

150 KENTUCKY
DERBY®

HANDICAPPING BETTING GUIDE

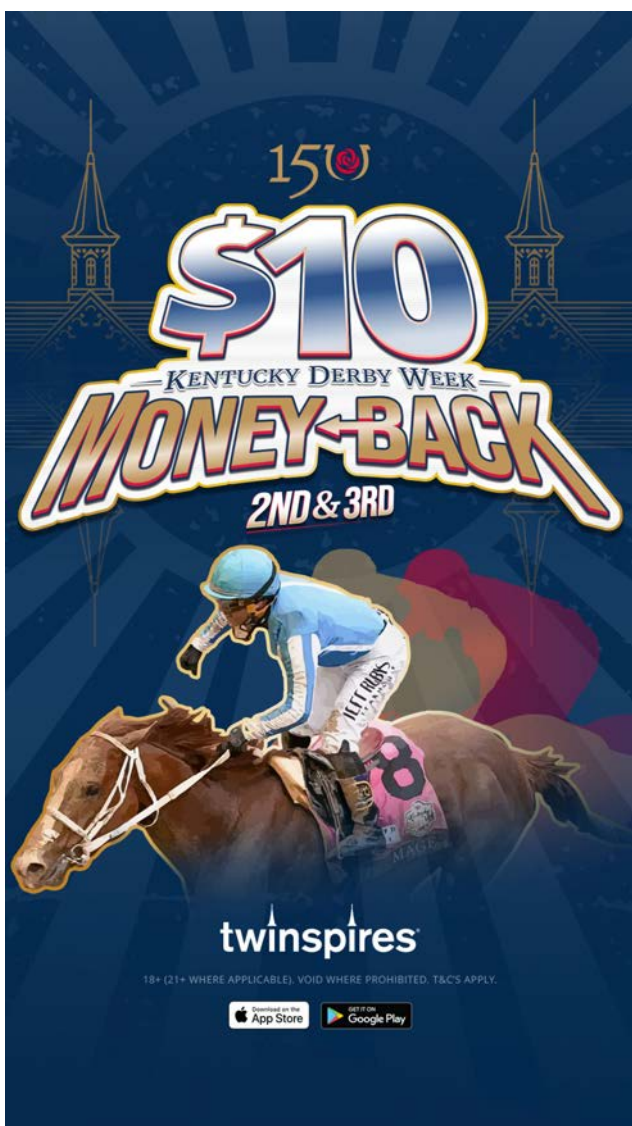
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HANDICAPPING BETTING GUIDE



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RACE & LIVE BLOG SCHEDULE

THURBY

Thursday, May 2, 2024 12:45PM ET

KENTUCKY OAKS

Friday, May 3, 2024 10:30AM ET

KENTUCKY DERBY

Saturday, May 4, 2024 10:30AM ET



DATE	GRADE	PURSE	RACE
Wed. May 1	Listed	\$300,000	William Walker
Wed. May 1		\$200,000	Isaac Murphy Marathon Overnight Stakes
Thur. May 2	Listed	\$350,000	Opening Verse
Thur. May 2		\$250,000	Kentucky Juvenile
Thur. May 2		\$200,000	St. Matthews Overnight Stakes
Fri. May 3	GI	\$1,500,000	Longines Kentucky Oaks
Fri. May 3	GI	\$1,000,000	Fasig-Tipton La Troienne
Fri. May 3	GII	\$750,000	Alysheba
Fri. May 3	GII	\$600,000	Eight Belles presented by Sysco
Fri. May 3	GII	\$600,000	Edgewood presented by Forcht Bank
Fri. May 3	GIII	\$400,000	Modesty presented by Derby City Gaming
Fri. May 3	GIII	\$400,000	Unbridled Sidney presented by Resolute Racing
Sat. May 4	GI	\$5,000,000	Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve
Sat. May 4	GI	\$1,000,000	Old Forester Bourbon Turf Classic
Sat. May 4	GI	\$1,000,000	Churchill Downs presented by Ford
Sat. May 4	GI	\$1,000,000	Derby City Distaff presented by Kendall-Jackson Winery
Sat. May 4	GII	\$750,000	Longines Churchill Distaff Turf Mile
Sat. May 4	GII	\$600,000	Twin Spires Turf Sprint presented by Sentient Jet
Sat. May 4	GII	\$600,000	Pat Day Mile presented by SAP
Sat. May 4	GII	\$600,000	American Turf presented by TwinSpires
Sat. May 4	Listed ®	\$200,000	Knicks Go presented by L&N Federal Credit Union

AT A GLANCE

A look at the previous Churchill Downs meet: November 27, 2023.

AVG. WINNING ODDS: 5.67-1

FAVORITE WIN%: 35% **FAVORITE ITM%:** 71%

EXOTICS	PAYOFF
Exacta	90.00
Daily Double	92.31
Trifecta	1,001.68
Pick 3	587.67
Superfecta	7,904.47
Pick 4	6,415.54
Pick 5	28,297.53
Pick 6 Jackpot	200,966.84
Super High Five	5,301.33



TRACK BIAS MEET (09/14 - 11/26)

Distance	# Race	% Wire	Best Style	Best Posts
6.0fDirt	39	15%	E/P	Rail/Ins
7.0fDirt	43	40%	E	Inside
1 MileDirt	46	22%	P	Inside
1 1/16mDirt	73	32%	E/P	Middle
Turf Routes	28	4%	P	Mid/Out

TRACK BIAS WEEK (11/20 - 11/26)

Distance	# Race	% Wire	Best Style	Best Posts
6.0fDirt	8	0%	S	Rail/Ins
7.0fDirt	10	40%	E	Inside
1 MileDirt	11	27%	E	Middle
1 1/16mDirt	14	21%	E/P	Rail/Ins
Turf Routes	1	0%	S	Inside

WHO'S HOT, WHO'S NOT

HOT TRAINERS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	WINNING FAVORITES	'22-'23 WIN %
Bauer Philip A.	12	5	2	2	6.12	2	22%
Medina Robert	8	3	0	2	17.58	2	12%
McCarthy Michael W.	9	3	2	2	4.83	0	16%
Newton Troy	2	2	0	0	5.18	0	19%
Walden Williams	4	2	1	0	16.43	2	19%
Beckman D. Whitworth	5	2	2	0	18.45	0	14%
Casse Mark E.	5	2	0	1	4.51	1	16%
Diodoro Robertino	5	2	0	0	9.47	1	21%

HOT JOCKEYS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'22-'23 WIN %
Rosario Joel	11	3	1	0	13.48	2	17%
Concepcion Axel	12	3	1	1	10.32	2	20%

COLD JOCKEYS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'22-'23 WIN %
Cannon Declan	20	0	1	5	27.06	1	12%
Ortiz Jose L.	11	0	1	1	11.36	2	18%
Beschizza Adam	10	0	1	1	20.40	0	10%

EXPERT PICKS FOR KENTUCKY DERBY WEEKEND

We've assembled an expert team of handicappers to give their top picks for each graded stakes race for both Kentucky Oaks and Kentucky Derby days.

FRIDAY, MAY 3 Churchill Downs



ALYSHEBA STAKES (G2)

3 First Mission
1 Money Supply
10 Trademark

10 Trademark
3 First Mission
7 Tapit Trice

7 Tapit Trice
3 First Mission
1 Money Supply

10 Trademark
3 First Mission
1 Money Supply

3 First Mission
7 Tapit Trice
10 Trademark

KENTUCKY OAKS (G1)

13 Just F Y I
5 Thorpedo Anna
16 Candied (AE)

14 Leslie's Rose
12 Power Squeeze
13 Just F Y I

11 Ways and Means
13 Just F Y I
14 Leslie's Rose

13 Just F Y I
5 Thorpedo Anna
11 Ways and Means

11 Ways and Means
8 Tarifa
14 Leslie's Rose

SATURDAY, MAY 4 Churchill Downs



AMERICAN TURF STAKES (G2)

5 Legend of Time
6 Neat
12 Abrumar

5 Legend of Time
6 Neat
14 Agate Road

5 Legend of Time
10 Set
14 Agate Road

13 Can Group
5 Legend of Time
14 Agate Road

5 Legend of Time
13 Can Group
14 Agate Road

TURF CLASSIC STAKES (G1)

6 I'm Very Busy
5 Program Trading
11 Naval Power

6 I'm Very Busy
11 Naval Power
1 Integration

4 Far Bridge
6 I'm Very Busy
5 Program Trading

5 Program Trading
11 Naval Power
6 I'm Very Busy

4 Far Bridge
11 Naval Power
6 I'm Very Busy

CHURCHILL DOWNS STAKES (G1)

3 Bo Cruz
4 Mr. Wireless
6 Zozos

2 Tejano Twist
6 Zozos
9 Three Technique

3 Bo Cruz
6 Zozos
9 Three Technique

3 Bo Cruz
9 Three Technique
1 Raise Cain

2 Tejano Twist
4 Mr. Wireless
7 Track Mate

KENTUCKY DERBY (G1)

2 Sierra Leone
4 Catching Freedom
7 Honor Marie

4 Catching Freedom
2 Sierra Leone
17 Fierceness

11 Forever Young
2 Sierra Leone
17 Fierceness

2 Sierra Leone
8 Just a Touch
12 Track Phantom

17 Fierceness
2 Sierra Leone
4 Catching Freedom



KENTUCKY OAKS LEADERBOARD

Updated: Sunday, April 27, 2024.

