

151  KENTUCKY  
DERBY

KENTUCKY DERBY 151

# BETTING GUIDE

presented by **twinspires**





# KENTUCKY DERBY 151 BETTING GUIDE



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# AT A GLANCE

A look at the previous Churchill Downs meet: December 2, 2024.

**AVG. WINNING ODDS:** 5.33-1

**FAVORITE WIN%:** 36% **FAVORITE ITM%:** 69%

EXOTICS	PAYOFF
Exacta	83.15
Daily Double	95.14
Trifecta	631.10
Pick 3	680.23
Superfecta	4,712.43
Pick 4	7,294.65
Pick 5	37,040.63
Pick 6 Jackpot	214,604.64
Super High Five	5,472.54



## TRACK BIAS MEET (09/12 - 12/01)

Distance	# Race	% Wire	Best Style	Best Posts
6.0fDirt	103	28%	E	Outside
6.5fDirt	40	25%	P	Rail/Ins
1 MileDirt	52	23%	E/P	Mid/Out
1 1/16mDirt	81	23%	E/P	Inside
Turf Sprint	5	0%	S	Outside
Turf Routes	27	7%	P	Outside

## TRACK BIAS WEEK (11/25 - 12/01)

Distance	# Race	% Wire	Best Style	Best Posts
6.0fDirt	12	25%	P	Mid/Out
6.5fDirt	6	17%	P	Mid/Out
1 MileDirt	12	17%	E	Middle
1 1/16mDirt	10	20%	P	Inside
Turf Sprint	0	0%	-	na
Turf Routes	6	17%	E/P	Inside

## WHO'S HOT, WHO'S NOT

HOT TRAINERS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	WINNING FAVORITES	'23-'24 WIN %
Hartman Chris A.	14	6	2	1	4.13	3	18%
Nihei Michelle	4	2	0	0	9.66	0	9%
Davis Christopher	5	2	1	0	5.10	1	14%
Stall, Jr. Albert M.	5	2	0	3	5.16	1	14%
Calhoun W. Bret	6	2	0	1	6.15	1	19%

HOT JOCKEYS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'23-'24 WIN %
Asmussen Erik	13	4	1	1	13.98	1	16%
Camacho, Jr. Samuel	8	3	1	0	12.15	1	12%
Vazquez Ramon A.	11	3	1	3	8.56	1	12%

COLD TRAINERS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'23-'24 WIN %
Cano Juan Munoz	10	0	0	2	9.21	1	13%

COLD JOCKEYS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'23-'24 WIN %
Torres Cristian A.	21	0	2	3	17.93	2	16%
Asmussen Keith J.	13	0	0	1	22.10	0	14%
Moncada Irving	11	0	0	1	15.90	1	14%
Roman Evin A.	10	0	0	1	39.70	0	20%

# RACE & LIVE BLOG SCHEDULE

## LIVE BLOG SCHEDULE

### OPENING DAY

Saturday, April 26, 2025 5:00PM ET

- Kentucky Derby and
- Kentucky Oaks draw information 7:00PM ET

### THURBY

Thursday, May 1, 2025 12:45PM ET

### KENTUCKY OAKS

Friday, May 2, 2025 10:30AM ET

### KENTUCKY DERBY

Saturday, May 3, 2025 10:30AM ET



## STAKES RACES SCHEDULE

DATE	GRADE	PURSE	RACE
Sat. Apr. 26		\$200,000	Roxalana Overnight Stake
Wed. Apr. 30	Listed	\$300,000	William Walker
Wed. Apr. 30		\$200,000	Isaac Murphy Marathon Overnight Stakes
Thur. May 1	Listed	\$350,000	Opening Verse
Thur. May 1		\$250,000	Kentucky Juvenile
Thur. May 1		\$200,000	St. Matthews Overnight Stakes
Fri. May 2	GI	\$1,500,000	Longines Kentucky Oaks
Fri. May 2	GI	\$1,000,000	Fasig-Tipton La Troienne
Fri. May 2	GII	\$750,000	Alysheba
Fri. May 2	GII	\$600,000	Eight Belles presented by Sysco
Fri. May 2	GII	\$600,000	Edgewood presented by Forcht Bank
Fri. May 2	GIII	\$400,000	Modesty presented by Derby City Gaming
Fri. May 2	GIII	\$400,000	Unbridled Sidney presented by Resolute Racing
Sat. May 3	GI	\$5,000,000	Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve
Sat. May 3	GI	\$1,000,000	Old Forester Bourbon Turf Classic
Sat. May 3	GI	\$1,000,000	Churchill Downs presented by Ford
Sat. May 3	GI	\$1,000,000	Derby City Distaff presented by Kendall-Jackson Winery
Sat. May 3	GII	\$750,000	Longines Churchill Distaff Turf Mile
Sat. May 3	GII	\$600,000	Twin Spires Turf Sprint presented by Sentient Jet
Sat. May 3	GII	\$600,000	Pat Day Mile presented by SAP
Sat. May 3	GII	\$600,000	American Turf presented by TwinSpires
Sat. May 3	Listed ®	\$200,000	Knicks Go presented by L&N Federal Credit Union



# MEET THE CONTENDERS

by Vance Hanson

# 151

KENTUCKY DERBY

## 1. BURNHAM SQUARE

**PRO:** Has come a long way from starting in maiden claimer; added distance helps.

**CON:** Blue Grass (G1) didn't seem as strong a prep as those in California, Arkansas.

## 2. SANDMAN

**PRO:** Benefited from extremely hot pace at Oaklawn; might see one here, too.

**CON:** Trip in congested field will determine whether he can win or settles for minor award.

## 3. JOURNALISM

**PRO:** Owns the edge on speed ratings and just needs right trip to come through as favorite.

**CON:** A bit of a grinding type, so could fall short if he can't show effective late kick.

## 4. RODRIGUEZ

**PRO:** Wood Memorial (G2) was a breakout performance; dangerous if he can build on it.

**CON:** Got away with easy trip at Aqueduct, unlikely to get similar here.

## 5. TIZTASTIC

**PRO:** Sustained early move into contention to upset Louisiana Derby (G2).

**CON:** Never really threatened to win any prep before final one; others look stronger.

## 6. TAPPAN STREET

**PRO:** Benefited from freshening in Florida Derby (G1); got jump on favorite and won.

**CON:** Remains light on experience and this a far more difficult task.

## 7. SOVEREIGNTY

**PRO:** Class, run style, and fondness for Churchill are all positives.

**CON:** Florida Derby second was relatively modest; potentially overbet.

## 8. FINAL GAMBIT

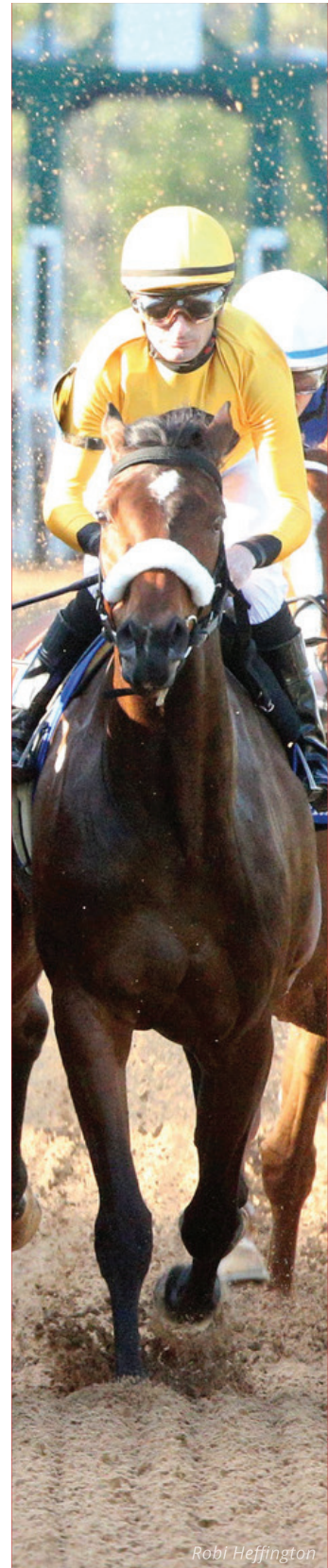
**PRO:** Rallied last-to-first to beat both maiden and Jeff Ruby (G3) foes; improving.

**CON:** Still an unknown quantity over dirt; needs another career peak.

## 9. COAL BATTLE

**PRO:** Won three preps over the winter and versatile in running style.

**CON:** Did not build on Rebel (G2) win in Arkansas Derby; doesn't appear quick enough.



Robt Heffington

## 10. CHUNK OF GOLD



**PRO:** Outran expectations in both the Risen Star and Louisiana Derby.  
**CON:** Not the strongest of the closers and will need considerable improvement.

## 11. CITIZEN BULL



**PRO:** Reigning champion juvenile was going good until recent Santa Anita Derby flub.  
**CON:** Tough to endorse for rebound with so much other speed in the field.

## 12. OWEN ALMIGHTY



**PRO:** A consistent colt up until the Blue Grass, which he didn't lose by a whole lot.  
**CON:** Seems better suited to shorter races, like the Pat Day Mile (G2).

## 13. EAST AVENUE



**PRO:** When he's on his game, a capable colt for barn is doing well now.  
**CON:** Possibly partial to Keeneland strip and seems a need-the-lead type

## 14. PUBLISHER



**PRO:** Blinkers seemed to help in Arkansas Derby, where he was a rallying second best.  
**CON:** No maiden has won the Derby in more than 90 years.

## 15. AMERICAN PROMISE



**PRO:** Rounding into best form after big Colonial win; enters fresh.  
**CON:** Track bias enhanced his Virginia Derby success; this a much harder task.

## 16. LUXOR CAFE



**PRO:** Japan form excellent; if he's as good as Forever Young last year, watch out.  
**CON:** Hard to tell if his form will really carry over in new surroundings.

## 17. ADMIRE DAYTONA

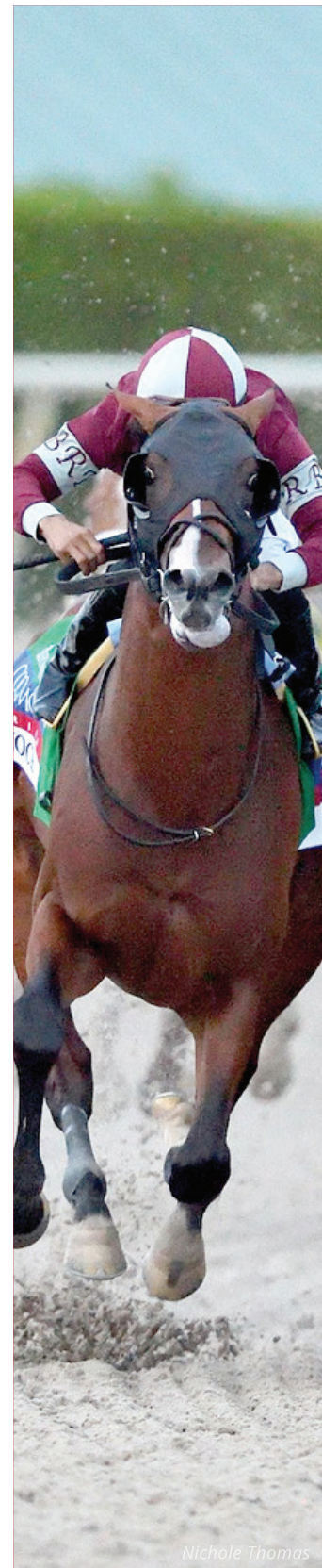


**PRO:** Flattered the Japan form with gutsy win in Dubai.  
**CON:** No UAE Derby (G2) winner has worn the roses; not in Luxor Café's class yet.

## 18. FLYING MOHAWK



**PRO:** Will put in best run late and should see fastest pace he's ever seen.  
**CON:** Exits one of the slower final preps and has no experience racing on dirt.



Nichole Thomas



## 19. GRANDE



**PRO:** Solid stakes debut in Wood Memorial; Curlin colt remains with upside.

**CON:** Less experienced than others and perhaps might show too much early foot.

## 20. BUILT



**PRO:** Stalk-and-pounce style might prove effective if not too close to a fast pace.

**CON:** Louisiana Derby try not encouraging; not guaranteed to be given green light.

## 21. NEOEQUOS



**PRO:** Consistency is main asset as he's won or placed in every race he's finished.

**CON:** Likely to just add fuel to the pace and seems distance limited.

## 22. RENDER JUDGMENT



**PRO:** Bred to run all day and hails from 2024 Derby-winning barn.

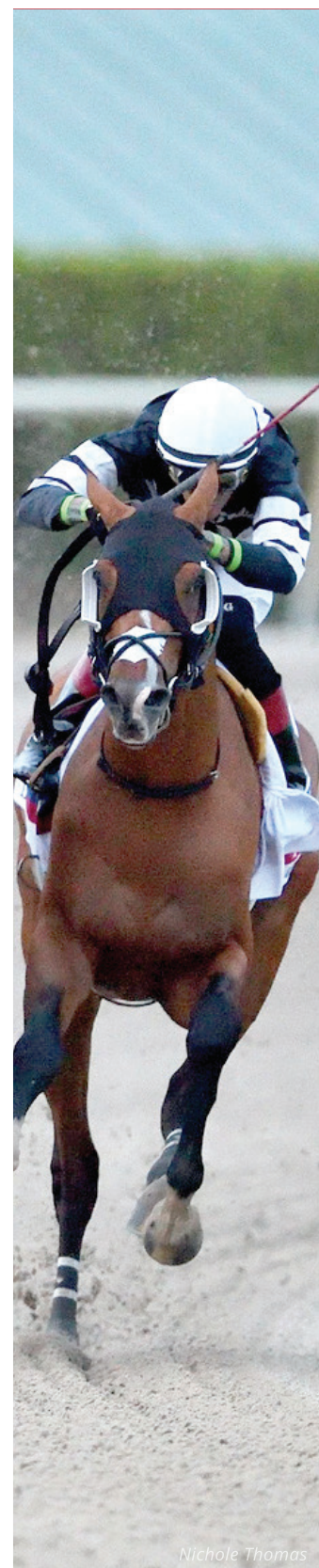
**CON:** Never really came close in five prep appearances; would be a shock.

## 23. BAEZA



**PRO:** Turned in excellent stakes debut in Santa Anita Derby; more to come.

**CON:** Buried deepest on AE list and still light on top-level experience.



Nichole Thomas



# BURNHAM SQUARE



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Burnham Square caught eyes in the 1 1/16-mile Holy Bull (G3) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, rallying from last place to prevail in the good time of 1:43.60. Later on, he launched a similar charge to win the 1 1/8-mile Blue Grass (G1) by a nose.

Now handicappers must answer an important question: can Burnham Square handle the testing 1 1/4-mile distance of the Kentucky Derby (G1)? Or are shorter routes likely to be his strong suit? Perhaps an analysis of his pedigree can reveal the answer.

Burnham Square is a son of Liam's Map, a high-class speedster best known for winning the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) and 1 1/8-mile Woodward (G1). Liam's Map never ran farther than 1 1/8 miles, so we don't know how he would have fared over classic distances.

Liam's Map's own pedigree suggests 1 1/4 miles could have been within reach. Sire Unbridled's Song is responsible for top-tier route racers like champions Arrogate and Will Take Charge, while dam Miss Macy Sue—though a sprinter herself—has foaled 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) runner-up Not This Time, the sire of champion and Kentucky Derby runner-up Epicenter.

However, as a stallion, Liam's Map has tended to pass on speed more than stamina. His progeny win at an average distance of 7.0 furlongs, suggesting a stallion who primarily sires miler types. Some of Liam's Map's runners have thrived running long, including 1 3/16-mile Pegasus World Cup Turf (G1) winner Colonel Liam and 1 3/8-mile Mac Diarmida (G2) winner Starting Over, but they've tended to be grass horses. Liam's Map's best dirt runners have been sprinters and milers like Alcibiades (G1) winner Juju's Map, Hopeful (G1) hero Basin, and Frizette (G1) conqueror Wicked Whisper.

Liam's Map has actually sired a healthy number of graded stakes winners on grass, which is notable since the dam of Burnham Square—Linda—was a talented turf miler who recorded top-four finishes in seven graded stakes. Most notably, she won the 1 1/16-mile Mrs. Revere (G2) and placed second in the 1 1/16-mile Valley View (G3).

Burnham Square is the first stakes winner produced by Linda, but she's already proven to be a source of winners. Her first three foals to reach the races—Lindsey, Hatch, and English Charm—have recorded a minimum of five wins apiece. English Charm has proven effective as a miler on synthetic tracks, while Hatch is primarily a dirt sprinter and Lindsey a dirt sprinter/miler.

At first glance, Linda looks like a source of miler speed more than classic stamina. But take note, she's a daughter of Scat Daddy, who is best known as the sire of 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify. If Scat Daddy can sire a Triple Crown winner, then there's potential for Linda to pass on some stamina to Burnham Square.

As a racehorse, Scat Daddy was best in short routes, winning the one-mile Champagne (G1) and 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1). But at stud, he proved capable of siring major winners across an incredibly wide variety of distances and surfaces. Scat Daddy's versatility helped his progeny accumulate a middle-of-the-road average winning distance of 7.2 furlongs.

Similar versatility can be found in Scat Daddy's record as a broodmare sire. His daughters have foaled Whitmore, winner of the six-furlong Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) on dirt; Curren Bouquet d'or, runner-up in the Japan Cup (G1) racing 2,400 meters (about 1 1/2 miles) on turf; Integration, winner of the 1 3/8-mile Red Smith (G2) on turf; Pappacap, winner of the six-furlong Best Pal (G2) and runner-up in the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) on dirt; Lotus Land, winner of multiple group stakes as a sprinter/miler on turf; and Reincarnate, who has placed in the Santa Anita H. (G1), Pacific Classic (G1), and Hollywood Gold Cup (G2) racing 1 1/4 miles on dirt.

It's also worth noting that Linda's dam, Beautiful Noise, was a classy turf horse who counted a win in the 1 1/8-mile Santa Ana H. (G2) and a second in the 1 1/4-mile Santa Barbara H. (G2) among her seven top-three finishes in graded stakes.

A quick glance at the breeding cross that produced Burnham Square—by dirt miler Liam's Map out of turf miler Linda—might lead to the conclusion Burnham Square will follow suit as a miler. However, there are enough examples of stamina in Burnham Square's family to suggest handling 1 1/4 miles is a distinct possibility.

That may prove especially true if Burnham Square switches to turf at some point down the road. If his Kentucky Derby aspirations don't pan out, Burnham Square may have a bright future (with arguably greater long-distance potential) on grass.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

The addition of blinkers made a big difference for Burnham Square, who broke his maiden by nine lengths when adding the headgear in late December. The fast-closing sophomore followed with an excellent win in the Holy Bull (G3), netting a 101 Brisnet Speed rating, recording a 1 3/4-length decision. Burnham Square jumped to the top of the Kentucky Derby leaderboard (130 qualifying points) when rallying to win the Blue Grass (G1) two starts later, confirming himself as a serious contender. The late runner is eligible to receive a favorable setup with an abundance of early speed signed on for this year's Kentucky Derby (G1).



# BURNHAM SQUARE CONT.

**OWNER:** Burnham Square will be the second homebred starter in the Kentucky Derby for Whitham Thoroughbreds (Janis Whitham), who had McCracken finish eighth in 2017. Now 93, Whitham combined with trainer Ian Wilkes to win the 2012 Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) with Fort Larned, and Whitham has been involved in the Thoroughbred business for nearly 50 years; she and her late husband, Frank, campaigned two-time champion Bayakoa, who won consecutive runnings of the Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1) in 1989-90.

**TRAINER:** An Australian native, Ian Wilkes left for America in 1989 to take a job with Hall of Fame trainer Carl Nafzger. The 59-year-old conditioner worked with a pair of Kentucky Derby winners under Nafzger, Unbridled in 1990 and Street Sense in 2007. When Nafzger began to scale back his operation and retired in 2006, he turned over the bulk of his stable to Wilkes. Wilkes' first Kentucky Derby starter, McCracken in 2017, finished seventh, and Burnham Square will be his second.

**JOCKEY:** After becoming the eighth rider to win the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks (G1) in the same year, guiding Mystik Dan and Thorpedo Anna last year, Brian Hernandez Jr. will look to become the first jockey to repeat in the Kentucky Derby since Hall of Famer Victor Espinoza, who guided American Pharoah and California Chrome in 2015-16. Hernandez's first Kentucky Derby mount came on Tom's Ready, who finished 12th in 2016, and he was unplaced in his first four attempts before breaking through in 2024. A native of Louisiana, the 39-year-old picked up the mount aboard Burnham Square in the Blue Grass.

**BREEDER:** A Kentucky-bred bay gelding, Burnham Square, will be the second Kentucky Derby starter as a breeder for Whitham Thoroughbreds. Burnham Square will try to become the first gelding to win the Kentucky Derby since Mine That Bird in 2009.

**SIRE:** Burnham Square is from the sixth crop of Liam's Map, who concluded his racing career with wins in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) and Woodward (G1). Liam's Map has had some runners on the Triple Crown trail, including 2020 Arkansas Derby (G1) runner-up Basin, but he's never impacted the Triple Crown with his offspring. Many of his top performers, including multiple Grade 1-winning millionaire Colonial Liam, have come on turf.

**DAM:** Burnham Square is the first stakes winner out of the Grade 2-winning turf mare Linda, a daughter of Scat Daddy, best known as the sire of 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify. Scat Daddy won the Florida Derby (G1) and Fountain of Youth (G2) before finishing 18th in the Kentucky Derby in his career finale, and he's still looking to make an impact on the Triple Crown as a broodmare sire. Burnham Square counts 1983 Kentucky Derby winner Sunny's Halo as his second maternal broodmare sire and 1973 Triple Crown winner Secretariat as his third; his female family provides confidence for the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby distance.



# SANDMAN



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

An eye-catching rally from behind a fast pace carried Sandman to victory in the 1 1/8-mile Arkansas Derby (G1) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Stretching out over 1 1/4 miles for the Kentucky Derby (G1) shouldn't be an obstacle for Sandman. But one interpretation of his pedigree suggests there's a possibility the first Saturday in May is coming up a bit soon for Sandman.

Sandman is a son of Tapit, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Wood Memorial (G1) and a participant in the 2004 Kentucky Derby. Tapit was a fine racehorse, but he's risen to the highest level as a stallion. He's ranked as North America's leading sire by progeny earnings on three occasions, and along the way he's sired some of the best dirt horses of the last 20 years.

Stamina is a strong suit for sons and daughters of Tapit. His progeny win at an average distance of 7.6 furlongs, indicating a stallion who tends to pass on two-turn stamina. A few of Tapit's best foals include:

- Flightline, the undefeated 2022 Horse of the Year and a runaway winner of the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1).
- Essential Quality, a two-time champion who won the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1).
- Untapable, a champion three-year-old filly who won the Kentucky Oaks (G1) and Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1) racing 1 1/8 miles.
- Stardom Bound, a champion two-year-old filly who won the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1).
- Hansen, a champion two-year-old male best known for his victory in the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1).
- Unique Bella, a two-time champion who won Grade 1 races up to 1 1/16 miles in distance.
- Tonalist, Creator, and Tapwrit, all winners of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont.
- Frosted, runner-up in the Belmont and winner of the one-mile Metropolitan H. (G1) and 1 1/8-mile Whitney (G1).
- Cupid and Careless Jewel, Grade 1 winners over 1 1/4 miles.

The list of Grade 1-winning route racers sired by Tapit goes on and on. Unsurprisingly, he's been a prolific sire of Kentucky Derby starters. No fewer than 14 of his foals have started in the Run for the Roses, including at least one every year from 2012 through 2023.

But Tapit has yet to sire a Kentucky Derby winner. Sometimes it seems as though the Kentucky Derby is too sharp of a race and/or too early in the season for Tapit's classic-type sophomores. Essential Quality, Creator, and Tapwrit were all beaten in the Kentucky Derby before bouncing back five weeks later to win the Belmont racing a quarter-mile farther. Meanwhile, Tonalist matured too late to qualify to the Kentucky Derby, but peaked in time to win the Belmont.

Will a similar fate befall Sandman? It's a possibility worth pondering, especially since the bottom half of his pedigree trends in a similar direction.

Sandman's dam is Distorted Music, who didn't debut until September of her three-year-old year. She won for the first time in November and went on to enjoy modest success as a four-year-old, ending her career with three victories over distances from six furlongs to 1 1/16 miles.

Prior to Sandman, Distorted Music foaled the capable miler She Can't Sing. While She Can't Sing broke her maiden as a juvenile, she failed to win a stakes until age five, when she went on a tear and nabbed four stakes on turf and dirt. Her signature triumph came in the one-mile Chilukki (G3).

Distorted Music pretty much followed the example set by her sire, Distorted Humor. After failing to race as a juvenile, Distorted Humor won the Screen King S. at age three, but reached his peak at ages four and five. With maturity, he proved talented enough to win the Churchill Downs H. (G2), Commonwealth Breeders' Cup (G2), and Salvator Mile H. (G3) in addition to placing in the Cigar Mile H. (G1).

