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# JUSTIFY

2018 TRIPLE CROWN CHAMPION



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JUSTIFY: BIOGRAPHY

**OWNER** China Horse Club, Head of Plain Partners, Starlight Racing and WinStar Farm  
**BREEDER** John D. Gunther (KY)  
**TRAINER** Bob Baffert  
**JOCKEY** Mike Smith

**SIRE** Scat Daddy  
**DAM** Stage Magic, by Ghostzapper  
**COLOR** Chestnut

**STARTS** 6  
**WINS (1ST)** 6  
**PLACE (2ND)** 0  
**SHOW (3RD)** 0  
**TOTAL CAREER EARNINGS** \$3,798,000

Justify brought an unbeaten, five-for-five mark into Belmont Stakes 150. The chestnut was never challenged in his first four races for trainer Bob Baffert, including a 2 1/2-length score in the Kentucky Derby on May 5 over a sloppy, sealed track at Churchill Downs. Conditions only worsened for the Preakness Stakes (G1) two weeks later at Pimlico, as a heavy fog blanketed the area at post time. Most of the second of jewel of the Triple Crown was blocked by the heavy mist but, as the horses emerged from the gloom, fans were greeted with Justify leading the way while Bravazo and Tenfold closed fast on the colt. The wire came just in time. In what would be the historical finale for Justify, he stretched out to 1 1/2 miles in the Belmont Stakes for the first time and led wire to wire to complete only the 13th Triple Crown in history.

#5044 Brisnet.com Lifetime PP's

<b>Justify</b>	<b>Sire:</b> Scat Daddy 2004 <b>SPI:</b> 2.3	<b>Life</b>	6	6	-	0	-	0	\$3,798,000	<b>114</b>	<b>Fast (108)</b>	3	3	-	0	-	0	\$1,432,400	<b>114</b>
CH C 2015 KEESEP 2016 \$ 500,000	<b>Dam:</b> Stage Magic 2007 (Ghostzapper 2000)	<b>2018</b>	6	6	-	0	-	0	\$3,798,000	<b>114</b>	<b>Wet (105)</b>	3	3	-	0	-	0	\$2,365,600	<b>104</b>
<b>AWD:</b> 9.25 <b>SSI:</b> 129.52	<b>Brdr:</b> John D. Gunther (KY)		0	0	-	0	-	0	\$0		<b>Turf (110)</b>	0	0	-	0	-	0	\$0	
<b>Own:</b> China Horse Club Head Of Plains Partners	<b>Trnr:</b> Baffert Bob																		

DATE	TRK	DIST	FRACTIONS	RR	RACETYPE	CR	E1	E2	LP	SPD	PP	ST	1C	2C	Str	FIN	JOCKEY	M/E	ODDS	Top Finishers	Comment							
09Jun18	Bel	1 1/2	ft :48	1:13	1:38	2:28	3	118	Belmont-G1	124	109	115/	97	109	1	1 1/2	12	12	12	1 1/4	Smithme <sup>126</sup>	L	*0.80	Justify <sup>1</sup> Gronkowski <sup>1 1/2</sup> Hofburg <sup>4</sup>	Coax ins, drft bit, game	10		
19May18	Pim	1 3/8	sy :47	1:11	21:36	1:55	43	118	Preaknes-G1	122	98	107/	83	98	7	1hd	1hd	1hd	1 1/2	1 1/2	Smithme <sup>126</sup>	L	*0.40	Justify <sup>1</sup> Bravazo <sup>4</sup> Tenfold <sup>4</sup>	3-4w outs foe, lasted	8		
05May18	CD	1 1/2	sy :45	3	1:11	1:37	2:04	13	118	KyDerby-G1	124	100	102/	92	102	7	2 1/2	2 1/2	1 1/2	12 1/2	12 1/2	Smithme <sup>126</sup>	L	*2.90	Justify <sup>2 1/2</sup> Goodmagic <sup>hd</sup> Audible <sup>1 3/4</sup>	Bid 3w, unwavering	20	
07Apr18	SA	9	1 1/8	ft :47	4	1:12	31:37	1:49	33	116	SADerby-G1	121	100	105/	117	114	6	1 1/2	13	1 1/2	1 1/2	13	Smithme <sup>124</sup>	L	*0.90	Justify <sup>3</sup> Bolt <sup>d</sup> oro <sup>6 1/2</sup> Corebeliefs <sup>1 1/4</sup>	Drift out, in str, clear	7
11Mar18	SA	5	1m	my:22	2	:45	1:09	31:35	33	115	OC75k/n1x-N	118	107	117/	88	104	5	3 2 1/2	2 1 1/2	12 1/2	15	16 1/2	Smithme <sup>120</sup>	L	*0.05	Justify <sup>6 1/2</sup> Shivermetimbers <sup>1</sup> Pepetono <sup>4</sup>	Off step slow, handily	5
18Feb18	SA	2	7f	ft :21	4	:44	1:09	1:21	43	112	Md Sp Wt	119	99	106/	91	100	3	5	1hd	1 1/2	15	19 1/2	Vandykedrayden <sup>122</sup>	Lb	*0.50	Justify <sup>9 1/2</sup> Camby <sup>5 1/2</sup> Paddockpick <sup>13</sup>	Dueled btwn, drew off	5

04Jun18CD 5f ft 1:01<sup>2</sup> B 9/15 ●29May18CD 4f ft:46<sup>4</sup> B 1/43 27Apr18SA 7f ft 1:25<sup>1</sup> H 1/1 21Apr18SA 6f ft 1:13<sup>1</sup> H 4/16 02Apr18SA 6f ft 1:13<sup>1</sup> H 2/8 26Mar18SA 5f ft:59<sup>3</sup> H 2/118 ●20Mar18SA 4f ft:46<sup>2</sup> H 1/105 05Mar18SA 5f ft 1:00<sup>4</sup> H 31/114 26Feb18SA 5f ft 1:01<sup>2</sup> H 33/55 12Feb18SA 6f ft 1:13<sup>4</sup> Hg 4/14 ●05Feb18SA 6f ft 1:12<sup>2</sup> Hg 1/7 29Jan18SA 5f ft 1:01<sup>1</sup> H 12/45

		Storm Bird 1978
	Storm Cat 1983	
	Hennessy 1993	Terlingua 1976 *Hawaii 1964
	Island Kitty 1976	
	Johannesburg 1999	T. C. Kitten 1969 Damascus 1964
	Ogygian 1983	
	Myth 1993	Gonfalon 1975 Mr. Prospector 1970
	Yarn 1987	
	Scat Daddy (2004)	Narrate 1980 Native Dancer 1950
	Raise a Native 1961	
	Mr. Prospector 1970	Raise You 1946 Nashua 1952
	Gold Digger 1962	
	Love Style 1999	Sequence 1946 Northern Dancer 1961
	Nijinsky II 1967	
	Likeable Style 1990	Flaming Page 1959 No Robbery 1960
	Personable Lady 1981	
	Deputy Minister 1979	Porthole 1971 Vice Regent 1967
	Awesome Again 1994	Mint Copy 1970 Blushing Groom (FR) 1974
	Primal Force 1987	
	Ghostzapper 2000	Prime Prospect 1978 In Reality 1964
	Relaunch 1976	
	Baby Zip 1991	Foggy Note 1965 Tri Jet 1969
	Thirty Zip 1983	
	Sailaway 1976	
	Seattle Slew 1974	
	A.P. Indy 1989	
	Pulpit 1994	Weekend Surprise 1980 Mr. Prospector 1970
	Preach 1989	
	Magical Illusion 2001	Narrate 1980 Nijinsky II 1967
	Baldski 1974	
	Voodoo Lily 1987	Too Bald 1964 For the Moment 1974
	Cap the Moment 1980	
	Set Your Cap 1963	

3SB x 5SA x 5SD Mr. Prospector  
4SB x 5SD Nijinsky II  
5MA x 5MD Narrate





# JUSTIFY: FAMILY IN TRAINING

## 2013 THE LIEUTENANT

b, c, by Street Sense

**OWNER** Warren, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. William K.

**TRAINER** McCarthy, Michael W.

<b>LIFETIME</b>	12	4	1	1	\$209,537	<b>SSI</b> 4.12
<b>SINCE 01/01/1998</b>	12	4	1	1	\$209,537	
<b>2018 1ST</b>	ALL AMERICAN S. [G3] (\$60,000 GG)					\$101,125
<b>2018 2ND</b>	SANTANA MILE S. [L] (\$15,400 SA)					\$75,460
<b>2018 3RD</b>	CALIFORNIAN S. [G2] (\$24,000 SA)					\$200,345

DATE	TRACK RACE#	DIST	TR WNRS CD TIME	WT	FP	LENGTH BEHIND	PP	RACE/TYPE	SR	CL	ODDS	EARNINGS
28My18	GG7	1m	FT 1:36.3	122	1	1	3	AllAmrc-G3	96	119.0	*2.90	\$60,000
28Ap18	SA5	1 1/8	FT 1:49.4	122	3	7 1/2	5	Calfrnln-G2	98	118.9	7.10	\$24,000
31Mr18	SA4	1m	FT 1:37.0	122	2	4	2	SantanaMIL75k	90	118.6	3.50	\$15,400
19Fe18	OP8	1 1/16	MY1:45.0	114	7	8 1/4	11	RazrbakH-G3	93	118.4	15.90	\$1,667
03Fe18	SA8	1 1/8	FT 1:50.2	120	7	8 3/4	5	SnPsqal-G2	90	119.3	21.40	\$345
17De17	LRC5	1m	FT 1:35.2	121	1	1/2	6	OC63k/n2x-N	96	119.6	2.50	\$28,800
28Oc17	SA5	1m	FT 1:37.0	122	5	8 3/4	1	CmmaToTopB70k	94	116.7	19.60	\$1,460
03Sp17	DMR7	1m	FT 1:37.0	122	1	1 1/2	2	OC40k/n1x-N	93	118.7	5.60	\$37,200
23Jy17	DMR8	6.5f	FT 1:17.0	122	7	14	5	OC40k/n1x-N	72	113.5	17.30	\$345
14My16	SA8	1 1/16	FT 1:42.2	120	1	1 1/4	1	Md Sp Wt	89	114.9	4.40	\$33,600
09Ap16	SA12	7f	SY 1:22.0	123	4	6	6	Md Sp Wt	96	114.2	6.80	\$3,360
12Mr16	SA5	6.5f	FT 1:16.0	123	4	11	6	Md Sp Wt	81	112.9	76.90	\$3,360

## 2014 HOLIDAY MUSIC

b, f, by Harlan's Holiday

**OWNER** Sanders, Wayne and Hirsch, Larry

**TRAINER** Calhoun, W. Bret

<b>LIFETIME</b>	9	2	3	1	\$51,926	<b>SSI</b> 1.39
<b>SINCE 01/01/1998</b>	9	2	3	1	\$51,926	

DATE	TRACK RACE#	DIST	TR WNRS CD TIME	WT	FP	LENGTH BEHIND	PP	RACE/TYPE	SR	CL	ODDS	EARNINGS
01Ja18	FG2	Ta1m	FM1:37.4	120	1	nk	5	Clm 3000n2l-c	79	112.4	3.20	\$12,000
24No17	FG8	Ta1 1/16	FM1:45.0	117	5	5 3/4	3	Alw 4000n1x	76	111.3	25.20	\$1,200
19Oc17	IND4	T7.5f	GD1:31.3	116	4	4 1/4	4	Alw 3250n2l	79	111.7	6.30	\$1,625
01Oc17	CD9	1 1/16	FT 1:45.2	118	5	7 1/2	5	Alw 5220n1x	75	111.5	6.70	\$1,590
08Sp17	IND6	T1m	FM1:36.3	116	2	2	3	Alw 3250n2l	70	111.1	4.10	\$6,500
16Ag17	IND6	T1 1/16	FM1:44.3	116	2	no	8	Alw 3250n2l	76	112.5	32.90	\$6,500
21Jy17	LS9	T7.5f	FM1:29.3	120	1	1	6	Md Sp Wt	72	107.1	2.20	\$12,300
22Sp16	RP2	T7.5f	FM1:30.2	119	3	2 1/4	3	Md Sp Wt	69	108.0	*0.30	\$3,611
18Ag16	RP4	5.5f	FT 1:05.0	119	2	2 1/2	1	Md Sp Wt	69	108.2	2.70	\$6,600



# TALES FROM THE CRIB: JUSTIFY

KELLIE REILLY APRIL 12, 2018

Some horses just have “it,” that indefinable air of supremacy, from day one. Given what unbeaten Justify has accomplished on the track in the span of about seven weeks – going from unraced three-year-old to Kentucky Derby (G1) favorite – you won’t be surprised to learn he was one of those who stood out from babyhood.

Justify was bred by John D. Gunther, the proprietor of Glennwood Farm, who along with daughter Tanya has achieved remarkable success from a relatively small broodmare band. Most of the Gunther headliners have been on the Triple Crown trail, from champion two-year-old male Stevie Wonderboy (bred in partnership) and First Samurai, the respective top two in the 2005 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (G1); 2011 Travers (G1) hero and Belmont S. (G1) runner-up Stay Thirsty (bred with son John Darren); 2015 Florida Derby (G1) winner Materiality and 2016 Preakness (G1) fourth Stradivari, both ill-fated not to achieve their full potential; and Mo Town (bred in partnership w/ Tanya’s Eurowest Bloodstock), the 2016 Remsen (G2) victor who missed the 2017 classics due to illness but roared back last fall to capture the Hollywood Derby (G1) on turf.