HOW TO GET INTO THE KENTUCKY OAKS STARTING GATE

The Road to the Kentucky Oaks Presented by TwinSpires.com is a 31-race series that awards points to the Top 5 finishers in each race. The Top 14 point earners will earn a spot in the starting gate for the 150th running of the \$1.25 million Kentucky Oaks Presented by Longines (Grade I) on Friday, May 3, 2024.

POST POSITIONS	HORSE	ML ODDS	OWNER(s)	TRAINER	Non-Restricted Stakes Earnings
1	Tapit Jenallie	30-1	Willis Horton Racing LLC	Eddie Milligan Jr.	\$216,725
2	Gin Gln	30-1	Calumet Farm	Brad Cox	\$154,708
3	Where's My Ring	15-1	Michael McMillan	Val Brinkerhoff	\$162,000
4	Regulatory Risk	20-1	Klaravich Stables, Inc	Chad Brown	\$48,000
5	Thorpedo Anna	5-1	Brookdale Racing, Inc.	Kenneth McPeck	\$471,800
6	Lemon Muffin	30-1	Aaron Sones, Julie Gilbert and Harrison M. Sones	D W Lukas	\$228,750
7	Fiona's Magic	30-1	Stonehedge LLC	Michael Yates	\$166,010
8	Tarifa	7-2	Godolphin, LLC	Brad Cox	\$420,000
9	Everland	30-1	Foster Family Racing, Wargel, William J., R.K. Eckrich Racing, LLC and Maxis Stable	Eric Foster	\$185,050
10	Into Champagne	30-1	Six Column Stables, LLC, Bloch, Randall L., Gladden, Jim, Davis, Mike and Steele, Michael	Ian Wilkes	\$124,360
11	Ways and Means	5-1	Klaravich Stables, Inc	Chad Brown	\$108,000
12	Power Squeeze	12-1	Lea Farms, LLC	Jorge Delgado	\$300,870
13	Just F Y I	9-2	George Krikorian	William Mott	\$1,375,500
14	Leslie's Rose	4-1	Whisper Hill Farm, LLC	Todd Pletcher	\$300,870
AE15	Our Pretty Woman	N/A	Courtlandt Farms	Steven Asmussen	\$80,000
AE16	Candied	N/A	Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners	Todd Pletcher	\$566,925



TWINSPIRES TIPSHEET



150TH RUNNING OF THE KENTUCKY OAKS

An overflow field of 16 three-year-old fillies has been entered to travel 1 1/8 miles on the Churchill Downs main track in Friday's \$1.25 million Kentucky Oaks (G1).

POST	HORSE	ML ODDS
1	Tapit Janelle	30-1
2	Gin Gin	30-1
3	Where's My Ring	15-1
4	Regulatory Risk	20-1
5	Thorpedo Anna	5-1
6	Lemon Muffin	30-1
7	Fiona's Magic	30-1
8	Tarifa	7-2
9	Everland	30-1
10	Into Champagne	30-1
11	Ways and Means	5-1
12	Power Squeeze	12-1
13	Just F Y I	9-2
14	Leslie's Rose	4-1

TOP PICKS
#11 Ways and Means
#13 Just F Y I
#14 Leslie's Rose
#8 Tarifa

WAGERS
\$20 win and place 11
\$5 Exacta: key box 11 with 8,13,14
50-cent Superfecta: 11 with 8,13,14 with 5,8,12,13,14 with 3,5,7,8,12,13,14

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#1 TAPIT JENALLIE (30-1): Stakes winning Tapit filly was third in the Honeybee (G3) and second in the Fantasy (G2) in her last pair of outings. The chestnut filly has been mostly consistent to this stage of development but will need a forward move to have a chance at a placing late from the rail for trainer Eddie Milligan Jr.

#2 GIN GIN (30-1): Brad Cox trainee was a distant third in the Gazelle (G3) at Aqueduct most recently. Hightail homebred has enjoyed some success at Churchill, but she will need to step up to challenge the top guns in the Kentucky Oaks homestretch.

#3 WHERE'S MY RING (15-1): Twirling Candy filly broke her maiden in style when dominating the Gazelle (G3) in her latest assignment. The sophomore has displayed dramatic improvement since adding blinkers three starts back, and she shows a swift half-mile drill on the Churchill surface as well. The Val Brinkerhoff pupil wouldn't be a total shocker with Jose Lezcano retaining the ride.

#4 REGULATORY RISK (20-1): Omaha Beach filly will have the blinkers removed in this affair for conditioner Chad Brown. The Gazelle (G3) runner-up earned a lifetime best Brisnet Speed rating last time out, but she will have to improve even more on this occasion with Jose Ortiz in the stirrups.

#5 THORPEDO ANNA (5-1): Fantasy (G2) romper is loaded with talent and she also posted a most impressive allowance tally over this track as a juvenile for trainer Kenny McPeck. Kentucky-bred daughter of Fast Anna has tactical speed and a fine turn-of-foot, and she will be a major factor if she can prove capable of firing her best shot at 1 1/8 miles. Brian Hernandez Jr. has the riding assignment.

#6 LEMON MUFFIN (30-1): Honeybee (G3) upsetter failed to produce her best in the recent Fantasy (G2) and is hard to back off of her latest try. The D. Wayne Lukas charge has looked the part in her local morning moves, but she appears to be a cut below the best. Keith Asmussen will ride.

#7 FIONA'S MAGIC (30-1): Davona Dale (G2) heroine might be the pace of the field while making her second two-turn run for trainer Michael Yates. The daughter of St Patrick's Day lost by 44 3/4 lengths in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2) last time out, but the filly will surely improve off of that if she clears this group early on. Luis Saez taking the reins is a bonus.

#8 TARIFA (7-2): Godolphin homebred is 3-for-3 in 2024, with measured wins in the Rachel Alexandra (G2) and Fair Grounds Oaks (G2) in succession. Bernardini filly has the gate presence to get a good position early, and the closing kick to put her foes away late. Flavien Prat will guide the streaking morning-line choice.

#9 EVERLAND (30-1): Bourbonette Oaks upsetter will make her initial try on dirt in this endeavor. The daughter of Arrogate is in good form, but this is a difficult spot to try the surface for the first time. Abel Cedillo will pilot the longshot.

#10 INTO CHAMPAGNE (30-1): Talented Into Mischief filly was put away in the lane when making her two-turn debut in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2) most recently, but she has some top-four appeal for conditioner Ian Wilkes. The Davona Dale (G2) second has speed and will be forwardly placed from the break with Julien Leparoux in the stirrups.

#11 WAYS AND MEANS (5-1): Top selection turned heads in her brief juvenile campaign, and the Chad Brown pupil was a strong second in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2) in her 2024 bow. The bay daughter of Practical Joke has trained in swift fashion in advance of her local debut, and I'm expecting the Klaravich Stables homebred to take a big step forward in her second appearance since last summer. Tyler Gaffalione will be in the silks.

#12 POWER SQUEEZE (12-1): Jorge Delgado pupil has rolled home to wins in four straight races, including a game victory over Ways and Means in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2). Union Rags filly has thrived since stretching out in distance in her 2023 finale, and she has also earned strong Brisnet Late Pace ratings in each of her starts this season. The Kentucky-bred could be dangerous if she doesn't have too much ground to make up late under Daniel Centeno.

#13 JUST F Y I (9-2): Champion two-year-old filly of 2023 finished a solid runner-up in the deep Ashland (G1) in her three-year-old debut and will be a major contender with expected improvement on Friday. Bill Mott pupil has been posting excellent morning drills since the winter and appears to be rounding up to a major effort second time off the layoff with regular rider Junior Alvarado at the controls.

#14 LESLIE'S ROSE (4-1): Once-beaten daughter of Into Mischief rolled home a superb Ashland (G1) victress and rates a huge chance with anything resembling her latest performance for trainer Todd Pletcher. The well-bred bay passed the two-turn test with flying colors at Keeneland, and she will be imposing if she avoids a wide voyage throughout with Irad Ortiz Jr. retaining the mount.

#15 OUR PRETTY WOMAN (15-1): Steve Asmussen trainee is short on experience but long on talent as she displayed when second in the Fair Grounds Oaks (G2) in her latest showing. The \$900,000 daughter of Medaglia d'Oro has good early speed and the ability to carry it, and if she draws in off of the also-eligible list, then the dark bay would be a win contender with Joel Rosario riding.