At stud, Distorted Humor has sired multiple classic winners. Champion Funny Cide won the Kentucky Derby and Preakness (G1), while the long-winded Drosselmeyer took the Belmont and Breeders' Cup Classic.

But daughters of Distorted Humor often foal late-maturing types like champion and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Arrogate, Hong Kong sensation Golden Sixty, and Pegasus World Cup (G1) heroes Art Collector and Life Is Good. There have been plenty of exceptions—like Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) winner Citizen Bull and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1) conqueror New Money Honey—but a U.S. classic winner has yet to emerge from Drosselmeyer's otherwise exemplary record as a broodmare sire.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

After a troubled second in the Southwest (G3) and rallying third in the Rebel (G2), Sandman broke through with his first stakes win in the Arkansas Derby (G1), powerfully circling rivals on the far turn to reach a clear lead by the top of the stretch. The gray colt brings improving form and numbers to the Kentucky Derby (G1), registering a 101 Brisnet Speed rating for his 2 1/2-length decision last out, and Sandman will look to make a serious impact from off the pace.



# SANDMAN CONT.

**OWNER:** Sandman is owned by the partnership of D.J. Stable (Leonard C. Green), St. Elias Stable (Vincent Viola), West Point Thoroughbreds (Terry Finley), and C J Stables (Charles Sonson), and social media influencer Griffin Johnson is a minority shareholder in the racehorse via America's Best Racing's A Stake in Stardom influencer ownership initiative. St. Elias and West Point were involved in the partnership that campaigned 2017 Kentucky Derby winner Always Dreaming, and West Point owned 2014 runner-up Commanding Curve.

**TRAINER:** A Hall of Famer in the United States and Canada, Mark Casse can add the Kentucky Derby to a packed trophy case. Casse captured the Preakness (G1) with War of Will and Belmont (G1) with Sir Winston in 2019, but he's winless from 10 previous Kentucky Derby attempts. The 2017 fourth-placer Classic Empire is his top Derby finisher. An Indiana native, Casse won his first race at Keeneland in 1979 shortly after receiving his trainer's license at age 18, and he developed into a leading trainer in the Midwest and Canada, winning his first training title at Churchill Downs in 1988. He's now approaching 4,000 wins and his horses have earned more than \$250 million.

**JOCKEY:** Jose Ortiz will make his 10th Kentucky Derby appearance, his best results coming aboard runner-up Good Magic in 2018 and third-placer Tacitus in 2019. An Eclipse Award-winning rider and runaway leader of the recently completed Fair Grounds meet, Ortiz launched his riding career in New York in 2012. The 31-year-old Puerto Rico native will try to accomplish a personal sweep of the Triple Crown, winning the 2022 Preakness on Early Voting and the 2017 Belmont on Tapwrit.

**BREEDER:** Sandman will be the first Kentucky Derby starter bred by the late Robert Lothenbach (Lothenbach Stables), a prominent owner/breeder in the Midwest. Lothenbach ranked among the top 10 leading North American owners by wins and earnings in 2020 and 2022. Sandman sold for \$1.2 million as a two-year-old at the 2024 Ocala March sale.

**SIRE:** Perhaps best known for siring undefeated Horse of the Year Flightline, Tapit has significantly impacted the final leg of the Triple Crown, siring four winners of the 1 1/2-mile classic. However, the legendary stallion still seeks his first Kentucky Derby winner. He's by Pulpit, who was fourth in the 1997 Kentucky Derby and is a grandson of 1977 Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew. Tapit, the hero of the Wood Memorial (G1), caught a sloppy Derby track and never fired, finishing ninth as the 6-1 third choice in the 2004 running. A leading sire and force on the Triple Crown trail for nearly 20 years, Tapit will be celebrated if Sandman delivers an elusive Kentucky Derby win.

**DAM:** Sandman is out of the Distorted Humor mare Distorted Music and counts Grade 3 winner She Can't Sing as a half-sibling. This is the immediate female family of Dubai World Cup (G1) winner Mystic Guide, and Sandman is bred to relish the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby distance. Distorted Humor, a leading general and freshman sire, counts 2003 Kentucky Derby hero Funny Cide among his 163 stakes winners. While still looking to make a serious mark upon the Triple Crown, Distorted Humor has developed into a prominent broodmare sire. Hall of Famer

Arrogate, who established a North American record with more than \$17.4 million in earnings, is among his notable runners. Kentucky Derby contenders Citizen Bull and Tappan Street also count Distorted Humor as their broodmare sire.





## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Sometimes it's possible to glance at the pedigree of a potential Kentucky Derby (G1) contender and conclude with certainty they're bred to shine racing 1 1/4 miles on the first Saturday in May.

Such is the case with Journalism. The bay colt impressed in his Road to the Kentucky Derby debut, pulling away to win the Los Alamitos Futurity (G2) by 3 1/2 lengths. He followed up with fast triumphs over tough competition in the San Felipe (G2) and Santa Anita Derby (G1).

Journalism is a son of two-time Horse of the Year Curlin, whose Triple Crown exploits include a win in the Preakness (G1), a second in the Belmont (G1), and a third in the Kentucky Derby. Curlin relished classic distances and won five times over 1 1/4 miles, most notably in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and Dubai World Cup (G1).

Curlin has since developed into a stellar sire of long-winded dirt racers. His best foals include Belmont winner Palace Malice; Preakness winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Exaggerator; Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Good Magic; Breeders' Cup Classic conqueror Vino Rosso; Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1) heroines Malathaat and Idiomatic; multiple Grade 1 winners Stellar Wind, Nest, Curalina, and Clairiere; and the classic-placed runners Keen Ice, Tenfold, Irish War Cry, and Ride On Curlin.

Once in a while, Curlin sires speedier types like Horse of the Year and two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Cody's Wish and two-time champion male sprinter Elite Power. But the vast majority of Curlin's best runners excel in route races, and they've compiled a lofty average winning distance of 7.6 furlongs.

Having Curlin as his sire is reason enough to respect Journalism as a Kentucky Derby contender. Yet the dam's side of his pedigree adds further layers of classic potential.

Journalism was produced by Mopotism, a durable mare who raced 26 times over the course of four seasons. While she won only three races, most notably the one-mile La Canada (G2), she finished second or third 10 times at the graded stakes level, including in four Grade 1 races over distances from seven furlongs to 1 1/8 miles.

Mopotism, in turn, is a daughter of Uncle Mo out of the Bernardini mare Peppy Rafaela. There are a lot of positives to unpack here, so let's take it one horse at a time.

Uncle Mo achieved renown as the champion two-year-old male of 2010 after winning the Breeders' Cup Juvenile and Champagne (G1). On track, he excelled as a miler. But at stud, he's a source of classic stamina, with his progeny winning at an average distance of 7.5 furlongs. The best of them include Kentucky Derby winner Nyquist and Belmont hero Mo Donegal, plus a bevy of Grade 1 winners racing 1 1/16 miles or farther.

Just as importantly, Uncle Mo is developing into a successful broodmare sire. Aside from Journalism, his daughters have produced Kentucky Oaks (G1) and Breeders' Cup Distaff winner Thorpedo Anna, Arkansas Derby (G1) and American Pharoah (G1) winner Muth, and two-time Champions Cup (G1) runner-up Wilson Tesoro.

As for Peppy Rafaela, she wasn't much of a racehorse, failing to finish better than fourth in a trio of starts. But her record as a broodmare is significantly better. In addition to Mopotism, she has foaled Nabokov (a son of Uncle Mo who won four times over distances as far as 1 1/16 miles), Ruth (a daughter of Uncle Mo who broke her maiden racing one mile), and Humor Controller (a son of Distorted Humor who won three times racing one mile).

The fact all four of Peppy Rafaela's winning foals have prevailed racing one mile or farther isn't surprising since she's a daughter of Bernardini, the champion three-year-old male of 2006. Winner of the Preakness, Travers (G1), and Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1), Bernardini excelled over classic distances and is the sire of Travers winners Stay Thirsty and Alpha. His progeny win at an average distance of 7.5 furlongs.

The cross of Curlin with Mopotism creates a pedigree perfectly suited for success in the spring classics. Whether it's the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness, or the Belmont, Journalism is cut out to shine in the Triple Crown.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Journalism established himself as the Kentucky Derby (G1) favorite, sweeping the Los Alamitos Futurity (G2), San Felipe (G2), and Santa Anita Derby (G1), overcoming traffic trouble in the latter to extend his winning streak to four. He will bring imposing Brisnet Speed ratings to the Kentucky Derby, easily registering a field-best 108 stretching out to nine furlongs in the Santa Anita Derby. Journalism owns the tactical ability to make his own trip in a bulky field and has a lot going for him.

**OWNER:** Journalism is campaigned by Bridlewood Farm (John & Leslie Malone), Don Alberto Stable (Liliana Solari Falabella & sons Andrea & Carlos Heller), Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners (Aaron Wellman), Elayne Stables 5, and Robert V. LaPenta. Bridlewood will make their second Kentucky Derby appearance, co-owning Tapwrit, sixth in 2017, with Eclipse and LaPenta. Eclipse also co-owned Danza, who finished third in 2014. LaPenta, who has owned over 10 Kentucky Derby starters, recorded his best finish with runner-up Ice Box in 2010. Don Alberto will have their second starter, co-owning 2017 third-placer Battle of Midway.



# JOURNALISM CONT.

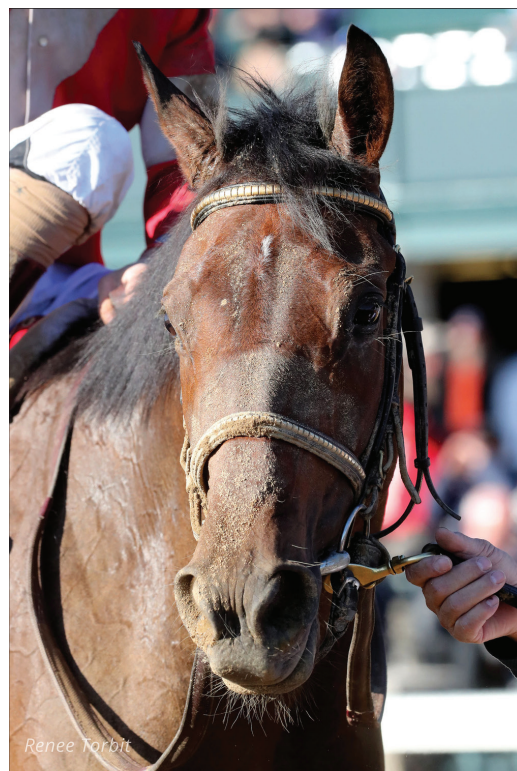
**TRAINER:** After making his Kentucky Derby debut last year, finishing ninth with Endlessly, Michael McCarthy will be back at Churchill Downs with the favorite. A former assistant to Todd Pletcher, McCarthy worked for the Hall of Famer when he scored his first Kentucky Derby victory with Super Saver in 2010. McCarthy grew up near Santa Anita, and the Southern California-based conditioner opened his own stable in 2014. The 54-year-old won the 2021 Preakness (G1) with Rombauer, who finished third in the Belmont (G1) in his career finale.

**JOCKEY:** Umberto Rispoli will make his third Kentucky Derby start, finishing 14th on Brooklyn Strong in 2021 and ninth aboard Endlessly.

**BREEDER:** Bred in Kentucky, Journalism will be the first Kentucky Derby starter as a breeder for Don Alberto Corporation, a large breeding and racing operation in Chile that has expanded its operations worldwide, purchasing Vinery Farm in Central Kentucky in 2013.

**SIRE:** After a troubled third in the 2007 Kentucky Derby, Curlin returned to win the Preakness and finished second in the Belmont (G1). The two-time Horse of the Year has developed into one of the world's top sires, becoming the first to produce three individual American champions in the same year and three Breeders' Cup race winners on the same day. Along with siring eight individual champions in America, Curlin produced 2017 Preakness winner Exaggerator and 2013 Belmont winner Palace Malice. And his son, Keen Ice, handed Hall of Famer American Pharoah his lone loss at age three in the Travers (G1). The Kentucky Derby is the one major prize missing from the resume of Curlin, whose son, Good Magic, sired 2023 Kentucky Derby winner Mage.

**DAM:** Journalism is the first foal to race out of Grade 2 winner and multiple Grade 1-placed Mopotism, who finished 10th in the 2017 Kentucky Oaks (G1). She's by Uncle Mo, who was named champion two-year-old male of 2010 and proved to be an exceptional sire, siring 109 stakes winners and 15 Grade 1 winners, including 2016 Kentucky Derby hero Nyquist. By Indian Charlie, Uncle Mo has carried his prowess forward as an emerging broodmare sire, with last year's Horse of the Year and Kentucky Oaks winner Thorpedo Anna hailing from an Uncle Mo mare.



# RODRIGUEZ



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Rodriguez emerged as a top-tier 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1) contender when leading from start to finish in the Wood Memorial (G2) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Rodriguez posted quick times throughout the 1 1/8-mile race and drew off down the homestretch to prevail by 3 1/2 lengths in 1:48.15. But can he successfully stretch out another furlong in distance for the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby?

Five years ago, the same question faced Rodriguez's sire, Authentic. The son of leading North American sire Into Mischief was arguably bred to be an elite miler more than a 1 1/4-mile route racer. During the summer, he was all-out to win the 1 1/8-mile Haskell (G1) in advance of a Kentucky Derby postponed to September due to COVID-19.

But as Authentic matured, he proved himself capable of handling classic distances with aplomb. First he sprung a gate-to-wire upset in the Kentucky Derby, reaching the finish line in a fast 2:00.61. Then he finished second by a neck in the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1), which elapsed in the blazing time of 1:53.28. Finally, he wired the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) at Keeneland in the track-record time of 1:59.60.

Authentic only raced once as a juvenile, and he didn't peak until the second half of his three-year-old season. Unsurprisingly, his first foals are following suit. They reached the races in 2024 and failed to achieve much as juveniles, but they're warming up as three-year-olds this year. In addition to Rodriguez, Authentic is the sire of 1 1/8-mile Santa Anita Derby (G1) third-place finisher Westwood and 1 1/16-mile Lecomte (G3) third-place finisher Innovator, two runners who have earned qualification points on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

So far, the progeny of Authentic are winning at an average distance of 7.4 furlongs, a lofty number for such a young stallion. It suggests Authentic's runners appreciate racing route distances, which we're already seeing as they mature into three-year-olds.

Meanwhile, Rodriguez's dam is Cayala, who scored her lone victory in a six-furlong maiden special weight on turf at Hollywood Park. While hardly a standout racehorse, Cayala has proven highly successful as a broodmare. Her previous foals include One Liner, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Southwest (G3) and runner-up in the 1 3/16-mile Pimlico Special (G3); Provocateur, a two-time stakes-

winning sprinter who placed third in the seven-furlong Woody Stephens (G1); and Roderick, third in the 6 1/2-furlong Nyquist S.

Notably, One Liner, Provocateur, and Roderick are all sons of Into Mischief, the sire of Authentic. The cross of Cayala with Authentic produces a very similar pedigree, but Authentic's emerging tendency to sire route racers may have endowed Rodriguez with more stamina than his closely related half-siblings.

Turning now to the lineage of Cayala, she's a daughter of Cherokee Run out of Chasethegold, by Touch Gold. Cherokee Run is best remembered as a champion sprinter who won the six-furlong Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1), but he wasn't without stamina; running long, he won the 1 1/8-mile Dwyer (G2) and finished second by half a length in the Preakness.

At stud, Cherokee Run enjoyed respectable success as the sire of champion two-year-old male and 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) winner War Pass; Kentucky Derby participants Zanjero and Recapturetheglorry, who won graded stakes running as far as 1 1/8 miles; Kafwain, a three-time graded stakes winner who placed in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile and Santa Anita Derby; Chilukki, a champion two-year-old filly who won at the Grade 1 level racing as far as 1 1/16 miles; and Yonaguska, a Grade 1-winning sprinter who sired Kentucky Derby and Preakness top-three finisher Musket Man.

Meanwhile, daughters of Cherokee Run have foaled Hokko Tarumae, winner of the 1,800-meter (about 1 1/8-mile) Champions Cup (G1) and a bevy of local Group 1 races running as far as 2,100 meters (about 1 5/16 miles) on dirt in Japan; The Blue Eye, an accomplished campaigner running long on turf in Qatar; and Rattlesnake Bridge, runner-up in the 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1).

As for Chasethegold, she proved best as a sprinter, finishing second in the Senator Ken Maddy H. (G3) sprinting about 6 1/2 furlongs over the downhill turf course at Santa Anita. But there's stamina in her bloodlines since her sire, Touch Gold, won the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1).

All things considered, the pedigree of Rodriguez appears to contain an ideal blend of speed and stamina suitable for success racing 1 1/4 miles on dirt.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

An impressive maiden winner stretching to two turns in early January, winning by seven lengths over eventual Santa Anita Derby (G1) runner-up Baeza, Rodriguez didn't appreciate stalking tactics finishing a well-beaten second in the Robert B. Lewis (G3) and third in the San Felipe (G2), retreating significantly in the stretch of the latter. The dark bay colt rebounded spectacularly while switching back to a frontrunning style in the Wood Memorial (G2), running the second-fastest edition in the last 20 years and earning an outstanding 105 Brisnet Speed rating for the 3 1/2-length decision. Along with



# RODRIGUEZ CONT.

facing a projected abundance of early speed, Rodriguez will meet a much deeper field in the Kentucky Derby, but his improving form and strong connections merit serious respect.

**OWNER:** Rodriguez is campaigned by Starlight Racing (Jack Wolf), Madaket Stables (Sol Kumin), SF Racing (Gavin Murphy), Diane Bashor, Determined Stables (Matt Dorman), Robert E. Masterson, Tom J. Ryan, Waves Edge Capital (W. Gregg Slager), and Catherine Donovan. Starlight and Kumin (through multiple nom de courses) were involved in partnerships that campaigned Kentucky Derby winners Justify (2018) and Authentic (2020). These same connections also have Citizen Bull in the 2025 Kentucky Derby field.

**TRAINER:** Tied with Ben Jones for the most wins, Hall of Famer Bob Baffert returns to the Kentucky Derby after a three-year suspension by Churchill Downs following the post-race disqualification of Medina Spirit. His six Kentucky Derby victories include a pair of Triple Crown winners, American Pharoah (2015) and Justify (2018), and Baffert has compiled three seconds and three thirds from 34 starts. His first appearance came in 1996, with Cavonnier finishing second by a nose. The 72-year-old Arizona native won the following two editions with Hall of Famer Silver Charm and Real Quiet. Along with winning the Preakness (G1) a record eight times, Baffert owns the most Triple Crown race wins (17). He will also send out Citizen Bull in the 2025 Kentucky Derby field.

**JOCKEY:** A two-time Kentucky Derby winner, Mike "Big Money" Smith made his first appearance in 1984, finishing sixth on Pine Circle, and Rodriguez will give the Hall of Famer a record-extending 29th mount in the Run for the Roses. His first win came aboard 50-1 upsetter Giacomo in 2005, and Smith was the regular rider for 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify. He also owns four seconds (Bodemeister, Lion Heart, Prairie Bayou, and Proud Citizen) and a third (Cat Thief). A 59-year-old native of New Mexico, Smith has won the Preakness twice and Belmont thrice. And Smith leads all jockeys with a record 27 wins in the Breeders' Cup. He picked up the mount on Rodriguez in the Wood.

**BREEDER:** Kingswood Farm (Robert Wachman) and David Egan will make their first Kentucky Derby appearance as the breeders of Rodriguez.

**SIRE:** Rodriguez is from the first crop of Authentic, who was named Horse of the Year and champion three-year-old male after winning the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) in 2020. By six-time reigning leading sire Into Mischief, Authentic earned more than \$7 million.

**DAM:** Rodriguez is the third stakes winner out of Cherokee Run mare Cayala and counts as a half-brother of One Liner, who was on the 2017 Triple Crown trail after winning his first three career starts, including the Southwest (G3), but was sidelined by injury. By Canadian champion and 1982 Travers (G1) winner Runaway Groom, Cherokee Run finished second in the 1993 Preakness and sixth in the Belmont before cutting back to

sprints as an older horse, earning champion sprinter honors in 1994 after winning the Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) at Churchill Downs. He sired a pair of juvenile champions, but Cherokee Run failed to make an impact on the Triple Crown as a sire or broodmare sire. Rodriguez counts 1997 Belmont winner Touch Gold as his second maternal broodmare sire, and his female family features a nice mix of speed and stamina.



Chelsea Durand



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Of all the horses taking aim at the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1), Tiztastic boasts one of the most interesting pedigrees.

The upset winner of the Louisiana Derby (G2) is closely inbred to Tapit, a three-time leading North American sire. Winner of the 1 1/8-mile Wood Memorial (G1), Tapit is known for passing on stamina at stud, with his best runners including 2022 Horse of the Year Flightline and 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) winners Tonalist, Creator, Tapwrit, and Essential Quality. The progeny of Tapit win at a lofty average distance of 7.6 furlongs.

So how exactly does Tapit fit into Tiztastic's pedigree? First off, Tapit is the sire of Constitution, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1) and 1 1/8-mile Donn H. (G1). Constitution, in turn, is the sire of Tiz the Law, a decorated campaigner who won the Champagne (G1), Florida Derby (G1), Travers (G1), and a shortened edition of the Belmont over distances from one mile to 1 1/4 miles.

Tiz the Law is the sire of Tiztastic, which makes Tiztastic a great-grandson of Tapit on that side. Tiztastic hails from the first crop of foals sired by Tiz the Law; others in this group include Miss Grillo (G2) winner Scythian and Oak Leaf (G2) conqueror Non Compliant, two fillies who have achieved their signature wins racing 1 1/16 miles. Already Tiz the Law's foals have compiled an average winning distance of 7.0 furlongs, a stout number for a stallion whose oldest foals are young three-year-olds.

Tiztastic is simultaneously a grandson of Tapit through his dam Keesha, a daughter of Tapit.

Keesha never raced, but as a broodmare she's making up for her lack of on-track accomplishments. Prior to Tiztastic she produced Interpolate, winner of the seven-furlong Ruthless S. and runner-up in the about-seven-furlong Beaumont (G2). Another of Keesha's foals, Midway Mischief, won twice over distances of 1 1/16 miles and 1 1/8 miles.

Since Keesha is a daughter of Tapit, it's worth highlighting Tapit's record as a broodmare sire. His daughters have foaled a bevy of accomplished racers over a variety of distances and surfaces. The best of them include:

- Arcangelo, champion three-year-old male and winner of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont and 1 1/4-mile Travers.
- Pretty Mischievous, a champion three-year-old filly who won the Kentucky Oaks (G1), Test (G1), and Acorn (G1) over distances from seven furlongs to 1 1/8 miles.
- Cody's Wish, 2023 Horse of the Year and a two-time winner of the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1).
- Saudi Crown, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Pennsylvania Derby (G1).
- Kingsbarns, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster (G1) and 1 3/16-mile Louisiana Derby (G2).
- Society, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Cotillion (G1) and seven-furlong Ballerina H. (G1).
- Gran Alegria, a six-time Group 1 winner over distances from 1,200 meters (about six furlongs) to 1,600 meters (about one mile) in Japan.
- Tenfold, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Pimlico Special (G3) and a close third to Triple Crown winner Justify in the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1).

Having Tapit as both his grandsire and his great-grandsire means Tiztastic has likely inherited a double dose of Tapit's stamina. This bodes well for Tiztastic's prospects for success over classic distances.

If there's one chink in the pedigree of Tiztastic from a Kentucky Derby perspective, it's the fact Tapit has yet to sire a Kentucky Derby winner despite having many attempts to do so. No fewer than 14 sons of Tapit have tackled the Run for the Roses, including at least one every year from 2012 through 2023.

Granted, Tiztastic isn't a son of Tapit, and there's a chance Tiz the Law (who finished second as the favorite in the 2020 Kentucky Derby) will have better luck siring a Run for the Roses victor. But since Tapit's genetics have proven more suitable for success in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont in late spring than the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby in mid-spring, we have to ponder the possibility that the doubling up of Tapit in Tiztastic's pedigree will prompt the Louisiana Derby winner to enjoy his greatest successes a few weeks or months after the first Saturday in May.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

After placing in the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2), Street Sense (G3), and Southwest (G3), Tiztastic put it all together in the Louisiana Derby (G2) at Fair Grounds, earning a Kentucky Derby (G1) berth. The sophomore colt rallied four-wide to record a 7-1 upset win. The confirmed closer overcame conditions that appeared to favor speed and inside paths, displaying the progress needed to compete at the highest levels. Tiztastic will be a candidate to outperform his projected double-digit odds with another forward move in the Kentucky Derby.

