



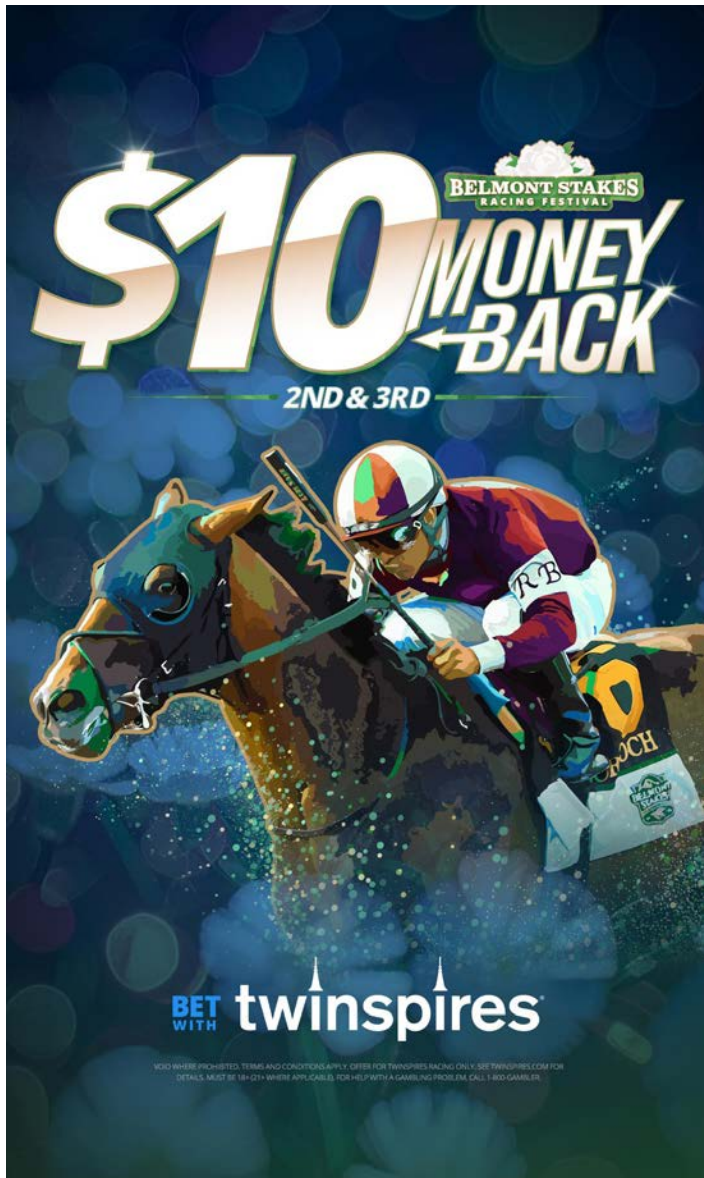
BETTING GUIDE

presented by **twinspires**





BELMONT STAKES 157 BETTING GUIDE



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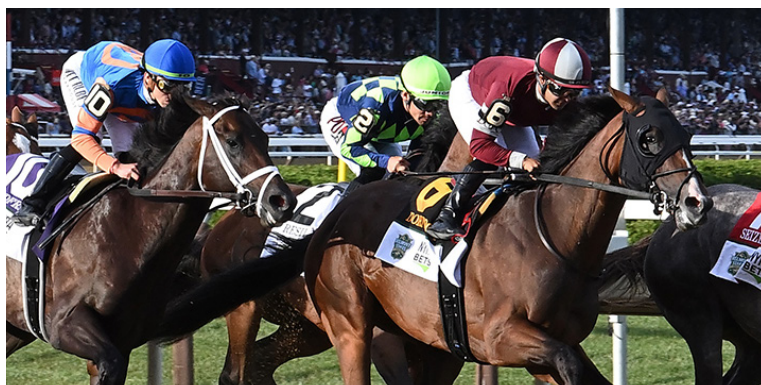
RACE SCHEDULE AND WAGER MENU

FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 2025

RACE	PURSE	RACE TYPE	EST. POST
6	\$300,000	Bed o' Roses Stakes	2:40 PM ET
9	\$500,000	Ogden Phipps Stakes	4:28 PM ET
10	\$250,000	Belmont Gold Cup S.	5:08 PM ET
11	\$500,000	Acorn S.	5:46 PM ET
12	\$750,000	New York Stakes	6:25 PM ET
13	\$500,000	Just a Game Stakes	7:04 PM ET

SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 2025

RACE	PURSE	RACE TYPE	EST. POST
6	\$300,000	Wonder Again Stakes	1:55 PM ET
7	\$400,000	True North Stakes	2:37 PM ET
8	\$1,000,000	Metropolitan Handicap	3:17 PM ET
9	\$500,000	Jaipur Stakes	4:08 PM ET
10	\$300,000	Pennine Ridge Stakes	4:47 PM ET
11	\$500,000	Woody Stephens Stakes	5:28 PM ET
12	\$1,000,000	Manhattan Stakes	6:09 PM ET
13	\$2,000,000	Belmont Stakes	7:04 PM ET



BELMONT STAKES SATURDAY WAGERING

RACE	POST TIME	WAGERING MENU							
1	10:45	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P5	
2	11:20	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P4	QUI
3	11:55	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P5	
4	12:35	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P4	QUI
5	1:15	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P5	
6	1:55	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P4	
7	2:37	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P5	
8	3:17	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P6	
9	4:08	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P5	GS
10	4:47	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P4	P5
11	5:28	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3	P4	
12	6:09	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD	P3		
13	7:04	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR	DD			
14	8:02	WPS	EX	TRI	SPR				

AT A GLANCE

Saratoga At a Glance September 2, 2024.