#16 CANDIED (20-1): Alcibiades (G1) queen made a nice middle move in the Ashland (G1) before tiring late, and she will be interesting at a nice price if she gets in for Todd Pletcher. Third in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1) to close out 2023, the daughter of Candy Ride possesses a fine turn-of-foot, and she lands in a field with some tired legs to run at turning for home. She needs two defections from the main body of the race in order to draw in.





KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD

Updated: Saturday, April 27, 2024

HOW TO GET INTO THE KENTUCKY DERBY STARTING GATE

The Road to the Kentucky Derby Presented by TwinSpires.com is a 36-race series that awards points to the Top 5 finishers in each race. The Top 20 point earners will earn a spot in the starting gate for the 150th running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) on Saturday, May 4, 2024. The Kentucky Derby field has been limited to 20 starters since 1975. At least 20 horses have entered the 1 ¼-mile race for 3-year-olds every year since 2004, and 16 of the last 18 years.

POST POSITIONS	HORSE	POINTS	OWNER(s)	TRAINER	Non-Restricted Stakes Earnings
1	Dornoch	20-1	West Paces Racing LLC, R. A. Hill Stable, Belmar Racing and Breeding, LLC, Two Eight Racing, LLC and Pine Racing Stables	Chad C. Brown	\$472,375
2	Sierra Leone	3-1	Derrick Smith, Mrs. John Magnier, Michael Tabor, Westerburg, Rocket Ship Racing & Peter Brant	Brad Cox	\$369,750
3	Mysik Dan	20-1	4 G Racing, LLC	Kenny McPeck	\$550,050
4	Catching Freedom	8-1	Albaugh Family Stables, LLC	Brad Cox	\$802,000
5	Catalytic	30-1	Tami Bobo, Julie Davies and George G. Isaacs	Saffie A. Joseph, Jr.	\$186,000
6	Just Steel	20-1	BC Stables, LLC (John Bellinger and Brian Coelho) and Henry Schmueckle	D. Wayne Lukas	\$628,295
7	Honor Marie	20-1	Ribble Farms, LLC (Alan Ribble), Michael H. Eiserman, Earl I. Silver, Kenneth E. Fishbein and David Fishbein	D. Whitworth Beckman	\$448,455
8	Just a Touch	10-1	Qatar Racing, LLC (Sheikh Fahad Al Thani), Resolute Racing (John Stewart) and Marc Detampel	Brad Cox	\$247,500
9	Encino	20-1	Godolphin, LLC	Brad Cox	\$323,880
10	T O Password (JPN)	30-1	Tomoya Ozasa	Daisuke Takayanagi	\$822,000
11	Forever Young (JPN)	10-1	Susumu Fujita	Yoshito Yahagi	\$1,768,722
12	Track Phantom	20-1	L and N Racing, LLC (Lee Levinson), Clark O. Brewster, Jerry Caroom and Breeze Easy, LLC (Mike Hall)	Steven M. Asmussen	\$300,000
13	West Saratoga	50-1	Harry L. Veruchi	Larry W. Demeritte	\$363,640
14	Endlessly	30-1	Amerman Racing Stables, LLC	Michael W. McCarthy	\$658,000
15	Domestic Product	30-1	Klaravich Stables, Inc	Chad C. Brown	\$260,500
16	Grand Mo the First	50-1	Granpollo Stables, LLC	Victor Barboza, Jr	\$164,250
17	Fierceness	5-2	Repole Stable	Todd A. Pletcher	\$1,646,100
18	Stronghold	20-1	Sharon and Rick Waller	Philip D'Amato	\$742,800
19	Resilience	20-1	Emily Bushnell and Ric Waldman	William I. Mott	\$416,000
20	Society Man	50-1	Reeves Thoroughbred Racing (Dean Reeves), West Paces Racing, LLC (Larry Connolly), GMP Stables, LLC (Anthony Melfi), and Carl F. and Yurie Pascarella	Danny Gargan	\$141,875
21	Epic Ride	20-1	Welch Racing LLC	John Ennis	\$198,654
22	Mugatu	20-1	JSM Equine, Average Joe Racing Stables and Dan Well	Jeff Engler	\$30,107

TWINSPIRES TIP SHEET

KENTUCKY DERBY.

150

150TH RUNNING OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY

The 150th running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby (G1) at Churchill Downs is upon us and attracted an overflow field of 23 three-year-olds for the historic 1 1/4-mile contest.

POST	HORSE	ML ODDS
1	Dornoch	20-1
2	Sierra Leone	3-1
3	Mystik Dan	20-1
4	Catching Freedom	8-1
5	Catalytic	30-1
6	Just Steel	20-1
7	Honor Marie	20-1
8	Just a Touch	10-1
9	Encino	SCR
10	T O Password (JPN)	30-1
11	Forever Young (JPN)	10-1
12	Track Phantom	20-1
13	West Saratoga	50-1
14	Endlessly	30-1
15	Domestic Product	30-1
16	Grand Mo the First	50-1
17	Fierceness	5-2
18	Stronghold	20-1
19	Resilience	20-1
20	Society Man	50-1
21	Epic Ride	50-1

TOP PICKS

#4 Catching Freedom

#19 Resilience

#2 Sierra Leone

#12 Track Phantom

WAGERS

\$25 win and place #4 Catching Freedom

\$1 Trifecta 4 with 2,12,19 with ALL

\$1 Trifecta 4 with ALL with 2,12,19

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#1 DORNOCH (20-1): Two-time Grade 1 winner finished a non-threatening fourth in the Blue Grass S. (G1) in his latest showing for Danny Gargan. The half-brother to 2023 Derby victor Mage received a tough draw on the rail and will surely be sent from the break with the aggressive Luis Saez in the silks.

#2 SIERRA LEONE (3-1): Superb late runner is a nose from being unbeaten in his four career tries and might be moving best of all in the stretch on Saturday. The \$2.3 million son of Gun Runner aced both the Blue Grass (G1) and Risen Star (G2) this season and could peak third time off the bench for conditioner Chad Brown. Tyler Gaffalione will ride the impressive colt.

#3 MYSTIK DAN (20-1): Kenny McPeck pupil blitzed the Southwest S. (G3) prior to recording a third-place result in the Arkansas Derby (G1) in his latest endeavor. This Goldenfence colt broke his maiden on the surface and he has trained well locally, too. Brain Hernandez, Jr. will be in the stirrups aboard the exotics contender.

#4 CATCHING FREEDOM (8-1): Top pick owns a powerful turn of foot and gives every impression of a three-year-old who will thrive at 10 furlongs. One of three in the field for trainer Brad Cox, the well-bred son of Constitution will save ground early and be asked for his best approaching the turn for home with Flavien Prat in the irons.

#5 CATALYTIC (30-1): Catalina Cruiser colt was a distant runner-up in the Florida Derby (G1) and makes his second route attempt for trainer Saffie Joseph. The Kentucky-bred will need a huge step forward in order to challenge this deep cast with Jose Ortiz up.

#6 JUST STEEL (20-1): D. Wayne Lukas trainee was an excellent second in the Arkansas Derby (G1) most recently and appears to be an interesting long shot in the field. This Justify colt shows a trio of stakes seconds from four outings this campaign, and he concluded 2023 with a black-type win on the oval, too. Keith Asmussen will be in the stirrups.

#7 HONOR MARIE (20-1): Stout late runner rallied to be second in the Louisiana Derby (G2) and has reportedly been training in strong fashion in advance of this major test. The win threat dominated the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2) at Churchill in his two-year-old finale, and he will be dangerous if he receives a clear voyage in the race with Ben Curtis retaining the ride.

#8 JUST A TOUCH (10-1): Second from the Cox shedrow has run a trio of very good ones to begin his career, led by a clear second in the recent Blue Grass (G1) at Keeneland. The son of Justify possesses tactical speed as well as a solid turn of foot, and I envision him being forwardly placed from the start on Saturday. Regular pilot Florent Geroux has the assignment once again.

#9 ENCINO (20-1): SCRATCHED

#10 T O PASSWORD (30-1): The first of the pair of Japanese imports is bred to handle the distance but shows only two career outings in preparation for the Derby. The bay is quick and might be forwardly placed in the early going with Kazushi Kimura inheriting the mount.

#11 FOREVER YOUNG (10-1): Unblemished son of Real Steel was a convincing winner of the UAE Derby (G2) in his second run of the season and could be a major player while making his U. S. debut. The Yoshito Yahagi trainee has looked good on the surface since arriving in Kentucky, and the late runner will be a force with a forward move under the guidance of Ryusei Sakai.

#12 TRACK PHANTOM (20-1): Underrated son of Quality Road is battle-tested and will wear blinkers for the initial time for Steve Asmussen. The speedy colt has never run a bad one in his lifetime, and he will be forcing the pace from the break with Joel Rosario. I feel that the Kentucky-bred will be the one to catch at the top of the lane on Saturday.