**OWNER:** Tiztastic is campaigned by Winchell Thoroughbreds (Ron and Joan Winchell) and Coolmore connections (Mrs. John Magnier, Derrick Smith, and John Tabor). Winchell Thoroughbreds, which was started by the late Verne Winchell,



# TIZTASTIC CONT.

Joan's husband and Ron's father, has campaigned more than a dozen horses in the Kentucky Derby (sole owner or partnership), with their top result coming via runner-up Epicenter in 2022. Winchell also co-owned Gun Runner, who finished third in the 2016 Kentucky Derby before going on to earn Horse of the Year honors in 2017. Prior to his involvement in Coolmore-affiliated partnerships, Tabor owned 1995 Kentucky Derby winner Thunder Gulch. Magnier, Smith, and Tabor, who co-owned 2024 Kentucky Derby runner-up and champion three-year-old male Sierra Leone, are seeking their first Kentucky Derby win under the Coolmore banner.

**TRAINER:** North America's all-time leading trainer by wins, Steve Asmussen, has won nearly 11,000 races since his first in July 1986. He seems destined to eventually win the Kentucky Derby, but it remains one of the few major dirt races to elude him, compiling a 26-0-3-2 mark. A former jockey, the Hall of Famer has finished second with Epicenter, Lookin at Lee, and Nehro, and his third-place finishers, Curlin and Gun Runner, went on to be named Horse of the Year. Asmussen has compiled more wins at Churchill Downs than anyone, and the 59-year-old horseman seeks to become the sixth living trainer to win all three Triple Crown races. He also will saddle Publisher in this year's Kentucky Derby.

**JOCKEY:** Fourth when making his Kentucky Derby debut in 2010, Joel Rosario captured the 2013 edition aboard late-running Orb in his fourth appearance. His overall record reads 13-1-1-0. Winner of the Eclipse Award for leading jockey in 2021, Rosario guided champion three-year-old male Epicenter to runner-up finishes in the 2022 Kentucky Derby and Preakness (G1) for Asmussen and Winchell Thoroughbreds.

**BREEDER:** A \$335,000 yearling purchase at the 2023 Keeneland September sale, Kentucky-bred Tiztastic will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for breeder Capital Bloodstock.

**SIRE:** From the second crop of 2020 Belmont (G1) winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Tiz the Law, a New York-bred son of Constitution, Tiztastic will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for his sire.

**DAM:** Tiztastic is the second stakes winner out of the unraced Tapit mare Keesha, a half-sister to turf sprint stakes winner Shumoos and stakes-winning miler Steady On. One of the great stallions of the modern era and the leading broodmare sire of 2023, Tapit is known for siring a quartet of Belmont winners. As broodmare sire, Tapit counts 2023 Belmont winner and champion three-year-old male Arcangelo and 2023 Kentucky Oaks winner and champion three-year-old filly Pretty Mischievous among his accolades. With the mighty Storm Cat as his second maternal damsire, Tiztastic is bred to appreciate the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby distance on both sides of his pedigree.



# TAPPAN STREET



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

A well-timed rally carried Tappan Street to victory in the 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, stamping the bay colt as the latest top-tier Kentucky Derby (G1) contender sired by Into Mischief.

Into Mischief is in the midst of a stellar stud career. He's ranked as North America's leading sire by progeny earnings every year from 2019 through 2024, becoming the first to top the chart more than three times since Bold Ruler in the 1960s.

Along the way, Into Mischief has sired a spectacular list of champions and Grade 1 winners. Many of his best runners have been sprinters and milers like Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) conquerors Life Is Good and Goldencents, Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) winners Gamine and Covfefe, and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1) victor Wonder Wheel.

But make no mistake, Into Mischief is also capable of siring classic winners. In 2020, his son Authentic wired the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby and finished second in the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1) before winning the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) to earn Horse of the Year honors. The following year, Into Mischief sired a second Kentucky Derby winner when Mandaloun claimed the roses via the disqualification of Medina Spirit.

In addition, Into Mischief is the sire of 2018 Kentucky Derby third-place finisher Audible, runaway Dubai World Cup (G1) hero Laurel River, and Santa Anita H. (G1) winner Newgate, all of whom have shown high-class form over 1 1/4 miles.

The record for most Kentucky Derby winners sired by a single stallion is three, held jointly by Virgil, Falsetto, Sir Gallahad III, and Bull Lea. Into Mischief has a strong chance to join this elite group in 2025. In addition to Tappan Street, Into Mischief's contenders for this year's Derby include Fountain of Youth (G2) winner and Florida Derby runner-up Sovereignty, champion two-year-old male Citizen Bull, and San Felipe (G2) runner-up Barnes.

In the case of Tappan Street, his Kentucky Derby credentials are further bolstered by his dam, Virginia Key, who brings some stamina to the genetic mix.

Virginia Key was a capable route racer. During her brief career, she won a one-mile and 40-yard maiden special weight and a one-mile allowance in addition to placing third (beaten only three-quarters of

a length) in the 1 1/8-mile Gazelle (G2). Prior to Tappan Street, she foaled the stakes-placed Distorted d'Oro, a three-time winner over distances from about one mile to 1 1/16 miles.

Virginia Key, in turn, is a daughter of Distorted Humor out of the Newfoundland mare Our Khrysty. Newfoundland finished second by narrow margins in the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) and Suburban H. (G1) racing 1 1/4 miles, and he passed on his stamina to Our Khrysty, who scored her signature win in the 1 1/16-mile Turnback the Alarm H. (G3).

As for Distorted Humor, he's enjoyed resounding success as both a sire and a broodmare sire. His sons and daughters including champion three-year-old male Funny Cide, a Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner who coincidentally defeated Newfoundland in the Jockey Club Gold Cup; Drosselmeyer, winner of the Breeders' Cup Classic and 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1); and Flower Alley, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1) and the sire of Kentucky Derby/Preakness winner I'll Have Another.

Meanwhile, daughters of Distorted Humor have foaled champion Arrogate, winner of the Breeders' Cup Classic, Travers, and Dubai World Cup; Golden Sixty, victorious in a bevy of Group 1 prizes racing as far as 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles) in Hong Kong; and the above-mentioned Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile winner Life Is Good, who stretched his speed over 1 1/8 miles to win the Pegasus World Cup (G1).

The cross of Into Mischief with the Distorted Humor mare Virginia Key yields a high-class pedigree with potential for success over 1 1/4 miles. There's a good chance Tappan Street will develop into Into Mischief's record-equaling third Kentucky Derby winner.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A midpack stalker, Tappan Street exits a fine win in the Florida Derby (G1), surging to a clear lead in upper stretch and holding favored Sovereignty safe for a 1 1/4-length decision. He will look to get first run on deep closers in the Kentucky Derby (G1). After winning first time out at Gulfstream Park in late December, the early/presser improved nicely upon a runner-up effort in his stakes debut, the Holy Bull S. (G3). Tappan Street is lightly raced with only three starts, but the progressing colt owns strong connections and merits serious respect based on form.

**OWNER:** Tappan Street races for the partnership of WinStar Farm (Kenny Troutt), CHC (Kit Ng), and Cold Press Racing. WinStar's first Kentucky Derby appearance came via runner-up Bluegrass Cat in 2006, and the Central Kentucky farm campaigned 2010 winner Super Saver and 2018 Triple Crown hero Justify (in partnership). WinStar has compiled a 23-2-1-2 record in the Kentucky Derby. China Horse Club (CHC) co-owned Justify and Audible, who was third in 2018. Tappan Street will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for Cold Press Racing.



# TAPPAN STREET CONT.

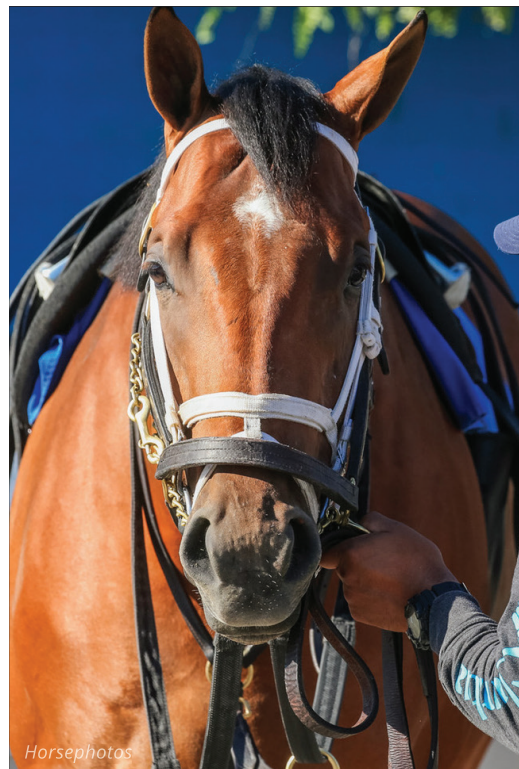
**TRAINER:** Brad Cox won his first attempt at the Kentucky Derby via disqualification, with Mandaloun being placed first in 2021, and Essential Quality was third the same year. The 45-year-old Louisville, Kentucky native has had multiple runners every year since then, recording a third with Angel of Empire in 2023 and a fourth with Catching Freedom last year. The two-time Eclipse Award winner also captured the Belmont (G1) with Essential Quality. His overall Kentucky Derby scorecard reads 11-1-0-2, and Cox also will saddle Final Gambit in this year's field.

**JOCKEY:** Luis Saez finished first in the 2019 Kentucky Derby aboard Maximum Security, who was disqualified and placed 17th for interference. His best result from 10 other starts came aboard Essential Quality, who was elevated to third via disqualification in 2021. A 32-year-old native of Panama, Saez returned to win his first Belmont on Essential Quality, doubling up last year with Dornoch.

**BREEDER:** Tappan Street will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for breeder Blue Heaven Farm (Adam Corndorf), who sold the bay Kentucky-bred for \$1 million as a yearling at the 2023 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga August sale.

**SIRE:** One of the world's greatest sires, Into Mischief has produced Kentucky Derby winners Authentic and Mandaloun (2020-21), and the 20-year-old stallion's progeny earned more than \$30 million in 2024, leading the North American general sire list for a sixth consecutive time. Only Bold Ruler (eight), the sire of 1973 Triple Crown winner Secretariat, has been leading sire more times than Into Mischief in the last century. By Harlan's Holiday, Into Mischief owns a lengthy list of accolades, and Tappan Street will be one of his three Kentucky Derby starters this year (Citizen Bull and Sovereignty).

**DAM:** Tappan Street is the first stakes winner out of the Grade 2-placed Distorted Humor mare Virginia Key, who is also the dam of stakes-placed Distorted d'Oro. She's a half-sister to Grade 1 juvenile winner Grace Adler and Pyrenees, winner of last year's Pimlico Special (G3) at 1 3/16 miles. Tappan Street's female family is geared toward Triple Crown distances. Distorted Humor, a leading general and freshman sire, counts 2003 Kentucky Derby hero Funny Cide among his 163 stakes winners. And while still looking to make a serious mark upon the Triple Crown, Distorted Humor has developed into a prominent broodmare sire, with Hall of Famer Arrogate, who established a North American record with more than \$17.4 million in earnings, among his notable runners. Kentucky Derby contenders Citizen Bull and Sandman also count Distorted Humor as their broodmare sire.



Horsephotos



# SOVEREIGNTY



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

There was a time not too many years ago when a horse like Sovereignty might have been overlooked as a Kentucky Derby (G1) contender because of his pedigree.

Even with decisive stretch-running scores in the 1 1/16-mile Street Sense (G3) and 1 1/16-mile Fountain of Youth (G2) under his belt, bettors might have doubted Sovereignty's ability to stretch out over 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby. The reason? His sire, Into Mischief.

Into Mischief was a sprinter/miler, winning the 1 1/16-mile CashCall Futurity (G1) and finishing second in the seven-furlong Malibu (G1). And as recently as 2020, he had a reputation for being almost exclusively a source of speed at stud, with his best runners included two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Goldencents, Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) heroine Covfefe, and three-time Grade 1-winning sprinter/miler Practical Joke.

But then Into Mischief's son Authentic won the 2020 Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) racing 1 1/4 miles, earning Horse of the Year honors. Then another son of Into Mischief, Mandaloun, won the 2021 Kentucky Derby via disqualification. All of a sudden, Into Mischief was the sire of back-to-back Kentucky Derby winners.

Into Mischief continues to sire plenty of sprinters and milers, but as Authentic and Mandaloun vividly demonstrate, his progeny occasionally prove effective over 1 1/4 miles and shouldn't be underestimated where the Kentucky Derby is concerned.

That goes double for Sovereignty. The genetics of Into Mischief represent only half of Sovereignty's pedigree, and his dam, Crowned, introduces a hefty dose of stamina into the equation.

Crowned is an unraced daughter of Bernardini out of Mushka, by Empire Maker. There's a ton of racing class to analyze here, so let's break it down one horse at a time.

Bernardini is remembered equally for his racing ability and stud career. The champion three-year-old male of 2006 was a top-class route racer who won the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1), 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1), and 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1). He's passed on his stamina at stud, with his progeny compiling a lofty average winning distance of 7.5 furlongs. The best of them include Travers winners Alpha and Stay Thirsty.

Bernardini is also developing a strong record as a broodmare sire, with his daughters foaling two-time Pegasus World Cup Turf (G1) winner Colonel Liam, Saudi Cup (G1) hero Emblem Road, Travers winner Catholic Boy, and the multiple Grade 1 winners Clairiere, Maxfield, and Chancer McPatrick. The specific cross of Into Mischief with Bernardini mares has previously yielded Owendale, a multiple Grade 3-winning route racer who placed third by 1 1/4 lengths in the 2019 Preakness.

Now, what about Mushka? She was a versatile and long-winded filly who won the 1 1/8-mile Demoiselle (G2) on dirt, the 1 3/8-mile Glens Falls H. (G3) on turf, and the 1 1/8-mile Spinster (G1) on synthetic.

As for Empire Maker, he counted the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) as his signature victory, though he also won the Wood Memorial (G1) and Florida Derby (G1) racing 1 1/8 miles and finished second in the Kentucky Derby. As a stallion, Empire Maker has proven to be a source of classic stamina. His sons Pioneerof the Nile and Bodemeister each finished second in the Kentucky Derby. Pioneerof the Nile subsequently sired 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, while Bodemeister's son Always Dreaming won the 2017 Kentucky Derby.

Prior to foaling Sovereignty, Crowned produced two daughters of Into Mischief: Jane Grey and Misintention. These fillies emulated their sire's racing prowess; Jane Grey broke her maiden racing seven furlongs and placed in five allowances over distances from six furlongs to one mile, while Misintention placed in maiden special weights over distances from seven furlongs to one mile.

But Sovereignty, from all appearances, is a different type of horse — more like Authentic or Mandaloun, seemingly inheriting the ideal blend of speed and stamina from his sire and dam. Racing 1 1/4 miles on the first Saturday in May should be within reach for this talented bay colt.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A powerful closer, Sovereignty impressively broke his maiden when shipping to Churchill Downs for the Street Sense (G3) last fall, rallying to win by a widening five-length margin. His affinity for the Twin Spires may prove to be an advantage, and Sovereignty has a pair of commendable efforts in preparation this year, closing boldly to win the Holy Bull (G3) and finishing second in the Florida Derby (G1) at Gulfstream Park. Sovereignty figures to benefit from a projected speed-laden field.

**OWNER:** Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum's Godolphin will seek their first Kentucky Derby win. And along with Sovereignty, the international operation will have East Avenue in the 20-horse field. They represent Godolphin's first starters since Essential Quality was elevated to third via disqualification in 2021, the best result from 13 previous starts. Godolphin has swept the Eclipse Award for leading owner the last four years, winning eight times overall.



# SOVEREIGNTY CONT.

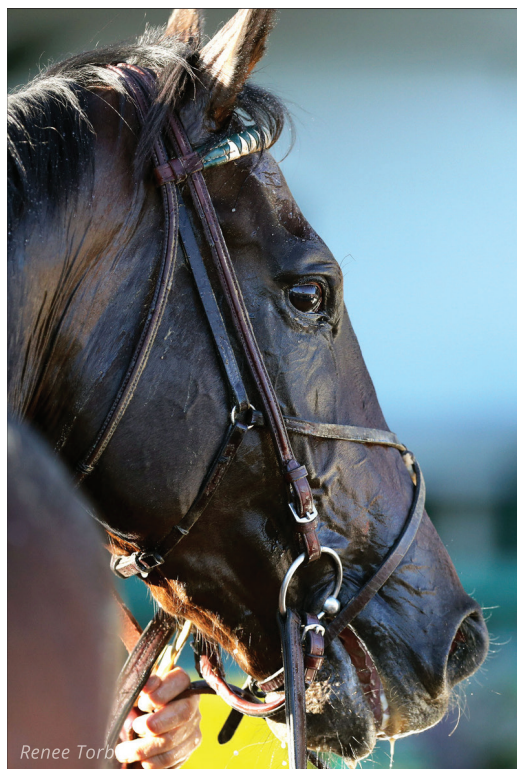
**TRAINER:** Bill Mott owns a 13-1-0-1 Kentucky Derby record, winning the 2019 edition via disqualification with Country House. A South Dakota native, the 71-year-old worked as an assistant for Hall of Famer Jack Van Berg before going out on his own in 1978, and Mott became the youngest trainer (45) ever elected to the Hall of Fame in 1998. Winner of the 2010 Belmont (G1) with Drosselmeyer, Mott saddled his first Kentucky Derby starter in 1984 but sent out only six runners over the next 34 years. He's become much more involved over the last decade, with Sovereignty being his seventh Kentucky Derby starter in the last eight years.

**JOCKEY:** Junior Alvarado finished fourth when making his first Kentucky Derby appearance aboard Frosted in 2016, his best result from five attempts. His last two came aboard Mott-trained horses, and Alvarado was the regular rider for 2023 Horse of the Year Cody's Wish.

**BREEDER:** Sovereignty was bred in Kentucky by Godolphin, whose best result from three previous starts as a breeder came in 2021 with third-placer Essential Quality.

**SIRE:** One of the world's greatest sires, Into Mischief has produced Kentucky Derby winners Authentic and Mandaloun (2020-21), and the 20-year-old stallion's progeny earned more than \$30 million in 2024, leading the North American general sire list for a sixth consecutive time. Only Bold Ruler (eight), the sire of 1973 Triple Crown winner Secretariat, has been the leading sire more than Into Mischief in the last century. By Harlan's Holiday, Into Mischief owns a lengthy list of accolades, and Sovereignty will be one of his three Kentucky Derby starters this year (Citizen Bull and Tappan Street).

**DAM:** Sovereignty is the first stakes winner out of the unraced Bernardini mare Crowned, a half-sister to Grade 1-winning Mushka, and an abundance of stamina influences can be found in Sovereignty's female family. Winner of the 2006 Preakness, champion three-year-old male Bernardini proved to be a leading sire and an influential broodmare sire, recording the highest percentage of graded stakes winners to starters of all broodmare sires with active runners for a period earlier this decade. He's still looking to make a mark upon the Kentucky Derby as a broodmare sire.



# FINAL GAMBIT



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

A terrific homestretch rally allowed Final Gambit to overcome a bumping start and dominate the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3), his Road to the Kentucky Derby debut.

The Jeff Ruby took place at a distance of 1 1/8 miles over the synthetic Tapeta track at Turfway Park. The Kentucky Derby (G1) is a 1 1/4-mile dirt race. Does Final Gambit have the pedigree to switch distances and surfaces successfully for the Run for the Roses?

There's a strong chance the answer is "yes" on both accounts.

Final Gambit is a son of Not This Time, a stallion with the genetic makeup to sire major winners over a wide variety of distances and surfaces. Not This Time is a son of European grass star Giant's Causeway, who won Group 1 races over distances from one mile to 1 5/16 miles in addition to finishing second in the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) on dirt.

Plus, Not This Time's dam is Miss Macy Sue, a stakes winner on dirt and synthetic who previously foaled Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Liam's Map.

Giant's Causeway sired top-notch runners on dirt, turf, and synthetic, but his progeny primarily thrived racing one mile or farther. That includes Not This Time, winner of the Iroquois (G3) and runner-up in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) racing 1 1/16 miles on dirt.

Not This Time is following Giant's Causeway's example as a stallion, with the added versatility of siring sprinters and route racers alike.

A sampling of Not This Time's top progeny includes Epicenter, a champion three-year-old who won the 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1) after finishing second in the Kentucky Derby and 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1); Up to the Mark, a champion turf male after winning three Grade 1 races over distances from one mile to 1 1/4 miles; Cogburn, a record-setting winner of the 5 1/2-furlong Jaipur (G1) on turf; Next, a multiple graded stakes-winning dirt marathon star; and Sibelius, Just One Time, and Princess Noor, all Grade 1-winning dirt sprinters.

Since the top half of Final Gambit's pedigree suggests he could develop into any sort of horse—sprinter, miler, router, dirt horse, turf horse, synthetic specialist—we'll look to the bottom half of his

pedigree to gauge which direction he might ultimately lean.

Final Gambit's dam is Pachinko, who scored her lone victory in a one-mile maiden special weight over the Ellis Park turf course. Her first foal, Havildar, is a two-time winner over distances of 1 1/16 miles and one mile and 70 yards on dirt.

Pachinko, in turn, is a daughter of Tapit out of Hachita. Tapit won the 1 1/8-mile Wood Memorial (G1) on dirt and is a three-time leading North American sire best known for siring long-winded dirt racers, including four winners of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1): Tonalist, Creator, Tapwrit, and Essential Quality. Tapit is also the sire of 2022 Horse of the Year Flightline, whose undefeated career culminated with a runaway win in the Breeders' Cup Classic.

Tapit is also developing a strong reputation as a broodmare sire. His daughters have foaled a bevy of accomplished horses, including Horse of the Year and two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Cody's Wish, champion three-year-old filly and 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1) winner Pretty Mischievous, champion three-year-old male and Belmont/Travers winner Arcangelo, and the six-time Group 1-winning turf sprinter/miler Gran Alegria.

As for Hachita, she's enjoyed success as a broodmare. Aside from Pachinko, she has foaled 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Prix Jean Romanet (G1) winner Announce, the multiple Group 3-placed Straight Thinking, and 1 1/16-mile Athenia (G3) third-place finisher Mexican Gold. All three of these horses did their best work on turf.

Taking all of these elements together, it's clear the pedigree of Final Gambit is packed with multi-surface versatility. While Final Gambit has proven best on Tapeta and has yet to race on dirt, there's no reason to believe he'll struggle while switching surfaces, especially since Not This Time and Tapit were both talented dirt racers.

Furthermore, there's nothing in Final Gambit's pedigree to suggest 1 1/4 miles is out of reach. Don't underestimate his chances of shining over the Kentucky Derby conditions.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A dedicated late runner, Final Gambit graduated the third time out in mid-February, rallying from far back to win a maiden special weight on Turfway Park's synthetic track, going away by more than two lengths. He came back five weeks later to upset the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3), earning a Kentucky Derby (G1) berth by closing from far back to win by daylight. The rapidly improving gray registered a commendable 101 Brisnet Speed rating for that victory. The big question is dirt; the lightly raced colt has raced exclusively on synthetics and turf. Final Gambit will try to emulate Animal Kingdom, who won the 2011 Kentucky Derby in his first dirt start.

**OWNER:** Juddmonte Farm (Fahad bin Khalid) has compiled an outstanding 6-1-2-1 record in the Kentucky Derby, winning the



# FINAL GAMBIT CONT.

2021 edition via disqualification with Mandaloun. Empire Maker, who finished second as the favorite in the 2003 Kentucky Derby, came back to win the Belmont (G1) five weeks later, and Aptitude finished second in the 2000 Kentucky Derby. A champion owner in England and France, Juddmonte has received four Eclipse Awards for outstanding owner in America.

**TRAINER:** Brad Cox won his first attempt at the Kentucky Derby via disqualification, with Mandaloun being placed first in 2021, and Essential Quality was third the same year. The 45-year-old Louisville, Kentucky native has had multiple runners every year since then, recording a third with Angel of Empire in 2023 and a fourth with Catching Freedom last year. The two-time Eclipse Award winner also captured the Belmont (G1) with Essential Quality. His overall Kentucky Derby scorecard reads 11-1-0-2, and Cox also will saddle Tappan Street in this year's field.

**JOCKEY:** Final Gambit will be the first Kentucky Derby mount for Luan Machado, who was a top rider in his native Brazil before moving his tack to America late in 2018. Machado won his second consecutive riding title, and fifth overall, during the 2025 Turfway winter/spring meet.

**BREEDER:** A gray homebred colt for Juddmonte Farm, Final Gambit was bred in Kentucky. Juddmonte owns the same record as a breeder/owner in the Kentucky Derby (6-1-2-1). Juddmonte has been recognized with five Eclipse Awards as the top breeder in America.

**SIRE:** A 10-length maiden winner, Not This Time exited a neck second in the 2016 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) with an injury and was forced to retire. He quickly developed into a top sire, making an impact upon the Triple Crown trail since his first crop hit the track in 2020. The 11-year-old stallion has produced seven Grade 1 winners from his first four crops. By Giant's Causeway, Not This Time is the sire of 2022 champion three-year-old male Epicenter, who finished second in the Kentucky Derby and Preakness (G1).

**DAM:** The first stakes winner out of the Tapit mare Pachinko, a half-sister to Group 1 French winner Announce, Final Gambit's immediate female family is filled with turf performers, and it makes sense Cox initially tried him on grass. Broodmare sire Tapit does offer encouragement for the main track. Known for siring a quartet of Belmont winners, Tapit ranked as the leading broodmare sire of 2023, counting 2023 Belmont winner and champion three-year-old male Arcangelo and 2023 Kentucky Oaks winner and champion three-year-old filly Pretty Mischievous among his notables.