Gunther has excelled on the 2018 Derby trail, not only as the breeder of Justify, but of Wood Memorial (G2) winner Vino Rosso as well – quite a feat, especially for an operation of Glennwood’s scale. And the Gunthers have a highly-regarded classic prospect in England too, Without Parole, who romped in his debut for John Gosden. A son of unbeaten phenom Frankel, Without Parole is a half-brother to Gunther-bred Tamarkuz, a star of the 2015 Dubai Carnival and later victorious in the 2016 Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile (G1).

Justify’s tale is interwoven with the story of Tamarkuz and Materiality, not by bloodline, but by the timing of his birth. Making his grand entrance on March 28, 2015, the chestnut colt was born on a banner day for Glennwood – the day that Tamarkuz captured the Godolphin Mile (G2) on the Dubai World Cup card, and Materiality clinched his Kentucky Derby berth at Gulfstream Park.

Tanya tweeted the happy announcement of the mare Stage Magic’s delivering her Scat Daddy colt:

“Hearing of action from Dubai to Miami, Scat Daddy x Stage Magic decided to arrive in KY #twasthenight #glennwood.”



Newborn Justify gets on his feet at Glennwood Farm

The colt had an ebullient nature to match his exquisite sense of timing.

“He really was so full of life and cheekiness, he never seemed to get tired or tired of being playful,” Tanya recalled. “He could give you a side look that very plainly indicated he knew exactly what his rank was (#1) and if he sensed you didn’t know it already he would rectify that lack of understanding in short order.”

As the foal became a yearling, his physique turned out to be as robust as his personality.

“By summer of his yearling year, he had grown up to be quite a tall, strong yearling and of course he knew it,” Tanya observed. “Looking back at our records he weighed in at 1,050 pounds on August 3, 2016 (about a month before the Keeneland September Yearling Sale).

“He had a lot of energy and he certainly had figured out we were 1/10th of his size (or thereabouts!) and kinda fun to play with so long as we were feeding him, turning him out (you know, things he was keen on).

“I can’t recall a day during evening turnout during sales prep where he walked out to the paddock like it was no big deal. It could be hot, humid and sweaty and he would still be like, ‘C’m on already. LET’S DO THIS!’

“Naturally he couldn’t wait to be let go at the gate once inside his paddock and he would unfailingly race as fast as he could away from the gate, usually racing alongside the fence with his buddy. Buck, kick, rear and do it all over again.”

The yet-unnamed colt was also very aware when he was the center of attention.

“Usually during sales prep I like to take the odd video during yearling turnout especially when a yearling looks and moves like he did,” Tanya said, “but I never did with Justify primarily for one reason. He knew when he was being watched and would ham it up for an audience. Every year, the closer we get to the yearling sale dates and the fitter the yearlings get, the more we worry about them doing something to hurt themselves.

“And so I would walk away like he wasn’t the big, impressive, fast colt that he was. I mean he would still do his thing and play like it was his job, but any time I lingered I felt like he was putting on an extra show – ‘Look at me, see what I can do!’ - so I would feign nonchalance and go to get another horse to turn out!”

The striking chestnut certainly caught the attention of prospective buyers at the 2016 Keeneland September Yearling Sale, where he commanded \$500,000 from China Horse Club and Maverick Racing. He was named by his new connections, and tutored by Rodolphe Brisset, before gearing up to race for Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert.



Justify as a yearling at Glennwood Farm

The signs of an exceptional individual were therefore in evidence early. But Tanya's hopes were raised long before Justify was even born. In fact, he represents the second generation of well-judged breeding by the Gunthers.

So to appreciate his tale in full, we have to go back a little further, and dig into the pedigree weeds.

Justify's dam, Stage Magic, was herself a homebred. Gunther had purchased her dam, Magical Illusion, for \$425,000 as a broodmare prospect at the 2005 Keeneland January Horses of All Ages Sale. Magical Illusion's price reflected her appeal, a combination of racing ability and a fascinating pedigree pattern. Recently retired as the winner of three of six starts, the daughter of Pulpit finished third behind future Hall of Famer Ashado and Stellar Jayne in the 2004 Coaching Club American Oaks (G1).

Magical Illusion offered an intriguing genetic palette, being inbred to the full brothers Honest Pleasure and For the Moment. Honest Pleasure, the 1975 champion two-year-old colt, was a game second to Bold Forbes as the favorite in the 1976 Kentucky Derby. For the Moment, also a multiple Grade 1 winner, was eighth in the 1977 Run for the Roses after arguing the early pace with Seattle Slew. (This kind of pedigree pattern is a foreshadowing of Justify's own make-up.)

In her second season as a broodmare in 2006, Magical Illusion visited Ghostzapper. The brilliant Hall of Famer, then just entering stud, was an outcross himself (through five generations) and complemented the mare's pedigree with just a couple of duplications further back.

The resulting foal was Stage Magic. Up for sale as a yearling at Keeneland September, the chestnut failed to reach her reserve price when bidding maxed out at \$70,000. Gunther therefore kept her. Stage Magic won three of 12 starts and placed in four stakes in 2011, including a runner-up effort in the New Orleans Ladies at Fair Grounds and a third to two-time champion Groupie Doll in the Gardenia (G3).

As ever, Tanya was meticulous in formulating Stage Magic's breeding plans. One element of her pedigree invited reinforcement, and Scat Daddy was an attractive answer. Their union would combine the strains of two influential full sisters – Yarn, who appears in Scat Daddy's ancestry through his sire Johannesburg, and Preach, the dam of the aforementioned Pulpit in Stage Magic's pedigree.

You can see the pattern in the five-cross pedigree (from Brisnet.com), where Yarn and Preach (blue underlining) appear in the fourth generation.

Justify ch, c; March 28, 2015				
Justify ch, c Foaled March 28, 2015 in Kentucky	Scat Daddy, 2004	Johannesburg, 1999	Hennessy, 1993	Storm Cat, 1983
				Storm Bird, 1978
				Terlingua, 1976
				Island Kitty, 1976
		Love Style, 1999	Myth, 1993	"Hawaii, 1964
				T. C. Kitten, 1969
				Oggyan, 1983
				Damascus, 1964
	Stage Magic, 2007	Ghostzapper, 2000	Yarn, 1987	Gonfalon, 1975
				Mr. Prospector, 1970
				Narrate, 1980
				Native Dancer, 1950
		Magical Illusion, 2001	Raise a Native, 1961	Raise You, 1946
			Mr. Prospector, 1970	Nashua, 1952
			Gold Digger, 1962	Sequence, 1946
			Likeable Style, 1990	Northern Dancer, 1961
			Nijinsky II, 1967	Flaming Page, 1959
			Personable Lady, 1961	No Robbery, 1960
				Porthole, 1971
			Deputy Minister, 1979	Vice Regent, 1967
			Awesome Again, 1994	Mint Copy, 1970
			Primal Force, 1987	Blushing Groom (FR), 1974
			Relaunch, 1976	Prime Prospect, 1978
			Baby Zip, 1991	In Reality, 1964
			Thirty Zip, 1983	Foggy Note, 1965
				Tri Jet, 1969
				Sailaway, 1976
			Pulpit, 1994	Seattle Slew, 1974
			A.P. Indy, 1989	Weekend Surprise, 1980
			Preach, 1989	Mr. Prospector, 1970
				Narrate, 1980
			Baldski, 1974	Nijinsky II, 1967
			Cap the Moment, 1980	Too Bald, 1964
				For the Moment, 1974
				Set Your Cap, 1963

Inbreeding to siblings is a potent angle, particularly because of the doubling-up of the influential broodmare responsible for both. This duplication of a superior mare is called the "Rasmussen Factor" after Daily Racing Form pedigree maven Leon Rasmussen, who analyzed the phenomenon with Rommy Faversham.

"The idea of inbreeding full sisters Yarn and Preach was very compelling," Tanya recalled, "and one of those matings that I felt just had to be done."

Yarn and Preach are by Mr. Prospector, but their dam is the key according to the Rasmussen Factor. That dam, Narrate, is by Honest Pleasure (him again) and out of State, a mare by Nijinsky II and herself out of a full sister to Hall of Famer Round Table.

Nijinsky appears twice more in Justify's pedigree, closer up via other descendants, something else to savor on the page.

"Justify is also inbred to one of the all-time great racehorses in history - Nijinsky - so I was pretty happy about that too," Tanya added.

Nijinsky is the last horse to sweep the English Triple Crown. A rigorous test of the classic Thoroughbred, the English Triple Crown encompasses the 2000 Guineas (G1) down Newmarket's straight Rowley Mile, the 1 1/2-mile Derby (G1) around an idiosyncratic Epsom Racecourse that puts a premium on balance and athleticism, and the demanding St Leger (G1) conducted over a little longer than 1 3/4 miles at Doncaster. Until Nijinsky came along in 1970, no horse had managed to win those three British classics since Bahram in 1935. It took another 42 years for a horse even to try for the sweep, Aidan O'Brien's Camelot, the 2012 Guineas/Derby hero who was a troubled second in the St Leger.

Because the marriage of Scat Daddy and Stage Magic offered these desirable pedigree angles, Tanya was especially eager to see how the foal would turn out.

"Every year when I am working on the stallion selection for our mares, there will be one or two matings that stand out and I can't wait to see what the mating will produce - this was the one for that season. Sometimes I feel and often say that foaling season is like opening Christmas presents (assuming all goes well that is). After waiting on average 11 months and 7 days to 'open the presents' there is a great deal of anticipation and we were pretty excited to meet Justify when he was born!"

Now fans can share in the excitement by watching Justify run, against his opponents and against Derby history. Although he faces a significant historical hurdle – no unraced two-year-old has gone on to win the Derby since Apollo in 1882 – Justify has displayed freakish talent with the potential to overturn the record book.

And that's what the breeding of these noble creatures is all about. It's pursuing the dream that one day, the foals you imagined when painstakingly arranging their parents' tryst, the little ones you've raised and nurtured, can reach the highest level of the sport.

Tanya summed it up best:

"It is a very rewarding feeling to have known both Magical Illusion (grandma of Justify) and his dam Stage Magic. Having a homebred that you've known since they were kids and watch them grow up into gutsy racehorses and then their babies grow up to do their moms proud...it brings such a feeling it is hard to describe.

"When they run with so much heart, run to win or at least never give up it is a mixture of awe and pride and feeling so fortunate for the experience."



# MAGNUM MOON, JUSTIFY NEW STARS OF THREE-YEAR-OLD CLASS

DICK POWELL FEBRUARY 20, 2018



There were lots of stakes races run over the President's Day weekend, but the two stars of the week came in an allowance race at Tampa Bay Downs and a maiden special weight race at Santa Anita.

On January 13, Todd Pletcher unveiled MAGNUM MOON in a six-furlong dirt sprint at Gulfstream Park. Against a good field where he was only the second choice in the wagering, the son of Malibu Moon sat just off the pace before taking over on the turn. Without any real urging from Luis Saez, Magnum Moon opened up in the stretch with a last quarter in :24.53 to stop the teletimer in 1:10.03.

Magnum Moon earned a terrific BRIS speed rating of 99, and with his ability to finish, two turns was in his immediate future. In third was Machismo, who came back to win his next start at Gulfstream Park by over 11 lengths going 6 1/2 furlongs in very fast time while also earning a BRIS speed rating of 99.

Last Thursday, he showed up not at Gulfstream Park but at Tampa Bay Downs to run in a first-level allowance race for only \$27,500.

The main reason was Pletcher's confidence that the race would fill and go, so he didn't care about the purse but get the timing of the race right. Going 1 mile and 40 yards, Luis Saez sat him in fourth, in behind horses with dirt in his face, before pulling out around the far turn and blowing by the leaders. Left in his wake was VOUCH who was a good third in the Remsen (G2) behind Catholic Boy and Avery Island.

Magnum Moon's final time of 1:39.18 was only .11 seconds slower than the track record and it was achieved without the benefit of a fast pace. Being owned by Robert and Lowana Low, who like to race their horses at Oaklawn Park, the Rebel (G2) and Arkansas Derby (G1) should be in his immediate future.

Out in California, Bob Baffert was joking around in December about getting starts into his unraced two-year-olds before the end of the year since no horse has won the Kentucky Derby (G1) since Apollo in 1882 without racing at two.

Then along came first-time-starter JUSTIFY, who raced in Sunday's second race at Santa Anita; a seven-furlong maiden special weight dirt race for three-year-olds. Touted as the next big thing off a series of brilliant workouts, Justify was sent off as the 1-2 favorite in the field of five.

Breaking a bit tardy, Drayden Van Dyke sent him up to engage the leaders and even while racing between horses, he relaxed beautifully while going the first quarter mile in :21.80. Gradually asserting himself, Justify began to open up going into the far turn and he came to the top of the stretch in front and then the fun began.

Fast horses run fast so the :44.37 first half was good, but it was what he did in his next three furlongs that made me ask the question, "Am I watching Seattle Slew all over again?" Justify flew through six furlongs in 1:09.07 and finished the seven furlongs in 1:21.86 and earned a BRIS speed rating of 100.

Now, here is where it gets interesting. After the race, Bob Baffert said he had a plan to get him to the Derby and Triple Crown. With only 11 weeks to the first Saturday in May, Baffert saw enough in the morning and now, in the afternoon, to tempt fate and try to win the Derby after making his career debut on February 18.

Obviously, everything would have to go right for it to work and there is a big risk of asking him to do too much too soon. The normal path would be to take your time and have a monster for the Preakness (G1).

But Baffert, without hesitation, said that he is confident that Justify can do it. So what does that tell you?

It tells me that McKinzie, Solomini and Mourinho are second-stringers in the Baffert barn. Even though all three are legitimate Derby contenders, they pale in comparison to Justify.