AVG. WINNING ODDS: 5.06 – 1

FAVORITE WIN%: 32% **FAVORITE ITM%:** 68%

EXOTICS	PAYOFF
Quinella	25.11
Exacta	76.04
Daily Double	89.53
Trifecta	463.08
Pick 3	660.28
Superfecta	2,637.11
Pick 6	113,522.15
Pick 4	4,654.44
Pick 5	32,395.88
Grand Slam	191.79



TRACK BIAS MEET(07/11 - 09/01)

Distance	# Race	% Wire	Best Style	Best Posts
6.5fDirt	24	42%	E	Middle
7.0fDirt	42	33%	E	Rail
1 MileDirt	58	33%	E	Rail/Ins
1 1/8mDirt	30	37%	E	Outside
Turf Sprint	45	24%	E	Outside
InTf Routes	70	14%	E/P	Rail/Ins
Turf Routes	31	16%	E/P	Outside

TRACK BIAS WEEK(08/26 - 09/01)

Distance	# Race	% Wire	Best Style	Best Posts
6.5fDirt	7	43%	E	Inside
7.0fDirt	10	20%	E/P	Rail/Ins
1 MileDirt	8	25%	E/P	Rail/Ins
1 1/8mDirt	1	0%	E	Middle
Turf Sprint	10	10%	P	Middle
InTf Routes	13	15%	E/P	Middle
Turf Routes	3	0%	E/P	Rail/Ins

WHO'S HOT, WHO'S NOT

HOT TRAINERS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	WINNING FAVORITES	'22-'23 WIN %
Cox Brad H.	15	6	2	1	5.99	4	27%
Dixon Linda K.	4	2	0	0	13.23	0	12%
Baker Charlton	5	2	1	1	8.6	0	10%
Ortiz John Alexander	5	2	1	1	9.61	0	14%
Serpe Philip M.	5	2	0	0	15.54	0	13%
Trombetta Michael J.	6	2	1	0	2.78	1	15%
Ward Wesley A.	6	2	0	0	12.09	1	27%

HOT JOCKEYS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'22-'23 WIN %
Luzzi Lane J.	8	2	1	1	24.74	0	11%

COLD TRAINERS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'22-'23 WIN %
Hennig Mark A.	13	0	1	0	24.66	0	11%
Antonucci Jena M.	12	0	0	2	24.45	0	13%
Bond H. James	11	0	2	0	14.92	1	9%
Kantarmaci Mertkan	11	0	0	1	7.55	2	13%
Englehart Chris J.	10	0	0	2	22.03	1	18%
Noda Orlando	10	0	1	0	18.63	0	12%

COLD JOCKEYS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'22-'23 WIN %
Gomez Jose Antonio	21	0	1	1	28.4	2	9%
Vazquez Ramon A.	18	0	0	0	20.14	0	12%
Davis Katie	14	0	1	2	18.39	1	7%
Cancel Eric	10	0	1	1	9.99	2	13%

MEET THE CONTENDERS



HILL ROAD



PRO: Along in time to win Peter Pan and should be even better stretching out an extra furlong.
CON: Needs not only a strong pace but also a few of the top players to have an off day.

SOVEREIGNTY



PRO: Kentucky Derby winner handles all conditions and five-week freshening a plus.
CON: Pace might not be as strong as in Derby, which might hinder chances.

RODRIGUEZ



PRO: Classier than other speed and might prove tough to catch if he can sneak away.
CON: Missed earlier classics due to foot issues; two-month layoff a concern.

UNCAGED



PRO: Based on record so far, chances improve if the track comes up wet.
CON: Flattened out quickly in the Peter Pan and doesn't appear to be of this class yet.

CRUDO



PRO: Dominant in last two including restricted Sir Barton S. at Pimlico.
CON: Doesn't appear more than a potential pace factor on paper.

BAEZA



PRO: Narrowly missed second in Kentucky Derby and remains with a lot of upside.
CON: Hasn't yet outfinished the other three main contenders.

JOURNALISM



PRO: Bravely won Preakness despite adversity; near or at the top of this crop.
CON: Not as fresh as Sovereignty, the only to horse to beat him since last fall.

HEART OF HONOR



PRO: A consistent one-two finisher before his first exposure to U.S. racing.
CON: Midpack finish in Preakness probably his proper spot in pecking order.