# COAL BATTLE



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Sprints and short routes are clearly within the wheelhouse of Coal Battle. But can he handle the testing 1 1/4-mile distance of the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1)?

Following a stretch-running win in the 6 1/2-furlong Jean Lafitte S., Coal Battle enjoyed abundant success on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, winning the one-mile Remington Springboard Mile, 1 1/16-mile Smarty Jones S., and 1 1/16-mile Rebel (G2) in succession.

Coal Battle's success racing 1 1/16 miles or less is reminiscent of his sire, Coal Front. While never a Grade 1 winner, Coal Front proved dominant at slightly lower class levels, winning half a dozen stakes (five of them graded) over distances from six furlongs to 1 1/16 miles. His greatest triumph came in the Godolphin Mile (G2), but he also wired the six-furlong Gallant Bob (G2) in the sharp time of 1:08.94.

Coal Front's first foals reached the races in 2023. Since then, they've compiled an average winning distance of 6.5 furlongs, which is indicative of a stallion who passes on speed more than stamina. In addition to Coal Battle, Coal Front is the sire of Xtreme Diva (a two-time stakes winner sprinting six furlongs) and Haulin Ice (dominant winner of the seven-furlong Azalea S.).

This is all a bit surprising when you consider how Coal Front was bred top and bottom to shine over classic distances. His sire, Stay Thirsty, won the 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1) and placed second in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1). And Coal Front's dam, Miner's Secret, is a daughter of long-winded 2003 Horse of the Year Mineshaft, the sire of Kentucky Derby runner-up Nehro, Belmont runner-up Fly Down, and Saudi Cup (G1) winner Senor Buscador.

But it turns out the progeny of Stay Thirsty win at a modest average distance of 6.6 furlongs, so his own stamina notwithstanding, Stay Thirsty is a source of speed more than two-turn prowess. Coal Front followed that formula and is passing it on even further.

The tricky part for Coal Battle is the fact the dam's side of his pedigree is similarly geared toward speed.

Coal Battle is the first foal produced by Wolfblade, a pure sprinter who recorded eight of her nine wins in 4 1/2-furlong dashes at Charles Town. Her longest win came in a five-furlong sprint, though

she did manage to place over 6 1/2 furlongs in the West Virginia Triple Crown Nutrition Breeders' Classic S.

Wolfblade is a daughter of Midshipman out of Venice Queen, by Latent Heat. Midshipman was a talented sprinter/miler voted champion two-year-old male of 2008 after winning the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) and seven-furlong Del Mar Futurity (G1). The following year, he placed third in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1).

In the U.S., Midshipman is primarily known for siring sprinters and milers, though in Chile he's responsible for the long-winded multiple Group 1 winners The Goat and Fortino, who have respectively won at the highest level over distances of 2,200 meters (about 1 3/8 miles) and 2,400 meters (about 1 1/2 miles).

Daughters of Midshipman have definitely passed on Midshipman's speed. In addition to Coal Battle, they have foaled Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint (G1) and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint (G2) winner Golden Pal, Ladies Turf Sprint (G2) heroine Bay Storm, Amsterdam (G2) conqueror New York Thunder, and Inglis Sires' (G1) winner Manaal, all of whom achieved their signature wins dashing seven furlongs or shorter.

As for Venice Queen, she was purely a sprinter, recording her lone victory in a 5 1/2-furlong \$40,000 maiden claimer in addition to placing in the 5 1/2-furlong Tippet S. and seven-furlong Gin Talking S. That isn't surprising since her sire, Latent Heat, recorded his biggest wins sprinting seven furlongs in the Malibu (G1) and San Carlos H. (G2).

With few exceptions, the pedigree of Coal Battle is all about speed. Some horses defy their breeding and excel over distances they aren't bred to handle, but if Coal Battle runs to his pedigree, it's fair to wonder if the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance is longer than ideal.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Coal Battle, a popular colt with lesser-known connections, recorded his first three wins at Evangeline Downs, Delta Downs, and Remington Park. He posted a minor upset in December's Springboard Mile, a Kentucky Derby (G1) qualifier at the latter venue. He proved to be a serious contender at Oaklawn Park this winter, showing his versatility by recording a frontrunning win in the Smarty Jones and rallying from midpack to take the Rebel (G2) at 11-1. The sophomore overtook the pacesetters before weakening to third in the Arkansas Derby (G1). He may not have been fully cranked last time after four consecutive wins, rating as a potential rebound candidate in the Kentucky Derby, but the 1 1/4-mile distance looms a question with his breeding. But hard-trying Coal Battle has made a career out of exceeding expectations.

**OWNER:** Coal Battle will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for Norman Stables (Robbie Norman).



# COAL BATTLE CONT.

**TRAINER:** Coal Battle has put 72-year-old Lonnie Briley, who has never attended the Kentucky Derby, in the spotlight. A mainstay at Delta Downs, Midwestern-based Briley earned his first graded stakes victory in this year's Rebel. He's won 338 races since 1991, according to Equibase.

**JOCKEY:** Juan Vargas, a 43-year-old veteran rider from Peru, has gained national attention due to Coal Battle. Based during the year at Delta Downs and other Louisiana tracks, Vargas will make his first Kentucky Derby appearance.

**BREEDER:** Bred in Kentucky by Hume Wornall and Jay Adcock, Coal Battle sold for \$70,000 as a yearling at the 2023 Texas Thoroughbred Association sale. He will be their first Kentucky Derby starter.

**SIRE:** Coal Battle is the most successful offspring from the second crop of Coal Front, who recorded graded stakes wins at six furlongs, 6 1/2 furlongs, seven furlongs, a mile, and 1 1/16 miles. By 2011 Travers (G1) winner and Belmont (G1) runner-up Stay Thirsty, Coal Front counts 1977 Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew as an ancestor on both sides of his pedigree.

**DAM:** Coal Battle is the first foal to race out of the stakes-placed Wolfblade, a West Virginia-bred daughter of Midshipman who competed exclusively in sprints over a 39-race career. By Unbridled's Song, Midshipman was named champion two-year-old male after winning the 2008 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1). He missed the Triple Crown the following spring and never raced at a route again, recording a pair of wins sprinting. Midshipman didn't make any impact on the Triple Crown before being relocated to South America. From a limited sample as a broodmare sire, he's best known for Grade 1-winning turf sprinter Golden Pal. Wolfblade is out of a mare by Grade 1-winning sprinter Latent Heat, a son of Maria's Mon, who sired 2001 Kentucky Derby winner Monarchos and 2010 Kentucky Derby winner Super Saver.



# CHUNK OF GOLD



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Homestretch rallies carried Chunk of Gold to runner-up finishes in the Louisiana Derby (G2) and Risen Star (G2) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, earning the gray colt a spot in the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1) starting gate.

The Louisiana Derby took place over 1 3/16 miles, only slightly shorter than the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby. But Chunk of Gold lost some ground down the Louisiana Derby homestretch, so it's worth analyzing his pedigree to gauge if the Kentucky Derby distance is within his wheelhouse.

Chunk of Gold comes from the second crop of foals sired by Preservationist. As a racehorse, Preservationist achieved a high level of success running long on dirt; though slow to mature, at age six, he won the 1 1/8-mile Woodward (G1) and 1 1/4-mile Suburban (G2) against tough competition.

While Preservationist has yet to enjoy resounding success at stud, he's sired a few capable stakes performers. They include Ican, third in the one-mile Jerome S. on the Road to the Kentucky Derby; Thrilla, third in the 1 1/16-mile Kitten's Joy S. on turf; and Diakonissa, winner of two sprint stakes for West Virginia-breds at Charles Town.

One of Preservationist's most accomplished runners to date is Band of Gold, a filly from his first crop of foals. She won the 1 1/16-mile Martha Washington S. on the Road to the Kentucky Oaks.

Band of Gold was produced by the Cairo Prince mare Play for Gold, who is also the dam of Chunk of Gold. Thus, Band of Gold and Chunk of Gold are full siblings.

Play for Gold wasn't nearly as fast a racehorse as her stakes-caliber foals; her lone start yielded a seventh-place finish in a Keeneland maiden special weight. She's obviously proven superior as a broodmare. Three of her foals have hit the races so far, and all have visited the winner's circle. In addition to Chunk of Gold and Band of Gold, Play for Gold has produced Coexist (by Creative Cause), a four-time claiming and starter allowance winner sprinting on dirt.

Play for Gold's success as a broodmare isn't surprising since she boasts a classy pedigree packed with talented racehorses.

Let's start with her sire, Cairo Prince. While not a Grade 1 winner,

Cairo Prince dominated the one-mile Nashua (G2) and 1 1/16-mile Holy Bull (G2) in addition to finishing second against future champion Honor Code in the 1 1/8-mile Remsen (G2).

At stud, Cairo Prince has carved out a productive career as a regular source of stakes winners over a variety of surfaces and distances. His best foals include Cairo Consort, winner of the Sweetest Chant (G3) on turf and a champion two-year-old filly in Canada; My Boy Prince, a five-time stakes winner over distances up to 1 1/8 miles on synthetic and a champion two-year-old male in Canada; Tony Ann and Honey Pants, a pair of graded stakes-winning turf sprinters; Kiss Today Goodbye, Dean Martini, and Cairo Cat, all graded stakes winners running long on dirt; and New and Improved and Cairo Memories, graded stakes-winning grass routers.

Cairo Prince is following the example set by his sire, Pioneer of the Nile, runner-up in the 2009 Kentucky Derby on dirt and a Grade 1 winner on synthetic. Pioneer of the Nile is best known for siring 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, but his runners achieved high levels of success over many distances and surfaces.

Meanwhile, the dam of Play the Gold is Gold N Shaft, a daughter of long-winded 2003 Horse of the Year Mineshaft. Gold N Shaft never raced, but she achieved some renown for foaling My Boy Jack, winner of the Lexington (G3) and Southwest (G3) racing 1 1/16 miles and the fifth-place finisher in the 2018 Kentucky Derby (G1).

As for Mineshaft, he won four Grade 1 races over distances from 1 1/8 miles to 1 1/4 miles, and he's carved out a long and productive stud career siring stakes winners over a variety of distances. The best include Saudi Cup (G1) winner Senor Buscador, Florida Derby (G1) winner Dialed In, Clark H. (G1) hero and Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) runner-up Effinex, multiple Grade 1 winner It's Tricky, and Cigar Mile H. (G1) hero True Timber.

So what does all of this mean for Chunk of Gold? Many of his closest relatives have enjoyed their best success racing 1 1/8 miles or less, so even though Preservationist won over 1 1/4 miles, the Kentucky Derby distance might be just a little farther than Chunk of Gold wants to run.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Chunk of Gold, a debut maiden winner on Turfway's Tapeta in mid-December, validated his Kentucky Derby candidacy with a runner-up finish in the Louisiana Derby (G2) at Fair Grounds. And while many of his Kentucky Derby rivals were high-priced purchases, including a pair who sold for at least \$1 million, Chunk of Gold has proved to be a terrific bargain after being acquired for \$2,500 as a yearling. The progressing gray colt has finished second in three consecutive stakes, and Chunk of Gold is eligible to get first run on the deep closers as a projected midpack stalker.

OWNER: Terry L. Stephens co-owned O'Besos, who wound up fifth in the 2021 Kentucky Derby, and Chunk of Gold will be his



# CHUNK OF GOLD CONT.

**TRAINER:** Bill Mott owns a 13-1-0-1 Kentucky Derby record, winning the 2019 edition via disqualification with Country House. A South Dakota native, the 71-year-old worked as an assistant for Hall of Famer Jack Van Berg before going out on his own in 1978, and Mott became the youngest trainer (45) ever elected to the Hall of Fame in 1998. Winner of the 2010 Belmont (G1) with Drosselmeyer, Mott saddled his first Kentucky Derby starter in 1984 but sent out only six runners over the next 34 years. He's become much more involved over the last decade, with Sovereignty being his seventh Kentucky Derby starter in the last eight years.

**JOCKEY:** Junior Alvarado finished fourth when making his first Kentucky Derby appearance aboard Frosted in 2016, his best result from five attempts. His last two came aboard Mott-trained horses, and Alvarado was the regular rider for 2023 Horse of the Year Cody's Wish.

**BREEDER:** Sovereignty was bred in Kentucky by Godolphin, whose best result from three previous starts as a breeder came in 2021 with third-placer Essential Quality.

**SIRE:** One of the world's greatest sires, Into Mischief has produced Kentucky Derby winners Authentic and Mandaloun (2020-21), and the 20-year-old stallion's progeny earned more than \$30 million in 2024, leading the North American general sire list for a sixth consecutive time. Only Bold Ruler (eight), the sire of 1973 Triple Crown winner Secretariat, has been the leading sire more than Into Mischief in the last century. By Harlan's Holiday, Into Mischief owns a lengthy list of accolades, and Sovereignty will be one of his three Kentucky Derby starters this year (Citizen Bull and Tappan Street).

**DAM:** Sovereignty is the first stakes winner out of the unraced Bernardini mare Crowned, a half-sister to Grade 1-winning Mushka, and an abundance of stamina influences can be found in Sovereignty's female family. Winner of the 2006 Preakness, champion three-year-old male Bernardini proved to be a leading sire and an influential broodmare sire, recording the highest percentage of graded stakes winners to starters of all broodmare sires with active runners for a period earlier this decade. He's still looking to make a mark upon the Kentucky Derby as a broodmare sire.



# CITIZEN BULL



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Citizen Bull has enjoyed a productive Road to the Kentucky Derby campaign, posting frontrunning successes in the 1 1/16-mile American Pharoah (G1), 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1), and one-mile Robert B. Lewis (G3).

A brief glance at Citizen Bull's pedigree might suggest 1 1/16 miles is the upper limit of his distance capabilities, leaving the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby (G1) out of reach. After all, both his sire and dam sire were sprinter/milers who failed to prove their worth over 1 1/4 miles.

But there's a lot more to analyzing pedigrees than simply reviewing the successes and failures of immediate ancestors as racehorses. When it comes to the stallions in pedigrees, one must consider the types of runners they sire. It's possible for a sprinter to consistently sire top-tier route racers, and vice versa.

This is relevant to the pedigree of Citizen Bull. His sire, Into Mischief, seemed destined to sire sprinters and milers after winning the 1 1/16-mile CashCall Futurity (G1) and finishing second in the seven-furlong Malibu (G1). And certainly many of his runners have followed this route, with prime examples including Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winners Life Is Good and Goldencents and Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) heroines Gamine and Covfefe.

But guess what? Into Mischief is also the sire of two Kentucky Derby winners: Mandaloun (2021) and Authentic (2020). The latter earned Horse of the Year honors after adding the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) to his record.

Sure, Into Mischief is typically a source of speed, with his progeny winning at a modest average distance of 6.8 furlongs. But no one can claim he's incapable of siring a Kentucky Derby winner. It helps that Into Mischief is a half-sibling to four-time champion Beholder and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G1) winner Mendelssohn, major stakes winners over distances as far as 1 1/4 miles and about 1 3/16 miles, respectively.

The bottom half of Citizen Bull's pedigree demonstrates the same. His dam is No Joke, an unraced daughter of Distorted Humor out of Unenchantedevening. Distorted Humor was a pure sprinter/miler, winning a quartet of graded stakes over distances from seven furlongs to one mile. Like Into Mischief, his progeny win at a speed-oriented average distance, in this case 7.1 furlongs.

But the best of Distorted Humor's runners have proven thoroughly capable of handling classic distances. Champion three-year-old male Funny Cide won the Kentucky Derby and 1 3/16-mile Preakness. Drosselmeyer took the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) and Breeders' Cup Classic. And don't forget 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1) winner and Breeders' Cup Classic runner-up Flower Alley, the sire of champion and Kentucky Derby/Preakness hero I'll Have Another.

Distorted Humor's record as a broodmare sire is also encouraging. Daughters of Distorted Humor have foaled:

- Arrogate, winner of the Breeders' Cup Classic, Travers, and Dubai World Cup (G1) racing 1 1/4 miles. As a stallion, Arrogate is responsible for Belmont winner Arcangelo and Preakness hero Seize the Grey.
- Golden Sixty, a 10-time Group 1 winner in Hong Kong who won running as far as 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles).
- Happy Saver, conqueror of the 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1).
- Elate, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1) and two editions of the 1 1/4-mile Delaware H. (G2).
- Constitution, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1) and 1 1/8-mile Donn H. (G1). Constitution is the sire of Tiz the Law, winner of the Travers and also a shortened 1 1/8-mile edition of the Belmont.

If there's one knock on the pedigree of Citizen Bull, it's the fact the cross of Into Mischief with Distorted Humor mares has tended thus far to yield sprinters a milers like the above-mentioned Life Is Good and also Practical Joke, a three-time Grade 1 winner over distances from seven furlongs to one mile.

But the sample size is relatively small, and the fact both Into Mischief and Distorted Humor have sired Kentucky Derby winners bodes well for Citizen Bull's chances of success on the first Saturday in May.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Named champion two-year-old male, Citizen Bull opened his three-year-old season with an authoritative gate-to-wire win in the Robert B. Lewis (G3) at Santa Anita in early February, his third straight convincing stakes victory. But he came back flat from a two-month freshening in the Santa Anita Derby (G1), giving way readily to be a well-beaten fourth. Following a performance too bad to be true, the classy colt figures to be much sharper in the Kentucky Derby (G1) and rates as a rebound candidate. The last four Kentucky Derby winners have bounced back from setbacks in their final prep, and Citizen Bull is eligible to be part of the early pace with his speed.

**OWNER:** Citizen Bull is owned by the consortium of Starlight Racing (Jack Wolf), Madaket Stables (Sol Kumin), SF Racing (Gavin Murphy), Stonestreet Stables (Barbara Banke), Diane Bashor, Determined Stables (Matt Dorman), Robert E. Masterson, Tom J. Ryan, Waves Edge Capital (W. Gregg Slager), and Catherine Donovan. Starlight and Kumin (through multiple nom de courses) were involved in partnerships that campaigned Kentucky Derby winners Justify (2018) and Authentic (2020).



# CITIZEN BULL CONT.

**TRAINER:** Tied with Ben Jones for the most wins, Hall of Famer Bob Baffert returns to the Kentucky Derby after a three-year suspension by Churchill Downs following the post-race disqualification of Medina Spirit. His six Kentucky Derby victories include a pair of Triple Crown winners, American Pharoah (2015) and Justify (2018), and Baffert has compiled three seconds and three thirds from 34 starts. His first appearance came in 1996, with Cavonnier finishing second by a nose, and the 72-year-old Arizona native won the next two editions with Hall of Famer Silver Charm and Real Quiet. Along with winning the Preakness (G1) a record eight times, Baffert owns the most Triple Crown race wins (17). The Southern California-based conditioner also will send out Rodriguez in the 2025 Kentucky Derby field.

**JOCKEY:** From four previous Kentucky Derby starts, Martin Garcia's best result came aboard third-placer Dortmund in 2015. That was Garcia's last appearance, and the 40-year-old Mexican native will return from a 10-year absence on Citizen Bull.

**BREEDER:** Robert and Lawana Low have twice participated in the Kentucky Derby as owners, campaigning third-placer Steppenwolfer in 2006, and Citizen Bull will be their first as a breeder. They sold the Kentucky-bred bay colt for \$675,000 as a yearling at the 2023 Keeneland September sale.

**SIRE:** One of the world's greatest sires, Into Mischief has produced Kentucky Derby winners Authentic and Mandaloun (2020-21), and the 20-year-old stallion's progeny earned more than \$30 million in 2024, leading the North American general sire list for a sixth consecutive time. Only Bold Ruler (eight), the sire of 1973 Triple Crown winner Secretariat, has been leading sire more times than Into Mischief in the last century. By Harlan's Holiday, Into Mischief owns a lengthy list of accolades, and Citizen Bull will be one of his three Kentucky Derby starters this year (Sovereignty and Tappan Street).

**DAM:** Citizen Bull is the first stakes winner out of No Joke, an unraced daughter of Distorted Humor from the female family of Favorite Trick, who was named Horse of the Year as a two-year-old and finished eighth in the 1998 Kentucky Derby. Distorted Humor, a leading general and freshman sire, counts 2003 Kentucky Derby hero Funny Cide among his 163 stakes winners. And while still looking to make a serious mark upon the Triple Crown, Distorted Humor has developed into a prominent broodmare sire, with Hall of Famer Arrogate, who established a North American record with more than \$17.4 million in earnings, among his notable runners. Kentucky Derby contenders Sandman and Tappan Street also count Distorted Humor as their broodmare sire.



# OWEN ALMIGHTY



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

We know Owen Almighty has speed. He showed that quite clearly when wiring the 1 1/16-mile Tampa Bay Derby (G3) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby by 3 1/2 lengths.

But does Owen Almighty have the necessary stamina to win over 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby (G1)? That's a tough question to answer, because Owen Almighty's pedigree can be interpreted multiple ways.

Owen Almighty is a son of Speightstown, a pure sprinter who won a quartet of graded stakes dashing seven furlongs or less. He ended his career with a triumph in the six-furlong Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) and was voted champion sprinter of 2004.

As a stallion, Speightstown has generally passed on speed. His progeny win at an average distance of 6.6 furlongs, indicating he primarily sires sprinters and milers. The best of them include Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1) winners Switzerland and Reynalduzewizard, Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) hero Tamarkuz, and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1) victor Sharing.

But Speightstown has repeatedly shown he's capable of siring major winners over 1 1/4 miles as well. Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) winners Olympiad and Haynesfield, Travers (G1) hero Golden Ticket, Belmont Derby (G1) conqueror Force the Pass, Hollywood Derby (G1) winner Seek Again, and American Oaks (G1) heroine Competitionofideas have all won at the highest level racing 1 1/4 miles.

One Grade 1 winner over 1 1/4 miles we might chalk up as a fluke. But six of them, including three on dirt? Clearly Speightstown is capable of siring long-winded route racers on occasion.

The key may be the mares. The damsires of Speightstown's Grade 1 winners over 1 1/4 miles include Medaglia d'Oro, Deputy Minister, Dynaformer, and Danehill, stallions known for siring numerous top-tier winners over classic distances. When mares contribute stamina to the mix, Speightstown has the potential to sire longer-winded runners than usual, though it's not guaranteed—he's been known to sire sprinters even when bred to stoutly bred mares.

This brings us to the dam side of Owen Almighty's pedigree. Does it offer enough stamina to counterbalance the speed of Speightstown? Maybe... or maybe not.

Owen Almighty is the first foal produced by Tempers Rising, a daughter of Bayern. While Tempers Rising never won at the stakes level—and actually scored just one victory, in a 1 1/16-mile maiden special weight—she did record top-four finishes in the 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1), 1 1/16-mile Fair Grounds Oaks (G2), 1 1/16-mile Rachel Alexandra (G2), and one-mile and 70-yard Silverbulletday S.

As for Bayern, he was a talented runner who won the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), 1 1/8-mile Haskell (G1), and 1 1/8-mile Pennsylvania Derby (G2). Speed was Bayern's greatest weapon, but he wasn't lacking in stamina either, much like his sire Offlee Wild. The 12th-place finisher in the 2003 Kentucky Derby, Offlee Wild won four graded stakes racing 1 1/16 miles or farther and scored his signature victory in the 1 1/4-mile Suburban H. (G1). He also defeated 2003 Kentucky Derby winner Funny Cide in the 1 1/8-mile Massachusetts H. (G2).

However, at stud, Bayern has primarily passed on the speed portion of his racing prowess. His progeny have compiled an average winning distance of 6.5 furlongs. They include seven-furlong Malibu (G1) winner Speed Boat Beach, one-mile Buena Vista (G2) victor Leggs Galore, and two-time stakes-winning sprinter Bayernness.

There is, however, a notable exception. Bayern is also the sire of Raon the Fighter, who has competed at a high level running long in South Korea, winning the KRA Cup Classic over 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles) before finishing second in the Grand Prix over 2,300 meters (about 1 7/16 miles).

So what does all this mean for Owen Almighty? If one judges from the average winning distance statistics compiled by the progeny of Speightstown and Bayern, Owen Almighty can be expected to shine as a sprinter/miler.

But there's at least a small chance Owen Almighty has inherited the stoutest genetics of both Speightstown and Bayern, in which case 1 1/4 miles may be within reach.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A frontrunning winner of the Tampa Bay Derby (G3), Owen Almighty was initially declared out of the Kentucky Derby (G1) after dead-heating for last in the Blue Grass (G1) at Keeneland. His connections reversed course, and the speedy colt promises to add to the pace while stretching out to a challenging 1 1/4-mile distance. Owen Almighty led gate-to-wire in two of his three stakes wins, the 1 1/16-mile Tampa Bay Derby and seven-furlong Pasco.

**OWNER:** Owen Almighty will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for Flying Dutchmen Racing and Breeding (Travis Boersma).

**TRAINER:** An Australian native and former assistant to Bobby Frankel, Brian Lynch will be represented by his second Kentucky Derby runner, with Classic Causeway finishing 12th in 2022. Lynch earned his first Breeders' Cup race win in 2006.