#13 WEST SARATOGA (50-1): Grade 3 winner got up for second in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) at Turfway Park in his last assignment. The Larry Dameritte trainee has been first or second in each of his trio of local races to date, but he will need a big move forward to make the frame in this contest with Jesus Castanon riding.

#14 ENDLESSLY (30-1): Mike McCarthy pupil is the wildcard in the field for me. The Oscar Performance three-year-old is an excellent performer on the turf and synthetic, evidenced by his Jeff Ruby (G3) romp, and will try the dirt for the first time in a tough spot. If the bay takes to the surface, then he has an exotics chance at a big price under Umberto Rispoli.

#15 DOMESTIC PRODUCT (30-1): Chad Brown trainee punched his Derby ticket with a game score in the Tampa Bay Derby (G3) in his latest venture. This Practical Joke colt shows excellent Late Pace figures, but he has still yet to prove that he is capable of firing with the best in his division at this stage of his development. Irad Ortiz, Jr. will be on board.

#16 GRAND MO THE FIRST (50-1): Florida Derby (G1) third has checked in third in four straight following two wins to begin his career. The Victor Barboza, Jr. trainee will need major improvement to have a say in the event with Emisael Jaramillo in the controls.

#17 FIERCENESS (5-2): Champion son of City of Light blitzed his foes in the Florida Derby (G1) in his final Derby prep and will be a force if he produces his best race on Saturday. The Todd Pletcher pupil has reportedly been training in lights-out fashion leading up to the event, and his post draw should allow him to have a clear voyage throughout, as well. John Velazquez will be in the irons atop the favorite.

#18 STRONGHOLD (20-1): Phil D'Amato charge has done little wrong in his lifetime and comes in flying under the radar. The Santa Anita Derby (G1) victor smoked a bullet half-mile in his last serious drill in California followed that with a nice local move on Sunday, and it's a good thing that he graduated on this strip against an excellent field, as well. Antonio Fresu will pilot the potential live long shot.

#19 RESILIENCE (20-1): Wood Memorial (G2) star took a nice step forward with the addition of blinkers in his run at Aqueduct most recently for trainer Bill Mott. The son of Into Mischief is bred to run all day and has the gate presence to be within range around the back side. I like the bay at a big price with Junior Alvarado taking the reins.

#20 SOCIETY MAN (50-1): Gargan pupil ran the race of his life when runner-up in the Wood (G2) at 106-1 odds last time out. The Good Magic gelding has posted a pair of solid drills beneath the Twin Spires as of late, and if his last was not a fluke, then he could potentially earn a minor slice of the pie with Frankie Detlori up.

#21 EPIC RIDE (50-1): First on the also-eligible list will need a defection to be in the gate on Saturday. This Blame colt was a solid third in the Blue Grass (G1) while making his dirt debut, but he is hard to back with confidence if he draws into the main body of the field with Adam Beschizza on board.

#22 MUGATU (50-1): Jeff Engler trainee has yet to hit the board from a trio of career outings on the dirt and looks to be in an impossible spot against this group. If the son of Blofeld gets in the race, then Joe Talamo will ride the colt.

BETTING THE 2024 KENTUCKY DERBY ON DIFFERENT BUDGETS

by John Mucciolo

A full field will go postward in Saturday's 150th \$5 million Kentucky Derby (G1) beneath the Twin Spires at Churchill Downs. Will conditioners Brad Cox or Bill Mott, who each have one Derby win to their credit despite their horse not crossing the wire in first, add a second victory in the storied race to pad their substantial respective resumes? I believe one of them will, but I am having a hard time separating them.

#4 Catching Freedom (8-1) caught my eye in a debut win on the oval in October, and he comes off of his best effort to date when going last-to-first in the Louisiana Derby (G2) last time out for Cox. The Albaugh Family color bearer checks a whole lot of boxes for me, including having the excellent Flavien Prat in the stirrups. I fully feel that the 1 1/4-mile distance is an ideal trip for the son of Constitution, too.

Mott's #19 Resilience (20-1) has so much appeal as a colt who gets better and better as he develops. The son of Into Mischief has a sensational catalog page, and he took the move forward that I expected when blinkers were added for his Wood Memorial S. (G2) waltz. I like the draw with the colt having a good measure of tactical speed, which should ensure him of a clear, albeit a ground-losing, trip in the Derby. John Velazquez jumps off to pilot the morning-line choice in the event which is understandable, but Junior Alvarado is among the most underrated riders around, in my opinion.

#2 Sierra Leone (3-1), #7 Honor Marie (20-1), and #12 Track Phantom (20-1), like the leading duo, all competed in the Risen Star S. (G2) at Fair Grounds on February 17. And I feel that the prep event was undoubtedly the deepest contest on the 2024 Road to the Kentucky Derby challenge series. The trio will be on most or all of my tickets.

Florida Derby (G1) romper #17 Fierceness (5-2) is special when he runs his best, but I have enough doubt in my mind with his inconsistencies to date. I'd never toss him, but I prefer others more. #6 Just Steel (20-1) was a fine runner-up to Muth in the Kentucky Derby (G1), and Muth would likely be a clear third choice in the field if he ran. Rooting for D. Wayne Lukas is always fun for me, too. Santa Anita Derby (G1) star #18 Stronghold (20-1) was a clear winner of a highly-rated maiden race at Churchill in the fall, and he hasn't done much wrong since. The Phil D'Amato trainee is flying under the radar, in my opinion.

I have mapped out some potential plays for bettors on three different budgets.

\$30 BUDGET

\$3 exacta 4,19 with 2,4,7,12,19 (\$24)

\$1 exacta 4,19 with 6,17,18 (\$6)

\$60 BUDGET

\$.50-cent trifecta 4,19 with 2,4,7,12,19 with 2,4,6,7,12,17,18,19 (\$24)

\$.50-cent trifecta 2,4,7,12,19 with 4,19 with 2,4,6,7,12,17,18,19 (\$24)

\$.50-cent trifecta 4,19 with 2,4,7,12,19 with 2,4,7,12,19 (\$12)

\$125 BUDGET

\$1 superfecta 4,19 with 4,19 with 2,6,7,12,17,18 with 1,2,6,7,9,11,12,15,17,18 (\$108)

\$1 superfecta 4 with 2,7,12 with 19 with 2,6,7,12,17,18 (\$15)



2024 KENTUCKY DERBY BRISNET SPEED RATING REPORT

by James Scully

From 2012-2021, nine of 10 Kentucky Derby (G1) winners registered triple-digit Brisnet Speed ratings prior to the 1 1/4-mile race, but the last two winners, 80-1 Rich Strike and 15-1 Mage, failed to meet the threshold.

At least Mage was close, registering a 99 Speed figure in the final prep, but Rich Strike came out of nowhere with a career-best 95 number.

Speed ratings remain an important tool, identifying the fastest horses in any field, and six horses in Saturday's 150th running of the Kentucky Derby have achieved a tripe-digit Speed rating.

Here are the two most recent Speed ratings, ranked by the top last-out number, for the 2024 Kentucky Derby field (excluding international runners).

FIERCENESS	106
	89
RESILIENCE	104
	89
SOCIETY MAN	102
	85
SIERRA LEONE	101
	93
CATCHING FREEDOM	100
	91
JUST A TOUCH	100
	97
HONOR MARIE	99
	86
STRONGHOLD	98
	95
TRACK PHANTOM	97
	93
JUST STEEL	97
	86
ENCINO	95
	94
DORNOCH	94
	94
MUGATU*	93
	80
MYSTIK DAN	92
	101
ENDLESSLY	91
	93
CATALYTIC	90
	87
GRAND MO THE FIRST	88
	84
WEST SARATOGA	87
	85
DOMESTIC PRODUCT	84
	91

*OUTSIDE THE TOP 20

TAKEAWAYS

Fierceness has run the fastest races, generating a 112 Speed rating for a smashing victory in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) last fall, and he rolled to a 13-length decision in the Florida Derby (G1) when posting the top last-out figure. Trained by two-time Kentucky Derby winner Todd Pletcher and ridden by three-time winner John Velazquez, Fierceness will bring speed to the 20-horse starting gate, leading all the way in the last start, but he showed tractability when racing up close during the opening stages of the Juvenile.

Resilience and Society Man, the 1-2 finishers in the Wood Memorial (G2), rank second and third.

After breaking his maiden and finishing fourth in a deep Risen Star (G2) to open 2024, Resilience moved forward with first-time blinkers in the Wood, drawing off to a 2 1/4-length decision, and the son of two-time Kentucky Derby-winning sire Into Mischief will enter on the upswing for Bill Mott, who won the 2019 Kentucky Derby via disqualification with Country House.

Society Man advanced to second entering the far turn of the Wood and held his position to the wire while never threatening the winner, surprising at 106-1 odds. Considering he was exiting a slower maiden triumph (85 Speed rating) and has never won at two turns, the gelding faces the possibility of a regression after a 17-point increase to his career-best number.