TWINSPIRES TIPSHEET



157TH RUNNING OF THE BELMONT STAKES

An excellent field of eight sophomores will travel 1 1/4 miles over the Saratoga dirt in Saturday's historic \$2 million Belmont S. (G1).

POST	HORSE	ML ODDS
1	Hill Road	10-1
2	Sovereignty	2-1
3	Rodriguez	6-1
4	Uncaged	30-1
5	Crudo	15-1
6	Baeza	4-1
7	Journalism	8-5
8	Heart of Honor	30-1

TOP PICKS

#2 Sovereignty

#7 Journalism

#6 Baeza

#1 Hill Road

2025 BELMONT STAKES WAGERS

\$20 exacta 2 with 6,7

\$1 superfecta 2 with 1,6,7 with 1,6,7 with all

powered by **brisnet.com**

#1 HILL ROAD (10-1): Peter Pan S. (G3) winner will make his third run of the season and first at 1 1/4 miles for conditioner Chad Brown. Quality Road colt has displayed a fine turn of foot in each of his races since arriving in the U. S. and could secure a placing with a well-timed ride under Irad.

#2 SOVEREIGNTY (2-1): Kentucky Derby (G1) star skipped the middle leg of the Triple Crown to prepare for this one, and he gets the nod for conditioner Bill Mott. The Godolphin homebred has reportedly trained in great fashion in advance of the Belmont, and he did run fairly well in his lone local appearance at this venue, as well. Junior Alvarado has the assignment.

#3 RODRIGUEZ (6-1): Baffert trainee was last seen taking the Wood Memorial S. (G1) at Aqueduct, and he is the potential controlling speed of the cast. The dark bay son of Authentic will need a step forward to challenge the top trio in the field, but he comes in fresh and might get brave late if left alone early with Mike Smith in the silks.

#4 UNCAGED (30-1): The outsider in the field was a non-factor in the recent Peter Pan and would be a massive surprise in this stout field with Luis Saez in the irons.

#5 CRUDO (15-1): Improving sort from the Pletcher shedrow led throughout in a facile score in the Sir Barton S. at Pimlico in his most recent effort. The Justify colt is bred to run long and looks like an outstanding prospect, but he will need a big leap forward to upset this group beneath John Velazquez.

#6 BAEZA (4-1): Well-bred son of McKinzie was a fast-closing third in the Run for the Roses in his most recent endeavor and rates a logical chance with another move forward on Saturday. John Shirreffs' pupil is a half-brother to the winner of the race last campaign, and he figures to get first run on the late runners turning for home under Flavien Prat.

#7 JOURNALISM (8-5): Derby runner-up overcame major traffic at Pimlico last time out and will go postward as the one to beat in his third classic try of the season. The gallant Preakness S. (G1) victor draws well to potentially avoid the traffic he has endured in three straight races, and his best could easily be good enough with Umberto Rispoli in the silks.

#8 HEART OF HONOR (30-1): UAE Derby (G2) runner-up looked hopeless in the Preakness after a slow break but put in a commendable late run to finish fifth in his stateside debut for trainer Jamie Osborne. The Honor A. P. colt will be doing his best work in the lane with Saffie Osborne in the stirrups.

2024 BELMONT STAKES: BRISNET SPEED RATING REPORT

by James Scully

Saturday's 157th running of the Belmont S. (G1) will feature an exciting rematch between the top three in the Kentucky Derby (G1). After winning the Roses, Sovereignty skipped the Preakness (G1) for the Belmont five weeks later.

Journalism, who finished 1 1/2 lengths back of Sovereignty in second at Churchill Downs, came back to win the Preakness dramatically, overcoming severe trouble in midstretch to prevail by a half-length in the final strides. A winner in five of his last six starts, Journalism has been installed as the 8-5 morning line favorite among eight three-year-olds in the Belmont, and Umberto Rispoli rides the Curlin colt for Michael McCarthy.

Sovereignty, a Bill Mott-trained son of Into Mischief, is pegged as the 5-2 second choice, and Junior Alvarado guides the late runner. A half-brother to 2023 Kentucky Derby winner Mage and 2024 Belmont winner Dornoch, Baeza remains an exciting presence following his third in the Kentucky Derby.

A maiden winner three starts previously, Baeza jumped to stakes competition with a commendable second to Journalism in the Santa Anita Derby (G1) and experienced trouble on the far turn of the Kentucky Derby, offering an eye-catching rally for third in the stretch drive. Baeza is a candidate to keep progressing for John Shirreffs, and Flavien Prat will be up on the McKinzie colt.

The Belmont will be held over 1 1/4 miles at Saratoga for the second consecutive year, and the final jewel of the Triple Crown will return to its traditional 1 1/2-mile distance when Belmont Park reopens in 2026.

Let's review the last two Brisnet Speed ratings for the 2025 Belmont field (listed by top last-out number).