# OWEN ALMIGHTY CONT.

**JOCKEY:** After a one-year absence, Javier Castellano will be back in the Kentucky Derby for the first time since guiding Mage to an off-the-pace victory in 2023. That victory marked his first win in 16 attempts, with his first appearance coming in 2005. His best previous finishes were a third on Audible in 2018 and a fourth on Normandy Invasion in 2013. Castellano has won the Preakness twice (Bernardini and Cloud Computing) and the 2023 Belmont (G1) on Arcangelo. He will ride Owen Almighty for the first time in the Kentucky Derby.

**BREEDER:** Bred in Kentucky by Mark Stanley, Owen Almighty passed through the sales ring twice, selling for \$360,000 as a weanling and \$350,000 as a yearling. Stanley campaigned Ecton Park, who finished 12th in the 1999 Kentucky Derby, and Owen Almighty will be his first starter as a breeder.

**SIRE:** Named champion sprinter in 2004, Speightstown has not made an impact on the Triple Crown as a sire. He's produced talented sprinter/milers but proven versatile if combined with the proper mare, with at least three offspring winning Grade 1 races at 10 furlongs or longer (Force the Pass, Golden Ticket, and Olympiad). But it's fair to question whether Owen Almighty's female family provides an ample dose of stamina for the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby distance.

**DAM:** Owen Almighty is the first foal to race out of the Bayern mare Tempers Rising, who finished second in the Fair Grounds Oaks (G2) and third in the Silverbulletday prior to a fifth in the 2020 Kentucky Oaks (G1). Winner of the 2012 Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Bayern finished ninth in the Preakness (G1) in his lone Triple Crown appearance. He had limited success as a sire before being sent to Korea in 2021, with Grade 1-winning sprinter Speed Boat Beach and Canadian champion female sprinter Hazelbrook his most notable offspring. Owen Almighty is his only runner as a broodmare sire.



# EAST AVENUE



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

A gate-to-wire victory by 5 1/4 lengths in the Breeders' Futurity (G1) launched East Avenue onto the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

The Godolphin homebred is known for his frontrunning style, but don't conflate his abundant speed with stamina limitations. His pedigree suggests stretching out over 1 1/4 miles for the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1) won't be an obstacle.

Certainly the Derby distance wasn't an issue for East Avenue's sire, Medaglia d'Oro. He finished fourth in the 2002 Kentucky Derby, but that was before he reached his peak. His later exploits over 1 1/4 miles included a win in the Travers (G1) plus runner-up finishes in the Dubai World Cup (G1), Pacific Classic (G1), and two editions of the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1). In addition, Medaglia d'Oro placed second in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1).

Medaglia d'Oro has consistently passed on his stamina at stud. His progeny have compiled a lofty average winning distance of 7.7 furlongs. They include Horse of the Year and 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1) winner Rachel Alexandra, two-time champion and 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1) heroine Songbird, Canadian Horse of the Year and 1 1/4-mile Queen's Plate S. winner Wonder Gadot, 1 1/2-mile Breeders' Cup Turf (G1) conqueror Talismanic, Alabama winner Elate, 1 1/4-mile Rodeo Drive (G1) winner Marketing Mix, Pacific Classic hero Higher Power, and 1 1/4-mile Belmont Oaks (G1) winner New Money Honey.

Medaglia d'Oro is also the sire of Golden Sixty, a 10-time Group 1 winner in Hong Kong over distances from 1,600 meters (about one mile) to 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles).

Since Medaglia d'Oro has proven time and time again that he's capable of siring major winners over classic distances, the top half of East Avenue's pedigree is well-suited to the Kentucky Derby. The bottom half is geared a bit more toward speed, but there's still plenty of stamina in the mix, and it's nice to see a blend of speed and stamina in the pedigree of a Kentucky Derby contender.

East Avenue is the first foaled produced by Dance Music, an unraced daughter of Ghostzapper out of Dance Card. Ghostzapper was a brilliant and versatile speedster who won Grade 1 races over distances from six furlongs to 1 1/4 miles, including the Breeders' Cup Classic. At stud he's proven similarly versatile, siring major winners over an incredibly wide variety of distances and surfaces.

Some, like Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) heroines Goodnight Olive and Judy the Beauty, have been sprinters. Others, like Dubai World Cup conqueror Mystic Guide, Queen's Plate winners Moira and Holy Helena, and Santa Anita H. (G1) hero Shaman Ghost, have done their best work over 1 1/4 miles.

Ghostzapper's record as a broodmare sire has followed a similar path. On the one hand, his daughters have foaled champion male sprinter Drefong and the Grade 1-winning sprinters Book'em Danno and American Gal. On the other hand, daughters of Ghostzapper are also responsible for 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify and champion turf male Up to the Mark, a three-time Grade 1 winner racing as far as 1 1/4 miles.

As for Dance Card, she's a daughter of Tapit (sire of Belmont winners Tonalist, Creator, Tapwrit, and Essential Quality) out of Belmont winner Editor's Note. Dance Card counted the 1 1/8-mile Gazelle (G1) as her signature victory, but as a broodmare she's passed on miler speed more than stamina. She's the dam of two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Cody's Wish, a fantastic sprinter/miler voted 2023 Horse of the Year, and also Endorsed, a son of Medaglia d'Oro who won the Gulfstream Park Mile (G2) and Fred W. Hooper (G3) racing one mile.

Taking all of these pedigree elements together, there's no reason to believe East Avenue will struggle over 1 1/4 miles. To the contrary, he's bred to thrive while stretching out over classic distances, a scary thought for his rivals given his dominant performance over 1 1/16 miles in the Breeders' Futurity.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

After flopping as the favorite in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) and Risen Star (G2), East Avenue turned things around with a nose second in the Blue Grass (G1) at Keeneland, nearly wiring the major qualifier to book his Kentucky Derby ticket. The athletic bay colt showed an affinity for Keeneland last fall, winning the Breeders' Futurity (G1), and he's taken it to rivals from the start in three commendable lifetime performances. East Avenue failed to respond when asked to settle behind rivals previously, suggesting he will display high speed from the break in a projected speed-laden Kentucky Derby.

**OWNER:** Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum's Godolphin will seek their first Kentucky Derby win, and the international operation also has top contender Sovereignty, who figures to benefit from a hot pace being a confirmed closer in the 20-horse field. They represent Godolphin's first starters since Essential Quality was elevated to third via disqualification in 2021, the best result from 13 previous starts. Godolphin has swept the Eclipse Award for leading owner the last four years, winning eight times overall.

**TRAINER:** East Avenue will be the second Kentucky Derby starter for Brendan Walsh, who finished ninth with Plus Que Parfait in 2019. A native of Ireland, Walsh came to the United States to be an assistant for Eddie Kenneally in 2007, and



# EAST AVENUE CONT.

the 53-year-old opened his own stable in 2012. Walsh won the 2023 Kentucky Oaks (G1) with champion three-year-old filly Pretty Mischievous.

**JOCKEY:** Manny Franco made the first of five previous Kentucky Derby starts in 2015, his best finish coming aboard runner-up Tiz the Law in 2020. A 30-year-old native of Puerto Rico, Franco won the Belmont aboard Tiz the Law, and he's been ranked in the top 10 among North American jockeys in wins and earnings the last two years. Franco, who earned his 14th NYRA riding title during the recent Aqueduct winter meet, will pick up the mount on East Avenue in the Kentucky Derby.

**BREEDER:** East Avenue was bred in Kentucky by Godolphin, whose best result from three previous starts as a breeder came via 2021 third-placer Essential Quality.

**JOCKEY:** Manny Franco made the first of five previous Kentucky Derby starts in 2015, his best finish coming aboard runner-up Tiz the Law in 2020. A 30-year-old native of Puerto Rico, Franco won the Belmont aboard Tiz the Law, and he's been ranked in the top 10 among North American jockeys in wins and earnings the last two years. Franco, who earned his 14th NYRA riding title during the recent Aqueduct winter meet, will pick up the mount on East Avenue in the Kentucky Derby.

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Jessica Piatt

# PUBLISHER



Renee Torbit

## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Although Publisher has yet to win a race, he qualified for the Kentucky Derby (G1) via a runner-up finish in the Arkansas Derby (G1) and aims to become the first maiden to win the Kentucky Derby since 1933.

Does Publisher have the pedigree to handle the task? At first glance, his breeding appears geared for success racing 1 1/4 miles over the Churchill Downs dirt. But dig a little deeper, and you may reach a different conclusion.

Publisher is a son of 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, one of the greatest horses to set foot on a racetrack this century. Classic distances obviously weren't an issue for the son of 2009 Kentucky Derby runner-up Pioneerof the Nile; he won the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby, 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1), and 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) in succession and later added the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) to his win tally.

American Pharoah has also carved out a successful stud career. His progeny have thrived over a wide variety of distances and surfaces, but it's worth noting his turf runners tend to handle classic distances better than his dirt racers.

Let's share some examples. American Pharoah's elite grass racers include Riff Rocket, winner of the Australian Derby (G1) racing 2,400 meters (about 1 1/2 miles); Above the Curve, conqueror of the 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Prix Saint-Alary (G1); Marketsegmentation, winner of the 1 1/4-mile New York (G1); and Harvey's Lil Goil, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Queen Elizabeth II Challenge Cup (G1) and third by a neck in the 1 3/16-mile Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf (G1).

American Pharoah is also the sire of Skygaze, a dominant winner of the 1 1/4-mile Maple Leaf (G3) over the synthetic Tapeta track at Woodbine. But on dirt, American Pharoah's progeny tend to shine over shorter trips. They include six-furlong Bing Crosby (G1) winner American Theorem, one-mile Beholder Mile (G1) heroine As Time Goes By, and two-time 1,600-meter (about one-mile) February (G1) victor Cafe Pharaoh.

Publisher's dam is Indian Pride, whose brief 3-for-4 career yielded a win in the seven-furlong Shine Again S. and a third-place finish in the seven-furlong Raven Run (G2) on dirt. The fact that she starred as a

sprinter rather than a classic type isn't unexpected since she's a daughter of Proud Citizen out of Ms. Cornstalk, the dam of Canadian champions Biofuel (a two-time graded stakes winner over 1 1/16 miles) and Tu Endie Wei (a five-time stakes-winning sprinter).

Proud Citizen was a capable performer over classic distances, parlaying a win in the 1 1/16-mile Lexington (G2) into a runner-up finish in the Kentucky Derby and a third in the Preakness. But his progeny win at an average distance of 7.0 furlongs, suggesting their stamina capabilities often max out at 1 1/8 miles or less.

Of course, there are always exceptions. Proud Citizen has sired 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1) winners Believe You Can and Proud Spell, and the latter was a champion three-year-old filly who stretched her speed to win the 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1). Furthermore, Proud Citizen's daughter Torre Laguna is the dam of Master Piece, winner of the 1 3/8-mile Red Smith (G2) on turf.

But as the saying goes, these are the exceptions that prove the rule. Proud Citizen is also the sire of Hembree, winner of the 6 1/2-furlong Joe Hernandez (G2) and six-furlong Nearctic (G2) on turf; Mark Valeski, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Peter Pan (G2) and 1 1/16-mile Mineshaft H. (G3) on dirt; and Blended Citizen, winner of three graded stakes over distances of 1 1/16 miles and 1 1/8 miles on dirt and synthetic.

And aside from Master Piece, daughters of Proud Citizen have foaled Manny Wah, winner of the six-furlong Phoenix (G2) on dirt; Conclude, conqueror of the 1 1/8-mile Del Mar Derby (G2) and one-mile Del Mar Mile (G2) on grass; and Gimme Da Lute, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Los Alamitos Derby (G2) and 1 1/16-mile Affirmed (G3) on dirt.

Clearly, Publisher has the pedigree to shine over distances up to 1 1/8 miles on both dirt and turf. He might even handle 1 1/4 miles on turf. But racing 1 1/4 miles on dirt? That may stretch the limits of Publisher's stamina.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Still winless from seven starts, Publisher stamped his Kentucky Derby (G1) ticket with a rallying second in the Arkansas Derby (G1), improving upon a troubled sixth in the Southwest (G3) and fourth in the Rebel (G2). Only three maidens have won the Kentucky Derby, none since Brokers Tip in 1933, and the last 12 to compete finished eighth or worse. But Publisher stepped up significantly while adding blinkers and stretching to 1 1/8 miles last time, and he will look to make a serious impact from off the pace in the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby.

**OWNER:** Publisher is campaigned by Gus King and the Estate of Brereton C. Jones. The bay colt will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for King. Jones, the former Governor of Kentucky and a noted horseman, co-owned King Russell, 15th in the 2023 Kentucky Derby.



# PUBLISHER CONT.

**TRAINER:** North America's all-time leading trainer by wins, Steve Asmussen, has won nearly 11,000 races since his first in July 1986. He seems destined to eventually win the Kentucky Derby, but it remains one of the few major dirt races to elude him, compiling a 26-0-3-2 mark. A former jockey, the Hall of Famer, finished second with Epicenter, Lookin at Lee, and Nehro, and his third-place finishers, Curlin and Gun Runner, went on to be named Horse of the Year. Asmussen has compiled more wins at Churchill Downs than anyone, and the 59-year-old horseman seeks to become the sixth living trainer to win all three Triple Crown races. He will also saddle Tiztastic in this year's Kentucky Derby.

**JOCKEY:** Irad Ortiz Jr. will pick up the mount on Publisher. Ranked first nationally by wins every year since 2018, Ortiz has won the Eclipse Award for leading jockey five times in the last seven years. He's guided a pair of Belmont (G1) winners, and recorded a pair of seconds in the Preakness (G1), but the 32-year-old Puerto Rico native has yet to make an impact in the Kentucky Derby, recording eight unplaced finishes since his first appearance in 2014.

**BREEDER:** Bred in Kentucky by the late Brereton C. Jones, Publisher brought a final bid of \$600,000 from King when selling for a yearling at the 2023 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga August sale. Jones bred 1983 Kentucky Derby runner-up Desert Wine in partnership and was the sole breeder of 2022 third-placer Zandon. He's also the breeder of Kentucky Derby starter Chunk of Gold this year.

**SIRE:** The first Triple Crown winner in 37 years, American Pharoah was named the 2015 Horse of the Year after romping in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1). A champion first and second-crop sire, American Pharoah's offspring have yet to make an impact in the Triple Crown. The popular stallion will try to change the narrative with a pair of starters in the 2025 Kentucky Derby field, Publisher and Japanese invader Luxor Café.

**DAM:** Publisher is the only foal to race out of the stakes-winning Proud Citizen mare Indian Pride, a half-sister to Canadian Horse of the Year Biofuel and champion Canadian two-year-old filly Tu Endie Wei. By Gone West, Grade 2 winner Proud Citizen finished second in the Kentucky Derby and third in the Preakness in 2002. He hasn't been a factor in Triple Crown races as a broodmare sire. Proud Citizen is best known for siring Kentucky Oaks (G1) winners Believe You Can and Proud Spell.



# AMERICAN PROMISE



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

A 7 3/4-length demolition of the Virginia Derby at Colonial Downs launched American Promise into the Kentucky Derby (G1) picture.

Racing over a lightning-fast track, American Promise completed 1 1/8 miles in the track-record time of 1:46.41. His pedigree indicates stretching out another furlong in distance for the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby won't be an issue.

American Promise's sire, Justify, needs no introduction. The brilliant speedster went from an unraced maiden to a Triple Crown winner in less than four months. After splashing through mud to beat a talented field in the Kentucky Derby, Justify added the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1) and 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) to his record.

Justify has since embarked on a stellar stud career. Many of his best runners have starred on turf, including 1 1/2-mile Derby (G1) winner City of Troy, 1 1/4-mile Belmont Oaks (G1) conqueror Aspen Grove, 1 1/4-mile Nassau (G1) victress Opera Singer, one-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1) heroine Hard to Justify, and 1,400-meter (about seven-furlong) Prix de la Foret (G1) winner Ramatuelle.

But others have performed at a high level on dirt, including champion two-year-old filly and 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1) winner Just F Y I and seven-furlong Woody Stephens (G1) hero Arabian Lion.

As can be deduced from the above examples, the progeny of Justify have shown talent over a variety of distances. But on the whole they perform well running long, compiling a lofty average winning distance of 7.7 furlongs. That's indicative of a stallion who passes on stamina more than speed.

The bottom half of American Promise's pedigree is geared in a similar direction. He's the third foal produced by Tapella, a daughter of Tapit out of Princess Arabella.

Tapella showed some stamina during her racing career, winning a maiden special weight and an allowance racing one mile at Belmont Park. She passed on her route racing ability to her first foal, Hoosier Philly, a five-time stakes winner who secured her biggest win to date in the 1 1/16-mile Golden Rod (G2).

Tapella's stamina is owed at least in part to Tapit, a three-time leading North American sire. Winner of the 1 1/8-mile Wood

Memorial (G1) and a participant in the 2004 Kentucky Derby, Tapit regularly passes on stamina, with his progeny winning at an average distance of 7.6 furlongs. He's famously sired four winners of the Belmont (Tonalist, Creator, Tapwrit, and Essential Quality) as well as Flightline, the undefeated 2022 Horse of the Year who dominated the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1).

Princess Arabella may have contributed some stamina to Tapella as well. The daughter of 1 1/8-mile Haskell (G1) winner Any Given Saturday went 3-for-3 during her brief racing career, which culminated with an eight-length drubbing of the 1 1/16-mile Sunland Park Oaks. In addition to Tapella, Princess Arabella is the dam of Ulele, runner-up in the 1 1/8-mile Black-Eyed Susan (G2) and 1 1/16-mile Iowa Oaks (G3).

Getting back to Tapit, he's developing an excellent record as a broodmare sire. Aside from American Promise, his daughters have foaled champion three-year-old male and Belmont winner Arcangelo, Horse of the Year and two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Cody's Wish, champion three-year-old filly and 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1) conqueror Pretty Mischievous, 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster (G1) victor Kingsbarns, and 1 1/8-mile Pennsylvania Derby (G1) winner Saudi Crown.

The presence of Tapit in the bottom half of American Promise's pedigree may explain why American Promise has turned into one of Justify's talented dirt racers rather than a grass star. While Tapit has sired talented turf horses, it's more common for his best runners to shine on dirt.

In any case, the cross of Justify with a Tapit mare creates a pedigree packed with classic stamina. There's no reason to believe 1 1/4 miles is out of reach for American Promise, and even the 1 1/2-mile journey of the Belmont is a possibility.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A well-built chestnut, American Promise broke his maiden the sixth time out at Oaklawn Park in late December. He booked his Kentucky Derby (G1) ticket three starts later, romping on the front end in the Virginia Derby at Colonial Downs. He got away slowly from the starting gate in his first two stakes, unplaced efforts in the Risen Star (G2) and Southwest (G3), but American Promise broke well in the 1 1/8-mile Virginia Derby and established a new track record drawing off to a 7 3/4-length decision, registering an excellent 105 Brisnet Speed rating. The improving colt promises to bring speed to the Kentucky Derby after a seven-week freshening.

**OWNER:** The nom de course for John Bellingier and Brian Coelho, BC Stables will send out a second consecutive Kentucky Derby starter, finishing 17th with Just Steel in their initial appearance.

**TRAINER:** A four-time Kentucky Derby winner, D. Wayne Lukas finished third with his first starter, Partez, in 1981, and has competed in 30 previous editions. After achieving great success in the Quarter-Horse ranks, Lukas switched to Thoroughbreds



# AMERICAN PROMISE CONT.

and took the racing world by storm in the 1980s, earning his first Kentucky Derby victory with Winning Colors in 1988. The 89-year-old Hall of Famer has won 15 Triple Crown races, becoming the oldest trainer to do so with Preakness (G1) winner Seize the Grey last year, and Lukas swept six consecutive Triple Crown races from 1994-96, with Tabasco Cat (1994 Preakness and Belmont [G1]), Thunder Gulch (1995 Kentucky Derby and Belmont), Timber Country (1995 Preakness), and Grindstone (1996 Kentucky Derby).

**JOCKEY:** After exercising American Promise in the mornings, Nik Juarez picked up the mount and guided the frontrunning colt to a smashing win in the Virginia Derby. The 31-year-old jockey will make his first Kentucky Derby appearance.

**BREEDER:** Owned by Everett Dobson, who races under the Cheyenne Stables banner, Candy Meadows will have their first Kentucky Derby starter as a breeder. They sold Kentucky-bred American Promise for \$750,000 as a yearling at the 2023 Keeneland September sale.

**SIRE:** American Promise is from the third crop of 2018 Triple Crown winner and undefeated Hall of Famer Justify, who has proven to be an immediate success at stud. By Scat Daddy, Justify has already sired champions/highweights in America, Australia, England, France, and Ireland. And the in-demand stallion appears poised to make a serious impact in the Triple Crown series.

**DAM:** The second stakes winner out of the Tapit mare Tapella, American Promise counts Grade 2-winning Hoosier Philly, a five-time stakes winner who earned nearly \$1 million, as a half-sister. It's a classy female family with stamina influences. One of the great stallions of the modern era and the leading broodmare sire of 2023, Tapit is known for siring a quartet of Belmont winners. As broodmare sire, Tapit counts 2023 Belmont winner and champion three-year-old male Arcangelo and 2023 Kentucky Oaks winner and champion three-year-old filly Pretty Mischievous among his accolades.



Renee Torbit



# FLYING MOHAWK



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Flying Mohawk has shown talent competing on turf and synthetic, so much so that he qualified to compete in the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1) via a runner-up finish in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) on Tapeta at Turfway Park.

But dirt racing is a different ballgame. Can Flying Mohawk successfully switch surfaces for the Kentucky Derby? His pedigree suggests it's not a guarantee.

Flying Mohawk's sire, Karakontie, was a top-notch turf miler. He earned a French classic win when he took the Poule d'Essai des Poulains (G1), and later on he nabbed the Breeders' Cup Mile (G1) with a powerful late rally.

It's not hard to find the sources of Karakontie's turf prowess. His sire, Bernstein, was a talented turf horse who sired 2015 Breeders' Cup Mile winner and Hall of Fame inductee Tepin. Also, Karakontie's third dam is Miesque, a two-time Breeders' Cup Mile heroine who foaled Poule d'Essai des Poulains winner Kingmambo, among others. All throughout the pedigree of Karakontie, turf influences can be found.

Since retiring to stud, Karakontie has sired almost exclusively turf horses. The vast majority of his graded stakes winners have done their best work on grass, including three-time Grade 1 winner She Feels Pretty, Del Mar Oaks (G1) heroine Spendarella, multiple graded stakes winner Princess Grace, Del Mar Derby (G2) conqueror None Above the Law, and Louisville (G3) heroes Sugoi and Foreign Relations.

So far, only one horse sired by Karakontie has managed to win a graded stakes on dirt: Sole Volante, who scored his signature win in the Sam F. Davis (G3) before finishing sixth in the Belmont (G1) and 11th in the Kentucky Derby. And even Sole Volante won as many races on turf as he did on dirt, including the Pulpit S.

Since Karakontie is unlikely to sire a dirt horse on any given day, Flying Mohawk will have to rely on his female family if he's going to handle dirt in the Kentucky Derby.

Flying Mohawk is the first foal produced by Bonbons Fleur, a daughter of Twirling Candy out of America's Blossom. Bonbons Fleur

failed to factor in three career starts, but there's some class in her immediate pedigree. America's Blossom is the dam of Change of Control, a talented turf sprinter with victories in the Franklin County (G3), Intercontinental (G3), and four other stakes on her record.

As for Twirling Candy, he was an accomplished campaigner over a variety of distances and surfaces. His biggest win came in the Malibu (G1) on dirt, in which he clocked seven furlongs in the track-record time of 1:19.70. But he also won the 1 1/8-mile Californian (G2) over synthetic and the 1 1/8-mile Del Mar Derby (G2) on turf.

Twirling Candy's versatility is evident among his progeny. Some, like Preakness (G1) winner Rombauer and Santa Anita H. (G1) conqueror Gift Box, have starred on dirt. Others have excelled on turf, including Belmont Oaks (G1) heroine Concrete Rose, Hollywood Derby (G1) winner Beyond Brilliant, and Shoemaker Mile (G1) winner Exulted. All told, Twirling Candy has sired five Grade 1 dirt winners and four Grade 1 turf winners, close to an even split. And Rombauer showed synthetic prowess when taking the El Camino Real Derby.

Meanwhile, Twirling Candy's developing record as a broodmare sire is highlighted by Sixpence, winner of the Nakayama Kinen (G2), Mainichi Okan (G2), and Spring (G2) on turf in Japan; Accomplished Girl, winner of the Presque Isle Downs Masters (G2) on synthetic plus two ungraded stakes on turf; Pounce, conqueror of the Lake George (G3) and Herecomesthebride (G3) on grass; and Good Sam, winner of the Tempted S. on dirt.

