate to get in the position they want. Add to that you have #12 East Avenue in the middle of the pack, ensuring you have speed from all three levels (inside, middle and outside), and this sets up to be an extremely fast pace. #4 Rodriguez, stablemate of Citizen Bull, exiting the Derby on Thursday may lighten the load on the pace, but it is doubtful without more defections.

Due to the abundance of speed, and now the draw, I am tossing all of these horses from my pool of possible winners. It would take a herculean-like effort to be able to clear this field and hold off the closers to win. One of them may stay on to hit the Superfecta, and we saw Two Phils do this in 2023 while being close to a fast pace, but even that is a big ask.

WHO WON THE BREAK?

It almost seems unfair, but the clear winner was the favorite, Journalism. Not only does he get one of the most desired post positions on race day, he also has a clear trip advantage based on who is around him. There are four

likely speed players to his inside and closers all around him. That means he should be able to get over toward the rail while being mid-pack during the early stages of the race. The biggest question mark with him will be field size, as he has only faced more than four other horses once in his career, but this draw essentially shortens the number of horses that could bother him during the race. There will be 6-7 horses in front of him, but with the majority of the horses behind him, and his ability to pick his route to the wire first, it's not nearly as daunting as it could have been if he drew to the inside or outside.

OTHER WINNERS

The obvious answer is the deep closers. With a hot pace, they have a better chance of the field coming back to them while they are hitting their best strides. Of this group, two horses stood out to me.


#14 Tiztastic drew well to simply drop back and make a run. We saw in the Louisiana Derby his ability to fall back and fly home to a victory, but what stood out to me was his athleticism in doing so. He weaved in and out of horses while being able to change gears easily and not get himself blocked. That's a valuable skill when coming from the back of 20 horses. Mage won this race by beating horses to holes two years ago and Tiztastic has similar attributes.

#18 Sovereignty also is set up well to succeed coming from the back of the pack. The wide draw hurts him less than a stalking type and we have seen him devour ground last over this Churchill Downs track before.

I wanted to call out #10 Grande as well, but unfortunately, he was scratched on Friday morning.

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KENTUCKY DERBY HORSE PROFILES

Longtime horse racing handicapper Mr. Ed Sehon has been studying the ponies since 1962. Here are his thoughts and some stats for the 2025 Kentucky Derby entries.



1 CITIZEN BULL 20-1

RECORD: 6-4-0-1
TRAINER: Bob Baffert
JOCKEY: Martin Garcia
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 98
EARNINGS: \$1,451,000

MR. ED: Inner-most post might bury Baffert's best. If he gets to the front early, he might be there late. On my Exacta ticket, despite the rail post.

2 NEOEQUOS 30-1

RECORD: 7-2-2-2
TRAINER: Saffie Joseph, Jr.
JOCKEY: Flavien Prat
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 91
EARNINGS: \$291,050

MR. ED: Another speedball who may be compromised by the inside post. Dull record doesn't excite. Bet at your own risk.

3 FINAL GAMBIT 30-1

RECORD: 4-2-1-1
TRAINER: Brad Cox
JOCKEY: Luan Machado
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 90
EARNINGS: \$520,639

MR. ED: Big fan of Brad Cox. I'm crushed by Tappan Street's unfortunate injury. A recent win at Turfway doesn't impress.. Pass.

4 RODRIGUEZ (SCRATCHED)

RECORD: 5-2-2-1
TRAINER: Bob Baffert
JOCKEY: Mike Smith
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 101
EARNINGS: \$522,800

MR. ED: Cagey coupling of HOFers Baffert and Smith. Bred to go the distance. Wood Memorial score was impressive. Tough inside assignment, don't dismiss.

5 AMERICAN PROMISE 30-1

RECORD: 9-2-1-1
TRAINER: D. Wayne Lukas
JOCKEY: Nik Juarez
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 95
EARNINGS: \$444,874

MR. ED: Not on my dance card. The "Coach" has been here and done this, but this colt is no Charismatic. Not today.

RECORD: X-X-X-X represents Starts-Win-Place-Show
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: Calculated based on final time and distance of a race, adjusted by the inherent speed of the track. Top horses will have values in the 100s.

6 ADMIRE DAYTONA 30-1

RECORD: 6-2-2-0
TRAINER: Yukihiro Kato
JOCKEY: Christophe Lemarie
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: -
EARNINGS: \$672,047

MR. ED: Too busy handicapping those who have a chance. I like Daytona Speedway, but not this guy.