JOURNALISM	107
	102
RODRIGUEZ	105
	91
SOVEREIGNTY	103
	94
BAEZA	102
	107
HEART OF HONOR	97
	n/a
HILL ROAD	94
	87
CRUDO	93
	88
UNCAGED	83
	84

TAKEAWAYS

After beating up on short fields in California, Journalism was shuffled back during the early stages and rated well off the pace in the Kentucky Derby for the first time. He still offered a fine move to take the lead in upper stretch, giving way to Sovereignty in the final furlong, and the experience toughened up Journalism. Despite being nearly wiped out by a tiring rival in the stretch of Preakness, the bay colt regained his stride and momentum to rally thrillingly to the front in deep stretch, erasing a five-length deficit with fierce determination. Journalism registered a 107 Brisnet Speed rating, the top last-out number in the Belmont field, and nearly paired up his career-best figure, a 108 in the Santa Anita Derby. He's earned triple-digit Speed ratings in the last four starts, and triple-digit Brisnet Late Pace numbers in five of the last six, and Journalism rates as the one to beat based upon numbers.

Sovereignty had been on the verge of the triple-digit threshold, netting a 99 figure for his game win in the Fountain of Youth (G2) three starts previously, but the Kentucky Derby marked the first time he reached the century mark, netting a 103 figure that was nine points better than his runner-up effort in the Florida Derby (G1) two back. He had shown an affinity for Churchill, earning his first stakes win when romping by five lengths in the Street Sense (G3) last fall, and finished fourth in his career debut when making his lone appearance at Saratoga last August. However, Sovereignty was still a raw prospect at that stage – he's progressed nicely this season for his Hall of Fame trainer and appears to be still improving.

A well-built sophomore colt, Baeza was far from a finished product when making his career debut on turf last December. He broke his maiden two starts later in mid-February and gave Journalism all he could handle despite a lack of seasoning in the Santa Anita Derby next out. One can argue that Sovereignty and Journalism caught Baeza at the right time in his career; their less-experienced rival was still in a developmental stage entering the Kentucky Derby, and Baeza will benefit significantly from the setback. His numbers fit, and Baeza will seek to keep advancing with a strong showing from just off the pace.

It promises to be an exciting race between the top three. Rodriguez earned an outstanding 105 Speed rating when dominating the Wood Memorial (G2) on the front end in early April, 14 points better than his previous stakes efforts, well-beaten thirds in the San Felipe (G2) and Robert B. Lewis (G3). He missed the first two legs of the Triple Crown due to a bruised foot, which means the Bob Baffert-trained colt will be returning from a two-month freshening Saturday. And with the speedy Crudo entered, Rodriguez doesn't project to have everything his own way on the Belmont lead.

Heart of Honor received a decent 97 rating when rallying belatedly for fifth in the Preakness, his first U.S. appearance, but the dedicated closer must improve to challenge for a minor award in the Belmont. Crudo will add to the pace after a dominant wire-to-wire performance in the Sir Barton on the Preakness undercard, but his numbers appear too low to make a significant impact.

Hill Road has something going for him following a nice win in the Peter Pan (G2), and the late runner has some appeal for the bottom of the exotics given the presence of Crudo and Rodriguez, but his lower Speed ratings are difficult to endorse. Uncaged doesn't appear fast enough to be competitive.

Good luck in Belmont 157!

BETTING THE 2025 BELMONT STAKES ON DIFFERENT BUDGETS

by John Mucciolo

The third leg of the Triple Crown series has attracted a fantastic field of eight three-year-olds to run 1 1/4 miles at Saratoga on Saturday. The \$2 million Belmont S. (G1) will be contested in upstate New York for the second year in succession and will feature Kentucky Derby (G1) star **#2 Sovereignty (2-1)**, impressive Preakness (G1) S. hero **#7 Journalism (8-5)** who was second in Louisville, and **#6 Baeza (4-1)** who was a closing third in the Run for the Roses. For the first time since 2013, each of the top-three Derby finishers will compete in the race, making the spectacle even that much more exciting.

I'm on the Sovereignty bandwagon and feel that we haven't seen the best of the Bill Mott trainee as of yet. The Godolphin homebred has been handled with perfection this campaign by his Hall-of-Fame conditioner, and I feel that he has more to offer going forward. The Into Mischief colt will save ground from a good post early, prior to moving to the fore in the lane with Junior Alvarado riding.

Journalism showed his athleticism and class to stage a desperate rally in the stretch at Pimlico last time out for Michael McCarthy. The Curlin colt is obviously among the best horses in this crop, and he will be as fit as any runner in the group while making his third run in five weeks on Saturday. With a post slot near the outside, Journalism should finally enjoy a clear voyage after being in traffic at some stage of his last three straight assignments. His best might be enough under Rispoli.

Baeza, a half-brother to defending champ Dornoch, has given up substantial ground in his last pair of efforts and wouldn't be a major surprise to me with a more advantageous trip. The John Shirreffs trainee is clearly heavily talented, and the distance is within his scope, so if he can avoid being wide the entire way, then his chances will improve with Flavien Prat retaining the mount.