Clearly the genetics of Twirling Candy can yield successful dirt, turf, and synthetic runners, depending on the individual horse. Crossing the Twirling Candy mare Bonbons Fleur with Karakontie seems likely to tip the genetic scale toward turf, the surface over which Flying Mohawk has secured both his wins to date. Thus, switching to dirt for the Kentucky Derby could be challenging for Flying Mohawk.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Runner-up in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3), Flying Mohawk will test his mettle on dirt in the Kentucky Derby (G1). He raced exclusively on turf last year, breaking his maiden at Churchill Downs the fourth time out in his juvenile finale, and the dark bay colt opened 2025 with a convincing turf allowance win at Fair Grounds. A confirmed closer, Flying Mohawk switched to Turfway Park's Tapeta to earn a spot in a 20-horse Kentucky Derby field, and the last three runnings of the Jeff Ruby have produced 2022 Kentucky Derby winner Rich Strike, 2023 Kentucky Derby runner-up Two Phil's, and 2024 Preakness (G1) winner Seize the Grey. Flying Mohawk will try to emulate Animal Kingdom, who captured the 2011 Kentucky Derby in his first dirt start.

**OWNER:** Flying Mohawk is campaigned by the partnership of Two Eight Racing (Jason Werth), Berry Family Racing, and Kaleta Racing. Werth, an All-Star and World Series champion during



# FLYING MOHAWK CONT.

his 15-year MLB career, co-owned Dornoch, who won the Belmont (G1) and Haskell (G1) after finishing 10th in last year's Kentucky Derby.

**TRAINER:** A Louisville native, Whit Beckman worked as an assistant for Chad Brown and Todd Pletcher before opening his own stable in late 2021, and the up-and-coming horseman will have a second consecutive Kentucky Derby starter in 2025. Honor Marie, who provided Beckman with his first graded stakes win, finished eighth last year. Beckman will also send out his first Kentucky Oaks starters this year, Simply Joking and Drexel Hill.

**JOCKEY:** Based at Turfway Park and Horseshoe Indianapolis since 2021, Joe Ramos will make his first Kentucky Derby start aboard Flying Mohawk. The Puerto Rican native won back-to-back riding titles at Horseshoe Indianapolis in 2022-23.

**BREEDER:** Bred in Kentucky, Flying Mohawk will provide John O'Meara with a second Kentucky Derby starter as a breeder. O'Meara bred in partnership Going Wild, who finished 18th in the Kentucky Derby, and he initially sold Flying Mohawk for \$25,000 as a weanling. The colt was pinhooked for \$72,000 as a yearling at the 2023 Keeneland September sale.

**SIRE:** Racing exclusively on turf, Japanese-bred Karakontie recorded a pair of Group 1 wins in France and upset the 2011 Breeders' Cup Mile (G1) at 30-1. And at stud, he's better known as a turf sire, producing Grade 1 winners She Feels Pretty and Spendarella, but his son Sole Volante was on the Kentucky Derby trail after winning the 2020 Sam F. Davis (G3), eventually finishing 11th under the Twin Spires.

**DAM:** Flying Mohawk has turf influences on both sides of his pedigree. He's the first foal to race out of the Twirling Candy mare Bonbons Fleur, a half-sister to multiple Grade 3 turf winner Change of Control. By Candy Ride, Twirling Candy has proved to be a versatile sire, producing multiple Grade 1 winners on dirt and turf, including 2021 Preakness (G1) winner Rombauer. The relatively young broodmare sire is still looking to make an impact on the Triple Crown.



Renee Torbit



# GRANDE



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Grande qualified for the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1) via a strong runner-up finish in the 1 1/8-mile Wood Memorial (G2) at Aqueduct.

Despite racing wide around both turns, Grande launched a determined rally down the homestretch and gained a bit of ground through the final furlong against gate-to-wire winner Rodriguez. This performance suggests he'll handle stretching out over 1 1/4 miles for the Kentucky Derby, and his pedigree agrees.

Grande is a son of two-time Horse of the Year Curlin, whose Triple Crown exploits yielded a win in the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1), a close second in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1), and a third in the Kentucky Derby. He later won the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Dubai World Cup (G1), and two editions of the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) racing 1 1/4 miles.

Curlin has consistently passed on his classic stamina at stud. Many of his sons have recorded top-three finishes in Triple Crown races; some of the best include Belmont winner Palace Malice, Preakness winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Exaggerator, and Kentucky Derby runner-up Good Magic.

Also impressive is the list of sons and daughters of Curlin who have won at the Grade 1 level racing 1 1/4 miles on dirt, the configuration of the Kentucky Derby. They include champion and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Vino Rosso, champion and Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1) conqueror Malathaat, champion and Alabama (G1) winner Nest, Travers (G1) hero Keen Ice, Woodward H. (G1) winner Global Campaign, Jockey Club Gold Cup victors Bright Future and Highland Falls, and Santa Anita H. (G1) winner Idol.

Curlin has staked his claim as one of the best sources of classic stamina in modern pedigrees. This year, in addition to Grande, he's the sire of 1 1/8-mile Santa Anita Derby (G1) winner and Kentucky Derby favorite Journalism.

Once in a while, Curlin sires a high-class sprinter or miler, like Horse of the Year and two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Cody's Wish or two-time champion male sprinter Elite Power. But there's nothing in Grande's racing record to date—and little in the dam's side of his pedigree—to suggest he'll develop down this route.

Grande is the third starter produced by Journey Home, a daughter of War Front out of the A.P. Indy mare Soul Search. As a racehorse, Journey Home achieved respectable success on turf, winning the one-mile Jimmy Durante (G3) and about 1 1/16-mile Christiana S. in addition to recording top-three finishes in the Pucker Up (G3), Valley View (G3), and Mrs. Revere (G2) over distances up to about 1 1/8 miles.

Prior to Grande, Journey Home foaled Ticker Tape Home, winner of the seven-furlong Seaway (G3) over the synthetic Tapeta track at Woodbine.

As for War Front, he's sired Grade 1 and Group 1 winners over a wide variety of distances and surfaces. Dirt sprinters, turf sprinters, dirt routers, and turf routers have all emerged from War Front's stud career, even though he himself never won at the Grade 1 level and was strictly a dirt sprinter, securing his biggest triumph in the six-furlong Alfred G. Vanderbilt Breeders' Cup H. (G2).

War Front isn't as reliable a source of classic stamina as Curlin, though he is the sire of Preakness winner War of Will, and daughters of War Front have produced Belmont third-place finisher Joevia plus Adelaide River, who placed in the Irish Derby (G1) and Grand Prix de Paris (G1) racing 1 1/2 miles on turf.

Turning our attention now to Soul Search, the dam of Journey Home, she never won at the graded stakes level but finished second in the 1 1/8-mile Spinster (G1) and third in the 1 1/4-mile Personal Ensign (G1). The fact she demonstrated high-class form running long is to be expected since her sire, A.P. Indy, won the Belmont and Breeders' Cup Classic before developing into a legendary source of stamina at stud.

The stamina of Curlin, Soul Search, and A.P. Indy mixing with a dose of speed from War Front should leave Grande with a perfect pedigree for negotiating 1 1/4 miles on the first Saturday in May.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A convincing debut winner in mid-January, Grande followed with a 1 1/8-mile allowance win in late February. The dark bay colt ran well while making his stakes debut in the Wood Memorial (G2), registering a 101 Brisnet Speed rating, rallying from midpack to be second to Rodriguez, who dictated terms as the controlling speed. Grande is still lightly raced with plenty of potential upside for his connections, and the stalker is eligible to get first run on the closers if he keeps progressing in the Kentucky Derby.

**OWNER:** From eight previous starts as an owner, Repole Stable (Mike Repole)'s best Kentucky Derby finish came via fifth-placer Mo Donegal in 2022, who Repole owned in partnership. Mo Donegal returned to win the Belmont (G1) five weeks later. The 56-year-old Queens native and water magnate recorded runner-up finishes in the Belmont with Next (2022) and Stay Thirsty (2011).



# GRANDE CONT.

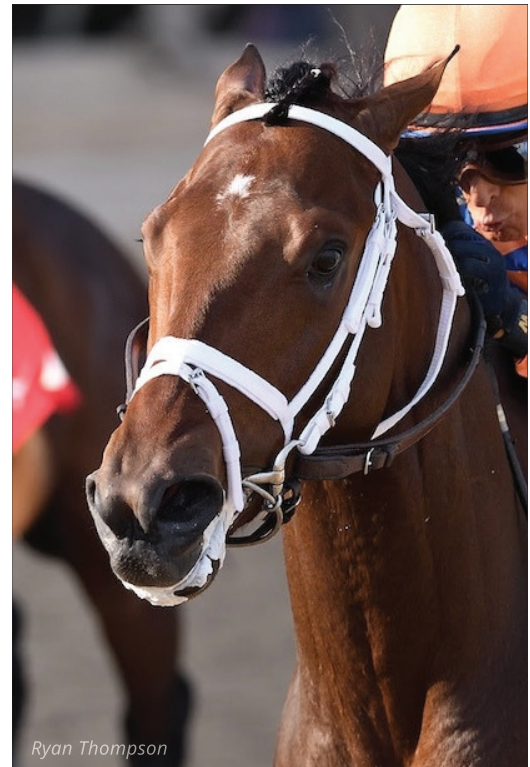
**TRAINER:** Todd Pletcher owns a pair of Kentucky Derby wins, Super Saver in 2010 and Always Dreaming in 2017, and the Hall of Famer holds the record for number of starts, compiling an overall mark of 63-2-2-4. After working as an assistant for Hall of Famer D. Wayne Lukas, Pletcher went out on his own in 1995. The 57-year-old Texas native has won a record eight Eclipse Awards for leading trainer and four editions of the Belmont.

**JOCKEY:** Tied for the most Kentucky Derby wins among active jockeys, John Velazquez will be the only rider in the 2025 field with three wins, guiding Animal Kingdom (2012), Always Dreaming (2017), and Authentic (2020) to victories under the Twin Spires. The Hall of Famer was also up on Medina Spirit, who finished first in the 2021 Kentucky Derby but was disqualified post-race. After launching his career in his native Puerto Rico, the 53-year-old moved his tack to New York in 1990. Velazquez is a two-time Eclipse Award winner for leading jockey, and he has a Preakness and a pair of Belmont winners to his credit.

**BREEDER:** Bred in Kentucky by KatieRich Farms (Larry & Karen Doyle), Grande will be their second starter as a breeder. KatieRich also bred Instilled Regard, who finished fourth in the 2018 Kentucky Derby, and they sold Grande for \$300,000 as a yearling at the 2023 Keeneland September sale.

**SIRE:** After a troubled third in the 2007 Kentucky Derby, Curlin came back to win the Preakness and finished second in the Belmont (G1). The two-time Horse of the Year has developed into one of the world's top sires, becoming the first to produce three individual American champions in the same year and three Breeders' Cup race winners on the same day. Along with siring eight individual champions in America, Curlin produced 2017 Preakness winner Exaggerator and 2013 Belmont winner Palace Malice. And his son, Keen Ice, handed Hall of Famer American Pharoah his lone loss at age three in the Travers (G1). The Kentucky Derby is the one major prize missing from the resume of Curlin, whose son, Good Magic, sired the 2023 Kentucky Derby winner, Mage.

**DAM:** Grande is out of the Grade 3 turf-winning War Front mare Journey Home and counts Canadian Grade 3 winner Ticker Tape Home as a half-brother. By Danzig, Grade 2 winner and multiple Grade 1 runner-up War Front is ranked first among North American stallions by percentage of lifetime stakes winners and graded stakes winners, siring 25 Grade 1 winners, but was primarily known as a turf sire. But he did produce the 2019 Preakness winner War of Will. From a limited sample as a broodmare sire, War Front is responsible for 2019 Belmont third-placer Joevia.



# LUXOR CAFE



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Luxor Cafe, a Triple Crown nominee based in Japan, could have Kentucky Derby (G1) aspirations after winning the Hyacinth S. and Fukuryu S. on the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Luxor Cafe was particularly impressive in the Fukuryu racing 1,800 meters (about 1 1/8 miles) at Nakayama. After settling within striking distance of a modest pace, he unleashed an eye-catching burst of acceleration on the far outside to dominate by five lengths.

Although Luxor Cafe has competed exclusively in Japan, his pedigree is thoroughly American. His sire is 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, and his dam is multiple U.S. graded stakes winner Mary's Follies.

You might assume a son of a Triple Crown winner is bred for success over classic distances on dirt. But a closer examination of Luxor Cafe's pedigree suggests turf racing—and distances shorter than the 1 1/4-mile journey of the Kentucky Derby—might be preferable.

Consider the stud record of American Pharoah. Even though he was stellar over classic distances on dirt—winning the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) in addition to his Triple Crown sweep—many of his best runners have found success on turf.

American Pharoah's accomplished grass runners include 1 1/8-mile Queen Elizabeth II Challenge Cup (G1) winner Harvey's Lil Gail, 2,400-meter (about 1 1/2-mile) Australian Derby (G1) conqueror Riff Rocket, 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Prix Saint-Alary (G1) heroine Above the Curve, 1,600-meter Criterium International (G1) winner Van Gogh, 1 1/4-mile New York (G1) winner Marketsegmentation, and five-furlong Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint (G2) victor Four Wheel Drive.

On turf, the progeny of American Pharoah have shown the ability to win over classic distances. But on dirt, they've tended to be sprinters and milers. American Pharoah's best dirt runners include two-time 1,600-meter February (G1) winner Cafe Pharoah, Beholder Mile (G1) heroine As Time Goes By, and six-furlong Bing Crosby (G1) conqueror American Theorem.

The bottom half of Luxor Cafe's pedigree trends in a similar direction. His dam, Mary's Follies, was a capable grass runner who won the Mrs. Revere (G2) and Boiling Springs (G3) racing 1 1/16 miles. She's found even greater acclaim as a broodmare.

Prior to Luxor Cafe, Mary's Follies foaled Cafe Pharoah, the above-mentioned two-time February winner; champion turf female Regal Glory, a four-time Grade 1-winning turf miler; and Night Prowler, winner of the 7 1/2-furlong Dania Beach (G3) and 1 1/16-mile Transylvania (G3) on grass. Clearly Mary's Follies has a tendency to foal stakes-caliber milers much like herself.

That isn't surprising since Mary's Follies is a daughter of More Than Ready, winner of the King's Bishop (G1), Hutcheson (G2), Sanford (G2), and Tremont (G3) sprinting seven furlongs or less. Even though his big wins came in sprints, More Than Ready also showed enough stamina to finish second in the 1 1/8-mile Blue Grass (G1) and fourth in the Kentucky Derby, so he was more of a sprinter/miler than a pure sprinter.

The same tendency can be seen among More Than Ready's most accomplished progeny. He's sired seven horses who have combined to win eight Breeders' Cup races, all racing one mile or shorter. Most of More Than Ready's Breeders' Cup winners have excelled on turf, including Breeders' Cup Mile (G1) winners Uni and More Than Looks, Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1) heroines Rushing Fall and More Than Real, Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G1) victor Pluck, and Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint (G1) conqueror Regally Ready. But More Than Ready is also responsible for Roy H, a two-time winner of the Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) on dirt.

Much like American Pharoah, More Than Ready has sired an abundance of top-tier turf runners even though he himself raced on dirt. That turf prowess is arguably even more pronounced in More Than Ready's record as a broodmare sire. His daughters have foaled major grass winners around the globe: Australia's Melbourne Cup (G1) winner Knight's Choice, Japan's Kikuka Sho (G1) conqueror Durezza, the United States' two-time Grade 1-winning miler Carl Spackler, and Hong Kong's four-time Group 1-winning sprinter Wellington, to name a select few.

Knight's Choice and Durezza scored their signature wins over marathon distances, so there's precedent for Luxor Cafe to find success racing 1 1/4 miles or farther... on turf. But the dirt influences in Luxor Cafe's pedigree are geared toward success racing one mile or less, so he isn't guaranteed to relish the Kentucky Derby conditions.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A smashing winner of the Fukuryu in late March, Luxor Café won the Japan Road invitation for the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1). Japanese invader and U.A.E. Derby (G2) winner Forever Young finished two noses back in third in last year's Kentucky Derby, and Japan Road qualifier T O Password finished fifth. Luxor Café lacks the reputation of Forever Young, but he appears more formidable than T O Password. The bay colt will bring a four-race win streak to Churchill Downs, twice defeating U.A.E. Derby winner and Kentucky Derby-bound Admire Daytona in Japan, and he displayed a dynamic turn of foot sweeping to lead from the off the pace in his final prep race.



# LUXOR CAFE CONT.

**OWNER:** Luxor Café will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for Koichi Nishikawa.

**TRAINER:** A top trainer in Japan, Noriyuki Hori will make his first Kentucky Derby appearance.

**JOCKEY:** Known as the “Magic Man” for his riding exploits, Joao Moreira has been a successful rider in Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, and his native Brazil. The 41-year-old picked up the mount on Luxor Café in the Fukuryu, guiding the bay colt to his most authoritative performance to date, and Moreira will make his first Kentucky Derby start.

**BREEDER:** Luxor Café was bred in the Kentucky by the Coolmore-affiliated partnership of Orpendale/Chelson/Wynatt and Westerberg Ireland. Orpendale bred Castle Gandolfo, who finished 12th in the 2002 Kentucky Derby.

**SIRE:** The first Triple Crown winner in 37 years, American Pharoah swept the 2015 series and was named Horse of the Year after romping in the Breeders’ Cup Classic (G1). A champion first and second-crop sire, American Pharoah’s offspring have yet to make an impact in the Triple Crown, but the popular stallion will try to change the narrative in the 2025 Kentucky Derby with Luxor Café and Publisher.

**DAM:** Luxor Café is the fourth stakes winner out of the classy Mary’s Follies, a daughter of More Than Ready who counted the 2009 Mrs. Revere (G2) at Churchill Downs among her graded turf wins. Luxor Café’s siblings include half-sister Regal Glory, a champion turf female, and full-brother Café Pharoah. In 2020, Café Pharoah, who had the same owner and trainer as Luxor Café, topped the Japan Road to Kentucky Derby but didn’t ship for the pandemic-delayed race, and he was named champion dirt horse in Japan in 2022. More Than Ready finished fourth in the 2000 Kentucky Derby and developed into a Grade 1-winning sprinter. Luxor Café’s two-turn prowess and strong female bloodlines bode well for the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby distance.



# ADMIRE DAYTONA (JPN)



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Japanese raider Admire Daytona displayed unwavering tenacity when taking his game on the road to the UAE Derby (G2) at Meydan in Dubai. Facing fierce homestretch challenges from a pair of rivals, Admire Daytona gamely held on along the inside to prevail by a nose.

Another international excursion is on the horizon for Admire Daytona. He's the top points earner on the European/Middle East Road to the Kentucky Derby, and the Kentucky Derby (G1) beckons. Admire Daytona has already proven himself racing 1,900 meters (about 1 3/16 miles) in the UAE Derby, and stretching out over 1 1/4 miles for the Kentucky Derby shouldn't be an issue.

That might come as a surprise to bettors who take a brief glance at Admire Daytona's pedigree. His sire, Drefong, was purely a sprinter. As a three-year-old in 2016, he won the six-furlong Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) and seven-furlong King's Bishop (G1) on his way to earning the Eclipse Award for champion male sprinter. The following year, he added the seven-furlong Forego (G1) to his win tally.

But it's important to note Drefong is not bred like a sprinter. His sire, Gio Ponti, was a three-time Eclipse Award winner who excelled running long on turf, winning seven Grade 1 races over distances from one mile to 1 3/8 miles. He also finished second in the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) on synthetic.

Furthermore, Drefong's dam is Eltimaas, a daughter of Horse of the Year and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Ghostzapper. Daughters of Ghostzapper have foaled standout route runners like 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify and champion turf male Up to the Mark.

Since Drefong never tried racing farther than seven furlongs, perhaps he would have handled longer distances just fine. His pedigree suggests stretching out wouldn't have been an issue, and as a stallion in Japan, Drefong has proven capable of siring high-quality route racers.

Indeed, Drefong's best runner to date—Geoglyph—became a Japanese classic winner when he took the Satsuki Sho (G1) racing 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles) on turf. Geoglyph also won the 1,800-meter Sapporo Nisai (G3) and finished second in the 2,000-meter Sapporo Kinen (G2).

Other successful progeny of Drefong include Desierto, winner of the Chunichi Shimbun Hai (G3) and two other stakes racing 2,000 meters; Warp Speed, runner-up in the 3,200-meter (about two-mile) Melbourne Cup (G1); and Continuar and Consigliere, two winners of the 1,600-meter (about one-mile) Hyacinth S. on the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Clearly there's no reason to doubt Drefong's ability to sire route racers. But Admire Daytona needn't rely exclusively on his sire for stamina. The dam's side of his pedigree also offers potential for success running long.

Admire Daytona was produced by Ice Pastel, a daughter of Shackleford out of Million Gift. Ice Pastel didn't show much as a racehorse, but she's fared better as a broodmare. One of her previous foals, Red la Glace, has won three times on dirt over distances from 1,700 meters (about 1 1/16 miles) to 1,800 meters.

As for Shackleford, U.S. Triple Crown fans surely remember him as the winner of the 2011 Preakness (G1) racing 1 3/16 miles. Speed was Shackleford's greatest weapon, and he was versatile from a distance standpoint; in addition to the Preakness, he won the seven-furlong Churchill Downs (G2), one-mile Metropolitan H. (G1), and 1 1/8-mile Clark H. (G1).

That versatility has shown up in Shackleford's stud record. He's the sire of route racers like 1 1/4-mile Santa Anita H. (G1) winner Stilleto Boy and 1 1/16-mile Rebel (G2) hero Malagacy plus sprinters like seven-furlong H. Allen Jerkens (G1) conqueror Promises Fulfilled and Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) runner-up Yuugiri.

Digging deeper into the female family of Admire Daytona, Million Gift is a daughter of 1989 Horse of the Year Sunday Silence out of Maplejinsky, a daughter of British Triple Crown winner Nijinsky II. Sunday Silence won the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Breeders' Cup Classic before embarking on a legendary stud career in Japan, while Maplejinsky—winner of the 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1) and 1 1/8-mile Monmouth Oaks (G1)—is the dam of Sky Beauty, a champion and Hall of Fame inductee who won nine Grade 1 races running as far as 1 1/4 miles.

With this deep female family backing up the surprising stamina contributions of Drefong, Admire Daytona is well suited to race 1 1/4 miles.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Admire Daytona dug in gamely when challenged in midstretch of the 1 3/16-mile U.A.E. Derby (G2), earning his way to the Kentucky Derby (G1) with a hard-fought nose decision, and became the fourth consecutive winner based in Japan. Forever Young, who finished two noses back in third in last year's Kentucky Derby, has recorded the best previous finish from a Japanese-based runner, and Admire Daytona figures to be forwardly placed at Churchill Downs after leading all the way in Dubai last time



# ADMIRE DAYTONA (JPN)

**OWNER:** Admire Daytona will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for Junko Kondo. Her late husband, Riichi, was known for naming his horses with the “Admire” prefix, campaigning 2007 Japanese Horse of the Year Admire Moon.

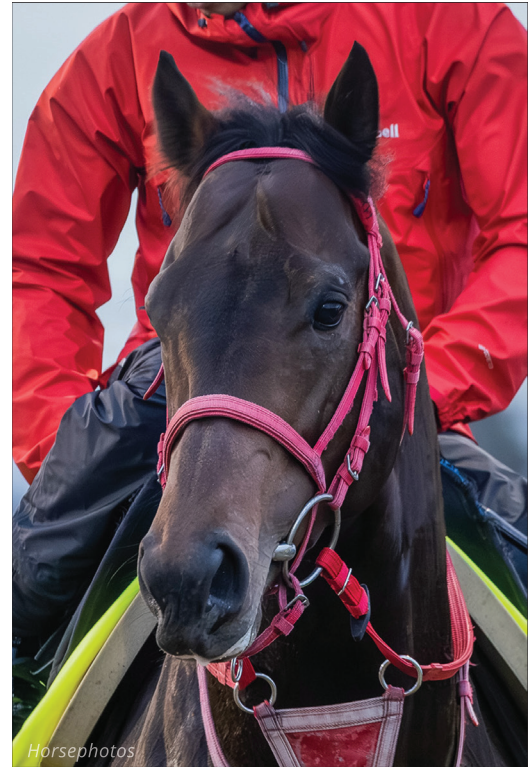
**TRAINER:** Yukihiro Kato will make his first Kentucky Derby appearance.

**JOCKEY:** Admire Daytona will be the third Kentucky Derby starter for Christophe Lemaire, who finished 13th with Crown Pride in 2022 and sixth with Derma Sotogake the following year. A 45-year-old native of France, Lemaire has been the leading rider by wins in Japan six times since 2017.

**BREEDER:** Bred in Japan by Northern Racing, who bred third-placer Forever Young last year, Admire Daytona will be the lone internationally bred runner in 2025 Kentucky Derby field. He was purchased as a weanling for approximately \$480,000.

**SIRE:** Sold to Japan after being named champion American sprinter in 2016, Drefong was bred to appreciate longer distances and has passed those bloodlines along to his offspring. By multiple turf champion Gio Ponti and out of a mare by Ghostzapper, the broodmare sire of 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify, Drefong has sired Japanese classic winners and Warp Speed, who finished second in the about two-mile Melbourne Cup (G1).