Sierra Leone overcame a slow pace and a wide trip to gamely win the Risen Star, and his Speed ratings progressed nicely when registering his first triple-digit number in a convincing Blue Grass (G1) win. The late runner is a candidate to keep improving for Chad Brown.

Since registering an 89 Speed rating for winning the Smarty Jones S. on New Year's Day, Catching Freedom's Speed ratings have increased nicely in a pair of starts, and the fast-closing colt will look to keep advancing for Brad Cox, who won the 2021 Kentucky Derby via disqualification with Mandaloun.

Unraced at two, Just a Touch chased a fast pace before surging to a clear lead in midstretch of the Blue Grass. And while he couldn't withstand the late charge of Sierra Leone, the lightly raced colt received his first triple-digit Speed rating finishing a clear second. That also marked his first start at two turns and on a fast track, and Just a Touch may have more to offer in the Kentucky Derby for Cox.

Honor Marie exits a respectable second in the Louisiana Derby (G2), netting a 99 Speed rating, and the Grade 2 juvenile winner at Churchill Downs also merits respect from a Speed rating perspective.

Good luck in Kentucky Derby 150!

2024 KENTUCKY DERBY RUN STYLES

by James Scully

Post positions are set for the 150th running of the Kentucky Derby (G1), and the last two editions set up well for late runners. Projecting pace scenarios is far from an exact science for handicappers, but it's safe to say the potential exists for another hot and contested pace on Saturday.

Based upon the previous races of each horse, Brisnet Past Performances classify runners into four different categories.

Early ("E") types do their best running on or close to the lead. Horses with an "E/P" designation, early pressers, can show the way if necessary or be farther back if the pace is hot, but they generally like to race within a few lengths of the early action. Pressers ("P") are more off-the-pace runners, midpack stalkers with some versatility. And "S" types, sustained runners, have exhibited the characteristics of one-run closers.

Here is a projection of run styles for this year's Kentucky Derby field:

EARLY

#1 DORNOCH (20-1) - A frontrunning winner of the Fountain of Youth (G2) and Remsen (G2), Dornoch faltered when trying stalking tactics in the Blue Grass (G1), and the speedy colt promises to send from the rail post after drilling a fast half-mile work in advance of the Kentucky Derby. The presence of late runners to his immediate outside in the starting gate may be a benefit.

#9 ENCINO (20-1) - Displayed fine speed leading all the way in the Lexington (G3) three weeks ago, and Encino's sharp five-furlong breeze last Saturday suggests he's tied on for another frontrunning performance.

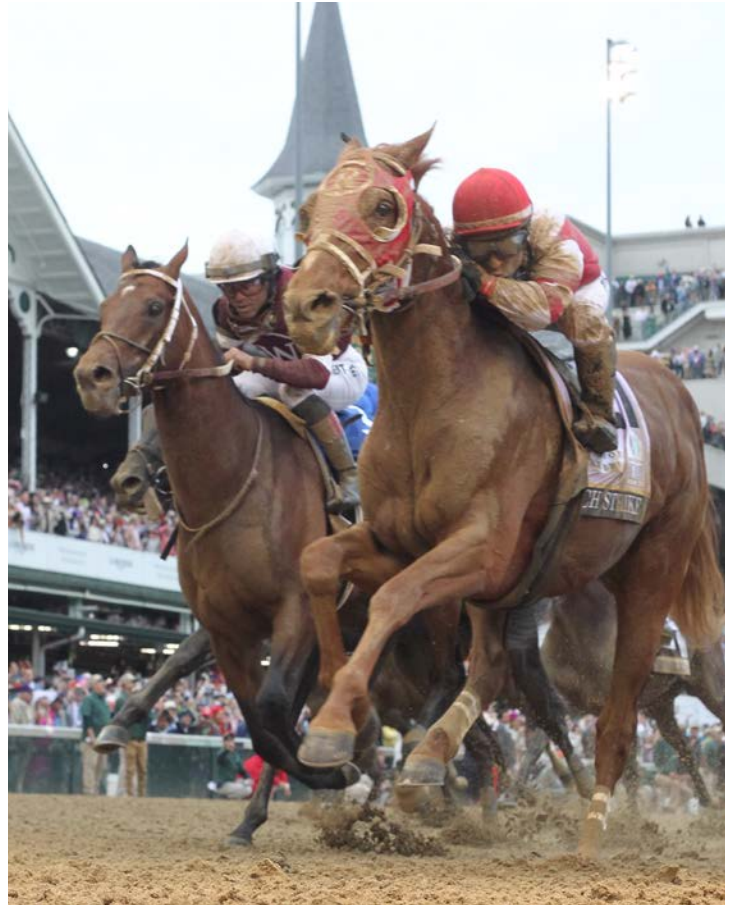
#10 T O PASSWORD (30-1) - Japanese invader has shown early speed in both of his starts. If he's quick enough, T O Password's best chance will be on the front end of the Kentucky Derby.

#12 TRACK PHANTOM (20-1) - Steve Asmussen adds blinkers to help his pupil relax and finish better, but Track Phantom will still be forwardly placed with his natural speed. The colt has raced on or within a head of the early lead in all seven career starts.

#17 FIERCENESS (5-2) - Kentucky Derby favorite has run the fastest races, generating a 106 Brisnet Speed rating for his 13 1/2-length, wire-to-wire win in the Florida Derby (G1). And while he has the versatility to settle close, Fierceness figures to use his top-class speed to avoid being caught too wide.

EARLY/PRESSERS

#8 JUST A TOUCH (10-1) - Showed excellent speed chasing a hot pace in the Blue Grass, winding up a commendable second to Sierra Leone, and Just a Touch is well-drawn to receive a favorable trip in the second flight.



#11 FOREVER YOUNG (10-1) - Unbeaten from five starts over five different tracks, this classy Japanese colt didn't like kickback when dropping off the pace in his second start and displayed good speed winning his third start on the front end. Forever Young will look to

show tactical ability in the Kentucky Derby, hustling from the starting gate to avoid dropping too far back in a bulky field, and his rider will attempt to get him outside in the clear.

#15 DOMESTIC PRODUCT (30-1) - Since making his career debut, the Tampa Bay Derby (G3) winner has never raced more than three lengths off the early pace in four starts. Domestic Product's sharp recent work at Churchill Downs suggests he'll look to establish positioning in the first half of the field during the opening quarter-mile.

#18 STRONGHOLD (20-1) - A pace-pressing scorer in the Sunland Derby (G3), Stronghold settled just off the leaders before launching his winning rally in the Santa Anita Derby (G1) and has never been more than 2 1/2 lengths behind at the second call in six career starts.

#19 RESILIENCE (20-1) – Has shown tactical speed in all three starts this year, recording a convincing win with the addition of blinkers in the Wood Memorial (G2). Resilience will try to stay within striking range from the break of the Kentucky Derby.

PRESSERS

#2 MYSTIK DAN (20-1) – After showing speed in his first four starts, Mystik Dan improved switching to stalking tactics in the Southwest (G3), romping by eight lengths. He exits a rallying third in the Arkansas Derby (G1).

#5 CATALYTIC (30-1) – An off-the-pace type in his first two starts, Catalytic raced closer in a Florida Derby lacking early speed, but the lightly raced colt may have a difficult time establishing early positioning Saturday from an inside post.

#6 JUST STEEL (20-1) – A game runner-up in the Arkansas Derby, Just Steel displayed more speed as a juvenile, developing into more of a stalking type in recent stakes appearances. He'll try to avoid being too far back in midpack during the opening stages of the Kentucky Derby.

#13 WEST SARATOGA (50-1) – Winless from three starts beyond a mile, West Saratoga will try to establish positioning just off the pace, but he may not be quick enough to work out a trip in the first half of the field.

#20 SOCIETY MAN (50-1) – Showed improved positional speed finishing second at 106-1 in a slow-paced Wood Memorial, but Society Man has never established positioning in the top three at the first two calls of five career starts.