In order to get Derby eligibility points, Baffert is going to have to be creative to separate Justify from the rest of his three-year-olds. Time is running out and with most trainers wanting at least four weeks rest going into the Derby, there is really only seven weeks. Depending upon how he comes out of the race, I can't see Baffert getting two more races into him unless he goes to Arkansas for the Rebel/Arkansas Derby.

Where he would run into Magnum Moon!

# JUSTIFY IS ON THE KENTUCKY DERBY TRAIL; WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

SCOTT SHAPIRO FEBRUARY 23, 2018



Justify's career bow was so impressive that he's already as high as #3 on some people's Kentucky Derby polls. But before the son of Scat Daddy can win North America's most prestigious race, he'll be expected to perform well in his next start—likely at a short price.

Racing Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert has yet to decide where to send the \$500,000 Keeneland September yearling purchase for career start number two, but regardless of the spot he opts for he will take on significantly stronger competition than the compact group of protected non-winners he beat last weekend.

Situations like this beg an interesting question to horseplayers.

Do you trust the monster 100 Brisnet.com Speed Rating and "the way" Justify did it on debut or do you assume he is unlikely to repeat that sort of effort since he will be facing far more battle-tested animals, many with multiple victories next time out, at a longer distance, possibly following a ship, etc.

As a handicapper, generally speaking I try to beat horses like Justify that take on stakes company off of one big effort, but only if their price lacks what I determine to be fair value. For example, if Justify is 5-1 next month in the Sunland Derby I will be extremely interested in wagering on him. At 4-to-5? Not so much.

Regardless of where Justify races next he is likely to be heavily backed, but can racing fans count on him to replicate his first start or move forward or is regression highly possible?

Given the success of Baffert in the Triple Crown series there is reason to believe that the son of Scat Daddy cannot only win his next race, but he can become the first horse since Apollo in 1882 to win the Kentucky Derby without racing at the age of two. There are also reasons to believe that

Justify will have things much tougher in his attempt to begin his career a perfect 2 for 2.

Firstly, the move into stakes-company and a larger field brings with it a stronger likelihood that Justify will encounter more challenging circumstances than he did on debut.

In that start, Justify overcame a slightly tardy beginning, pushed between rivals to duel with stable mate Show Time Rocket, took control on the turn and drew off to an eye-popping nine and a half length victory under jockey Drayden Van Dyke.

Outside of breaking a bit flat-footed Justify used his tactical speed and class to work out a perfect trip. It is possible he will be able to do that again next time out, but it is also far more likely that things will not go as smoothly. Especially if he fails to break with conviction in start number two.

In addition to the likelihood of a more challenging voyage next time out, there is a strong possibility that handicappers will also have to take into consideration whether Justify will run as well out of town. Unless Baffert decides to run him in the San Felipe on March 10th, his next start will be at another venue. There is no guarantee that Justify will take to the new surface quite like he did to the Santa Anita main track.

Many horses bring their "A" game with them no matter where they travel to, but horses like Beholder and Lava Man simply did not run as well away from home. You really never know until they race on the road, but it certainly is something to keep in mind before you go "all in" on a short priced colt.

Regardless of your opinion on where Justify fits amongst Kentucky Derby contenders his presence adds to the intrigue for the 2018 "Run for the Roses." I cannot wait to see how he performs against stiffer competition next month.

As an aside, Baffert already has saddled a highly acclaimed so-called Apollo curse in the Kentucky Derby when Bodemeister tried to wire the 2012 field but got caught by Santa Anita Derby winner and eventual dual classic winner and champion three-year-old male I'll Have Another late. Bodemeister did not race again after the Preakness Stakes.



# JUSTIFY ON HIS WAY TO KENTUCKY AFTER SANTA ANITA DERBY SCORE

VANCE HANSON APRIL 7, 2018

In his one and only shot at securing a berth in the Kentucky Derby (G1), not only did Justify ace the test but possibly made himself the favorite for next month's Run for the Roses with a sterling, wire-to-wire victory in Saturday's \$1 million Santa Anita Derby (G1) for trainer Bob Baffert.

Making just his third career start after winning a February 18 maiden by 9 1/2 lengths going seven furlongs followed by a 6 1/2-length allowance win over a mile March 11, Justify was sent to the lead as expected under Mike Smith and was left uncontested while setting fractions of :23.96, :47.85, and 1:12.61. The 9-10 favorite was chased from second by 11-10 second choice Bolt d'Oro, who narrowed the gap from three lengths to 1 1/2 lengths on the far turn.

In the stretch, Bolt d'Oro moved outside then back inside of the long-time leader in the hopes of wearing him down, but Justify proved too resilient as he extended his lead back up to three lengths at the wire. The final time for nine furlongs on a fast track was 1:49.72.

"What you're seeing right now is really just raw talent. He's got so much room to grow and to even get better, believe it or not," Smith said. "I think this race is going to put a lot more bottom into him. He handled a mile and an eighth really well and like I said what you're seeing right now is just raw talent. If he moves forward off of this race, which he should, then it's even kind of scary to talk about."

Javier Castellano, the rider on Bolt d'Oro, was happy with his colt's performance in light of the circumstances.

"This was Justify's game plan and it suited him, his ability to be able to go to the lead. I had to try and catch him today," Castellano said. "I think it will be interesting in the [Kentucky] Derby because I think there will be more speed, it will be interesting. It will suit my horse, he'll be able to sit off that faster pace but I'm still very satisfied with today and my horse's performance."

Owned by WinStar Farm, China Horse Club, Head of Plains Partners, and Starlight Racing, Justify returned \$3.80. Bolt d'Oro was 6 1/2 lengths clear of 41-1 outsider Core Beliefs, with third choice Instilled Regard 1 1/4 lengths farther back in fourth.

As part of the Road to the Kentucky Derby series, qualifying points of 100-40-20-10 were distributed to the top four finishers. Justify earned his initial 100 points, while Bolt d'Oro, who happened to grab a quarter in his right front during the running, improved his total to 104. Core Beliefs earned his first 20, while Instilled Regard's total is now at 29.

Justify, who has earned \$666,000, will be seeking to become the first horse unraced at two to win the Kentucky Derby since Apollo in 1882.

By the late Scat Daddy, Justify was reared by the Grade 3-placed Stage Magic, by Ghostzapper. He was bred in Kentucky by Thomas J. Young and most recently sold for \$350,000 at the Barretts March two-year-old sale.



# KENTUCKY DERBY REPORT – STARS COME OUT AT SANTA ANITA

JAMES SCULLY MARCH 14, 2018

A pair of races at Santa Anita last weekend excited fans and invigorated the 2018 Kentucky Derby picture.

The San Felipe (G2) led the way Saturday with spectacular theater as Bolt d'Oro and McKinzie engaged in a head-and-head battle through the stretch. A controversial disqualification could not overshadow the exhilaration generated by a showdown between top-ranked contenders.

Power and grace were on display a day later as Justify remained unbeaten with a two-turn allowance win, delivering a scintillating performance that catapulted him to 6-1 favoritism among individual interests in Pool 3 of the Kentucky Derby Future Wager.

Elsewhere, the Gotham (G3) and Tampa Bay Derby (G2) were offered without the same fanfare and respective winners Enticed and Quip virtually guaranteed themselves a Kentucky Derby berth picking up 50-point prizes in the qualifiers.

## SAN FELIPE

After a couple of months with little buzz in the Road to the Kentucky Derby series, the San Felipe produced the race we were waiting for as Bolt d'Oro and McKinzie hooked up leaving the far turn and went at it all the way to the finish line. McKinzie prevailed by a head but after drifting out into his rival in the latter stages, he was disqualified by stewards and Bolt d'Oro was placed first.

Contested over 1 1/16 miles, it was a roughly run affair with multiple incidents and I wouldn't have made a change afterward. Bolt d'Oro arrived at the five-sixteenths pole three wide and while straightening into the stretch, he angled into the two-path and exchanged a couple of hard bumps with McKinzie. Stewards ruled it inconclusive but I thought Bolt d'Oro instigated the roughhousing by putting McKinzie in tight quarters along the rail. He continued to lean on his rival through the stretch and McKinzie drifted out late under left-handed urging.

Would McKinzie have veered out without the early contact? That was inconclusive in my book and the better horse (on this day) finished first on the wire. Stewards took their sweet time before reaching a decision to reverse.

McKinzie raced up close from the start and fought back determinedly after Bolt d'Oro stuck a head in front in upper stretch. He failed to maintain a straight course but Bolt d'Oro never appeared to be getting by in deep stretch. McKinzie brought a recency edge into the San Felipe, winning a pair of graded stakes wins over the winter for Bob Baffert, and Bolt d'Oro performed admirably making his first appearance in more than four months for Mick Ruis.

A smashing winner of the FrontRunner (G1) last fall, Bolt d'Oro bungled the start recording a third as the 3-5 favorite in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) and broke slowly in three of four attempts last year. He added the services of Javier Castellano for the San Felipe and left gate smoothly from his innermost post, settling into a comfortable stalking trip behind horses before advancing into contention on the far turn.

A triple-digit BRIS Speed rating was the only thing missing as the top two received a 98 BRIS Speed rating. The track was still rated "fast" despite plenty of rainfall and it's fair to question how much the changing surface affected Speed ratings.

There may be some apprehension surrounding aftereffects, but I see no reason Bolt d'Oro can't keep moving forward off the hard race. Ruis didn't have his charge fully cranked and we've witnessed multiple horses win the Kentucky Derby who ran their hearts out but came up a little short making a demanding penultimate prep in the San Felipe (Silver Charm and Real Quiet). The well-built son of Medaglia d'Oro will use the Santa Anita Derby (G1) on April 7 as his final tune-up and I think Bolt d'Oro fits the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby distance better than McKinzie.

McKinzie, who had registered BRIS Speed ratings of 100-100-104 in his first three starts, turned in another top-class performance but will probably need a jockey change for his final prep race since Mike Smith also rides Justify.

## JUSTIFY

Justify has the goods but faces an uphill task after making his first start at Santa Anita on February 18. It's been 135 years since the last unraced juvenile, Apollo, captured the Kentucky Derby and Justify has yet to be tested while registering excellent 100 and 104 BRIS Speed numbers in a pair of convincing wins.

The chestnut colt will get one opportunity to qualify for the Kentucky Derby and it will be interesting to see whether he comes back for the Santa Anita Derby or leaves the friendly home confines for a target like the Wood Memorial (G2) or Arkansas Derby (G1). Justify figures to go favored either way, but I can't find a Kentucky Derby winner in modern times who raced exclusively at a single venue before arriving at Churchill Downs.

Following a 9 1/2-length maiden romp at 7-furlongs, Baffert removed blinkers and stretched his pupil to a two-turn mile distance. The entry-level allowance was contested over a muddy track and for the second straight race, the son of Scat Daddy broke a step slow. It hasn't hurt him in a pair of short fields, with Justify meeting only four overmatched rivals in both outings, but will be something to watch for against stakes foes.

After rushing forward to lead wire to wire in his unveiling, Justify showed versatility rating behind the speed on Sunday. He blew into the lead with a few dynamic strides on the far turn and it was fun to watch his long and smooth action through the stretch as he effortlessly extended the winning margin to 6 1/2 lengths.

Justify has proven to be beautiful mover with freakish ability, but a lack of foundation isn't easily overcome by a 3-year-old on the first Saturday in May. He's opened his career in similar fashion to Curlin, who blistered maidens going 7-furlongs in an early February debut and captured the Rebel Stakes by 5 1/4 easy lengths in his second start. The eventual Hall of Famer and two-time Horse of the Year looked more than capable when rolling to a 10 1/2-length victory in the Arkansas Derby, but Curlin wasn't a serious factor and sustained his first defeat with a third behind Street Sense and Hard Spun in the 2007 Kentucky Derby.

Some observers feel the “Apollo Curse” won’t last with horses being more lightly-raced nowadays, but I’m not sure about the correlation. It’s asking a lot for Justify to squeeze three starts into a seven-week window (if he runs in Santa Anita Derby) before an extreme 1 ¼-mile test against 19 challengers four weeks later. A number of sophomore rivals, including Bolt d’Oro and Enticed, will be making at least their sixth stakes start in the Kentucky Derby, the same level of experience Street Sense and Hard Spun had when beating Curlin on the first Saturday in May.

It’s more about the competition. Curlin and Bodemeister (second in 2012) were forced to settle for placings behind top-class opponents, but circumstances may have been ripe for a breakthrough if they had come along in 2005 when Afleet Alex failed to fire and pair of slow longshots (Giacomo and Closing Argument) duked it out through a glacial final furlong. I like to think they could’ve beaten the fields Big Brown (2008) and California Chrome (2014) faced.

Perhaps Justify’s rivals won’t keep moving forward and he can finally snap one of the most imposing trends in all of sports. I remain dubious but will keep an open mind heading into the final round of prep races.

### GOTHAM

Enticed revived his Kentucky Derby hopes posting a 2 ¾-length decision in the Gotham, rallying to overhaul front-running Old Time Revival in deep stretch of the one-turn mile event at Aqueduct. He looked sharp in the final furlong and registered an excellent 104 BRIS Speed rating, but Enticed received a plum outside trip he seems to desire and wasn’t hurt by ground loss at the one-turn mile distance.

Trained by Kieran McLaughlin, the Godolphin homebred son of Medaglia d’Oro resented being inside in his first two starts, behaving rankly in traffic recording a maiden win and a third in the Champagne (G1), and jockey Junior Alvarado kept Enticed off the rail and in a forward position en route to his narrow victory in the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2) at Churchill Downs in late November.

The Gotham was held about 10 minutes after the Tampa Bay Derby and Enticed became the fourth runner from the Kentucky Jockey Club to win a Kentucky Derby qualifier, joining third-placer Promises Fulfilled (Fountain of Youth), seventh-placer Quip (Tampa Bay Derby) and 10th-placer Bravazo (Risen Star).