**DAM:** Admire Daytona is the first stakes winner out of Ice Pastel, a daughter of 2011 Preakness (G1) winner Shackleford. She’s out of Million Gift, a daughter of 1989 Kentucky Derby and Preakness (G1) winner Sunday Silence, one of the most influential worldwide sire of the modern era. Hall of Famer Sky Beauty can be found in the immediate female family, which provides encouragement for the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby distance.



# BUILT



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Built joined the Road to the Kentucky Derby with a gate-to-wire win in the 1 1/16-mile Gun Runner S. at Fair Grounds. He subsequently recorded top-five finishes in the Lecomte (G3), Risen Star (G2), and Louisiana Derby (G2) over the same track.

Built's achieved his Gun Runner triumph in eye-catching fashion. Even after setting the pace, he had enough stamina left to accelerate his fourth quarter-mile in :23.50 and his final sixteenth in :06.26 to dominate by 6 3/4 lengths.

It's easy to see where Built gets his combination of speed and stamina. His pedigree contains both in a mixture that suggests stretching out over 1 1/4 miles for the Kentucky Derby (G1) is within reach.

Built's speed can be attributed to his sire, Hard Spun. Certainly Hard Spun was fast, securing his signature victory in the seven-furlong King's Bishop (G1) on dirt at Saratoga. But he also won twice over 1 1/8 miles on synthetic, taking the Lane's End (G2) and Kentucky Cup Classic (G2).

Furthermore, Hard Spun performed admirably over classic distances while competing against one of the deepest crops of three-year-old males in memory. He finished second in the Kentucky Derby to champion Street Sense, third in the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1) to two-time Horse of the Year Curlin, and second in the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) to Curlin.

At stud, Hard Spun has passed on his versatility. His progeny have excelled over a wide variety of distances and surfaces. Some, like Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) winner Aloha West and Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) conqueror Spun to Run, have excelled racing one mile or less. But others have demonstrated their prowess over 1 1/4 miles, including champion and Alabama (G1) winner Questing, Gold Cup at Santa Anita (G1) hero Hard Aces, Arlington Million (G1) winner Hardest Core, and Kentucky Derby runner-up Two Phil's.

Even more impressive from a stamina standpoint, Hard Spun's son Rocketry won over 1 3/4 miles in the Marathon (G2) and over 1 5/8 miles in Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance (G2). All told, the progeny of Hard Spun win at an average distance of 7.4 furlongs, indicating a stallion who consistently sires route runners with speed to balance their stamina.

If anything, the bottom half of Built's pedigree is geared even more toward success over classic distances.

Built is the first foal produced by Sea Garden. Sea Garden didn't achieve much on track, with a third-place finish in a one-mile maiden special weight at Ellis Park ranking as her best effort. But her pedigree—by Curlin out of Navy Gardens—is packed with potential.

We'll start with a quick look at Navy Gardens. Although she never raced, she's enjoyed some success as a broodmare. Her best runner to date is Glenville Gardens, winner of the Play the King (G2) and three other stakes over distances from seven furlongs to 1 1/16 miles on turf and synthetic.

Moving on to Curlin, we've already mentioned he's a two-time Horse of the Year who won the Preakness, but his racing record—and stud career—warrant further attention.

Curlin was a standout performer over classic distances. He won the Breeders' Cup Classic, Dubai World Cup (G1), and two editions of the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) over 1 1/4 miles, and in addition to his Preakness win, he placed third in the Kentucky Derby and second in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1), giving him top-three placings in all three legs of the Triple Crown.

Amazingly, Curlin has matched his racing success as a stallion. He's the sire of eight U.S. champions: Cody's Wish, Elite Power, Good Magic, Idiomatic, Malathaat, Nest, Stellar Wind, and Vino Rosso. The latter six were top-tier route racers; to sample a few of their exploits, Vino Rosso won the Breeders' Cup Classic, Idiomatic took the 1 1/8-mile Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1), Malathaat nabbed the Breeders' Cup Distaff and 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1), Nest won the Alabama, and Good Magic placed second in the Kentucky Derby.

Good Magic's runner-up Derby finish is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the success of Curlin's progeny in the spring classics. He's also the sire of Preakness winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Exaggerator, Belmont hero Palace Malice, Preakness runner-up Ride On Curlin, Belmont runner-up Irish War Cry, Belmont third-place finisher Keen Ice, and Preakness third-place finisher Tenfold.

All told, the progeny of Curlin win at an average distance of 7.6 furlongs. The cross of Curlin with a Hard Spun mare produced the above-mentioned champion and Kentucky Derby runner-up Good Magic, and the opposite cross—Hard Spun with a Curlin mare—may prove similarly productive with Built.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Fifth in the Louisiana Derby (G2), Built turned in his best performances during the winter, winning his stakes debut, the Gun Runner in December, and finishing a neck second in the Lecomte (G3) a month later. Those stakes were at 1 1/16 miles,



# BUILT CONT.

and he didn't run as well stretching out in distance for his next two starts. Built weakened to be a well-beaten third in 1 1/8-mile Risen Star (G2) next out and had nothing left for the stretch run of the 1 3/16-mile Louisiana Derby, suggesting the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby distance may be beyond the best scope of the bay colt.

**OWNER:** Built is owned by Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners (Aaron Wellman), who also co-own Kentucky Derby favorite Journalism. There's no guarantee Built will run in the Kentucky Derby if Journalism ships to Churchill Downs in good order. Eclipse has campaigned four previous starters in partnership, including third-placer Danza in 2014.

**TRAINER:** Wayne Catalano has had one previous Kentucky Derby starter, Crypto Star who finished fifth in 1997. The 68-year-old New Orleans native is a four-time Breeders' Cup race winner and has trained multiple champions. A former jockey, Catalano finished second nationally in wins in 1977. After retiring with 1,792 wins in 1983, he went on to greater success, becoming the 39th trainer in the modern history of North American Thoroughbred racing to reach 3,000 wins in 2024.

**JOCKEY:** NA

**BREEDER:** Robert and Lawana Low, who also bred confirmed Kentucky Derby starter Citizen Bull, will make their first appearance as a breeder. The Lows have twice participated in the Kentucky Derby as owners, the best result being Steppenwolver's third in 2006. Built initially sold for \$82,000 as a yearling before being pinhooked for \$260,000 at the OBS two-year-old sale.

**SIRE:** Hard Spun, a son of legendary sire Danzig, finished a commendable second in the 2007 Kentucky Derby and third in the Preakness, concluding his racing career with a runner-up in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1). Multiple Grade 3-winning millionaire Two Phil's, who finished second in the 2023 Kentucky Derby, is the most successful performer in the Triple Crown produced by Hard Spun.

**DAM:** Built is the first foal to race from the Curlin mare Sea Garden, who was out of an unraced mare by Storm Cat. Winner of the 2007 Preakness (G1), two-time Horse of the Year Curlin also finished second in the Belmont (G1) and third in the Kentucky Derby. He's sired a Preakness and Belmont winner, as well as Good Magic, the sire of 2023 Kentucky Derby winner Mage. A relatively young broodmare sire, Curlin is eligible to make a major impact upon the Triple Crown in the years to come.



Renee Torbit



# NEOEQUOS



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

Speed is a strong suit for Neoequos. He set the pace in the 1 1/16-mile Fountain of Youth (G2) and pressed the tempo in the 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1), ultimately finishing third in both of those Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifiers.

But does Neoequos have the stamina to stretch out over 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby (G1)? He lost ground from the eighth pole to the finish line in both his Kentucky Derby qualifiers, hinting that classic distances might be farther than he wants to run.

That was the case for Neoequos' sire, Neolithic. Though never a stakes winner, Neolithic competed with aplomb against tough competition in 2017. He finished third in three Grade/Group 1 races: the 1 1/8-mile Pegasus World Cup (G1), the 1 1/8-mile Woodward (G1), and the 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Dubai World Cup (G1).

These were admirable performances considering Neolithic was squaring off against Arrogate and Gun Runner, a pair of future Hall of Fame inductees. But Neolithic tired down the homestretch in all three races, suggesting shorter distances might have been preferable. His three career victories came racing 1 1/16 miles or less.

Neolithic's sire, Harlan's Holiday, likewise showed some distance limitations. Though a three-time Grade 1 winner racing 1 1/8 miles, Harlan's Holiday went 0-for-6 over 1 1/4 miles, which included a seventh-place finish in the 2002 Kentucky Derby. And Neolithic's dam, Swingit, has also foaled Travel Column, whose stamina topped out at 1 1/16 miles with wins in the Fair Grounds Oaks (G2) and Golden Rod (G2).

At stud, Neolithic is passing on speed, with his progeny winning at a speed-oriented average distance of 6.6 furlongs. He's sired a handful of stakes winners so far, including one-mile Remington Springboard Mile S. conqueror Make It Big and one-mile Tepin S. heroine Dancing N Dixie. The latter managed to finish third against a small field in the 1 3/16-mile Saratoga Oaks (G3) on turf, but in general, Neolithic's runners have done their best work racing less than 1 1/16 miles.

Since Neolithic is a source of speed more than stamina, Neoequos will have to rely on the bottom half of his pedigree if he's going to successfully negotiate 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby. Here, we find mixed signals as far as stamina is concerned.

The dam of Neoequos is Bold Birdie, a three-time winner over distances from five furlongs to 6 1/2 furlongs on synthetic. She also finished third in the 5 1/2-furlong Shady Well S.

Bold Birdie has consistently passed on speed to her foals. Bedrock Birdie, a full-sister to Neoequos, has recorded three wins sprinting five to 5 1/2 furlongs. Wild Embrace, a daughter of Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) winner Bayern, broke her maiden sprinting at 5 1/2 furlongs. And Brashanknowit, by the long-winded Santa Anita H. (G1) hero Shaman Ghost, has posted four wins over distances from 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 furlongs.

This is all a bit surprising since Bold Birdie is a daughter of Birdstone, a talented stayer who won the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) and 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1). Birdstone's first crop of foals famously produced two classic winners: Kentucky Derby hero Mine That Bird and Belmont winner Summer Bird. The progeny of Birdstone have compiled an average winning distance of 7.4 furlongs, indicating he passes on stamina.

Rather than passing on the stamina of Birdstone, it appears Bold Birdie is taking after her dam, On the Podium, a two-time sprint winner who placed third in a five-furlong edition of the Shady Well. On the Podium has foaled Quality Lass, winner of the 5 1/2-furlong Satin and Lace S. and five-furlong Turf Amazon H.; Father Bryan, a maiden winner racing one mile; On the Zip, a five-time winner sprinting 5 1/2 to six furlongs; Step Aside Boys, a four-time winner racing one mile to 1 1/16 miles; and Tenacity Zip, who placed in the five-furlong Tamiami H. and five-furlong Victoria S.

On the Podium's sire, Bold Executive, won the 1 1/8-mile Coronation Futurity, but his best runners at stud have achieved their signature successes over shorter trips. For example, Sand Cove won the 1 1/16-mile Seagram Cup (G3) and Legal Move won half a dozen stakes sprinting six to 6 1/2 furlongs.

The presence of Birdstone notwithstanding, the overall pedigree of Neoequos is geared toward speed, suggesting sprints and short routes will be his strong suit. Classic distances, including the 1 1/4-mile journey of the Kentucky Derby, may be longer than ideal.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

Third in the Florida Derby (G1) and Fountain of Youth (G2), Neoequos is a versatile sort who has run well on the lead and rating just off the early pace while racing exclusively at Gulfstream Park. The August maiden winner made his first five starts in sprints, finishing second in a pair of Florida-bred stakes, and stretched out in distance effectively while stepping up to face open stakes rivals in the last two starts. However, Neoequos will still face a class check at a challenging 1 1/4-mile distance in the Kentucky Derby (G1) if he draws into the main body of the 20-horse field.

**OWNER:** C2 Racing Stable (Clint & Mark Cornett), Ian Parsard, Shining Stables, and Stefania Farms campaign Neoequos



# NEOEQUOS CONT.

in partnership. C2 Racing Stable co-owned 2025 Pegasus World Cup (G1) romper White Abarrio, who won the 2023 Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) after finishing 16th in the Kentucky Derby a year earlier. Parsard, Shining Stables, and Stefania Farms will make their first appearance.

**TRAINER:** Neoequos will be the fourth Kentucky Derby starter for Saffie Joseph Jr. His best previous result came via his first runner, Ny Traffic, who finished eighth in 2020. A champion trainer in his native Barbados, Joseph began training in South Florida in 2011. The 37-year-old was the leading trainer at Gulfstream Park's recently completed Championship meet for the fourth consecutive time. Joseph had a career-best season in 2024, recording 264 wins and more than \$16.6 million in earnings.

**JOCKEY:** After riding Neoequos for the first time in the Florida Derby, Edgard Zayas will make his first Kentucky Derby start. The 31-year-old Puerto Rican native started riding in South Florida in 2012 and has won multiple titles at Gulfstream, finishing fourth in the recent Championship meet that featured a deep jockey colony.

**BREEDER:** The lone Florida-bred in the mix for the 2025 Kentucky Derby, Neoequos was bred by Joseph and Helen Barbazon and Matalona Thoroughbreds. He would be the first starter for his breeders, who sold the bay horse for \$22,000 as a yearling at the 2023 OBS October sale.

**SIRE:** Neolithic won three of 12 career starts, placing in four graded stakes, including a pair of Grade 1 events in 2017, and Neoequos hails from his second crop. He's by three-time Grade 1 winner Harlan's Holiday, who finished seventh as the favorite in the 2002 Kentucky Derby and is best known for siring six-time reigning leading sire Into Mischief. Neolithic has produced six stakes winners, but he's still looking for his first graded winner.

**DAM:** The fourth foal to start out of the stakes-placed Birdstone mare Bold Birdie, Neoequos is the first stakes-placed performer. Bold Birdie raced primarily in sprints, but she's a daughter of Birdstone, who captured the 2004 Belmont (G1) after finishing eighth in the Kentucky Derby. By 1996 Kentucky Derby winner Grindstone, Birdstone produced 2009 Kentucky Derby upsetter Mine That Bird and 2009 Belmont winner Summer Bird. As a broodmare sire, Birdstone is still looking to make a mark on the Triple Crown.



Jessica Platt

# RENDER JUDGMENT



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

The 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby (G1) is one of the toughest horse races to win. A combination of speed and stamina is necessary to outrun as many as 19 rivals to the Churchill Downs finish line.

When analyzing the pedigrees of prospective Kentucky Derby contenders, bettors often find themselves asking: “Does this horse have enough stamina to stay 1 1/4 miles?” Less frequently, a different question is asked: “Does this horse have enough speed to compete in a fast-paced 1 1/4-mile race?”

That’s the question bettors must answer when analyzing the chances of Render Judgment, who has recorded top-five finishes in the Blue Grass (G1), Kentucky Jockey Club (G2), Virginia Derby, and Gun Runner S. on the 2024-25 Road to the Kentucky Derby. His pedigree suggests he’ll stay 1 1/4 miles without issue, but does the stretch-running colt have enough speed to win an ultra-competitive race like the Kentucky Derby, or will he get outsprinted early and find himself with too much ground to close?

Render Judgment is a son of Blame, the champion older male of 2010 after winning the 1 1/4-mile Breeders’ Cup Classic (G1), 1 1/8-mile Whitney H. (G1), and 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster H. (G1). Staying power was Blame’s strong suit, and the majority of his graded stakes-winning sons and daughters have followed suit with success as route racers.

Examples include 1 1/8-mile Coaching Club American Oaks (G1) winner Wet Paint, 1 1/8-mile Arkansas Derby (G1) conqueror Nadal, 2,100-meter (about 1 5/16-mile) Prix de Diane (G1) heroine Senga, and 1 1/8-mile Santa Margarita (G1) winner Fault.

Only on occasion do Blame’s runners prove best as sprinters, and even then, they’re not always one-dimensional speedsters. Marley’s Freedom achieved her signature win in the seven-furlong Ballerina H. (G1), but also stretched out over one mile to nab the Go for Wand H. (G3). March prevailed in the seven-furlong Woody Stephens (G2), but also finished second by a head in the 1 1/8-mile Hollywood Derby (G1).

Turning now to the bottom half of Render Judgment’s pedigree, he’s the first foal produced by the 0-for-4 maiden Barbara Gordon, a daughter of Commissioner.

As a racehorse, Commissioner was all about stamina, which isn’t surprising since he’s a son of 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) winner and renowned stamina influence A.P. Indy out of Flaming Heart, a two-time stakes-winning route racer and a daughter of Belmont winner Touch Gold.

Even though Flaming Heart previously foaled six-furlong Breeders’ Cup Sprint (G1) runner-up Laugh Track, Commissioner didn’t inherit any of that sprinting speed. His five career wins came racing 1 1/8 miles or farther, including triumphs in the 1 1/4-mile Hawthorne Gold Cup (G2), 1 3/16-mile Skip Away (G3), and 1 3/16-mile Pimlico Special (G3). He also finished second by a head in the Belmont.

At stud, Commissioner has passed on stamina to several of his best runners, including 1 3/16-mile Saratoga Oaks (G3) winner Con Lima, 1,600-meter (about one-mile) Saudi Derby (G3) hero Commissioner King, and 1 1/16-mile Rags to Riches S. winner Coach, who participated in the 2021 Kentucky Oaks (G1). However, one daughter of Commissioner—Boardroom—proved best as a sprinter with three graded stakes triumphs over distances from six to seven furlongs.

Getting back to Barbara Gordon, her dam—Waltz With Chester—has also foaled Saturn Boy (a maiden claiming winner racing one mile) and Gold Money (a four-time winner over distances from one mile to 1 1/8 miles). Waltz With Chester’s ability to produce winning route racers isn’t surprising since she’s a half-sister to Basqueian, who nearly swept the Canadian Triple Crown when sandwiching wins in the 1 1/4-mile Queen’s Plate S. and 1 1/2-mile Breeders’ S. around a runner-up finish in the 1 3/16-mile Princes of Wales S.

Waltz With Chester’s sire, Chester House, also brings stamina into the genetic equation. A half-brother to Belmont winner Empire Maker, Chester House stayed 1 1/4 miles to win the Arlington Million (G1) in decisive fashion.

With so many sources of stamina in his pedigree, Render Judgment appears well-suited to tackle any marathon distance offered in North American horse racing—he might even appreciate switching to turf for the two-mile Belmont Gold Cup (G2). But with relatively little speed in his pedigree, facing 19 rivals in the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby might be a little too sharp for Render Judgment.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A stakes veteran, Render Judgment recorded an encouraging second in the Virginia Derby at Colonial Downs two starts back, but he needs to rebound from a non-threatening fifth in the Blue Grass (G1) last out. A projected hot pace may benefit the late runner, but Render Judgment owns lower Brisnet Speed ratings and must improve significantly to offer a serious challenge if he draws into the main body of the 20-horse Kentucky Derby (G1) field.

**OWNER:** Baccari Racing Stable (Chris Baccari), Dream Walkin Farms (Tonni Covell et al), MJM Racing (Michael J. Makin), and



# RENDER JUDGMENT CONT.

Rocket Ship Racing (Brook T. Smith). Rocket Ship Racing co-owned last year's Kentucky Derby runner-up and eventual champion three-year-old male Sierra Leone. Render Judgment would be the first starter for Baccari Racing Stable, Dream Walkin Farms, and MJM Racing.

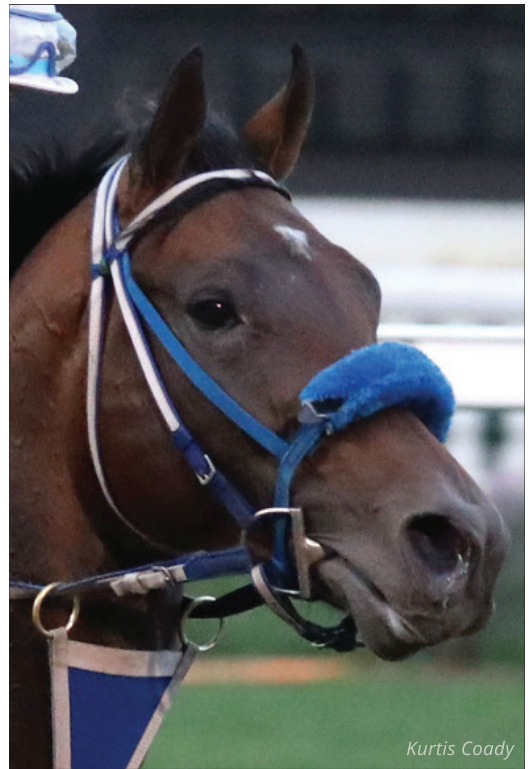
**TRAINER:** In 2024, Kenny McPeck became the first trainer to win the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks (G1) in the same year since Ben Jones in 1952, earning his first Kentucky Derby victory via 18-1 Mystik Dan. The win gave McPeck a personal sweep of the Triple Crown, all with double-digit longshots: Swiss Skydiver won the Preakness (G1) at 11-1 in 2020 and Sarava surprised at 70-1 in the 2002 Belmont (G1). The 62-year-old trainer made his first Kentucky Derby appearance in 1995, finishing second with Tejano Run, and McPeck owns an overall record of 10-1-1-0 record.

**JOCKEY:** NA

**BREEDER:** A Kentucky-bred bay colt, Render Judgment would give Green Lantern Stables their first starter as a breeder. He was purchased for \$310,000 as a yearling at the 2023 Fasig-Tipton Keeneland July sale.

**SIRE:** Named champion older male after defeating Zenyatta in the 2010 Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Blame is still looking to make an impact upon the Triple Crown as a sire. He's by Arch, who is perhaps best known as the broodmare sire of 2012 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner I'll Have Another.

**DAM:** Render Judgment is the first foal to race out of the Commissioner mare Barbara Gordon. By A.P. Indy, Commissioner finished second in the 2014 Belmont. Render Judgment is one of two North American starters as a broodmare sire for Commissioner.



# BAEZA



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

A gallant runner-up finish in a strong renewal of the Santa Anita Derby (G1) has stamped Baeza as a compelling candidate for the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1).

Baeza's credentials extend beyond his promising racing record. A stellar pedigree geared toward success in Triple Crown races cements the bay colt as an exciting prospect.

Baeza is one of the first horses sired by McKinzie, who won at the graded stakes level every year from age two through age five. A versatile runner who nabbed four Grade 1 prizes over distances from seven furlongs to 1 1/8 miles, McKinzie never won over the Kentucky Derby's testing 1 1/4-mile distance—quite unlike his sire, Street Sense, winner of the 2007 Kentucky Derby. However, McKinzie did record runner-up finishes in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and Santa Anita H. (G1), racing 1 1/4 miles.

Since McKinzie's first foals are young three-year-olds, it's too early to say whether he can sire top-level winners over classic distances. But his stud career is off to a promising start. Already he's sired Chancer McPatrick, winner of the seven-furlong Hopeful (G1) and one-mile Champagne (G1); Scottish Lassie, runaway winner of the one-mile Frizette (G1); Quickkick, runner-up in the 1 1/16-mile Alcibiades (G1); McKinzie Street, a top-three finisher in the seven-furlong Del Mar Futurity (G1) and 1 1/16-mile American Pharoah (G1); and Cyclone State, winner of the one-mile Jerome S. on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Clearly, McKinzie is churning out high-class racehorses with regularity. The same can be said of Baeza's dam, Puca, who has already made history as one of only nine mares to sire two winners of U.S. Triple Crown races.

Puca is a daughter of Big Brown out of Boat's Ghost. Big Brown was voted champion three-year-old male of 2008 after winning the Kentucky Derby, Preakness (G1), Florida Derby (G1), and Haskell (G1). While not a superstar stallion, Big Brown has sired a few high-profile winners through the years, including 2015 Santa Anita Derby winner and Kentucky Derby third-place finisher Dortmund. Thanks to Puca, Big Brown is also enjoying success as a broodmare sire.

As for Boat's Ghost, a runner-up finish in the Prairie Meadows Debutante S. was her biggest claim to fame as a racehorse. She's

found greater success as a broodmare, most notably foaling Finnegans Wake, a classy turf horse who won the Woodford Reserve Turf Classic (G1), San Marcos (G2), San Gabriel (G2), Hollywood Turf Cup (G2), and Arlington H. (G3) over distances from 1 1/8 miles to 1 1/2 miles.

Puca is the second stakes winner produced by Boat's Ghost, and she ranks as one of Big Brown's better runners. Her stakes triumph came in the Steve Pini Memorial S. on turf at Suffolk Downs, but she was also a decent dirt horse, finishing second in the Gazelle (G2) and competing in the Kentucky Oaks (G1) and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1).

As a broodmare, however, Puca has soared to another level entirely.

Puca's first foal, Gunning, won three minor races and placed in a couple of stakes racing seven furlongs and one mile. Her second foal, Mage, developed from an unraced maiden into the 2023 Kentucky Derby winner in barely more than three months. In addition to his Derby triumph, Mage recorded top-three finishes in the Preakness, Haskell, and Florida Derby, demonstrating consistent prowess racing 1 1/8 miles and farther.