SUSTAINED

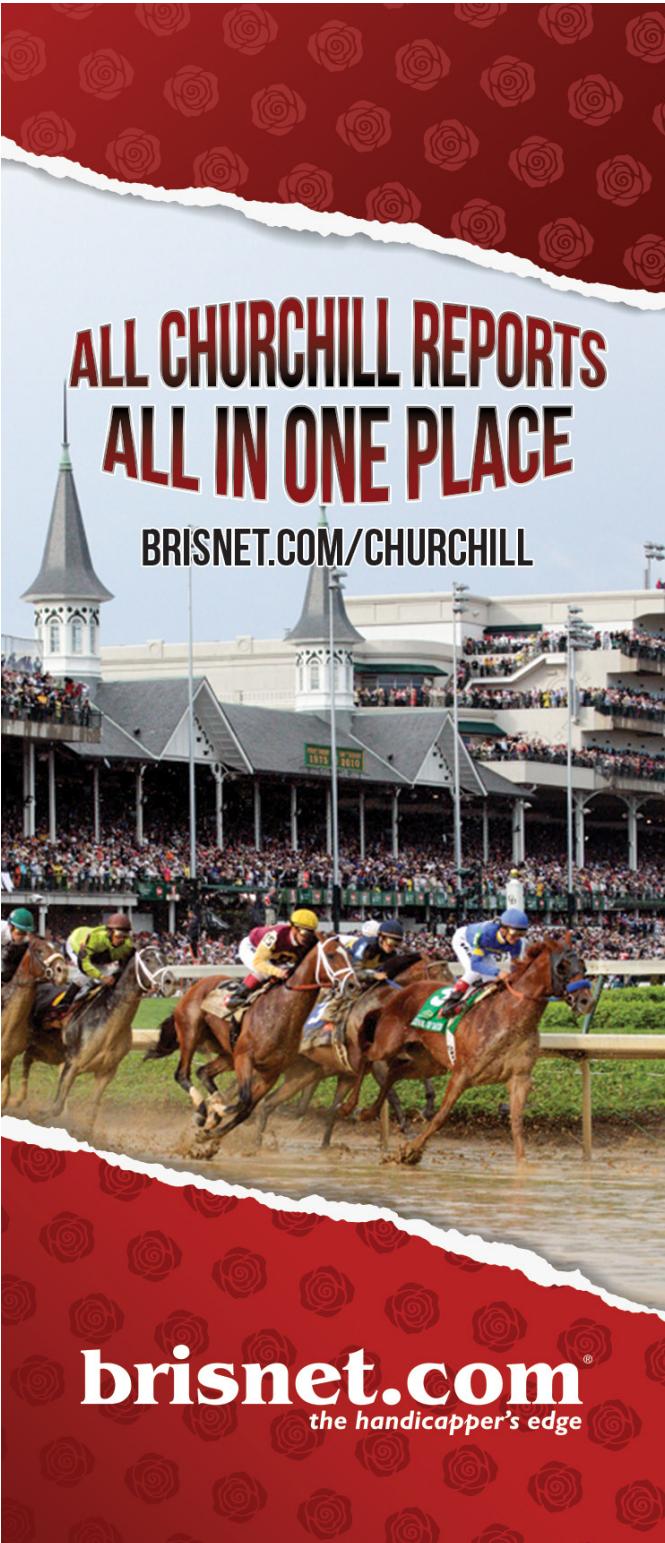
#2 SIERRA LEONE (3-1) – Winner of the Blue Grass and Risen Star (G2) this year, Sierra Leone has proven to be a dynamic closer from far off the pace.

#4 CATCHING FREEDOM (8-1) – Perhaps more versatile than he displayed last time, Catching Freedom promises to be out the back after a strong last-to-first win in the Louisiana Derby (G2).

#7 HONOR MARIE (20-1) – Winner of the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2) at Churchill Downs, Honor Marie exits an encouraging runner-up effort in the Louisiana Derby and has been last or next-to-last during the opening stages in all five career starts.

#14 ENDLESSLY (30-1) – His affinity for dirt will be tested, but Endlessly has displayed a powerful closing kick on turf and synthetic.

#16 GRAND MO THE FIRST (50-1) – He's not the confirmed closer like others in this category, but Grand Mo the First may lack the speed to avoid being in the back quintet during the opening stages.



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BRISNET LATE PACE RATING REPORT FOR THE 2024 KENTUCKY DERBY

by Keeler Johnson

Bettors wondering which horses are most likely to handle 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby (G1) are advised to analyze Brisnet Late Pace ratings.

Brisnet Late Pace ratings measure finishing speed, so horses who earn large Late Pace ratings in Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifiers have a fair chance to stretch out over 1 1/4 miles on the first Saturday in May.

The data is compelling. Eight of the last 13 Kentucky Derby winners managed to post a triple-digit Late Pace rating in one or both of their final two starts before the Derby. The list includes Triple Crown winners American Pharoah (2015) and Justify (2018) plus betting favorites Orb (2013), Nyquist (2016), and Always Dreaming (2017), but also double-digit longshot winners Animal Kingdom (2011), I'll Have Another (2012), and Rich Strike (2022).

Here are the last two Late Pace ratings posted by each 2024 Kentucky Derby contender (excluding a pair of international shippers for whom Late Pace ratings are unavailable):

DOMESTIC PRODUCT: 125 (LATEST), 108 (TWO BACK)

FIERCENESS: 113, 99

CATCHING FREEDOM: 101, 94

SIERRA LEONE: 101, 84

RESILIENCE: 98, 87

HONOR MARIE: 96, 95

JUST STEEL: 96, 85

SOCIETY MAN: 95, 92

ENDLESSLY: 93, 91

ENCINO: 91, 97

MYSTIK DAN: 91, 112

STRONGHOLD: 91, 95

CATALYTIC: 89, 97

GRAND MO THE FIRST: 84, 122

JUST A TOUCH: 83, 95

TRACK PHANTOM: 82, 92

MUGATU: 80, 91

WEST SARATOGA: 80, 82

DORNOCH: 76, 95

EPIC RIDE: 76, 92

TAKEAWAYS

Only four horses managed to post a triple-digit Late Pace rating in their final Kentucky Derby prep race: Domestic Product (125), Fierceness (113), Catching Freedom (101), and Sierra Leone (101). And

only two other contenders managed to crack the triple-digit barrier in their second-to-last prep: Mystik Dan (112) and Grand Mo the First (122).

Domestic Product is the only horse who earned triple-digit Late Pace ratings in each of his final two Kentucky Derby preps. He rallied from behind a slow pace to finish second in the Holy Bull (G3), earning a 108, then closed fast from behind a glacial pace to win the Tampa Bay Derby (G3) with a 125. But it's fair to wonder if Domestic Product can replicate those Late Pace ratings in a race with a faster early pace; Grand Mo the First posted a 122 Late Pace rating when finishing third by a neck in the Tampa Bay Derby, then regressed to an 84 when finishing a distant third in the faster-paced Florida Derby (G1).

Speaking of the Florida Derby, Fierceness got away with a modest opening quarter-mile in that 1 1/8-mile contest, but picked up the pace through the middle of the race and finished up powerfully to win by 13 1/2 lengths with a 113 Late Pace rating. That was even better than the 109 Late Pace rating he produced in the 2023 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1), a race in which Fierceness pressed a strong pace before drawing off to beat a deep field by 6 1/4 lengths. It's impressive that Fierceness has twice earned triple-digit Late Pace ratings in races with decent early paces.

The Louisiana Derby (G2) ranked among the stronger preps from a Late Pace standpoint, with the victorious Catching Freedom (101) and runner-up Honor Marie (96) earning ratings that rank among the top six last-out numbers in the Kentucky Derby field.

In contrast, the giant homestretch rally Sierra Leone (101) unleashed to win the Blue Grass (G1) got him into triple-digit territory even though the next four horses across the finish line—Just a Touch (83), Epic Ride (76), Dornoch (76), and Mugatu (80)—were tiring and earned numbers no higher than 83.

The Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) at Turfway Park ranked among the slowest of the final-round Derby preps from a Late Pace standpoint, with the top two finishers Endlessly (93) and West Saratoga (80) earning ratings that rank outside the top eight last-out numbers in the Kentucky Derby field. The Santa Anita Derby (G1) also featured modest Late Pace ratings, and the victorious Stronghold (91) is the only Santa Anita Derby entrant in the Kentucky Derby field.



HOW HAS THE WINNING TIME OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY CHANGED OVER TIME?

by Ashley Anderson

reprint from 2022

In 1896, bay colt Ben Brush crossed the wire first in a time of 2:07.75 at the 22nd running of the Kentucky Derby, the first to be raced at 1 1/4 miles.

Today, that champion Thoroughbred's winning time would hardly earn him third place in a typical Kentucky Derby, where victorious horses have run the iconic race in an average of about two minutes and two seconds from 2012 to 2021.

While a number of factors have influenced the uptick in speed of the fastest two minutes in sports over the last century, the Kentucky Derby has actually gotten almost a second slower over the past few decades.

Below we explore how the average winning Kentucky Derby time has transformed over history and pinpoint the reason such changes have transpired in the Run for the Roses.

THE EARLY DAYS OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY

While Ben Brush would face difficulty competing with today's three-year-olds in the Kentucky Derby, his winning time of 2:07.75 was exactly 30 seconds faster than that of Aristides, who won the first Kentucky Derby in 1875, when the Classic was raced at 1 1/2 miles.

From 1875 to 1895, racing fans witnessed a winning Derby time no quicker than 2:34.5, as accomplished by Spokane in 1889, and no more sluggish than 2:52.25 — the slowest winning Derby time in history, run by Kingman in 1891, when riders were ordered to stay off the lead until the final stretch, thus resulting in the four-horse field cantering side by side, like a cavalry, for much of the race.

When members of the racing community criticized the 1 1/2-mile distance as too long for three-year-old Thoroughbreds, the Derby was shortened by about two furlongs in 1896, winning horses finished the event in an average of 2:09.31, before the Derby saw a three-second improvement by winning horses, who completed the race in an average of 2:06.48 from 1912 to 1931.