7 LUXOR CAFE 15-1

RECORD: 6-4-1-0
TRAINER: Noriyuki Hori
JOCKEY: Joao Moreira
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: -
EARNINGS: \$379,057

MR. ED: A Japanese racer will eventually win the Derby, just not this year. Riding an impressive four-win streak, but not against the class he faces here.

8 JOURNALISM 3-1

RECORD: 5-4-0-1
TRAINER: Michael McCarthy
JOCKEY: Umberto Rispoli
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 108
EARNINGS: \$638,880

MR. ED: If speed figures won Derbys, there would be many more West Coast winners. Inside post compromises chances. Undefeated since debut loss. Perfect work early Sunday attests to readiness.

9 BURNHAM SQUARE 12-1

RECORD: 6-3-1-1
TRAINER: Ian Wilkes
JOCKEY: Brian Hernandez, Jr.
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 96
EARNINGS: \$977,755

MR. ED: He's way over-priced at 12-1. The mid-gate draw should benefit late-running style. I was on him for his Holy Bull win, off him for Blue Grass. I'm back on him today. One of my top plays.

10 GRANDE (SCRATCHED)

RECORD: 3-2-1-0
TRAINER: Todd Pletcher
JOCKEY: Johnny Velazquez
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 97
EARNINGS: \$228,200

MR. ED: Short on seasoning with only three trips to the post for the Repole gang. HOF trainer. HOF rider. Not expecting Grande HOF result. Pass.

RECORD: X-X-X-X represents Starts-Win-Place-Show
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: Calculated based on final time and distance of a race, adjusted by the inherent speed of the track. Top horses will have values in the 100s.

11 FLYING MOHAWK 30-1

RECORD: 6-2-2-0
TRAINER: Whitworth Beckman
JOCKEY: Joseph Ramos
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 84
EARNINGS: \$295,800

MR. ED: This is my favorite longshot. Everything is improving; trainer impresses me. Speed figure points to a possible in-the-money finish.

12 EAST AVENUE 20-1

RECORD: 5-2-1-0
TRAINER: Brendan Walsh
JOCKEY: Manny Franco
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 96
EARNINGS: \$654,395

MR. ED: Walsh had an excellent Keeneland meet; Franco is a top NY jockey. Recent work after an impressive Blue Grass effort says he's ready. When all is said and run, look for him in the Winner's Circle.

13 PUBLISHER 20-1

RECORD: 7-M-2-3
TRAINER: Steve Asmussen
JOCKEY: Irad Ortiz, Jr.
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 95
EARNINGS: \$407,756

MR. ED: Never count all-time wins leader Asmussen out. Colt, son of Derby winner American Pharoah, is improving with every race as a 3YO. I like the maiden's in-the-money chances.

14 TIZTASTIC 20-1

RECORD: 8-3-1-2
TRAINER: Steve Asmussen
JOCKEY: Joel Rosario
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 95
EARNINGS: \$1,549,800

MR. ED: Asmussen's other entry sports win and sharp Beyer in the Louisiana Derby. Regression is expected here. No chance.

15 RENDER JUDGMENT 30-1

RECORD: 7-1-2-1
TRAINER: Kenny McPeck
JOCKEY: Julien Leparoux
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 90
EARNINGS: \$250,672

MR. ED: Not sure what this slowpoke is doing here. Not this year, Kenny.

RECORD: X-X-X-X represents Starts-Win-Place-Show
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: Calculated based on final time and distance of a race, adjusted by the inherent speed of the track. Top horses will have values in the 100s.

16 COAL BATTLE 30-1

RECORD: 8-5-0-1
TRAINER: Lonnie Briley
JOCKEY: Juan Vargas
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 91
EARNINGS: \$1,188,875

MR. ED: Don't know much about the horse or connections. He's bagged a bunch of money while winning five of eight against nobodies. Pass.

17 SANDMAN 6-1

RECORD: 8-3-1-2
TRAINER: Mark Casse
JOCKEY: Jose Ortiz
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 99
EARNINGS: \$1,254,595

MR. ED: Expect Casse's charge will be over-bet. Despite an excellent record, he puts me to sleep. Can't recommend a win wager.

18 SOVEREIGNTY 5-1

RECORD: 5-2-2-0
TRAINER: Bill Mott
JOCKEY: Junior Alvarado
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 95
EARNINGS: \$572,800

MR. ED: Improving efforts put him on my short list, replacing Tappan Street. Mott-Alvarado team is a proven winner. Outside post suits the closing style.