Puca's third foal, Dornoch, scaled even greater heights. His signature victory came in the 1 1/4-mile Belmont (G1), but he also won the Haskell, Remsen (G2), and Fountain of Youth (G2) over distances from 1 1/16 miles to 1 1/8 miles.

For Baeza, the fact that McKinzie is unproven as a sire of classic winners is a non-concern thanks to the stellar produce record of Puca. Classic distances should absolutely be within reach for Baeza, and there's a chance he'll place Puca in the history books as the first mare to produce three U.S. classic winners.

## KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

A stakes veteran, Render Judgement recorded an encouraging second in the Virginia Derby at Colonial Downs two starts back, but he needs to rebound from a non-threatening fifth in the Blue Grass (G1) last out. A projected hot pace may benefit the late runner, but Render Judgement owns lower Brisnet Speed ratings and must improve significantly to offer a serious challenge if he draws into the main body of the 20-horse Kentucky Derby (G1) field.

**OWNER:** Baccari Racing Stable (Chris Baccari), Dream Walkin Farms (Tonni Covell et al), MJM Racing (Michael J. Makin), and Rocket Ship Racing (Brook T. Smith). Rocket Ship Racing co-owned last year's Kentucky Derby runner-up and eventual champion three-year-old male Sierra Leone. Render Judgement would be the first starter for Baccari Racing Stable, Dream Walkin Farms, and MJM Racing.

**TRAINER:** In 2024, Kenny McPeck became the first trainer to win the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks (G1) in the same year since Ben Jones in 1952, earning his first Kentucky Derby victory via 18-1 Mystik Dan. The win gave McPeck a



# BAEZA CONT.

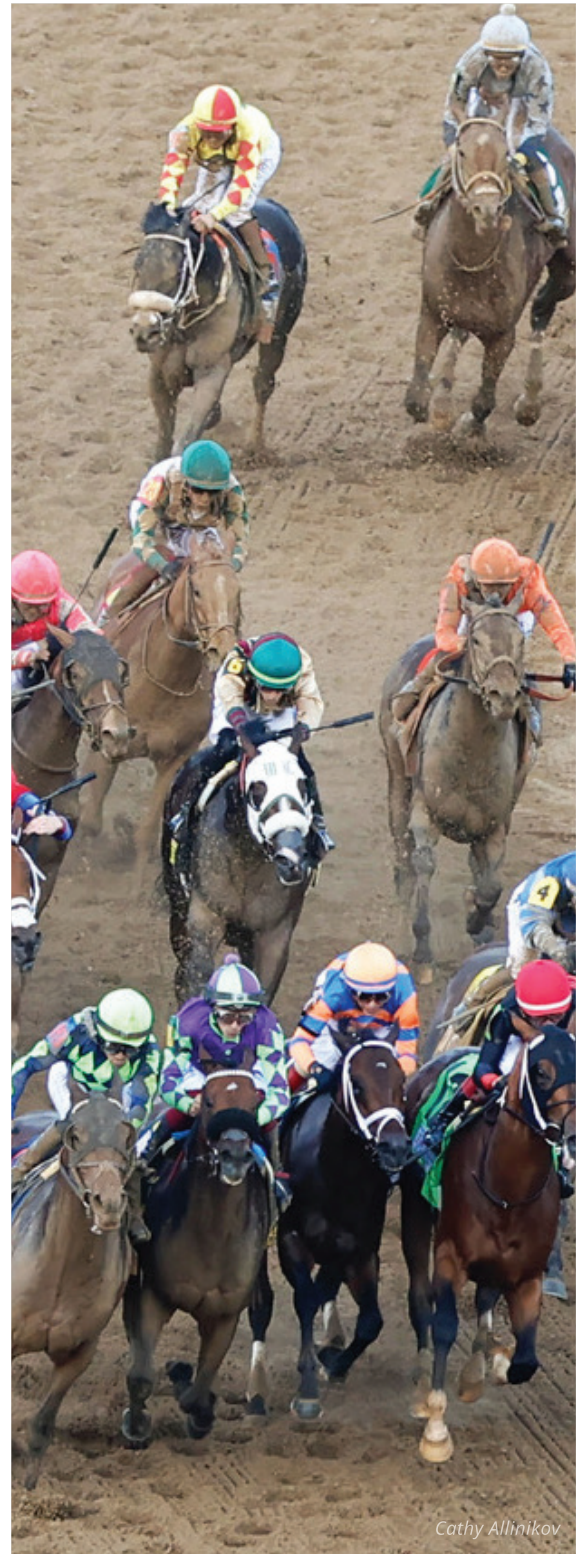
personal sweep of the Triple Crown, all with double-digit longshots: Swiss Skydiver won the Preakness (G1) at 11-1 in 2020 and Sarava surprised at 70-1 in the 2002 Belmont (G1). The 62-year-old trainer made his first Kentucky Derby appearance in 1995, finishing second with Tejano Run, and McPeck owns an overall record of 10-1-1-0 record.

**JOCKEY:** NA

**BREEDER:** A Kentucky-bred bay colt, Render Judgement would give Green Lantern Stables their first starter as a breeder. He was purchased for \$310,000 as a yearling at the 2023 Fasig-Tipton Keeneland July sale.

**SIRE:** Named champion older male after defeating Zenyatta in the 2010 Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Blame is still looking to make an impact upon the Triple Crown as a sire. He's by Arch, who is perhaps best known as the broodmare sire of 2012 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner I'll Have Another.

**DAM:** Render Judgement is the first foal to race out of the Commissioner mare Barbara Gordon. By A.P. Indy, Commissioner finished second in the 2014 Belmont. Render Judgement is one of two North American starters as a broodmare sire for Commissioner.



Cathy Allinikov



# CALIFORNIA BURRITO



## KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

A refuse-to-lose tenacity carried California Burrito to victory in the 1 1/16-mile John Battaglia Memorial S. on the Road to the Kentucky Derby at Turfway Park. The frontrunning colt turned back a challenge to prevail by half a length.

The John Battaglia Memorial took place over Turfway's synthetic Tapeta track, but California Burrito has also shown encouraging form on dirt at Churchill Downs, trouncing a \$150,000 maiden claimer and finishing second in a \$100,000 allowance optional claimer.

Switching back to dirt for the 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1) shouldn't be a concern for California Burrito. But can he handle the Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance? That's a tougher question.

California Burrito is a son of Army Mule, a talented but lightly raced runner who retired with an unblemished 3-for-3 record. He was clearly a stellar sprinter, winning all of his starts—including the Carter H. (G1)—by a minimum of 6 1/4 lengths. But he never tackled a distance longer than seven furlongs.

Whether Army Mule could have handled longer trips is open to debate. Certainly his pedigree offered potential for success around two turns. His sire, Friesan Fire, won the 1 1/8-mile Louisiana Derby (G2) and several other two-turn stakes. His dam, Crafty Toast, foaled Platinum Steel, the dam of 1 1/4-mile King's Plate S. winner Paramount Prince.

But as a stallion, Army Mule is primarily siring sprinters and milers. His progeny have compiled a speed-oriented average winning distance of 6.5 furlongs. The best of them include seven-furlong H. Allen Jerkens Memorial (G1) winner One in Vermillion and six-furlong Phoenix (G2) winner Federal Judge.

If California Burrito is going to handle 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby, he'll have to rely on the bottom half of his pedigree for stamina. There's definitely stamina in his female family, but will it be enough?

California Burrito's dam is Bluegrass Sunset, an unremarkable racer who failed to crack the top three in two starts. She's found more success as a broodmare, with her first three starters recording multiple victories apiece. In addition to California Burrito, she's

foaled Splurge (a sprinter on Tapeta) and Mongolian Diamond (a miler on dirt).

Bluegrass Sunset is a daughter of Hard Spun out of the Dynaformer mare Bluegrass Princess, and this is where the stamina comes into play.

Hard Spun scored his signature victory in the seven-furlong King's Bishop (G1), but he was also a capable campaigner over classic distances, finishing second in the Kentucky Derby, second in the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), and third in the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1). His progeny have compiled a solid average winning distance of 7.4 furlongs, and several have won at the highest level over 1 1/4 miles. Two years ago, his son Two Phil's finished second in the Kentucky Derby.

Hard Spun has also found success as a broodmare sire. His daughters have foaled champion juvenile and Kentucky Derby runner-up Good Magic and the long-winded dirt marathoner Lone Rock, to name a couple of prominent examples.

As for Bluegrass Princess, she won three times racing 1 1/16 miles and placed twice at the graded stakes level over 1 1/8 miles. Her sire, Dynaformer, was a renowned stamina influence best known for siring 2006 Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro. Other long-winded progeny of Dynaformer include Americain, winner of the Melbourne Cup (G1) over 3,200 meters (about two miles); Point of Entry, a five-time Grade 1 winner racing as far as 1 1/2 miles; and Perfect Drift, who recorded top-three finishes in nine Grade 1 stakes, including the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic.

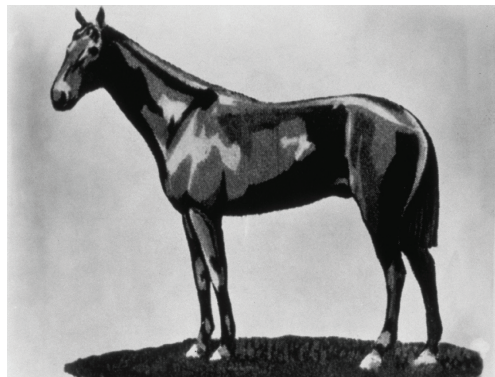
Having Hard Spun, Bluegrass Princess, and Dynaformer in the bottom half of his pedigree is likely the reason why California Burrito found enough stamina to win over 1 1/16 miles in the John Battaglia Memorial. And their influence may well prove sufficient to carry California Burrito over even longer distances.

But it remains to be seen how much the speed influence of Army Mule will be a limiting factor, especially since California Burrito's dam—Bluegrass Sunset—previously foaled sprinters and milers. It's possible 1 1/4 miles is a little too far for this particular pedigree cross.



# IS THE KENTUCKY DERBY'S APOLLO CURSE A NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE?

by Keeler Johnson



**FOR OVER A HUNDRED YEARS, THE “APOLLO CURSE” WAS A SEEMINGLY UNBREAKABLE KENTUCKY DERBY HANDICAPPING RULE.**

In 1882, Apollo became the first horse who did not race as a two-year-old to win the Kentucky Derby. His feat went unmatched throughout the 20th century; it seemed juvenile racing experience was basically a prerequisite to win the Derby.

**THIS RAISES AN IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR KENTUCKY DERBY HANDICAPPERS: IS THE APOLLO CURSE SHATTERED AND IRRELEVANT?**

Is a lack of juvenile racing experience actually a detriment in the Kentucky Derby, or is the Apollo Curse a myth resulting from an insufficient sample size of horses?

There's no reason to speculate on the answer. Let's dig into the data and find out.

## APOLLO CURSE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The complete racing records of Kentucky Derby starters from the race's early decades are not readily available. However, a complete list of every Apollo Curse qualifier since 1937 has been compiled by Churchill Downs, so we'll focus our study on the years 1937-2024.

Since 1937, 75 horses who did not race at age two have competed in 46 editions of the Kentucky Derby. They faced off against 718 horses who did race at age two.

The fact horses who raced at age two vastly outnumber horses who did not among Kentucky Derby starters is a compelling clue that juvenile racing experience makes a horse more likely to achieve Kentucky Derby glory.

But that doesn't necessarily help handicappers analyzing a Kentucky Derby field featuring one or more Apollo Curse qualifiers. The horses are here, they've qualified—the question is, how will they perform?

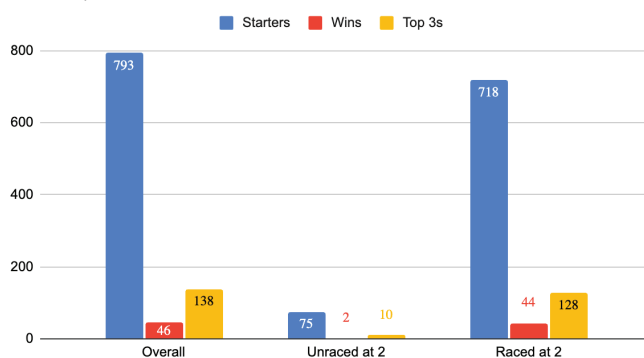
That's why we're emphasizing a more specific question: based on the number of starters in each category, when Apollo Curse qualifiers square off in the Kentucky Derby against horses with juvenile racing experience, are the Apollo Curse qualifiers more likely or less likely to win or finish in the top three?

## APOLLO CURSE DATA ANALYSIS

The results of our research paint a vivid picture:

	Starters	Wins	Top 3s
<b>Overall</b>	793	46	138
<b>Unraced at 2</b>	75 (9.5%)	2 (4.3%)	10 (7.2%)
<b>Raced at 2</b>	718 (90.5%)	44 (95.7%)	128 (92.8%)

Overall, Unraced at 2 and Raced at 2



Horses who did not race at age two represented 9.5% of starters in our sample size of 46 Kentucky Derbys. If all else were equal, one might expect them to record 4.3 wins (9.5%) and about 13.1 top-three finishes (9.5%).

But that's not what happened. The two wins from Justify and Mage gave the Apollo Curse qualifiers a 4.3% win rate, 55% lower than expected.

The group also underperformed at recording top-three finishes; only 10 of the 138 top-three finishers in the sample size were Apollo Curse qualifiers, which means they secured 7.2% of top-three finishes—24% lower than expected.

In contrast, the 718 Kentucky Derby starters who did race at age two represented 90.5% of starters in the sample size. They won 44 Kentucky Derbys (95.7%) and recorded 128 top-three finishes (92.8%), in both cases outperforming expectations.

## THERE'S ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT THIS DATA.

In our sample size of 46 Derbys, Apollo Curse qualifiers recorded two wins and 10 top-three finishes from 75 starts, which means 2.7% of them won and 13.3% finished in the top three. Horses who raced at age two posted 44 wins and 128 top-three finishes from 718 starts, meaning 6.1% of them won and 17.8% finished in the top three. Based on these percentages, Apollo Curse qualifiers were 56% less likely to win the Kentucky Derby than the starters who did race as juveniles, and they were 25% less likely to finish in the top three.

**BEFORE MOVING ON, THERE'S ANOTHER QUESTION THAT'S WORTH ANALYZING: DO HORSES WITHOUT JUVENILE RACING EXPERIENCE OUTPERFORM THEIR POST-TIME ODDS?**

If bettors have historically viewed Apollo Curse qualifiers with skepticism (which is warranted based on the data we outlined above), then there's a chance these horses are chronic overlays in the betting. Even if they're less likely to factor than horses who raced at age two, perhaps the Apollo Curse qualifiers consistently outperform their odds.

To determine if this is the case, we've reviewed every Apollo Curse qualifier since 2001, the year Churchill Downs started offering individual odds on every horse in the Kentucky Derby field. We've identified the ranking of each Apollo Curse qualifier in the betting (first choice, second choice, fifth choice, 12th choice, etc.) and compared their ranking to their actual finishing position:

**SEE RELATED CHART 2**

Horse	Finish position	Odds ranking
T O Password	5	18
Just a Touch	20	5
Mage	1	8
Kingsbarns	14	5
Zozos	10	15
Taiba	12	2
Happy Jack	14	11
Charge It	17	9
Sainthood	10	15
Rock Your World	16	2
Soup and Sandwich	18	8
Money Moves	13	5
Justify	1	1
Magnum Moon	19	7
Battle of Midway	3	15
Patch	14	6
Materiality	6	6
Verrazano	14	4
Bodemeister	2	1
Midnight Interlude	16	5
Summer Bird	6	13
Dunkirk	11	2
Curlin	3	2
Showing Up	6	12
Greeley's Galaxy	11	7
Song of the Sword	11	18
Atswhatimtalknbout	4	5
<b>Averages</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>7.7</b>

**THE NUMBERS AREN'T ENCOURAGING.**

On average, horses without juvenile racing experience started as roughly the eighth choice in the betting, but their average finishing position was about 10th, indicating they ran below the expectation of bettors. Indeed, only 37% of Apollo Curse qualifiers matched or exceeded the expectation of bettors, while 63% performed worse than expected.

**APOLLO CURSE CONCLUSIONS & KENTUCKY DERBY ODDS BETTING TAKEAWAY**

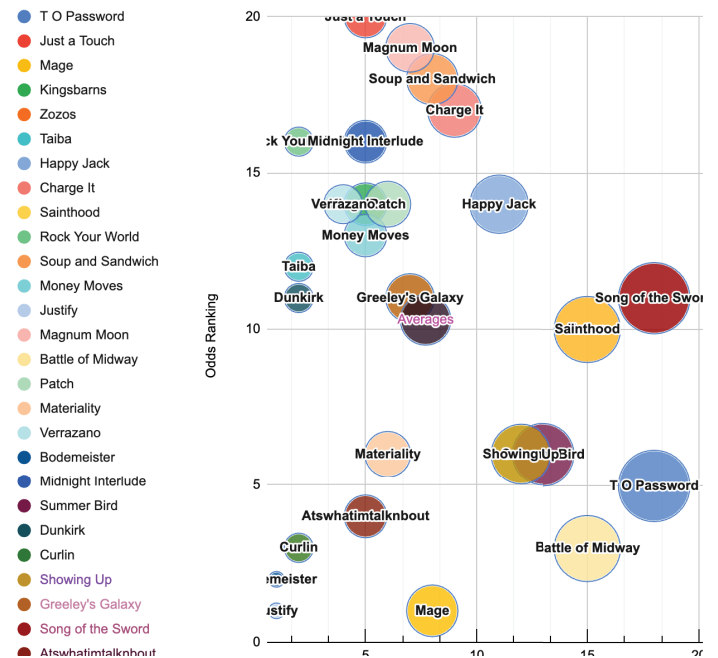
The Kentucky Derby is not a static race. Each year brings a new field of contenders, and there's a chance the recent victories by Justify and Mage are signaling the start of a new era in which horses without juvenile racing experience are no longer at a disadvantage.

But even with the victories of Justify and Mage, the broader history of the Kentucky Derby since 1937 indicates that when horses without juvenile experience enter the Kentucky Derby starting gate, they're 56% less likely to win than horses who did race at age two, and 25% less likely to finish in the top three.

Furthermore, even if the next three or so Apollo Curse qualifiers win the Kentucky Derby, they'll only reach equal footing with the success rates of horses who did race at age two.

The conclusion is straightforward: for the foreseeable future, the Apollo Curse lives on, and horses who did not race at age two are at a meaningful statistical disadvantage in the Kentucky Derby.

Finish Position and Odds Ranking





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12 Cathryn Sophia (E/P 5) <sup>9</sup>		7 B. f. 3 FTMSEP 2014 \$30k		8 Prime Power: 147.1 (1st)		12 Life: 5 4 - 0 - 1		10 Fst (109)		1 E1 E2/Late SPD	
9/2 Own: Cash Is King Llc		Sire: Street Boss (Street Cry (IRE)) \$12,500		11 L 121		2016 3 2 - 0 - 1		Off (109)		92 99 / 90	
Green, Multi-colored Crown, Green Shamrocks On White		Dam: Sheave (Mineshaft)				2015 2 2 - 0 - 0		Dis (108)			
CASTELLANO JAVIER (0 0-0-0 0%)		Brdr: Robert T Mantuso (MD)				CD 0 0 - 0 - 0		Trf (110)			
		Trnr: Servis John C (0 0-0-0 0%)						AW			
2 +2016 494 22% 54% -0.54		3 +2016 69 33% 57% +0.92		5 Sire Stats: AWD 6.7		15% Mud 241 MudSts		1.57spi			
+JKYw/EP types 591 26% 57% -0.15		Graded Stakes 28 7% 36% -1.84		6 Dam's Sire: AWD 7.3		15% Mud 820 MudSts		2.23spi			
+JKYw/Trn L60 2 50% 100% +10.60		+Btn favorite 74 30% 54% +0.13		4 Dam's Stats: Unraced		100% 2yo 1str		1w 1sw 18.02dpi			
+JKYw/Routes 107 22% 54% -0.28		+Routes 482 18% 43% -0.05		6 Sold At: FTMSEP 2014		\$30.0k (27/47) SireAvg: \$53.3k		StudFee: \$15,000			
14 ★ Finished 3rd in last race ★ Best Dirt Speed is fastest among today's starters		● Failed as favorite in last race ● Poor 'Graded Stakes' trainer record: 7% wins 28 sts									
★ Hot Jockey in last 7 days (13 4-5-1)											
15 DATE TRK 16 DIST 17 RR RACETYPE 18 CR E1 E2/ LP 1c 2c SPD PP ST 1C 2C STR FIN 23 JOCKEY 25 ODDS Top Finishers		19 20 21 26 20 21									
09Apr16Kee <sup>6</sup> 1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub> ft :24 :47 1:11 1:43 <sup>2</sup> 117 @Ashland-G1 118 92 106/ 80 +7 +13 94 3 3 1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 3 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>1</sub> 1hd 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> CastellanoJJ <sup>121</sup> L *0.50 WpNmRnkRclsVlntrnkCtrnSp <sup>2</sup> Bold bid 4w; hung 5											
27Feb16GP <sup>5</sup> 1m ft :24 :47 1:11 <sup>4</sup> 1:36 <sup>3</sup> 117 @DvonaDal-G2 122 83 88/ 103 -4 -7 96 4 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 4 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 12 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 17 CastellanoJJ <sup>122</sup> Lf *0.20 CthrynSph <sup>7</sup> LwsBy <sup>3</sup> Drst <sup>1</sup> 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> Pressed3w;bid1/4;handy 6											
30Jan16GP <sup>3</sup> 7f ft :22 <sup>3</sup> :45 <sup>2</sup> 1:09 <sup>4</sup> 1:22 116 @FrwdGal-G2 121 84 91/ 104 -5 -11 99 1 6 4 <sup>4</sup> 3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 15 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> RosarioJ <sup>120</sup> Lf *0.10 CthrynSph <sup>5</sup> IslndSn <sup>4</sup> BaltDiva <sup>3</sup> Off step slow;in hand 6											
05Dec15LH <sup>5</sup> 7f ft :23 :46 <sup>3</sup> 1:11 1:23 114 @GinTalkngB 100k 121 97 101/ 98 -1 -6 102 5 1 1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 1 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 1 <sup>8</sup> 11 <sup>6</sup> RosadoRJ <sup>119</sup> Lf *0.10 CthrynSph <sup>16</sup> Prgnss <sup>5</sup> ThndrngSk <sup>1</sup> 3 On left lead;handily 6											
30Oct15Prx <sup>5</sup> 6f ft :22 <sup>2</sup> :46 <sup>3</sup> :58 <sup>3</sup> 1:11 <sup>1</sup> 112 @Mdn 50k 119 94 94/ 102 -3 -11 99 2 3 1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 1 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>2</sub> 1 <sup>5</sup> 11 <sup>2</sup> RosadoRJ <sup>122</sup> L *2.40 CtrnSp <sup>12</sup> AWndSn <sup>5</sup> Wrbibrfl <sup>2</sup> 1 Sharp;handy fashion 9											
25 ●23Apr Kee 5f ft :59 <sup>3</sup> B 1/36 03Apr Kee 4f ft :48 <sup>1</sup> B 5/37 26Mar Pmm 6f ft 1:13 B 1/1 13Mar Pmm 4f ft :48 <sup>2</sup> B 2/42 ●20Feb Pmm 4f ft :48 B 1/66 24Jan Pmm 4f ft :50 <sup>2</sup> B 89/103											
●16Jan Pmm 5f ft :59 <sup>3</sup> B 1/13 08Jan Pmm 5f ft 1:00 <sup>3</sup> B 2/23 ●31Dec 15 Pmm 4f ft :48 B 1/76 ●20Dec 15 Pmm 4f ft :48 <sup>1</sup> B 1/37 ●25Nov 15 Prx 5f ft 1:00 <sup>3</sup> B 1/14 ●16Nov 15 Prx 5f ft :59 <sup>3</sup> B 1/13											

13 Land Over Sea (S 1)		Ch. f. 3 OBSAPR 2015 \$130k		Prime Power: 139.7 (4th)		Life: 8 2 - 4 - 1		7 Fst (107)		430,000 97	
5/1 Own: Reddam Racing Llc		Sire: Bellamy Road (Concerto) \$7,500		L 121		2016 3 1 - 2 - 0		Off (106)			
White, Purple Belt, White Band On Purple Sleeves, Purple		Dam: Belle Watling (Pulpit)				2015 5 1 - 2 - 1		Dis (107)			
GUTIERREZ MARIO (0 0-0-0 0%)		Trnr: O'Neil Doug F (0 0-0-0 0%)				CD 0 0 - 0 - 0		Trf (108)		\$42,000 82	
								AW			
2016 214 14% 45% -0.40		+2016 228 19% 45% -0.13		Sire Stats: AWD 7.2		20% Mud 492 MudSts		1.22spi			
+JKYw/S types 114 11% 44% -0.20		+Shipper 195 20% 38% -0.25		6 Dam's Sire: AWD 7.6		17% Mud 1422 MudSts		2.25spi			
								1w 1sw 18.02dpi			

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- 3 Trainer Stats
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