The span of 1932 to 1951 experienced yet another two-second improvement (an average of 2:04.46) to first-place times. That timeframe welcomed six Triple Crown winners — Omaha in 1935 (2:05.0), War Admiral in 1937 (2:03.2), Whirlaway in 1941 (2:01.4), Count Fleet in 1943 (2:04), Assault in 1946 (2:06.6), and Citation in 1948 (2:05.4). It also included the involvement of two legendary trainers, Ben Jones and Jim Fitzsimmons, who were in a class of their own.

Jones saddled 11 Kentucky Derby horses from 1938 to 1952 and achieved an 11-6-2-1 record in that time. Fitzsimmons conditioned 11 Kentucky Derby horses as well, and went 11-3-1-0 from 1930 to 1957.

The period of 1952 to 1961 was void of a Triple Crown winner but did produce another two-second boost in the average winning time, now 2:02.76. Over the course of 65 years of Kentucky Derby races,

progress in training and breeding had produced a seven-second uptick in the average winning time, but the next two decades would usher in a golden era for Thoroughbred racing.



SECRETARIAT AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF RACING

While Ben Brush would face difficulty competing with today's three-year-olds in the Kentucky Derby, his winning time of 2:07.75 was exactly 30 seconds faster than that of Aristides, who won the first Kentucky Derby in 1875, when the Classic was raced at 1 1/2 miles.

From 1962 to 1981, the average winning Derby time hit its peak at 2:01.76. The influence of bloodlines from top sires, like Bold Ruler, were beginning to manifest in a number of champion horses, including two of the era's three Triple Crown winners Seattle Slew and the speediest Derby runner of all — Secretariat.

In front of a then-record crowd of 134,476 attendees on May 5, 1973, Secretariat, known as "Big Red," etched his name in history with the fastest winning Derby time ever (1:59.4), besting second-place finisher Sham by 2 1/2 lengths.

As the 13-horse field broke from the gate, the Lucien Laurin trainee settled near the back of the pack before launching a wide rally, in which he ran every quarter mile faster than the previous. His last quarter-mile in 23 seconds set another record for the Derby, while Sham's finishing time of 1:59 4/5 also broke a previous course record but is largely overshadowed by his famous rival.

Secretariat was considered a "freak" among the racing world, a label that seemed all the more appropriate when his necropsy report in 1989 revealed that the chestnut's heart weighed between 21 and 22 pounds. For comparison, the average Thoroughbred heart weighs 8.5 pounds.

Although his larger-than-life features and near-perfect conformation helped the Triple Crown champion become arguably the greatest racehorse of all time, much more was at play during his epic 1 1/4-mile conquest at Churchill Downs.

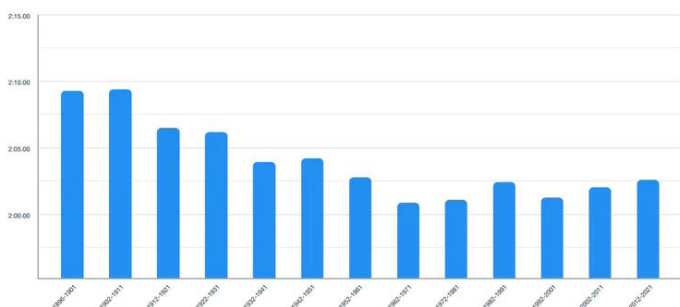
WEATHER CREATES A WRINKLE IN THE FASTEST TWO MINUTES IN SPORTS

A handful of factors led to Secretariat's sub-two-minute victory in the Run for the Roses, one of which helped Monarchos nearly match his time in 2001.

On both May 5, 1973 and May 5, 2001, there was zero 24-hour precipitation, which facilitated a fast track and a near-perfect environment for both horses to run an optimal race in the Kentucky Derby.

"The best condition I ever had was a Derby like in 2001, we had a temperature of 84," said former Churchill Downs track superintendent Raymond "Butch" Lehr, who held the role from 1982 to 2012, before accepting a similar position at Kentucky Downs. "It was really unseasonably warm and the conditions were perfect."

10 YEAR AVERAGE



Average winning time of the Kentucky Derby throughout each decade.

As far back as 1967, when Lehr joined the track's maintenance crew, he kept detailed records of each Derby. He witnessed both sub-two-minute victories by Secretariat and Monarchos, and also watched his fair share of slower Derbys, which he attributes to one main element — weather.

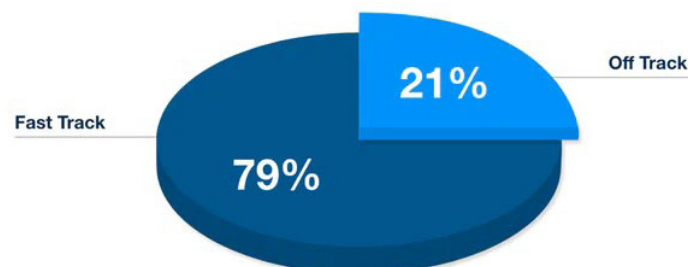
"Weather is the biggest thing that can affect the track," Lehr said. "I used to joke to people, The Weather Channel was my favorite show. ... I don't think the track is slower now than it was in the '70s, I just think the weather is different."

Following the decade in which Secretariat made history at Churchill Downs, the average winning Kentucky Derby time registered between 2:02.07 to 2:02.60 in the 80s, 90s, the early 2000s, and the most recent decade of races.

Lehr noted one track update, a resurfacing in 1983 that altered the composition of the dirt, which went from 99% sand to 75% sand, 23% silt, and 2% clay. But he believes the near-extra-second of time added to the winning average correlates more with a shift in the weather on the first Saturday in May. From 1959 to 1988, all but three Derbys were run on a fast track, with the exception of 1960, 1961, and 1970, each conducted on a "good" track.

Percentage of Fast vs Off Tracks

From the year 1960 to 2021



Fast vs. Off Tracks in the Kentucky Derby since 1960

In 1989, Sunday Silence crossed the finish line first in 2:05.00, the slowest winning time since Tim Tam in 1958, with both horses navigating a muddy track. In 1994, Go for Gin recorded a 2:03.72 winning time on a sloppy track during a stormy First Saturday in May, the final in a stretch of six consecutive wet Derby Days, based on precipitation measured from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. ET on race day.

The span of 1995 to 2003 offered reprieve from "off-track" races, with every Derby conducted on a fast track, including Monarchos' feat in 2001.

"Horses run faster when it's hot. ... On a hot, humid day, I've seen our track speed up as much as a full second," Lehr explained. "They claimed the track was speed-biased, but yet Monarchos ... came from way off the pace and won the Kentucky Derby in the fastest time since Secretariat. ... Later on, (trainer) John Ward called me personally and said, 'my horse is capable of running that fast.' And I said, 'he did run that fast, but the conditions were perfect that day.'"

Three years later, the conditions were nearly the opposite in 2004, when then-undefeated Smarty Jones steered through a sloppy track in 2:04.06.

Fast-forward another three years, and rain had virtually become the norm on the first Saturday in May. From 2007 to 2013, precipitation was present over the 24-hour period leading up to the Derby each year, and in that time, four Derbys were run on sloppy tracks, with the average winning time equaling 2:02.55.

ROAD TO THE KENTUCKY DERBY CHANGES LANDSCAPE OF RACE

Another interesting caveat entered the fold in 2013, in addition to increasingly wet weather. The Kentucky Derby introduced the points system in which horses qualify for the event based on select stakes races for two- and three-year-old Thoroughbreds. Prior to 2013, the Derby qualifying system was based on earnings from all graded stakes races worldwide, and the types of horses who joined the field were far more diverse, as a result.

One-dimensional sprinters are uncommon in today's Derby field, which has in turn affected the pace of the race since 2013.

A look at the top 10 fastest winning Derby times provides further evidence. If you throw out the outlier of Authentic's 2:00.61 finish on the first Saturday in September — when the COVID-19 pandemic postponed the Derby to a warm, dry day in the summer — no horse has achieved a sub-2:01 winning time since 2001.

Six of the top 10 fastest winning Derby times occurred the same year a top-15 record was set at the 3/4-mile marker. Monarchos got help from Songandaprayer, a winning sprinter, who clocked a quarter-mile in :22.25, ran a half-mile in a record :44.86, and set another record at three-quarters of a mile in 1:09.25. Ultimately, the son of Unbridled's Song tired and placed 13th, but set a hot pace for Congaree to push to the front of the pack and hit a 1:35.0 split at one mile, before Monarchos caught Congaree approaching the final sixteenth and drew clear.

A year prior, Hal's Hope established a hot pace with a 1:09.99 split at three-quarters of a mile, only to tire and place 16th, but he opened the door for Fusaichi Pegasus to come from far off the pace to make

up ground in the final quarter and win the Derby in 2:01.12, just outside the top 10 fastest winning times in history.