I wouldn't be floored to see #1 Hill Road (10-1) take a leap and put in a career-best effort under Irad. The Chad Brown charge will appreciate the added ground. He will save ground on the fence, and I think that a few of his contenders will be tiring in the closing stages of the race, as well. He is the key to finding value, in my opinion.

\$25 BUDGET

\$.50-cent superfecta 2 with 1,6,7 with 1,6,7 with all (\$15)

\$.50-cent superfecta 2,7 with 2,7 with 1,6 with all (\$10)

\$50 BUDGET

\$20 trifecta 2 with 7 with 1,6 (\$40)

\$5 trifecta 2 with 1,6 with 7 (\$10)

\$75 BUDGET

\$5 superfecta 2 with 1,6,7 with 1,6,7 with 1,6,7,8 (\$60)

\$.50-cent superfecta 7 with 1,2,6 with 1,2,6 with all (\$15)



THE BEST LONGSHOT TO BET IN THE 2025 BELMONT STAKES

by John Mucciolo

Saratoga Race Course will play host to the \$2 million Belmont S. (G1) for the second consecutive season in 2025, and this edition of the race is one of the strongest in recent memory. The top-three finishers of the Kentucky Derby – Sovereignty, Journalism, Baeza – are all on board, and five other talented sophomores join them in what should be a fantastic spectacle.

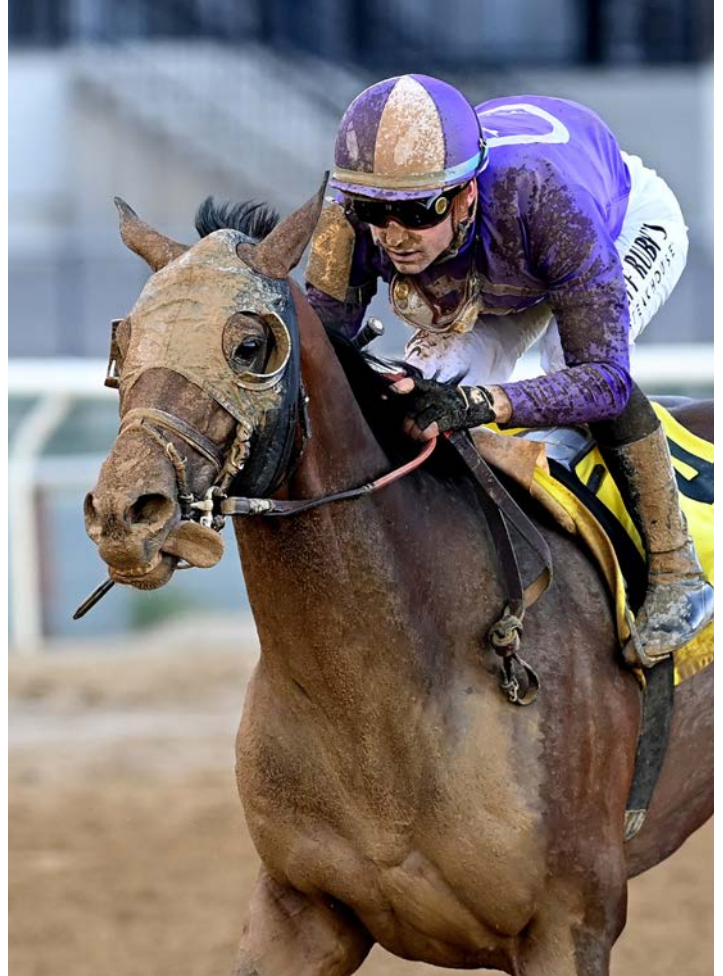
It will take a superb performance from a contender to knock off each of the trio above, but nothing is impossible, especially on the famed Saratoga main surface that has seen numerous standout thoroughbreds get upset on.

While the Bob Baffert-trained Rodriguez will be fancied by some as the potential wire-to-wire upset winner in the group, I will go in an entirely different direction with a one-run closer. Recent Peter Pan S. (G3) victor #1 Hill Road finished a rallying third in the 2024 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) at Del Mar in his first appearance in the states, and he flaunted his substantial late kick to be third in the Tampa Bay Derby (G3) in his three-year-old debut, as well.

Hill Road, by Quality Road, overcame a troubled break to earn his initial graded tally at Aqueduct in his second attempt off the shelf and could peak while running third time off the break on Saturday. I believe that he will be fully fit for the test, and drawing the rail on the move to 1 1/4 miles seems ideal for him, too. Trainer Chad Brown has won six of the last seven training titles at The Spa, while jockey Irad Ortiz, Jr. has won three straight jockey trophies, and six in total, at the majestic venue.

What I see in the Kentucky-bred is an improving horse who is bred to love the distance, a sophomore with positive recent works, and also an advantageous draw on the fence. Combine that with his human connections that have dominated the racing at this locale in recent years, and the up-and-coming colt checks a lot of boxes.

Hill Road is the best longshot for the 2025 Belmont Stakes.