The victory had to be sweet for Alvarado, who was replaced by Joel Rosario in the February 3 Holy Bull (G2) at Gulfstream Park, but Enticed drew the rail and was compromised by an inside trip rather than pilot error posting a well-beaten fourth as the 9-5 favorite in his seasonal debut. The dark bay colt received a career-best 95 BRIS Late Pace number winning the Gotham under wraps, with Alvarado gearing down his mount as soon as he struck the front, but Enticed was kept widest of all the entire way without a straw in his path.

With his running style, traffic issues are a staple of the 20-horse Kentucky Derby and Enticed must be able to handle being stuck inside of horses to prosper. I don’t want to see another outside trip where he has clear sailing in the final prep.

Laurel shipper Old Time Revival outperformed 35-1 odds, finishing four lengths clear of third as he recorded a second consecutive runner-up stakes effort, but the need-the-lead type appears to favor one-turn distances.

Free Drop Billy and Firenze Fire didn’t appear ready for prime time finishing up the track in third and fourth, respectively, and any enthusiasm surrounding their Kentucky Derby chances has dimmed.

### TAMPA BAY DERBY

Quip tracked moderate splits and wore down pacesetter World of Trouble in the stretch of the Tampa Bay Derby, earning his first stakes victory with a one-length tally. Overlooked at 19-1 in his first start since a troubled seventh in the Kentucky Jockey Club, the front-running son of Distorted Humor has now won three of four career starts for trainer Rudolphe Brisset and regular rider Florent Geroux was up.

He will add more speed to the Kentucky Derby line-up. Front-running types Promises Fulfilled (52 points) and Bravazo (54) are also well-positioned, and Snapper Sinclair (22) and Strike Power (20) will be looking to cement a berth in the final prep.

After concluding 2017 with a declining set of BRIS Speed ratings (88-86-84), Quip turned things around with a 98 Speed. But the overall quality of the Tampa Bay Derby field is in doubt and Flameaway arguably outperformed the winner, closing fast for second after a terrible start.

World of Trouble held third in his first two-turn start but his future appears to be in sprints. Vino Rosso came up empty adding blinkers for Todd Pletcher, winding up about five lengths back of third. I still like the Curlin colt’s long-term potential but Vino Rosso took a step back in the clunker.

### EUROPEANS

Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Turf (G1) winner Mendelssohn, a half-brother to Grade 1 main track scorers Beholder and Into Mischief, switched from turf to Polytrack for the March 9 Patton Stakes at Dundalk, Ireland and rallied up the inside to win going away by about a length. The one-mile event should provide valuable fitness for the Aidan O’Brien trainee and the U.A.E. Derby (G2) on March 31 will provide a better gauge upon his Kentucky Derby prospects.

Mendelssohn is by Scat Daddy, who is also represented by Justify and Combatant this year.

Kempton Park, England hosted a European Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifier on March 7 and Gronkowski offered a sustained late run to prove best. By turf sire Lonhro, Gronkowski has some dirt influences in his female family, with his dam being a half-sister to Grade 1 winner Flashy Bull, and trainer Jeremy Nosedá plans to prep the English-based colt in either the Blue Grass (G2) or Wood Memorial (G2).

As Bold Arrangement proved back in the mid-1980s, parlaying a third in the Blue Grass at Keeneland into a runner-up finish in the Kentucky Derby (he’s wearing the roses if Shoemaker doesn’t get through making a daring inside move aboard Ferdinand in upper stretch), the best chance for a European-based horse to win the Kentucky Derby is to ship over for a prep race.

I don’t know whether Gronkowski will prove good enough, but kudos to Nosedá for utilizing the proper strategy.

### UP NEXT

Solomini will be the last big name from 2017 to open his 3-year-old campaign when he returns in Saturday’s \$900,000 Rebel (G2) at Oaklawn Park. The 1 1/16-mile test offers a total of 85 points to the top four finishers (50-20-10-5 scale) and Solomini was last seen outfinishing McKinzie by about a length in the December 9 Los Alamitos Futurity



(G1). He's trained by Baffert, who has won six of the last eight runnings of the Rebel.

Solomini was disqualified and placed third for interfering with another rival in his juvenile finale but I liked how the evolving Curlin colt displayed push-button acceleration for the first time, dropping back to last on the backstretch after racing forwardly when second in Breeders' Cup Juvenile and FrontRunner. The chestnut colt was still growing into his massive frame last year and I'm buying Solomini's stock heading into the Rebel.

His main rivals include Combatant and Sporting Chance, second and third in the February 19 Southwest (G3) at Oaklawn; and Curlin's Honor and Magnum Moon, a pair of unbeaten colts making their first stakes appearance for Mark Casse and Pletcher, respectively.

Turfway Park's centerpiece event, the \$200,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) (formerly the Spiral), drew a contentious field of 12 for 1 1/16 miles on Polytrack and offers a total of 24 points (20-8-4-2). Pletcher ship in the pair of Hazit and Pony Up, and the top three from the local John Battaglia Memorial – Magicalmeister, Sky Promise and Arawak – are all back.

## KENTUCKY DERBY TOP 20

RANK	HORSE	COMMENTS
1	SOLOMINI	Returns in Saturday's Rebel Stakes
2	BOLT D'ORO	Broke well in impressive San Felipe comebacker
3	GOOD MAGIC	2yo champ built upon losses last fall
4	MCKINZIE	Tough as nails outfinishing Bolt in San Felipe
5	JUSTIFY	Inexperienced but supremely talented
6	AUDIBLE	Holy Bull romper headed to Florida Derby
7	CATHOLIC BOY	Expecting an improved finishing kick in final prep
8	ENTICED	Rebounded nicely in Gotham
9	COMBATANT	Three consecutive seconds in qualifiers
10	TITLE READY	Allowance romper tries stakes company in Rebel
11	INSTILLED REGARD	Looks to rebound after flat Risen Star
12	SPORTING CHANCE	Eligible to show more in Rebel for Lukas
13	PROMISES FULFILLED	Fountain of Youth upsetter adds speed
14	MY BOY JACK	Southwest scorer moves up on a wet track
15	MENDELSSOHN	U.A.E. Derby next for recent Polytrack stakes winner
16	MAGNUM MOON	Unraced juvenile makes stakes debut in Rebel
17	STRIKE POWER	Handled two turns finishing second in Fountain of Youth
18	CURLIN'S HONOR	Brings 2-for-2 mark into Rebel
19	BRAVAZO	Risen Star upsetter will be back for Louisiana Derby
20	QUIP	Secured a berth in Tampa Bay Derby upset

# SANTA ANITA DERBY WINNER JUSTIFY

JOHN MUCCIOLO APRIL 28, 2018

Santa Anita Derby (G1) star Justify has been sublime from three dominant wins in 2018 and will aim to buck a 136-year drought in the 2018 Kentucky Derby (G1). Apollo, who in 1882 won the Kentucky Derby, was the last horse to take the Run for the Roses after going unraced as a two-year-old. But Justify might be up to the task.

The Bob Baffert trainee has been virtually unchallenged to date as closed as the 3-1 deserved favorite in the final pool of the Kentucky Derby Future Wager.

Going to the lead soon after the start in the Santa Anita Derby, Justify flashed his brilliant and seemingly effortless stride to coast home a convincing winner, passing his initial class test with style under Mike Smith. He defeated classy Grade 1 victor Bolt d'Oro in the process and posted a seasonal-best 114 BRIS Speed figure for his work.

Baffert holds the physically imposing Justify in incredibly high regard, too. "I pinch myself. I had (American) Pharoah, Arrogate, and then I have this one," stated the Hall of Fame conditioner.

Bred in the Bluegrass State by John Gunther, Justify was a Book 1 purchase at the 2016 Keeneland September Yearling Sale, bringing the gavel down at \$500,000. He races for a partnership that includes China Horse Club, WinStar Farm, Starlight Racing and Head of Plains Partners LLC.

Justify is by the late Scat Daddy, who was a top-class juvenile who carried his form over into his sophomore campaign. Trained by Todd Pletcher, that son of champion Johannesburg bagged the 2006 Hopeful Stakes (G1) as a two-year-old, followed by scores in the Florida Derby (G1) and Fountain of Youth (G2) at three. His racing career concluded with an unplaced showing in the 2007 Kentucky Derby.

However, Scat Daddy left his mark in the breeding shed in a big way. A sire of nine individual champions, Scat Daddy is well represented on the Kentucky Derby Trail in 2018 – with the splendid Mendelssohn; Blue Grass (G2) runner-up Flameaway; Arkansas Derby (G1) fourth-placer Combatant; as well as Justify.

Justify is one of a trio of winning foals out of the Grade 3-placed Ghostzapper mare Stage Magic. His second dam is 2004 Coaching Club American Oaks (G1) third-place finisher Magical Illusion, who looked like a budding star prior to her retirement. Justify receives ample stamina influence through his female family.

While Justify is late to the party, not making his debut until February 18, he moves on to Churchill Downs as the center of attention. Could he be racing's next super horse?





# UNDEFEATED JUSTIFY 3-1 MORNING LINE FAVORITE FOR KENTUCKY DERBY PRESENTED BY WOODFORD RESERVE

MAY 1, 2018



China Horse Club International, Heads of Plains Partners, Starlight Racing and WinStar Farm's undefeated Justify has been established as the 3-1 morning-line favorite in a field of 20 3-year-olds and one also eligible entered Tuesday for Saturday's 144th running of the \$2,192,000 Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I).

If 20 horses start, the winner's share will be \$1,432,000.

The 1 ¼-mile classic that starts the Triple Crown series serves as the centerpiece of Saturday's 14-race program and will go as the 12th race with a 6:46 p.m. (all times Eastern) post time. First post time Saturday is 10:30 a.m.

Trained by Bob Baffert, Justify has won his three starts by a combined 19 lengths with his most recent score coming in the Santa Anita Derby (GI) in his stakes debut.

Ben Jones leads all trainers with six Kentucky Derby victories and Baffert is one of three trainers with four wins in the race with victories coming with Silver Charm (1997), Real Quiet (1998), War Emblem (2002) and American Pharoah (2015). Baffert is the most recent trainer to win the Derby in consecutive years.

Mike Smith, who rode Giacomo to victory in 2005, has the mount on Justify who will exit post position seven.

Justify will be trying to become the first horse since Apollo in 1882 to win the Derby without having raced as a 2-year-old.

Baffert also will saddle Zayat Stables, Mrs. John Magnier, Michael Tabor and Derrick Smith's Solomini. Flavien Prat retains the mount on Solomini (30-1) and break from post position 17. Adding international intrigue to



this year's renewal is Derrick Smith, Mrs. John Magnier and Michael Tabor's Mendelssohn, the second choice on the line at 5-1.

Trained by Aidan O'Brien, Mendelssohn comes to Kentucky off an 18 ½-length victory in the UAE Derby (GII) in Dubai that marked his first race on dirt. The Scat Daddy colt also has won on an all-weather surface and closed out 2017 with a victory in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (GI) at Del Mar.

Regular rider Ryan Moore has the mount Saturday and will break from post position 14. Another who will try to do what Apollo did is Lawana and Robert Low's undefeated Magnum Moon, the third choice in the line at 6-1.

Magnum Moon is one of four horses in the race trained by two-time Derby winner Todd Pletcher, who is seeking to become the seventh trainer to win the Run for the Roses in consecutive years. Always Dreaming won for Pletcher in 2017.

Magnum Moon did not make his racing debut until Jan. 13 at Gulfstream and followed a victory at Tampa Bay Downs in February with victories in the Rebel (GII) and Arkansas Derby (GI) at Oaklawn Park.

Luis Saez, who has been aboard in all four starts, has the call Saturday and will break from post position 16.

Pletcher also will send out Audible, owned by the same partnership as Justify, WinStar Farm and Repole Stable's Noble Indy and Repole Stable and St. Elias Stable's Vino Rosso.

The New York-bred Audible brings a four-race win streak to Churchill Downs with the latter two scores coming in the Holy Bull (GII) and Florida Derby (GI). Listed at 8-1 as the co-fourth choice on the morning line, Audible will break from post position five and be ridden by Javier Castellano.

John Velazquez, who won the Derby in 2011 with Animal Kingdom and last year with Always Dreaming, has the call on Wood Memorial (GII) winner Vino Rosso. Six riders have won the Derby in consecutive years, the most recent being Victor Espinoza (2014-15), who has the mount Saturday on Bolt d'Oro.

Listed at 12-1 on the line, Vino Rosso will break from post position 18.

Louisiana Derby (GII) winner Noble Indy picks up first-time rider Florent Geroux. Noble Indy, 30-1 on the line, will break from post position 19.

The other co-fourth choice is Ruis Racing's Bolt d'Oro at 8-1 on the line. Trained by owner Mick Ruis, Bolt d'Oro comes into the Derby off a runner-up finish to Justify in the Santa Anita Derby.

Espinoza, who also won the race in 2002 with War Emblem, will break Bolt d'Oro from post position 11.

Three other Grade I winners are in the field headed by e Five Racing Thoroughbreds and Stonestreet Stables' Good Magic.

Trained by Chad Brown, Good Magic won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI) last fall at Del Mar to earn the Eclipse Award as Champion 2-Year-Old Male. He comes into the Derby off a victory in the Blue Grass Stakes (GII) at Keeneland.

Jose Ortiz has the mount on Good Magic (12-1) on the line and will exit post position six.