19 CHUNK OF GOLD 30-1

RECORD: 4-1-3-0
TRAINER: Ethan West
JOCKEY: Jareth Loveberry
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 92
EARNINGS: \$348,818

MR. ED: Another lesser-known, lightly raced contestant. Pass.

20 OWEN ALMIGHTY 30-1

RECORD: 7-3-2-0
TRAINER: Brian Lynch
JOCKEY: Javier Castellano
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 93
EARNINGS: \$499,935

MR. ED: Oh by gosh, by golly, it's Owen Almighty. Great name, no chance.

RECORD: X-X-X-X represents Starts-Win-Place-Show
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: Calculated based on final time and distance of a race, adjusted by the inherent speed of the track. Top horses will have values in the 100s.

AE. BAEZA 12-1

RECORD: 4-1-2-0
TRAINER: John Shirreffs
JOCKEY: Flavien Prat
BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE: 101
EARNINGS: \$148,500

MR. ED: Best rider in America and high last-race Beyer aren't enough to convince me. Pass in or out of the field.

KENTUCKY DERBY

SUPERFECTA

by Mike Somich

The holy grail of betting on horses is hitting the Superfecta in the Kentucky Derby. Not only is it one of the toughest bets to hit each year, the payouts are exceptional. Over the last 10 years, the average Kentucky Derby Superfecta has paid \$51,094.90 for a \$1 base wager, highlighted by the \$321,500 payout when Rich Strike won. To hit a Superfecta, you must select the first four horses in the correct order that they cross the finish line. As you can imagine, with 20 horses that is very difficult. That being said, it's a fun lottery ticket to play every year.

When I break down the Superfecta, I like to group horses with possible finishing places and then structure out how to play the Superfecta. Let's take a look at the possible winners first.

WIN CONTENDERS

The most obvious win contender is #8 Journalism, who will be the post time favorite. The pace, which we will get to shortly, sets up well for him and drawing the #8 stall only makes him a more logical winner. The only issue there is with him in the winning (1st) position in the Superfecta is that it limits the upside of the payout. #18 Sovereignty also makes sense as a winner, he has won over the track before and should have plenty of pace to chase early. Longer shots that are playable on top include #14 Tiztastic, who took advantage of a hot pace in the Louisiana Derby and weaved his way through traffic to get a win.

THROW OUT HORSES

I mentioned we would get to the pace and here we are. This Kentucky Derby is setting up to be one of the hottest paces that I can remember. The draw did not help any either with speed drawing inside (#1 Citizen Bull, #2 Neoequos, #4 Rodriguez, and #5 American Promise) and the outside (#20 Owen Almighty). Horses with speed from those posts are forced to gun it right from the gate to try to get the forward position that they are looking for. Add into the mix #12 East Avenue, who may be the fastest of the bunch, and it creates a terrible scenario for any horses that want the lead. I am going to chuck out this bunch from my tickets.

OTHER HORSES TO CONSIDER FOR TICKETS

#3 Final Gambit enters for trainer Brad Cox off of an off-the-pace win in the Jeff Ruby Steaks. He is unlikely to win, but a similar run makes him possible for the Superfecta. #9 Burnham Square looked great in the Holy Bull and won the Blue Grass, but he is a cut below the top contenders. He is another who may get a great trip from off the pace. #16 Coal Battle has the upside to run 3rd or 4th here. He will be closer to the pace, but has held on with similar trips in the past. #21 Baeza who draws in is useful in the 3rd and 4th positions.

THE FAVORITE I AM NOT USING

I won't be using #17 Sandman. The pace and the draw set up fine for him, but he is a goofball. He won from the back of the pack in the Arkansas Derby after there were blistering fractions up front. When you watch the stretch run of that race, he is all over the place, struggling to run straight and switch leads. He is simply not as mature of a racer as others in this field. If he puts it together, he could win the race, but he has not yet in eight races so I am not willing to bet now is the time.

MY BETS

Okay, I am going to put together three bets depending on how much someone would be looking to spend. Each time you see a / in the bet, that separates the place the horse needs to finish. For example, this bet:

1,2 / 1,2,3 / 1,2,3,4 / 1,2,3,4,5

Would have to have the 1 or 2 win, the 1, 2 or 3 run second, the 1,2, 3, or 4 run third and the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 run 4th to win. For a \$1 base bet, it would cost \$16 since there are 24 different combinations for those events to happen.