EVERYTHING TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2025 BELMONT STAKES POST POSITIONS

by Keeler Johnson

It's difficult to determine how much of an impact the post position draw for the 2025 Belmont (G1) will have on the outcome of the Triple Crown's third leg.

Post positions for the 157th Belmont were drawn on Monday evening. It's tempting to analyze the long history of the Belmont to gauge which post positions are most likely to produce top finishers, but there are two major caveats to keep in mind when analyzing historical post-position data from the Belmont.

There have been 118 editions of the Belmont since the race moved to its primary home of Belmont Park in 1905. At first glance, it might appear post 1 offers a distinct advantage since it's yielded the most winners (24) and the highest win percentage (20.3%) of any gate position.

BELMONT STAKES POST POSITION

Post Position	Starts	Wins	Win %	Wins since 2000	Last winner	2025 Belmont entrant
1	118	24	20.3	2	Justify (2018)	Hill Road
2	118	13	11.0	2	Essential Quality (2021)	Sovereignty
3	116	16	13.8	4	Arcangelo (2023)	Rodriguez
4	110	10	9.1	2	Summer Bird (2009)	Uncaged
5	102	15	14.7	2	American Pharoah (2015)	Crudo
6	97	9	9.3	2	Dornoch (2024)	Baeza
7	84	14	16.7	3	Sir Winston (2019)	Journalism
8	74	7	9.5	2	Tiz the Law (2020)	Heart of Honor
9	57	4	7.0	2	Afleet Alex (2005)	None
10	40	1	2.5	0	Thunder Gulch (1995)	None
11	28	3	10.7	2	Tonalist (2014)	None
12	11	1	9.1	1	Palace Malice (2013)	None
13	7	1	14.3	1	Creator (2016)	None
14	3	0	0.0	0	None	None
15	1	0	0.0	0	None	None

However, the inherent biases in post-position statistics favor post 1 and inflate its success metrics to some extent. Through the years, many editions of the Belmont have featured small fields with only three, four, five, or six horses. When there are only four horses in a race, any given post position has a 25% shot at producing the winner, compared to a 10% chance of any post yielding a winner in a 10-horse field. Thus, inside post positions tend to generate higher win percentages than outside posts.

With this in mind, the win percentages for post 11 (10.7%), post 12 (9.1%), and post 13 (14.3%) are quite respectable.

The second caveat is bigger. The Belmont usually takes place over 1 1/2 miles at Belmont Park, the configuration used for 97 of the 118 Belmonts in our sample size. However, due to renovations at Belmont Park, the Belmont is taking place over 1 1/4 miles at Saratoga for the second straight year.

Obviously, the shift in distance and location could upend the historical post position statistics. The main track at Belmont Park is a massive 1 1/2-mile oval, whereas Saratoga is only 1 1/8 miles in circumference. Applying post positions stats from 1 1/2 miles at Belmont Park to 1 1/4 miles at Saratoga is fraught with risks; it's not an apples-to-apples comparison.

That's why we've also included post positions statistics from the last 34 editions of the historic Travers (G1), another important 1 1/4-mile dirt race for three-year-olds held at Saratoga each year. Since the Travers is held over the same configuration as this year's Belmont, Travers post position statistics may prove more relevant for identifying favorable (or unfavorable) posts.

TRAVERS STAKES POST POSITION

Post Position	Starts	Wins	Win %
1	34	2	5.9
2	34	4	11.8
3	34	3	8.8
4	34	6	17.6
5	34	6	17.6
6	33	5	15.2
7	30	5	16.7
8	20	1	5.0
9	16	1	6.3
10	12	2	16.7
11	7	0	0.0
12	4	0	0.0

These stats suggest posts 4 through 7 are most favorable when three-year-olds race 1 1/4 miles over the Saratoga dirt. Indeed, that was the case in the 2024 Belmont, as the victorious Dornoch posted a 17-1 upset after breaking from post 6.

Based on this data, we conclude Uncaged, Crudo, Baeza, and Journalism have all drawn favorable posts in the 2025 Belmont.

2025 BELMONT STAKES: WHICH HORSES ARE BRED TO HANDLE THE DISTANCE?

by Keeler Johnson

For the second straight year, the \$2 million Belmont (G1) is taking place over 1 1/4 miles at Saratoga, a quarter-mile shorter than its traditional 1 1/2-mile distance at Belmont Park.

The shorter distance could impact the outcome of the Triple Crown's third leg. Some of the entrants in the 2025 Belmont field have pedigrees suited for 1 1/4 miles, but not necessarily 1 1/2 miles.

Let's rank how well the eight entrants are bred to handle 1 1/4 miles:

1. JOURNALISM

Preakness (G1) winner and Kentucky Derby (G1) runner-up Journalism is a son of two-time Horse of the Year Curlin, a renowned source of classic stamina in pedigrees. His dam is Mopotism, winner of the 1 1/16-mile La Canada (G2) and a daughter of champion Uncle Mo, who has sired Kentucky Derby winner Nyquist and Belmont winner Mo Donegal. Journalism is bred to relish 1 1/4 miles and would surely have handled 1 1/2 miles too.