Other Grade I winners are Albaugh Family Stables' Free Drop Billy and Mr. Amore Stable's Firenze Fire. Trained by Dale Romans, Free Drop Billy won the Breeders' Futurity (GI) last fall at Keeneland. Robby Albarado has the mount on Free Drop Billy (30-1 on the line) and will break from post position two.

Romans also will send out Robert Baron's Promises Fulfilled. Winner of the Fountain of Youth (GII), Promises Fulfilled (30-1) will be ridden by Corey Lanerie and break from post position three.

Firenze Fire, winner of the Champagne (GI) at Belmont last fall, is trained by Jason Servis. Paco Lopez has the mount on Firenze Fire (50-1) and will break from post position one.

In addition to Baffert and Pletcher, two other trainers are seeking to add to their Derby victory totals: D. Wayne Lukas and Doug O'Neill.

Lukas, a four-time winner, will send out Bravazo (50-1 on the line) for the legendary Calumet Farm. Luis Contreras has the mount and will break from post position 13.

O'Neill, a two-time winner this decade, will be represented by Blended Citizen (50-1 on the line) if he makes the field. Owned by Greg Hall and SAYJAY Racing, Blended Citizen will be ridden by Kyle Frey if he gets in.

Three-time Derby winner Kent Desormeaux will be trying to pad her Derby resume when he rides Don't Tell My Wife Stables, Monomoy Stables and West Point Thoroughbreds' My Boy Jack for his brother Keith Desormeaux. Listed at 30-1 on the line, My Boy Jack will break from post position 10.

The field for the Kentucky Derby, with riders and morning-line odds from the rail out, is: Firenze Fire (Lopez, 50-1), Free Drop Billy (Albarado, 30-1), Promises Fulfilled (Lanerie, 30-1), Flameaway (Jose Lezcano, 30-1), Audible (Castellano, 8-1), Good Magic (J. Ortiz, 12-1), Justify (Smith, 3-1), Lone Sailor (James Graham, 50-1), Hofburg (Irad Ortiz Jr., 20-1), My Boy Jack (Desormeaux, 30-1), Bolt d'Oro (Espinoza, 8-1), Enticed (Junior Alvarado, 30-1), Bravazo (Contreras, 50-1), Mendelssohn (Moore, 5-1), Instilled Regard (Drayden Van Dyke, 50-1), Magnum Moon (Saez, 6-1), Solomini (Prat, 30-1), Vino Rosso (Velazquez, 12-1), Noble Indy (Geroux, 30-1) and Combatant (Ricardo Santana Jr., 50-1). Also-eligible: Blended Citizen (Frey, 50-1). All starters will carry 126 pounds.

# JUSTIFY PREVAILS OVER MUD, 'APOLLO CURSE' IN KENTUCKY DERBY 144

JENNIFER CALDWELL MAY 5, 2018

Much was made of the "Apollo Curse," whereas no horse since Apollo in 1882 has won the Kentucky Derby without running as a two-year-old, prior to Saturday's 144th Run for the Roses at Churchill Downs.

Justify turned that stat on its head when splashing home an easy winner of the 2018 Kentucky Derby (G1) over a sloppy, sealed track under the Twin Spires.

The Bob Baffert trainee tracked in second as Promises Fulfilled established fractions of :22.24, :47.77 and 1:11.01. Jockey Mike Smith kept Justify out of trouble on the pacesetter's outside and was in prime position to take over when that rival began fading on the turn.

Justify had command through a mile in 1:37.35 but was threatened entering the lane by champion Good Magic, who bided his time between runners early on before shifting out to commence his bid upon hitting the stretch. However, despite his best effort, Good Magic just could not reel in Justify, who proceeded home in a final time of 2:04.20 for the 1 1/4-mile classic.

Justify lived up to his near 3-1 favoritism in the Kentucky Derby, paying \$7.80 for the win. The chestnut son of Scat Daddy is campaigned by China Horse Club, Head of Plains Partners LLC, Starlight Racing and WinStar Farm, resulting in quite a crowded winner's circle.

Good Magic finished 2 1/2 lengths behind Justify and just held second by a head over the rallying Audible. It was another 1 3/4 lengths back to Instilled Regard, who was followed under the wire by 6-1 second choice My Boy Jack, Bravazo, Hofburg, Lone Sailor, Vino Rosso, Solomini, Firenze Fire, Bolt d'Oro, Flameaway, Enticed, Promises Fulfilled, Free Drop Billy, Noble Indy, Combatant, Magnum Moon and Mendelssohn.

Justify only began his career on February 18 and his three starts at Santa Anita Park prior to Saturday. The Kentucky-bred colt broke his maiden going seven furlongs by 9 1/2 lengths and followed a month later on March 11 with a 6 1/2-length score against allowance/optional claimers stretching out to a mile.

He kept his record perfect while capturing his stakes debut in the 1 1/16-mile Santa Anita Derby (G1) last out on April 7 by three lengths.

Bred by John D. Gunther, Justify is now a perfect four-for-four having banked \$2,098,000 in lifetime earnings. He is out of the Grade 3-placed Ghostzapper mare Stage Magic, making him a half-brother to stakes runner-up The Lieutenant who just finished third in the Californian Stakes (G2) last Saturday. His third dam is Grade 3 heroine Voodoo Lily, and this female line also boasts Grade 2 victress Spellbound and multiple Grade 3 conqueror Kid Cruz.





# DARE WE DREAM OF TWO TRIPLE CROWNS?

KELLIE REILLY MAY 6, 2018

Going into Saturday's 144th Kentucky Derby (G1), the year 1882 featured prominently in the discussion as the last time that an unraced two-year-old, Apollo, had gone on to win the Derby. Now that Justify has put the "Curse of Apollo" to rest, I'm hoping that another year will be cited – 1935.

That year remains unique in racing history for witnessing Triple Crowns on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1935, Omaha emulated sire Gallant Fox by capturing the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont, and the all-time great Bahram swept the English Triple Crown consisting of the 2000 Guineas, Derby at Epsom, and St Leger.

Never before, or since, have those two crowns coincided. The English treble has become an endangered species in the wake of Bahram, with Nijinsky II (1970) managing to accomplish it but only one other even trying it. The American version, although enduring a 37-year drought until American Pharoah came along in 2015, was at least frequently attempted.

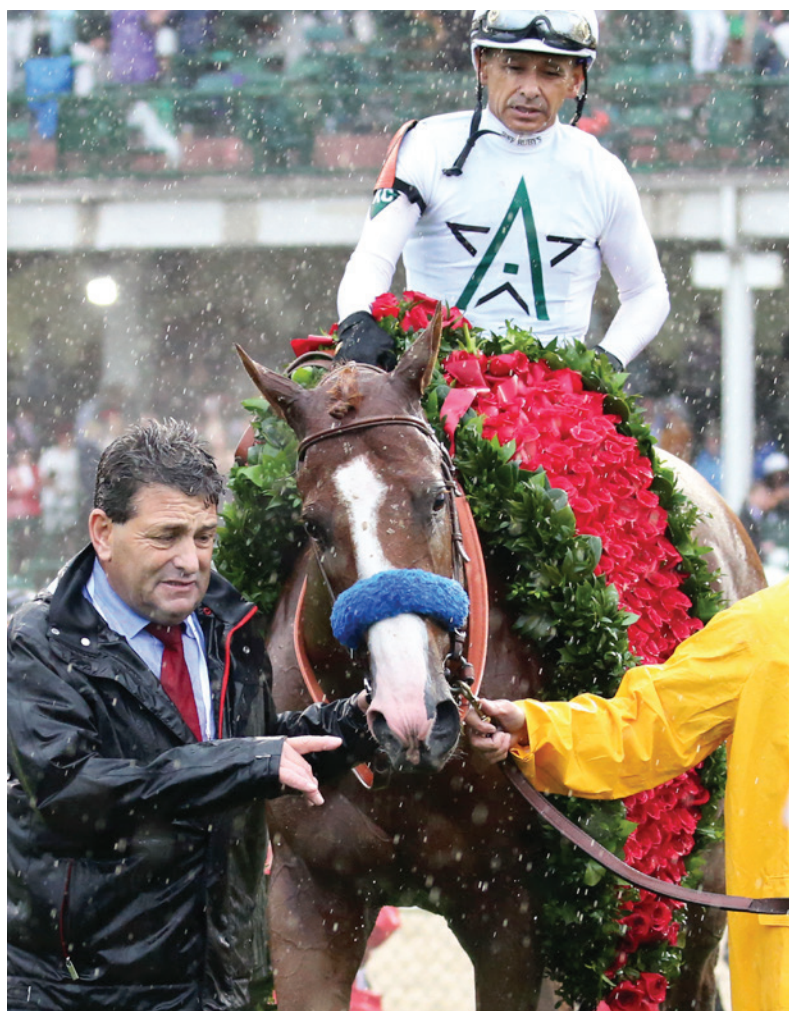
After Justify's powerful display at Churchill Downs, it's plausible that he can follow in the hoofsteps of American Pharoah. He would thereby put Bob Baffert alongside Sunny Jim Fitzsimmons (trainer of Gallant Fox and Omaha) and Ben Jones (of Whirlaway and Citation, the latter with son Jimmy) as the trainer of two Triple Crown winners.

Across the pond at Newmarket on Saturday, the Aidan O'Brien-trained Saxon Warrior turned in a powerful display of his own in the 2000 Guineas. Whispers of an English Triple Crown, already inspired over the winter just by the type of horse he is, were now stated forthrightly out in the open.

Could it be 1935 all over again?

Before getting too far ahead of ourselves, there's a reminder that we were in this position only six years ago – in fact, we were further along with dual classic winners apparently in pole position for a Triple Crown sweep. I'll Have Another held a strong hand ahead of the 2012 Belmont, having stayed on relentlessly to nab Bodemeister in both the Kentucky Derby and Preakness. Similarly, O'Brien's Camelot had scraped home in the Guineas and bolted up at Epsom. Stamina didn't figure to be an overriding concern for the son of Montjeu trying the about 1 3/4-mile St Leger, where he was the first since Nijinsky II even to go for the crown.

Then the travails of racing undercut both bids for history. I'll Have Another was a shock withdrawal, retired on Belmont Eve with a tendon injury. Camelot made it to the St Leger, only to endure a checkered passage in the stretch. Godolphin's Encke beat him to the punch and kept on too stoutly to be caught. Camelot reduced the deficit, but ran out of time, and three-quarters of a length separated him from immortality.



Still, with those pitfalls very much in mind, we may stand a better chance of a "double" Triple Crown this year than we did then. Justify and Saxon Warrior can argue they're more naturally gifted than the corresponding hopes from 2012.

I'll Have Another was a worthy Derby/Preakness champion, but no more compelling than the substantial list of others in the post-Affirmed era who could not complete the sweep.

Undefeated Justify, on the other hand, gives the vibe of one out of the ordinary. Sure, the Derby's final time of 2:04.20 militates against that, but only if you ignore how the race unfolded in those conditions. They were all feeling the effects of that unsustainable pace, and Justify was slowing as well. Yet the fact remains that he stood up to the punishing tempo, still had enough to hurl back a champion in Good Magic, and held sway with authority. Very few horses could have won Derby 144 in quite the way Justify did. I doubt that anyone else in this crop, at this point, could have.



Of course, that's not to say there weren't the usual hard-luck stories for some Derby rivals. Mendelssohn has the right to feel most aggrieved since he never got a reasonable chance after a problematic start. Although the O'Brien trainee broke fairly, he wasn't as quick into stride as Justify, and then the bludgeoning began. Magnum Moon veered over to crush Instilled Regard and Mendelssohn in turn. Once he was behind and playing bumper cars, Mendelssohn was never comfortable. And once he could not find his rhythm or use his early foot effectively, the race was over. Ryan Moore wisely took care of him the rest of the way.

Still, if Mendelssohn had a clean shot from the gate and Moore parked him where he wanted, I'm not convinced that he could have gone (or chased) that early pace and hung with Justify, let alone outfinish him. In any event, the point is moot because Mendelssohn is no longer a threat to Justify's Triple Crown bid. He's heading home to Ballydoyle to regroup. The best news of all is that O'Brien is plotting a return to Churchill for the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), and a relatively smaller field (maximum of 14) suggests a fairer shot.

If Justify is regarded as the best on merit, he's cleared the basic threshold for Triple Crown discussion. There's not an obvious rival waiting in the wings to set the record straight. The pressing question now, aside from the constant possibility of injury or illness, is the grind itself. Given what he's achieved in such a compressed time frame, at what point does it start to catch up with him?

Wheeling back in two weeks for the Preakness has been no problem for Baffert's previous four Derby heroes, with Silver Charm (1997), Real Quiet (1998), War Emblem (2002) and obviously American Pharoah all confirming the Derby form a fortnight later at Pimlico. But they were more experienced, not on the same meteoric rise as Justify. His Derby may have taken more out of him than we can tell. If he gets through the Preakness, he would face a searching 1 1/2-mile test in the Belmont – his sixth race in fewer than four months.

On the plus side, Justify has the imposing physique of a beast. He's anything but a light-bodied sort who gets knocked out easily by the rigors of it all. Barring injury, his constitution may allow him to maintain his form for the duration, and that's enough to envision a potential Triple Crown sweep.

The case for Saxon Warrior being better than Camelot is more tenuous than the Justify/I'll Have Another comparison. Both captured the Racing Post Trophy (G1) in their juvenile finales and remained unbeaten through the Guineas. But their respective Guineas performances can be read as a favorable sign for Saxon Warrior.

Camelot caught a rain-affected Rowley Mile that turned the Guineas into more of a stamina test than a showcase of miler speed. Moreover, it was a less than vintage edition in general with his best rival, stablemate Power, showing nothing but rebounding next time in the Irish 2000 Guineas (G1).