SMALL BUDGET SUPERFECTA

8,18 / 8,10,18 / 8,10,14,18,21 / 8,10,14,18,21 = \$24

MEDIUM BUDGET SUPERFECTA

8,10,18 / 8,10,14,18 / 3,8,10,14,18,21 / 3,8,10,13,14,18,21 = \$81

BIG BUDGET SUPERFECTA

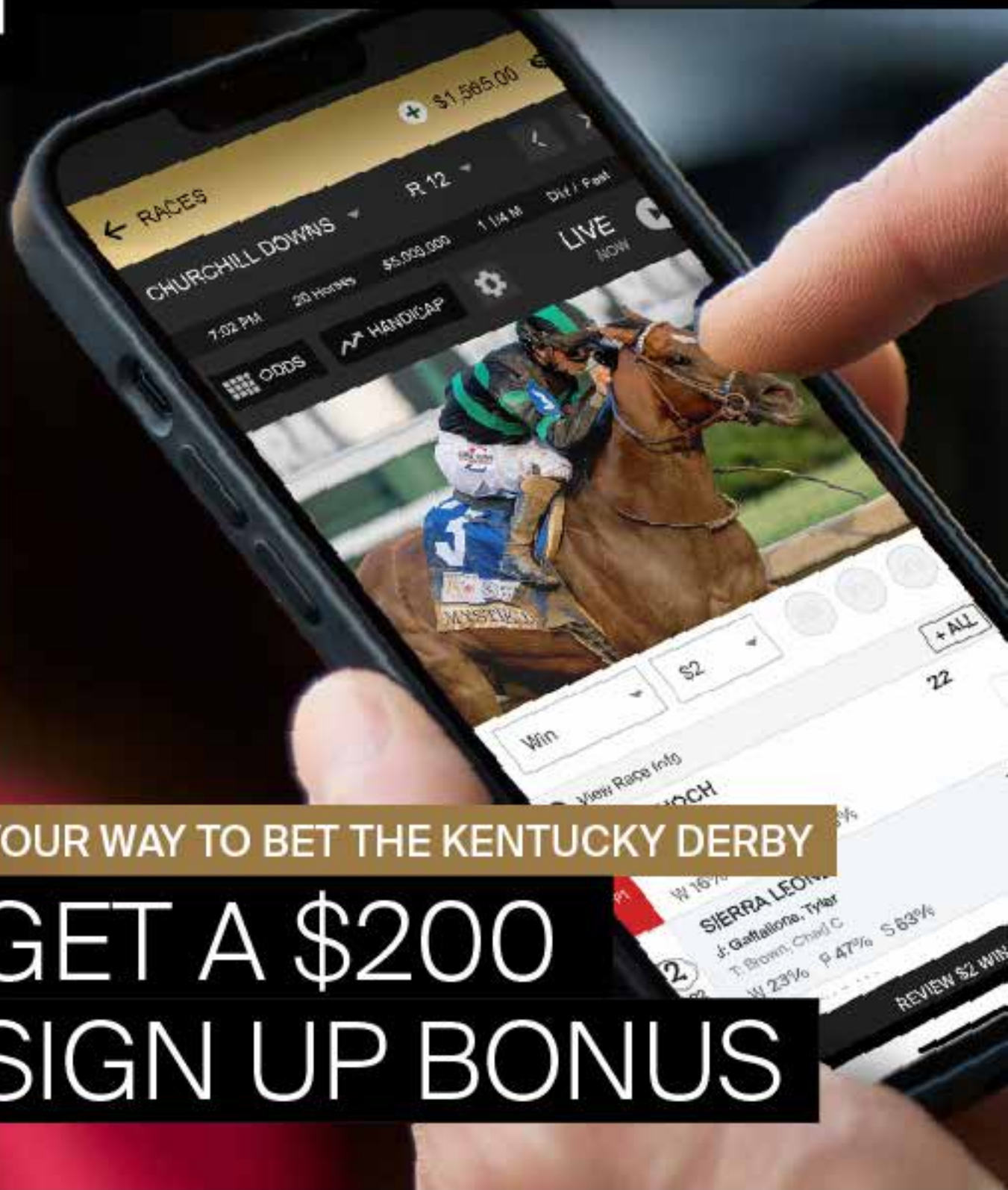
8,10,14,18 / 8,10,14,18 / 3,8,9,10,14,18,21 / 3,8,9,10,13,14,18,21 = \$192

#10 Grande was scratched Friday morning, so remove him from any potential tickets.

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