2. UNCAGED

Another son of Curlin, Uncaged was produced by 1 1/16-mile Delaware Oaks (G3) winner Dark Nile, a daughter of Kentucky Derby runner-up Pioneerof the Nile. The latter is the sire of 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, so distances from 1 1/4 miles to 1 1/2 miles are bound to be Uncaged's strong suit.

3. BAEZA

Baeza's sire, McKinzie, placed second in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and Santa Anita H. (G1) racing 1 1/4 miles. His dam, Puca, has previously foaled Kentucky Derby winner Mage and last year's Belmont hero Dornoch. While 1 1/2 miles might be a little farther than ideal for Baeza, 1 1/4 miles should be right up his alley.

4. CRUDO

As a son of Triple Crown winner Justify (a source of stamina at stud) out of Blossomed (a daughter of acclaimed sire and stamina influence Deputy Minister), Crudo has the pedigree to shine over 1 1/4 miles and might have even preferred a 1 1/2-mile journey.

5. SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty proved he can handle 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby, becoming the third son of perennial leading sire Into Mischief to win the roses. However, Into Mischief sires sprinters and milers more often than classic types. Sovereignty's dam sire is Bernardini, a champion who won the Preakness, so that adds some stamina to the mix. But 1 1/4 miles is likely the upper limit of Sovereignty's distance capabilities, and tackling 1 1/2 miles could have proven challenging.

6. RODRIGUEZ

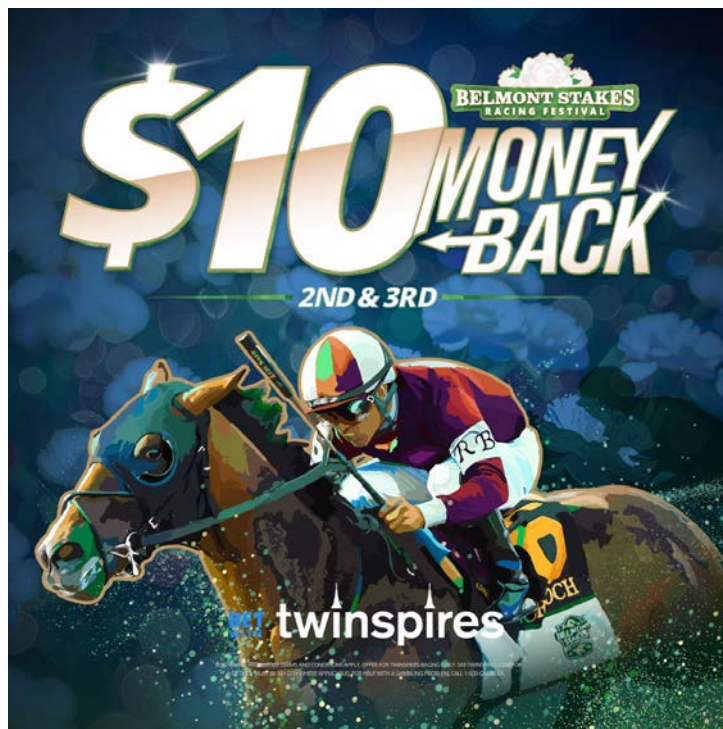
Since Rodriguez is the son of Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) winner Authentic, whose foals are winning at a lofty average winning distance of 7.5 furlongs, it's possible he'll handle 1 1/4 miles without issue. But the dam side of Rodriguez's pedigree is slanted more toward speed, and 1 1/2 miles would have been a question mark.

7. HILL ROAD

Peter Pan (G3) winner Hill Road is a son of Quality Road, who has sired Preakness winner National Treasure, plus a few notable winners over 1 1/4 miles. Hill Road's dam sire is Lemon Drop Kid, winner of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont and a couple of major 1 1/4-mile prizes. But there are also some speed influences in this pedigree cross, so 1 1/4 miles might be the limit of how far Hill Road wants to run.

8. HEART OF HONOR

Heart of Honor is a son of Santa Anita Derby (G1) winner Honor A. P. out of the Chilean-bred turf miler Ruby Love, a daughter of Scat Daddy. The latter stallion sired Triple Crown winner Justify. Racing 1 1/4 miles is quite possibly within reach for Heart of Honor, though it's not a given, and negotiating 1 1/2 miles could have been tricky.



STUDY: IS SKIPPING THE PREAKNESS BENEFICIAL FOR BELMONT HORSES?

by Keeler Johnson



We've all seen the statistics: Kentucky Derby (G1) starters who skip the Preakness (G1) to target the Belmont (G1) win the Triple Crown's final leg with regularity. This strategy has proven successful on 10 occasions since 2004, and it's by far the most common preparation approach employed by Belmont winners these days.

But does skipping the Preakness give these horses an advantage in the Belmont? Or has this prep approach simply become so widespread that victories are inevitable? Without knowing how many Kentucky Derby starters skip the Preakness to await the Belmont, as opposed to how many horses run in all three Triple Crown races, comparing the success rates of the two strategies is meaningless.