Saxon Warrior, in contrast, had to outkick them on good ground in a solid time of 1:36.55. While 50-1 longshot Tip Two Win finished second, other smart types were in pursuit including Craven (G3) romper Masar; Elarqam, the hitherto unbeaten son of Frankel and Attraction; Racing Post Trophy runner-up Roaring Lion; and Saxon Warrior's stablemate Gustav Klimt, himself the antepost favorite for a brief period. Only time will judge the caliber of the opposition, but I'd have to think this bunch will turn out pretty decent, probably better on the whole than Camelot's victims in 2012.

As a son of Japanese legend Deep Impact, Saxon Warrior is bred for distances longer than a mile. That's why it was so clutch for him to score in the Guineas, over an inadequate trip, while not totally cranked off the layoff. He'll come on a bundle for Epsom, where he looms as a prohibitive antepost favorite (trading odds-on or even-money at this writing). Although someone can emerge from the upcoming Derby trials, it will take a pretty serious customer to challenge Saxon Warrior, and to deprive him of a classic double.

If Saxon Warrior sails home at Epsom, it stands to reason that the "lads" (the Coolmore partners) would want to take a crack at the St Leger. They won't miss a chance to match the exploits of Nijinsky II.

"No question, I would think," Michael Tabor told Racing Post Saturday. "Why not? It most definitely motivates me. I haven't discussed it with John (Magnier), Derrick (Smith) or Aidan, but to me, yes."

O'Brien, back at Newmarket Sunday, echoed the thought.

Saxon Warrior has shown enough acceleration at a mile to give at least some pause about his stamina over the Leger trip. But if he arrives on Town Moor ready to roll, his class can see him through. Just ask Nijinsky II.

Needless to say, for this dream to become reality, everything has to go perfectly for both horses over the long haul. Nothing can be taken for granted. If too much can transpire even in the short time frame between the Kentucky Derby and Preakness, Doncaster in September feels like an eternity from now.

But when we have unusually talented classic winners like Justify and Saxon Warrior around, let us dream as long as we can.

# BAFFERT: JUSTIFY'S FOOT IRRITANT "NOT AN ISSUE"

MAY 7, 2018

Trainer Bob Baffert on Monday said he is not concerned with the condition of Kentucky Derby (G1) winner Justify's left hind foot after the colt appeared to show signs of being off when presented to the media Sunday morning at Churchill Downs.

"It's not an issue," Baffert said. "It was sensitive there. It's like a diaper rash, what he's got. He looked great today."

"He did not run down. They call them scratches or whatever. He's had it before. You get it from wet [tracks] and you have to soften it up. It can be irritating. When he stepped on those rocks [outside the barn], it bit him. That's why he did that. Because he was fine in the morning and today he was fine."

"He will be going back to the track in a couple of days and everything will be good. He's responding to the treatment. So we're good."

Justify will remain at Churchill Downs under the care of assistant trainer Jimmy Barnes until he ships to Pimlico next week. He is expected to return to the track on Thursday.

Trainer Steve Asmussen has said that Tenfold, fifth in the Arkansas Derby (G1) in his third career start, is probable for the Preakness.

Tenfold worked five furlongs in 1:00 1/5 Monday morning at Churchill Downs.

"He's a very nice horse that is getting better," Asmussen said. "I liked his work a lot today. We're expecting big things from him. I was a touch disappointed (in his Arkansas Derby). He's better than that."

Tenfold had previously won twice at Oaklawn.

Trainer Tom Amoss said that Louisiana Derby (G2) runner-up Lone Sailor, eighth in the Kentucky Derby, has not ruled out a Preakness bid.

"We'll see how he trains and make a decision off of that," he said. "Whether it should be the Preakness or something else, I don't know. (The Preakness) is not out of the question."

Meanwhile, trainer Rodolphe Brisset continues to prepare Tampa Bay Derby (G2) winner Quip for the Preakness although no official decision has been made about his participation.

Quip, who shares a common ownership with Justify, was kept out of the Kentucky Derby after running second in the Arkansas Derby.

"We got the horse set up to run in the Preakness," Brisset said. "Like (WinStar Farm's) Elliott (Walden) said, they like to do the right thing by the horse. We all agreed the Preakness was the best shot for Quip. We did talk that it didn't matter who won the Derby that we would be pointing him to the Preakness."



# WILL THE 2018 PREAKNESS TURN OUT TO BE A VIRTUAL REPLAY OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY?

KELLIE REILLY MAY 17, 2018

That's the question fans are asking as unbeaten Kentucky Derby (G1) star Justify looms as the heavy 1-2 favorite in the Preakness (G1). While every Preakness serves as a referendum on the Derby winner, Saturday's 143rd renewal has more reason than most to conjure up a sense of déjà vu, and fuel hopes of a Triple Crown sweep.

For starters, the weather and track conditions. Churchill Downs turned into a sea of slop, thanks to an unexpected monsoon. That Derby Day record amount of rainfall was not forecast by meteorologists, who you could say are "handicapping" the weather. So far, the rain at Pimlico has been more predictable, and protracted throughout the week. The soggy forecast offers no hope for relief through Preakness time.

And that arguably offers less hope for Justify's seven opponents, who have a right to fear his speed proving lethal once again in the slop. Maybe something else would be different, like post position? No such luck for them in that department either. Justify drew the exact same post as in the Derby – number 7 – and thus projects an eerily similar trip pressing the pace on the outside.

But there are two differences that could come into play, namely the pace scenario and the quick two-week turnaround between the Derby and the middle jewel of the Triple Crown.

The tempo in the Preakness figures to be honest with a few forwardly-running types aside from Justify. Chief among them is "new shooter" Quip, the Tampa Bay Derby (G2) winner and Arkansas Derby (G1) runner-up who drew the rail. Also capable of being in the first flight early are fellow Triple Crown newcomer Diamond King, winner of the Federico Tesio at Laurel, and Bravazo, the Risen Star (G2) hero who was a sneakily-good sixth in the Derby. Yet barring an unforeseen development, there's no equivalent of Derby pacesetter Promises Fulfilled who went out and burned himself up through scorching fractions.

If the Preakness pace scenario is fast but not crazy, Justify theoretically should have even more left in reserve to rebuff challenges and kick away. But his rivals would have more as well. The way the Derby unfolded, in a take-no-prisoners war of attrition, ended up playing to Justify's strengths. A more normal race shape stands to be of (relatively) greater benefit to his opponents who simply can't withstand a Derby-style slog.

The best example is Derby runner-up Good Magic, last year's Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1)-winning champion. Although his stalking style puts him within shouting distance of the leaders, he had to work harder than usual early to maintain a close position in a frenetically run Derby. Good Magic kept on well enough to offer a challenge in the stretch, but Justify stayed on better to the wire. Perhaps Good Magic will have some more life in his legs later in the Preakness.

The other Derby veteran, eighth-placer Lone Sailor, encountered a different issue as a deep closer. While he conserved more energy by racing well back, he also ran into traffic on the far turn and had too much ground to try to make up. The Preakness may give him the best of all worlds, a pace fast enough to set up his late kick but without stringing out the field as far as in the Derby. In other words, he's likelier to have only about a five-length deficit or so, as in his near-miss in the Louisiana Derby (G2), compared to 11 lengths at Churchill.

Playing "what-if" parlor games is a fun way to envision the race, but we shouldn't miss the forest for the trees. Justify remains the best horse on merit, the manner of his victory marking him out as an above-average Derby winner. Those beaten in the Derby all have to find a way to produce a career high to turn the tables, and a similar point applies, with greater force, to those who didn't even contest the Derby. In addition to the aforementioned Quip and Diamond King, the other new shooters are Sporting Chance, winless since last summer's Hopeful (G1), and Tenfold, a promising type eligible to move forward off a fifth in his Arkansas Derby stakes debut.

That's why the second difference, the two-week turnaround, may be the more salient point for anyone trying to beat Justify. Rivals have to hope that he can't keep up his accelerated program indefinitely. From his smashing debut in February, to his allowance romp, Santa Anita Derby (G1) conquest, and finally exorcising the "Apollo curse" as an unraced juvenile who went on to win Derby 144, Justify has risen like the proverbial meteor. Can he deliver another top effort wheeling back from the Derby? It's true that his three Derby rivals are likewise coming back in two weeks, but they've had a different arc of development.

All four of Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert's previous Derby heroes added the Preakness – Silver Charm (1997), Real Quiet (1998), War Emblem (2002) and Triple Crown champion American Pharoah (2015) – but again, all had a deeper foundation. We're in uncharted territory with a Derby winner of Justify's profile trying to turn the double two weeks later.

On a related note, the much-publicized bruise to Justify's left hind heel coming out of the Derby was a hiccup. A short-lived one, to be sure, since he got over it fast and has impressed observers ever since resuming his daily gallops May 10. He's sound, moving well, and giving all the signs of a happy horse ready to go to war again. Nevertheless, you'd rather not have to troubleshoot something in the midst of a Triple Crown bid. Right now it smacks of grasping at straws to over-interpret this, and I'm inclined to think we'll see Justify bring his "A" game.

If Justify does regress and prove vulnerable, history is against a new shooter taking advantage. Over the past 25 years, only four Preakness winners had skipped the Derby – Red Bullet (2000), Bernardini (2006), Rachel Alexandra (2009), and Cloud Computing (2017).

The Derby generally remains the place to find the Preakness winner. During that same 25-year span, 10 Derby winners have doubled up in the Preakness, and 11 Preakness winners were rebounding from losses at Churchill Downs. Also since 1993, the Derby exacta has been replicated at Pimlico three times – Real Quiet over Victory Gallop (1998), Charismatic over Menifee (1999), and I'll Have Another over Bodemeister (2012). The 1997 Derby trifecta was nearly repeated in the Preakness, with Silver Charm victorious again but Free House and Captain Bodgit switched the placings.

Given Justify's towering presence, and Good Magic's clear status as second-best, Preakness 143 might well be a virtual replay of Derby 144.



# JUSTIFY IN PERFECT SPOT FOR 2018 PREAKNESS STAKES

DICK POWELL MAY 16, 2018

Bob Baffert could not have had a better Preakness Stakes (G1) post-position draw. JUSTIFY drew post seven, just like in the Kentucky Derby (G1), and is outside the other speed horses. What could have been concerning for JUSTIFY would be if he drew inside. If the long-striding son of Scat Daddy has to steady in traffic, it would be a new experience for him but jockey Mike Smith can keep him in the clear and not have a single horse in front of him. Not ahead of him; in front of him.

Another factor in JUSTIFY's favor is having a horse outside of him. Horses have a habit of breaking to space and if he drew post eight, there would be the possibility that he would break out at the start. Now he has someone to keep him straight.

An expected wet track could play havoc with what part of the track is best. In 2016, Exaggerator rallied wide on a wet track to get up in time. On a similar wet track, American Pharoah gunned to the front from the inside and never looked back the year before. Last year, Cloud Computing ran down Classic Empire after tipping out turning for home. Hard to get any bias from recent races regardless of the track condition so, chances are, there will be no bias.



QUIP drew post one and I don't see where Florent Geroux has any choice but to go. His only bad race was from post 11 going two turns at Churchill Downs last November and he has done his best racing when up on the lead. Even though he is owned by the same group that owns JUSTIFY, I think QUIP will go and JUSTIFY will settle early.

It doesn't matter where LONE SAILOR, BRAVAZO and SPORTING CHANCE drew. They will be far back and come from behind if they are grabbing the track. DIAMOND KING drew post four and can follow QUIP going into the first turn. He has sprinter's speed but I don't see him going to the front.

GOOD MAGIC was a game second in the Derby after doing all the chasing. He handled the wet track that day, broke like a shot with Jose Ortiz, and could get a dream set up on Saturday while racing behind the leaders. TENFOLD drew post six, has a stout pedigree and will try to work out a stalking trip. I am happy Victor Espinoza has been replaced by Ricardo Santana Jr.

JUSTIFY will only have a post position problem if the Pimlico main track comes up with a golden rail on Saturday. He showed in his second career start that he can handle a wet track and he should be wide of the wet kickback if he breaks alertly and has no traffic going into the first turn.

So, I see QUIP going hard from the rail with DIAMOND KING pressing him early. GOOD MAGIC and TENFOLD can work out stalking trips and then it's up to Smith where to place JUSTIFY. He settled beautifully in the Derby after Smith had to light him up out of the gate and I would expect him to do the same thing here.

The post positions should ensure a fast pace since the speed horses drew inside of the others. The field should get stretched out some coming out of the clubhouse turn and the race will get interesting down the backside to see who makes the first move. I don't see anyone in here having an excuse based on their draw.

# JUSTIFY SHINES THROUGH THE FOG FOR HARD-FOUGHT WIN IN PREAKNESS STAKES 143

TERESA GENARO MAY 19, 2018

It would be hard to imagine a more dismal Triple Crown season. Unexpectedly, the Kentucky Derby (G1) turned into a sodden, sloppy affair, watched by tens of thousands of soaked spectators.

Preakness Week was, if possible, even worse. The rain came all week, in torrents and in sprinkles, accompanied by flash flood watches and a run on rain boots. And everyone knew that Preakness Day would bring no relief.

The infamous infield was a mudfest. The apron was largely bereft of customers. And all day long, on a sloppy racetrack, chalk and speed carried the day, offering little in the way of either profit or excitement.

And then, when the rain finally, finally stopped...the fog rolled in. Slowly but inexorably, creeping in first over the backstretch, and then curling around the turns, and finally shrouding even the stretch, with just a furlong or so of Pimlico dirt visible.

And that was a damn shame, because we all missed a hell of a horse race.