Since 2013, the average winning time is 2:02.69, with Derby field composition and weather both at play in the slight decline of first-place finishing times.

ADVANCEMENT IN TIMEKEEPING

Aside from the progress made in breeding, updates to Derby qualification, and changes in weather, another important factor has played a part in the variance of the average winning Derby time over the last century.

The way in which the race is timed has met significant advancement, with today's event measured in 1/100ths of a second.

Prior to 2000, the race was timed to 1/5 of a second, and prior to 1906, the race was timed to 1/4 second.

Secretariat's sub-two-minute romp is technically somewhere between 1:59.4 and 1:59.6, but would still beat out Monarchos' 1:59.97 finish.

The Triple Crown winner's Preakness S. (G1) time is a testament to the error-prone nature of timekeeping procedures of the past. Upon crossing the finish line at Pimlico, the infield teletimer flashed 1:55, but it had malfunctioned from damage caused by people crossing the track to reach the infield. Two independent clockers from the Daily Racing Form hand-timed the race at 1:53 2/5, which sparked a controversial debate that was only later resolved in 2012, when the Maryland Racing Commission voted unanimously to change the official time from 1:54 2/5 to 1:53, a stakes record.

Pace Influence

■ Top 10 Fastest Winning Time in Derby History

Year	Horse	Split	Finish	Winner	Winning Time
2001	Songandaprayer	1:09.25	13th	Monarchos	1:59.97
2005	Spanish Chestnut	1:09.59	16th	Giacomo	2:02.75
1985	Spend a Buck	1:09.60	1st	Spend a Buck	2:00.2
2013	Palace Malice	1:09.80	12th	Orb	2:02.89
2012	Bodemeister	1:09.80	2nd	I'll Have Another	2:01.83
1968	Kentucky Sherry	1:09.80	5th	Forward Pass	2:02.2
2000	Hal's Hope	1:09.99	16th	Fusaichi Pegasus	2:01
1963	Never Bend	1:10.00	2nd	Chateaugay	2:01.8
1996	Honor and Glory	1:10.15	18th	Grindstone	2:01
1962	Sunrise Country	1:10.20	5th	Decidedly	2:00.04



THE FUTURE OF KENTUCKY DERBY-WINNING TIMES

It's been nearly half a century since Secretariat set the Derby track record at 1 1/4 miles, with just one winning horse coming close to toppling him since.

Despite the ever-growing wealth of knowledge and resources at trainers' and breeders' disposal, Thoroughbreds are not getting faster at the fastest two minutes in sports.

When a horse does run close to two minutes flat, it takes far more than a supreme pedigree, top-notch training regimen, and a near-perfect ride by the jockey. It also requires a warm, dry weather forecast that promotes a fast track fit for speed — something no one is capable of controlling on race day.

The men's 100-meter world record has been set or equaled at least 20 times since 1973, but training, nutrition, and track surfaces have all advanced significantly in the sport, compared to horse racing.

Selective breeding is partially responsible for the improvement in the average winning Derby time over the first half of the 20th century, but it may have reached a plateau. Recognized as a separate breed since the 1700s, Thoroughbreds are now less genetically diverse than other horse breeds. Ninety-five percent of all Thoroughbreds descend from the Darley Arabian, and an estimated 75% come from one of 30 ancestors, so the gene pool is limited.

Another reason winning Derby times may not change much going forward is the lack of motivation to get faster. Human athletes attempt to run their best possible race, but horse racing connections are less concerned with how fast their horse crosses the finish line; only that their horse crosses it first.

Thus, the Kentucky Derby likely will not get any faster without a substantial update to one of the many variables that impact the final time recorded by the first-place finisher, such as track surface, selective breeding philosophy, or training tactics.

The fastest two minutes in sports will probably remain at just about two minutes and two seconds for the foreseeable future, but the prospect of all the right circumstances coming together to make history at Churchill Downs is part of what makes those two minutes so exciting.

KENTUCKY DERBY HORSE SIGNS

by Joe Kristufek

reprint from 2019

On Saturday, September 5, the Kentucky Derby will be run for the 146th time under the Twin Spires of Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky.

Eighteen equine athletes will test their courage, speed and stamina over a 1 1/4-mile distance in front of a massive, energetic and often raucous crowd. Talent is paramount but composure and fortitude are other critical components for a Derby triumph.

Based on the results of the points races over the last several months, all 20 horses earned their way into the Kentucky Derby starting gate. Some will be favorites, and others will be longshots. But remember, the horses don't know the odds.

On paper some horses might look better than others, but races aren't run on paper, and horses aren't machines. They're living, breathing animals. None of their race day experience to date, or any schooling they might go through the week before the race, can recreate the insane atmosphere they will face on the first Saturday in May.

From the walkover to the paddock to the tunnel to the racetrack and finally the starting gate, the Kentucky Derby participants will be center stage with an audience of roughly 170,000 people. Some of the horses will get stage fright, others will act like seasoned professionals.

Horses who get worked up before the race are unlikely to put their best hoof forward when the gate opens. Those who don't turn a hair have a much better chance to run to their top capabilities.

Here are some of the positive and negative signs you can look for on Kentucky Derby Day.

POSITIVE SIGNS

- Overall alertness
- On their toes, nudging the pony
- Prancy, but not too prancy
- Well-defined muscle tone
- Shiny coat — one that glistens in the sun — dappled, like freckles on a human
- Bright eye
- Satellite ears
- A horse with their neck bowed, feeling invincible

NEGATIVE SIGNS

- Sweating on a cool day. Look for a frothy substance on the neck and kidney area. It's a sign of nervousness. Sweaty horses are said to be "washed out"
- Dull and disinterested — walking with their head down like they just woke up from a nap. Take note, the lazy look may not be a negative for classy, seasoned veterans who have been to battle many times and understand their job
- Rambunctious — horses who are overly excited are wasting valuable energy
- Incessant tail swishing — a sign of being mad or upset
- Head over the pony in the post parade — a sign they're anxious and looking for comfort

Horses can't talk, but they can communicate with their body language, not only in the Kentucky Derby, but in every race that is run. When picking horses to bet on, use these visuals to your advantage.



HOW TO READ A PAST PERFORMANCE

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12 Cathryn Sophia (E/P 5) ⑨ Own: Cash Is King Lic Green, Multi-colored Crown, Green Shamrocks On White CASTELLANO JAVIER (0 0-0-0 0%)										13 Land Over Sea (S 1) Own: Reddam Racing Lic White, Purple Belt, White Band On Purple Sleeves, Purple GUTIERREZ MARIO (0 0-0-0 0%)									
2016 494 22% 54% -0.54 +JKYw/EP types 591 26% 57% -0.15 +JKYw/Trn L60 2 50% 100% +10.60 +JKYw/ Routes 107 22% 54% -0.28										2016 214 14% 45% -0.40 +JKYw/S types 114 11% 44% -0.20 +JKYw/Trn L60 2 50% 100% +10.60 +JKYw/ Routes 107 22% 54% -0.28									
B. f. 3 FTMSEP 2014 \$30k Sire: Street Boss (Street Cry (IRE)) \$12,500 Dam: Sheave (Mineshaft) Brdr: Robert T Manfuso (MD) Trnr: Servis John C (0 0-0-0 0%)										Ch. f. 3 OBSAPR 2015 \$130k Sire: Bellamy Road (Concerto) \$7,500 Dam: Belle Watling (Pulpit) Brdr: Jack Swain III (KY) Trnr: O'Neill Doug F (0 0-0-0 0%)									
Prime Power: 147.1 (1st) L 121										Prime Power: 139.7 (4th) L 121									
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★ Finished 3rd in last race ★ Best Dirt Speed is fastest among today's starters ★ Hot Jockey in last 7 days (13 4-5-1)										● Failed as favorite in last race ● Poor 'Graded Stakes' trainer record: 7% wins 28 sts									
DATE TRK DIST 17 RR RACETYPE 18CR E1 E2 LP 1c 2c SPD PP ST 1C 2C STR FIN 22 JOCKEY 23 ODDS Top Finishers Comment										09Apr16Kee6 1 1/4 ft :24 :47 1:11 1:43 117 @Ashland-G1 118 92 106/ 80 +7 +13 94 3 3 1/2 3 1/2 3 1/2 17 CastellanoJJ121 L *0.50 WpNMmrRclsVintnRkCtnSp2 Bold bid 4w; hung 5									
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3 Trainer Stats

4 Dam Stats

5 Sire Stats

6 Sales Stats

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10 BRIS Pedigree Rating

11 Medication, Equipment, and Weight the Horse Will Carry

12 Horse's Lifetime Start Information

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16 Surface, Distance, and Track Conditions

17 Fractional Times of Leader, Final Time, and Age Designation

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20 BRIS Pace and Speed Ratings

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22 Jockey and Weight

23 Medication, Equipment, and Odds

24 Top Finishers, Comment, and Number of Starters

25 Workouts

26 BRIS Race Shapes



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