Here's a hypothetical (and extreme) example to illustrate what we mean—if 95% of Belmont starters run in the Kentucky Derby and skip the Preakness, but they win only 50% of Belmonts, they're underperforming. If 5% of Belmont starters contest all three Triple Crown races, and they win 50% of Belmonts, they're overperforming. In this hypothetical example, running in all three Triple Crown races is the better strategy, even though the two categories produce the same number of winners (50%) at first glance.

Fortunately, it doesn't take a supercomputer to determine whether Kentucky Derby starters who skip the Preakness or horses who contest all three legs of the Triple Crown perform best in real-world Belmonts. All we need are some past performance records, a large handful of result charts, and a calculator.

IS SKIPPING THE PREAKNESS BENEFICIAL FOR BELMONT HORSES: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To ascertain whether skipping the Preakness results in a greater likelihood of a Kentucky Derby starter winning the Belmont, we'll first tally up how many Kentucky Derby/Belmont starters have skipped the Preakness since 2004. Excluding 2020, when the Triple Crown races were run out of order due to COVID-19, this provides a 20-year sample size.

Then we'll add up how many horses have contested all three legs of the Triple Crown during the same timeframe. Lastly, we'll turn the number of winners, runners-up, third-place finishers, and in-the-money finishers produced by the two categories into percentages based on the number of horses in each category, so the two groups can be directly compared.

IS SKIPPING THE PREAKNESS BENEFICIAL FOR BELMONT HORSES: DATA ANALYSIS

The data isn't necessarily what one might expect, but the results tell a fascinating story:

RECORDS OF BELMONT STAKES STARTERS, 2004-2024

	Starts	Wins	Seconds	Thirds	In-the-money
Skipped the Preakness Stakes	75	10 (13%)	9 (12%)	9 (12%)	28 (37%)
Contested entire Triple Crown	26	3 (12%)	3 (12%)	3 (12%)	9 (35%)

Since 2004, 75 horses have run in the Kentucky Derby, skipped the Preakness, and returned for the Belmont. They have recorded 10 wins courtesy of Birdstone (2004), Jazil (2006), Summer Bird (2009), Union Rags (2012), Palace Malice (2013), Creator (2016), Tapwrit (2017), Essential Quality (2021), Mo Donegal (2022), and Dornoch (2024). That's a 13% win rate.

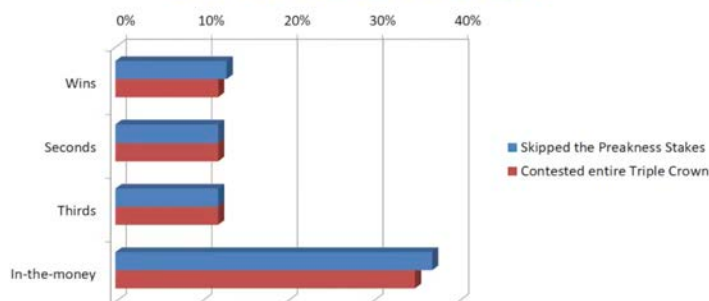
In contrast, horses who contested all three legs of the Triple Crown have won the Preakness three times in the last 20 years. The winners were Afleet Alex (2005), American Pharoah (2015), and Justify (2018). But the sample size contains only 26 horses, so the win percentage for this category is 12%—nearly identical to the success rate for horses who skipped the Preakness.

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Horses who passed on the Preakness have recorded nine seconds and nine thirds in the Belmont since 2004, which for each position is 12% of starters. Horses who ran in all three legs of the Triple Crown finished second three times and third three times, yielding matching 12% rates.

All told, horses who skipped the Preakness recorded 28 in-the-money finishes, representing 37% of starters. Horses who contested all three legs of the Triple Crown posted nine in-the-money finishes, a nearly identical 35% of starters.

**RECORDS OF BELMONT STAKES STARTERS,
2004 - 2024 (EXCLUDING 2020)**



CONCLUSIONS

When horseplayers handicap the Belmont, they shouldn't assume Kentucky Derby starters who skipped the Preakness have a better chance to finish first, second, or third than horses who ran in all three Triple Crown races. Although the raw number of in-the-money finishers produced by the first category is about three times higher, the number of starters is likewise three times higher.

It leads to a stark conclusion: in the Belmont Stakes, there is no meaningful difference in the success rates of Kentucky Derby starters who skip the Preakness vs. those who compete in all three Triple Crown legs.

This isn't to say that individual horses aren't better suited to skipping the Preakness than running in all three races. Some of the Kentucky Derby starters who skipped the Preakness and recorded top-three finishes in the Belmont might have performed worse if they'd contested the Preakness in between.

But when Belmont day arrives and bettors must weigh the chances of each horse in the entries, there's no statistical reason to doubt a runner who has proven durable enough to contest both the Kentucky Derby and Preakness. They're almost exactly as likely to factor in the Belmont as Kentucky Derby starters who skip the Preakness.





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