From the gate, it was clear that Good Magic wasn't going to let Justify have his way in the 143rd edition of the Preakness Stakes (G1), all alone on a speed-favoring track. We couldn't see much of it, but the infield screen revealed a cloudy tussle up the backstretch, Good Magic refusing to yield an inch.

And then the field went into the final turn, and we waited.

And waited.

We waited for the horses to emerge from the fog, waited to see who was on the lead and waited to see whether we'd head to Belmont Park with a Bob Baffert Triple Crown on the line for the second time in four years.

It was those white WinStar silks that emerged in front, but Good Magic was still there, and so, too, were Bravazo and Tenfold, and none of them was conceding, not an inch, not a nostril.

The finish line was still in the clear, but from everywhere except right there on the line, it was too close to call, until the crowd roared, and we knew that the chestnut colt with the flashy blaze and undefeated record would go to New York to try to get his name in the record books, again.

A 2-5 winning favorite on a day of winning favorites, Justify paid \$2.80 for a \$2 win bet. Bravazo was second by a half-length, with Tenfold a neck back in third. Good Magic held for fourth by a neck.

"This was a hard race on him, the hardest so far," Baffert said. "Mike Smith is the one that brought him home."

The Preakness win was Baffert's seventh, giving him more than any other trainer, one more than his friendly rival this week with D. Wayne Lukas, who had to settle for runner-up. Mike Smith got his second Preakness win, 25 years after his first with Prairie Bayou.

"A chance at a Triple Crown at my age would be a great way to ride off into the sunset," said the jockey, hastening to add that he's not retiring any time soon. "I don't think I was ready for it when I was younger, but I am now."

Baffert, of course, has been here before: three years ago with American Pharoah, and twice before that, unsuccessfully. The Belmont Stakes (G1) is, of course, a different challenge than those this lightly-raced horse has already faced: longer, on a track with a distinctive surface, a third race in five weeks, almost certainly with horses coming in fresh.

After these last two races, Team Justify may well be hoping for yet more rain in three weeks. And if the rain does come, the chestnut colt will try to do what he's done twice already: gleam brightly through the gloaming, outshining his competition and the weather.





# BELMONT STAKES 150 PREVIEW

ED DEROSA JUNE 9, 2018

Justify has answered every question in a whirlwind 4-month, 5-race career, and now the Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes winner faces the Test of the Champion.

The undefeated dual classic winner is the 4-to-5 morning line favorite to win the Belmont Stakes on Saturday at Belmont Park and become Thoroughbred racing's 13th Triple Crown winner.

The superlatives are already piling on the Scat Daddy colt, but sweeping the Triple Crown would be especially amazing for a horse who had not even run in a race until 4 months ago.

Indeed, he became the first horse since Apollo in 1882 to win the Kentucky Derby without racing as a two-year-old, and a Belmont victory would make him the only Triple Crown winner not to have raced as a juvenile. He'd also become just the second Triple Crown winner since Affirmed in 1978 and the second undefeated one along with Seattle Slew in 1977.

"Six races is a lot, but we've seen that he thrives on it," said Bob Baffert, who trains the colt for a partnership that includes WinStar Farm, China Horse Club, SF Bloodstock, and Starlight Racing. "The way he's built—his muscles—you could see he's just a big, strong, powerful horse. He's just a muscled-up strong athlete.

Justify will face nine other three-year-olds in his Triple Crown quest, a group that Florida Derby runner-up Hofburg leads in terms of hype as

the morning line second choice, but others lead on accomplishment as stakes winners such as the Todd Pletcher-trained duo of Wood Memorial Stakes winner Vino Rosso and Louisiana Derby winner Noble Indy.

"I just want to see him run his race," Baffert said. "If he runs his race, he's just a superior animal. I want him to show up, that's all. I'm focusing on if he shows up. If he's good enough, he'll get it done."

The only horse in the field to try Justify in both the Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes is Risen Star Stakes winner Bravazo, who was second in the Preakness. Adding to the intrigue of those two horses tussling again is that D. Wayne Lukas trains Bravazo for Calumet Farm, and Baffert and Lukas are tied for the all-time lead in Triple Crown race victories with 14 apiece.

"The foundation, just being fit, is going to help his chances," Lukas said. "They're all doing well; I've watched them all train. With the big (1 1/2-mile) configuration of the racetrack and the sweeping turns, we should have a good trip. I think it'll get down to which horses have the pedigree and the stamina to finish."

The field also includes multiple graded stakes winner Blended Citizen, Preakness third-place finisher Tenfold, European stakes winner Gronkowski, Justify's stablemate Restoring Hope, and smart two-year-old Free Drop Billy looking to regain his form following a disappointing Derby run.





# JUSTIFY WIRES BELMONT STAKES 150 TO BECOME 13TH TRIPLE CROWN CHAMPION

ED DEROSA JUNE 9, 2018

As if becoming only the 13th Triple Crown winner in racing history is not exclusive enough, JUSTIFY's Belmont Stakes (G1) win on June 9 at Belmont Park inducted him into even more exclusive company.

In sweeping the Kentucky Derby (G1), Preakness Stakes (G1) and 150th running of the Belmont Stakes, Justify became just the second undefeated horse to do so and the only one not to have raced as a two-year-old. Indeed, he was the first unraced two-year-old since Apollo in 1882 to win the Kentucky Derby.

"The great ones find another gear," said Bob Baffert, who trains Justify for a partnership that includes WinStar Farm, China Horse Club, Starlight Racing and Head of Plains Partners. "At the sixteenth-pole I knew he was home, and I was just able to enjoy the race."

Baffert had come to Belmont four times with Derby-Preakness winners. Silver Charm, Real Quiet and War Emblem all lost before American Pharoah was "finally the one" in 2015. Baffert said going into this year's Triple Crown try that he wanted to enjoy this pursuit more than previous tries.

The trainer joins exclusive company, too. He already was one of only 11 trainers to saddle a Triple Crown winner, and now he's one of only two to saddle two, joining "Sunny" Jim Fitzsimmons (trainer of Gallant Fox and Omaha). This is also Baffert's third Belmont Stakes victory and 15th all-time in a Triple Crown race, putting him ahead of D. Wayne Lukas in that category. Baffert has five Derbys and seven Preaknesses.

"When I won the Derby for the fifth time that was a special moment for me," Baffert said. "I thought, 'Wow this is cool I won the Derby five times,' but for the Triple Crown I wanted that for this horse. He deserves for his name to be up there with the greats, and when you win the Triple Crown you're great."

Justify's racing career began February 18, and in the nearly four months since, he has provided few anxious moments for his connections – winning all six starts by a combined 23 3/4 lengths as the favorite each time. In fact, the only eager moments in the Scat Daddy colt's career likely came before he even started racing, as he did not begin serious training until fall of his two-year-old season.

"As far as this horse goes, we were behind the eight-ball, but thought he had the talent to focus on the (Triple Crown) races," WinStar Farm President Elliott Walden said. "He started his training late, but we thought sending him to California with its consistent weather would give us a chance – especially with such a great trainer, maybe the greatest trainer."

There were no eager moments in the Belmont Stakes, as jockey Mike Smith had a good hold of Justify from the rail post position and cruised through fractions of :23.37, :48.11, 1:13.21, 1:38.09 and 2:02.90 before completing the 1 1/2 miles over the fast track in 2:28.18.

"This horse gets in a rhythm, then he can take a breather, then he keeps going," Smith said.

"I asked Bob what he told Mike as they were leaving the paddock, and he said, 'I told him the gas tank is full; don't empty it all at once.'"

Smith never really had to put his foot on the gas until the stretch run, as no horse got within a length of him for any sustained period of time. Stablemate Restoring Hope tracked him early before backing through the field, and Gronkowski – the European Road to the Kentucky Derby points leader – closed up the rail in his U.S. and dirt debut to be second at 24-1.

"I'm really proud of my horse," trainer Chad Brown said. "He had a lot of things against him – first time dirt, first time 1 1/2 miles, and a layoff."

"My thought turning for home was that we had a shot to get Justify if he was vulnerable at a mile and a half, but we just couldn't get to that horse. The pace might have been a little slow, but Justify ran in all three races and won the Triple Crown. He showed up and earned it."

Following Gronkowski under the Belmont wire were Hofburg, Vino Rosso, Tenfold, Bravazo, Free Drop Billy, Restoring Hope, Blended Citizen and Noble Indy.

Justify will return to Baffert's Churchill Downs string in Louisville, Kentucky.



# JUSTIFY'S 'TRIPLE CROWN' OF VIRTUES

KELLIE REILLY JUNE 10, 2018

As we celebrate Justify's Triple Crown, it's worth emphasizing the unprecedented manner of his sweep of the Kentucky Derby (G1), Preakness (G1), and Belmont S. (G1).

Unlike the 12 previous Triple Crown winners, who built upon the solid foundation of a campaign as two-year-olds, Justify did not race at two. The three-year-old progressed from a career debut as late as February 18 into an unbeaten Triple Crown champion within a four-month span – a feat that would have been thought unattainable.

After all, no Derby winner had been unraced as a juvenile since Apollo in 1882, and Justify had to break that "Apollo curse" at Churchill Downs. Furthermore, no horse had ever turned the Derby/Preakness double after going unraced at two, never mind win a Triple Crown.

That's because racing as a two-year-old helps the youngster develop mentally as well as physically. While more races logically offer more experience, the time frame is also important. Babies who learn how to run competitively absorb those lessons over time.

Think of it in terms of human education: a student typically spends four years to complete high school, and the same (or longer) to earn a college degree. To use that rough analogy, Justify crammed in an incredible load of credit hours to earn his diploma summa cum laude in record time, like the child genius who graduates college at 16 with a perfect grade point average.

So how did Justify pull it off? Although his talents can be described in various ways, I see it as a rare combination of three aptitudes that propelled him to the Triple Crown.

We might call it his "triple crown" of virtues.

**1. The physical ability to carry a high cruising speed over a classic distance.** Many horses are fast, but can't sustain their speed going a route of ground, let alone at distances upwards of 1 3/16 miles. Justify has the powerful engine to go forward early plus the stamina to keep motoring. As a result, he is the master of his own destiny, maker of his

own luck. He is not at the mercy of what his rivals may do, not a hostage to pace scenarios as closers are, not as liable to experience costly trouble in the pack. Justify could just go out and run his race, regardless. That had to instill confidence in Hall of Fame rider Mike Smith, who knew what he had underneath him at every stage and acted accordingly.

## **2. The mental strength to handle every situation under pressure.**

Some flashy debut winners go on to successful careers, but others fail to progress as the competition increases. Justify is the poster boy for the phrase "when the going gets tough, the tough get going." If his maiden and allowance scores were cakewalks, he was thrown into the gladiatorial arena in the Santa Anita Derby (G1). He met his first top-class opponent in Bolt d'Oro, who tried mightily to challenge him. Instead of reacting adversely or crumbling as inexperienced runners can do, Justify raised his game in response and rebuffed him. Each race of the Triple Crown posed its own stiff tests – a raucous atmosphere that can unnerve even well-behaved animals, sloppy tracks and pace duels in the first two jewels, the demanding distance of the Belmont that exposes any failure to relax – and Justify met them all with unflappable stoicism.

## **3. The hardy constitution to thrive throughout the Triple Crown grind.**

If a horse has the physical talent and mental strength, he still has to avoid the pitfalls that bedevil elite athletes in all sports – injury, illness, or just the wear and tear of an intense schedule. The spirit may be willing, but the flesh is often weak. Justify had more right than most to feel the effects of the Triple Crown grind, considering that he had to play catch-up to his more experienced contemporaries. And his bruised heel coming out of the Derby could have become an issue for a more fragile animal. Yet he healed fast, never missed a beat, and remained a hulking chestnut beast throughout, losing neither weight nor enthusiasm. Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert deserves praise for sculpting him to perfection, but Justify was the Carrara marble.

All three qualities can be regarded as virtues, in the ancient sense of the term connoting "excellence." These three dimensions of excellence, found in the great champions, made it possible for Justify to overcome a lack of juvenile foundation and achieve the ultimate prize in American racing.

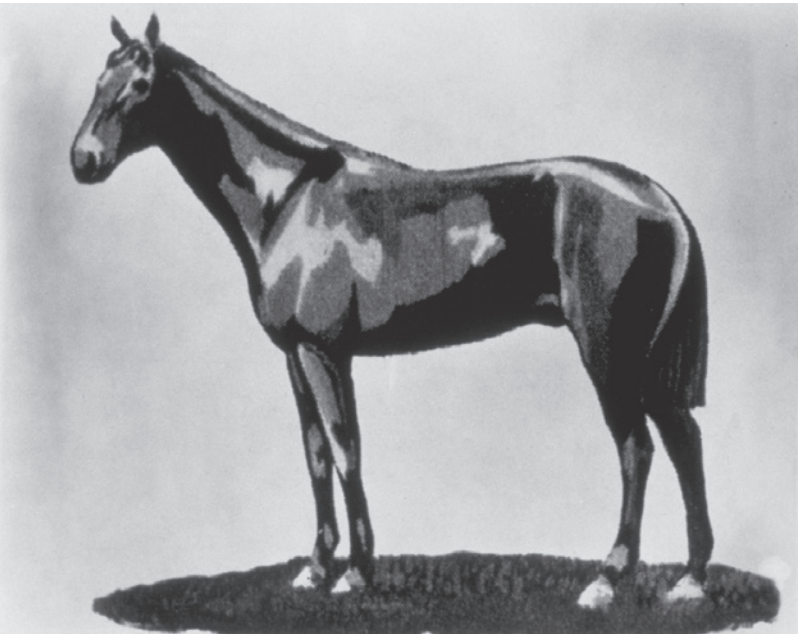




# APOLLO CASTS A LONG SHADOW BUT CURSES MADE TO BE BROKEN

JAMES SCULLY MAY 3, 2018

**WHAT DOES THE KENTUCKY DERBY HOLD FOR FUTURE CONTENDERS, WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE PAST?**



One of the longest-standing trends in sports, the Curse of Apollo has stretched 136 years since the eighth running of the Kentucky Derby in 1882. That's when Apollo became the lone horse to win the Kentucky Derby without racing as a 2-year-old.

It's stood the test of time so far but training methods have changed and horses are more lightly raced than ever before.

"I think trends with the winners in terms of days between races and number of preps has been changing the last 10-15 years, so it's only a matter of time before this one changes, too," leading trainer and two-time Kentucky Derby winner Todd Pletcher said after the final round of Kentucky Derby prep races. "With two of the top choices this year (being unraced juveniles), we'll certainly be testing the curse."

Experience is no longer a hallmark for Kentucky Derby contenders.

The clear favorite this year, Justify, is one of the horses Pletcher referenced. A brilliant winner in three career starts for trainer Bob Baffert, Justify didn't make his first outing until February 18.

Pletcher trains Magnum Moon, who is unbeaten from four attempts after making his initial start on January 13. The Arkansas Derby and Rebel Stakes winner is projected to be the third choice in Kentucky Derby wagering on May 5.

History may not be on their side but bettors won't be dismayed by the curse, opting for talent over experience in the Run for the Roses.

"It takes a special horse to do (what Justify and Magnum Moon have accomplished) and special horses can overcome trends," said Darren Rogers, Senior Director of Communications and Media Services at Churchill Downs.



## CHANGING TIDE

Horses used to make at least three starts at age 3 prior to entering the Kentucky Derby starting gate. In 1999, Charismatic raced seven times during the four-month span (January-April) and delivered a fourth Kentucky Derby victory to legendary horseman D. Wayne Lukas.

A seismic change occurred in 2007 when Street Sense received only two prep races beforehand. He started a new trend in which virtually every accomplished 2-year-old makes only two starts before getting to Churchill Downs.

Eight of the last 11 Kentucky Derby winners raced only twice and the trio who didn't (Orb, California Chrome and Always Dreaming) were unaccomplished juveniles who didn't open their 3-year-old season in a graded stakes race.

Two starts do remain a baseline with no horse winning the Kentucky Derby in modern times with less. Breeders' Cup Juvenile winner Arazi, who was based in France, famously faltered as the 4-5 favorite in the 1992 Kentucky Derby after racing only once at age 3. European horses have won the 1 ½-mile English Derby on turf in their first or second start of the year, but it's a different ballgame on dirt.

Coolmore Racing and trainer Aidan O'Brien learned the hard way. Their first Kentucky Derby starters, 2-year-old champion Johannesburg and turf stakes winner Castle Gandolfo, raced only once before finishing 8th and 12th in 2002. After a nine-year absence, they continued to defy conventional Kentucky Derby standards by prepping Master of Hounds (5th), Daddy Long Legs (DNF, eased) and Lines of Battle (7th) only once before contesting the 2011-13 editions of the Kentucky Derby.

The Irish-based connections won't make the same mistake in 2018 with Mendelssohn, who established himself as the probable second choice in the Kentucky Derby wagering recording an 18-length win in the U.A.E. Derby on March 31. O'Brien brought the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf winner back three weeks earlier in a one-mile Polytrack stakes in Ireland so Mendelssohn has two starts under him.



## STILL MEANINGFUL

Experience may not be as important as it once was but connections still prefer to have at least one start at age 2 for Kentucky Derby hopefuls.

"I think (experience) helps, I think that foundation means something," said Dale Romans, who has twice finished third and will send out a pair of Kentucky Derby starters this year. "You're going a mile and a quarter. Another thing that helps is (running in) big fields – that's always a plus going into the Derby."

Most stakes races are limited to 14 horses and the Kentucky Derby features a field of 20. It's also the first time horses will race at the 1 ¼-mile distance.

With a high-powered stallion roster and extensive breeding and racing programs, WinStar Farm is one of the most prominent Thoroughbred operations worldwide. The Versailles, Kentucky, farm bred Kentucky Derby winners Funny Cide (2003) and Super Saver (2010) and campaigned Super Saver.

With three runners in the 2018 field (Santa Anita Derby winner Justify, Florida Derby winner Audible and Louisiana Derby winner Noble Indy), WinStar Farm will move into third all-time by starts for owners (21).

"We try to run 2-year-olds but we don't try to make the biggest 2-year-old races," WinStar Farm CEO and President Elliott Walden said. "It's all a progression to try to get to the spring of their 3-year-old season. Our history has not been to really push horses as 2-year-olds, if you think about a lot of our Kentucky Derby starters, a lot of them came to hand in the fall."

Audible and Noble Indy raced at age 2 for WinStar Farm and Walden explained why Justify made a belated career debut.

"(Justify) was breezing last spring and pulled a muscle one day on the track and needed 60 days off," Walden said. "Even though he didn't race until February, Justify was one of the advanced (2-year-olds) we had last year. Maybe it was just a little too much for him but he was advancing with all the horses we had at age 2 but he had a setback."

A former trainer, Walden knows the backstretch of the track as well anyone. The third-generation horseman recorded back-to-back seconds in the Kentucky Derby with Victory Gallop and Menifee in 1998-99, and he isn't too concerned about Justify's inexperience.

"Lightly raced horses in the Kentucky Derby, it has been a shift in the last decade but they're still trained very hard in between starts," Walden said. "I don't think anybody would ever say Bob Baffert or Todd Pletcher runs a horse that's not ready or is green. They're put through the same paces in the morning (as Kentucky Derby horses in the past) but they don't run as much as they used to."

Romans echoed those sentiments when asked about his barn's Kentucky Derby preparations.

"We train on them hard to get them ready," Romans said.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

It's under serious assault this year and even if Justify and Magnum Moon come up short, the Curse of Apollo has never appeared more vulnerable. Old standards have become less relevant as horses make fewer starts in this new era and we've never seen two major contenders like Justify and Magnum Moon in a Kentucky Derby line-up.

"I think it could fall this year based on the talent of the horses themselves," Rogers said. "The unraced 2-year-olds that are among the favorites, Justify and Magnum Moon, appear to be supremely talented 3-year-olds."

Curses are made to be broken and the longest one in horse racing could soon be coming to an end.



# COMPARING THE TRIPLE CROWN TRAILS OF JUSTIFY AND AMERICAN PHAROAH

VANCE HANSON MAY 31, 2018

When Justify crossed the wire first in the Preakness (G1), setting up an opportunity for a Triple Crown in the Belmont Stakes (G1), it was inevitable that comparisons would be drawn between he and American Pharoah, who gloriously ended a 37-year drought when claiming the Crown in 2015.

The tie that binds both colts is trainer Bob Baffert, who will be taking a fifth shot at a Triple Crown sweep. After missing his first three times with Silver Charm (1997), Real Quiet (1998), and War Emblem (2002), Baffert will attempt to win a second, emulating "Sunny" Jim Fitzsimmons, who conditioned the father-son duo of Gallant Fox and Omaha to Triple Crowns in 1930 and 1935, respectively.

However, aside from the trainer, their frequent presence in the winner's circle, and general front-running style, similarities between the two colts are few.

For starters, American Pharoah and Justify took vastly different paths to the classics. Precocious enough to debut in August of his two-year-old year, American Pharoah wound up as the champion juvenile colt after back-to-back romps in the Del Mar Futurity (G1) and FrontRunner (G1). Overpowering his rivals in the Rebel (G2) and Arkansas Derby (G1) the following spring, American Pharoah became only the second two-year-old champion since 1978-79 to come back and win the Kentucky Derby (G1).

Justify, in contrast, has always had to play catch-up. It's a testament to his innate talent that he debuted as late as February 18 and, 11 weeks later, was in the Kentucky Derby winner's circle, becoming the first horse since Apollo in 1882 to win the Run for the Roses without having raced at two.

In addition to his relative inexperience, Justify arguably had a more difficult path en route to Churchill Downs, needing to win the Santa Anita Derby (G1) over a quality rival in Bolt d'Oro, generally considered the second best two-year-old in the country last year.

BRIS Speed ratings are also an interesting point of comparison. American Pharoah's were generally consistent from the Del Mar Futurity through the Preakness: 103-99-99-102-100-100. Justify's rose rapidly from his debut through the Santa Anita Derby (100-104-114) before dipping to 102-98 in the Derby and Preakness. It's this regression that has some wondering whether Justify peaked too soon and is vulnerable to further decline going 1 1/2 miles.

It must be said, though, that Justify's figures these past several weeks have been a function of how he's won, forcing a fast pace in the Derby and getting hooked into an early duel in the Preakness with a high-quality opponent in Good Magic, last year's juvenile champion. American Pharoah's experiences were different.

Taking a lead no one else seemed to want, American Pharoah set a relaxing pace, quickened slightly through interior fractions, and rolled to a 5 1/2-length win in the Belmont in one of the quicker times (2:26 3/5) in race history.

Justify might not have it so easy with Louisiana Derby (G2) winner Noble Indy also in possession of early foot, though both are owned in partnership by WinStar Farm and the expectation is Noble Indy isn't there to make things difficult for the marquee attraction.

The talent and speed are there for Justify to replicate American Pharoah's achievement of three years ago.

How he's gotten to Belmont and how he'll potentially get around one lap of "Big Sandy" in first place has been and could continue to be a vastly different tale.





# JUSTIFY COMPARES TO THESE THREE TRIPLE CROWN WINNERS

VANCE HANSON JUNE 5, 2018

## OF 12 TRIPLE CROWN RUNNERS, WHO DOES JUSTIFY COMPARE TO?

You could mention color, running style, historical reputation, or any number of points in trying to equate a Triple Crown candidate, like Justify, with any of the previous 12 winners of the series and come up woefully short of the mark. What is possible is finding some commonalities with Justify and some of the current members of the exclusive group he looks to join Saturday in the Belmont Stakes.

### JUSTIFY AND SIR BARTON

In mid-February, Justify was as unlikely a prospect to win a Triple Crown as there could possibly be. The primary reason was that he was unraced, and no horse since 1882 had even won the Kentucky Derby without having raced as a two-year-old.

Sir Barton, likewise, was a highly unpromising candidate to win the Kentucky Derby at that stage of the season, much less three races that would only become recognized as the Triple Crown nearly a decade later.

After finishing fifth, ninth, ninth, seventh, and 16th in his first five starts at two, Sir Barton finally finished a respectable second in the Futurity Stakes in his juvenile finale. He was still a maiden when he won the 1919 Kentucky Derby in his season debut.

### JUSTIFY AND GALLANT FOX

"Sunny Jim" Fitzsimmons had not yet saddled a winner of any Triple Crown race before Gallant Fox crossed the wire first in the 1930 Preakness (the first classic held that year), but would go on to win more Triple Crown races than any trainer in the 20th century. Nearly half of his career total of 13 came thanks to the father-son pair of Gallant Fox and Omaha (1935).

Justify, of course, has the winningest Triple Crown trainer of the 21st century, Bob Baffert, in his corner. Ten of Baffert's wins have come since 2001, and his career total of 14 is co-highest with D. Wayne Lukas.

### JUSTIFY AND SEATTLE SLEW

Justify enters the Belmont with a perfect five-for-five record. It's not the same number of starts Seattle Slew had entering the 1977 Belmont, but the two colts share the same win percentage – 100%.

The Belmont was Seattle Slew's ninth start. He won the juvenile title the previous fall off one stakes appearance (the Champagne Stakes), and had preceded the Triple Crown with two more stakes wins in the Flamingo Stakes at Hialeah Park and Wood Memorial.

Seattle Slew remains the only horse ever to win the Triple Crown while unbeaten, a feat Majestic Prince missed accomplishing in 1969 and Smarty Jones and Big Brown failed to replicate in 2004 and 2008, respectively.





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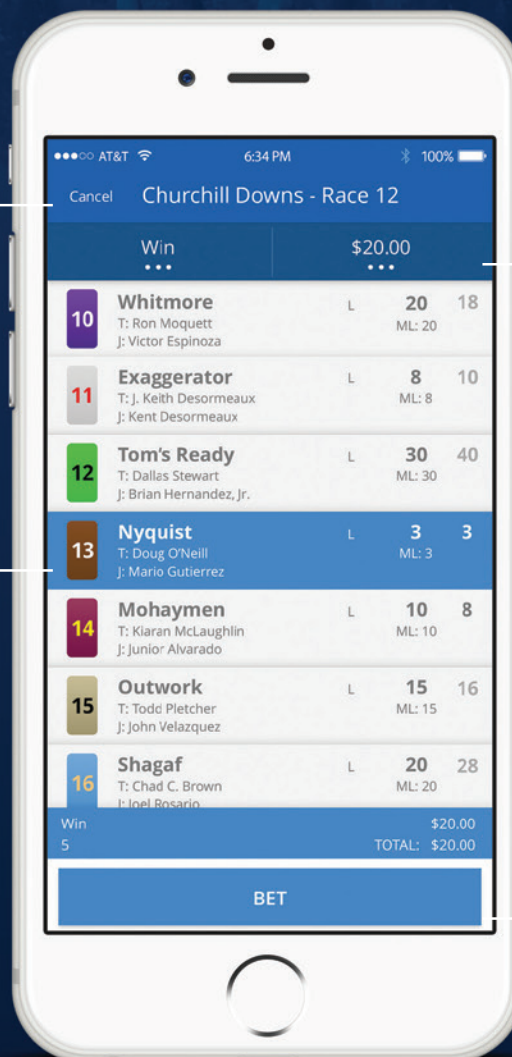
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