

151[™]  KENTUCKY
DERBY

HANDICAPPING BETTING GUIDE

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HANDICAPPING BETTING GUIDE



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RACE SCHEDULE & LIVE BLOG

LIVE BLOG SCHEDULE

OPENING DAY

Saturday, April 26, 2025 5:00 PM ET

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

THURBY

Thursday, May 1, 2025 12:45 PM ET

KENTUCKY OAKS

Friday, May 2, 2025 10:30 AM ET

KENTUCKY DERBY

Saturday, May 3, 2025 10:30 AM ET



STAKES RACES SCHEDULE

DATE	GRADE	PURSE	RACE
Sat. Apr. 26	Listed	\$200,000	Roxelana
Wed. Apr. 30	Listed	\$300,000	William Walker
Wed. Apr. 30	Listed	\$200,000	Isaac Murphy Marathon
Thur. May 1	Listed	\$350,000	Opening Verse
Thur. May 1		\$250,000	Kentucky Juvenile
Thur. May 1		\$200,000	St. Matthews Overnight
Fri. May 2	GI	\$1,500,000	Kentucky Oaks
Fri. May 2	GI	\$1,000,000	La Troienne
Fri. May 2	GII	\$750,000	Alysheba
Fri. May 2	GII	\$600,000	Eight Belles
Fri. May 2	GII	\$600,000	Edgewood
Fri. May 2	GIII	\$400,000	Modesty
Fri. May 2	GIII	\$400,000	Unbridled Sidney
Sat. May 3	GI	\$5,000,000	Kentucky Derby
Sat. May 3	GI	\$1,000,000	Turf Classic
Sat. May 3	GI	\$1,000,000	Churchill Downs
Sat. May 3	GI	\$1,000,000	Derby City Distaff
Sat. May 3	GII	\$750,000	Churchill Distaff Turf Mile
Sat. May 3	GII	\$600,000	Twin Spires Turf Sprint
Sat. May 3	GII	\$600,000	Pat Day Mile
Sat. May 3	GI	\$1,000,00	American Turf
Sat. May 3	Listed	\$200,000	The Knicks Go Overnight Stakes

AT A GLANCE

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

AVG. WINNING ODDS: 5.33-1
FAVORITE WIN%: 36% **FAVORITE ITM%:** 69%

EXOTICS	PAYOFF
Exacta	83.15
Daily Double	95.14
Trifecta	631.10
Pick 3	680.23
Superfecta	4,712.53
Pick 4	7,294.65
Pick 5	37,040.63
Pick 6 Jackpot	214,604.64
Super High Five	5,472.64



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

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

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

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

WHO'S HOT, WHO'S NOT

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

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

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

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



EXPERT PICKS FOR KENTUCKY DERBY WEEKEND

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

FRIDAY, MAY 2 Churchill Downs



Dean Keppler
@Keppskorner



Vance Hanson
@VPHanson



Kellie Reilly
@GallantFox1930



James Scully
@James_Scully111



Keeler Johnson
@J_Keelerman

EIGHT BELLES (G2)

10 Impulse Buy
5 Verity
7 Mendela

10 Impulse Buy
5 Verity
12 Eclatant

10 Impulse Buy
5 Verity
12 Eclatant

6 Kimchi Cat
12 Eclatant
2 Evanescence

12 Eclatant
5 Verity
9 Bourbon Memory

KENTUCKY OAKS (G1)

9 Tenma
11 Good Cheer
10 Take Charge Milady

14 Quietside
11 Good Cheer
7 La Cara

11 Good Cheer
6 Ballerina d'Oro
9 Tenma

11 Good Cheer
9 Tenma
13 Bless the Broken

11 Good Cheer
14 Quietside
2 Simply Joking

SATURDAY, MAY 3 Churchill Downs



Dean Keppler
@Keppskorner



Vance Hanson
@VPHanson



Kellie Reilly
@GallantFox1930



James Scully
@James_Scully111



Keeler Johnson
@J_Keelerman

CHURCHILL DOWNS STAKES (G1)

7 Mindframe
11 Mulliken
10 Nysos

11 Mullikin
3 Book'em Danno
10 Nysos

10 Nysos
11 Mullikin
7 Mindframe

11 Mullikin
10 Nysos
6 Extra Anejo

10 Nysos
7 Mindframe
11 Mullikin

DERBY CITY DISTAFF (G1)

1 Scylla
2 Kopion
9 Emery

2 Kopion
8 Ways and Means
7 Vahva

8 Ways and Means
2 Kopion
1 Scylla

8 Ways and Means
7 Vahva
13 My Mane Squeeze

2 Kopion
8 Ways and Means
7 Vahva

TURF CLASSIC STAKES (G1)

7 Running Bee
1 Integration
10 Spirit of St. Louis

4 Redistricting
1 Integration
2 Gold Phoenixs

7 Running Bee
1 Integration
8 Cameo Performance

1 Integration
11 Brilliant Berti
7 Running Bee

7 Running Bee
1 Integration
5 Idratherblessed

KENTUCKY DERBY (G1)

8 Journalism
1 Citizen Bull
3 Final Gambit

8 Journalism
9 Burnham Square
10 Grande

8 Journalism
9 Burnham Square
18 Sovereignty

17 Sandman
18 Sovereignty
1 Citizen Bull

8 Journalism
18 Sovereignty
7 Luxor Cafe

151™

KENTUCKY  OAKS

KENTUCKY OAKS LEADERBOARD

Updated: Sunday, April 27, 2025.

HOW TO GET INTO THE KENTUCKY OAKS STARTING GATE

The Road to the Kentucky Oaks Presented by TwinSpires.com is a 31-race series that awards points to the Top 5 finishers in each race. The Top 14 point earners will earn a spot in the starting gate for the 151st running of the \$1.25 million Kentucky Oaks Presented by Longines (Grade I) on Friday, May 2, 2025.

POST POSITIONS	HORSE	ML ODDS	OWNER(s)	TRAINER	Non-Restricted Stakes Earnings
1	Early On	30-1	C2 Racing Stable, Reimer, Ken T., Braverman, Paul, Pinch, Timothy and Kent, Bradley D	Saffie Joseph Jr.	\$90,000
2	Simply Joking	10-1	Grantley Acres, Conner, Ryan and Berkels0813	Whit Beckman	\$288,000
3	Fondly	30-1	Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners	Graham Motion	\$150,000
4	Drexel Hill	30-1	Legion Racing	Whit Beckman	\$127,000
5	Quickkick	30-1	Greenwell Thoroughbreds, LLC	Tom Amoss	\$329,000
6	Ballerina d'Oro	10-1	Rodeo Creek Racing, LLC	Chad Brown	\$184,375
7	La Cara	6-1	Tracy Farmer	Mark Casse	\$779,508
8	Five G	12-1	Gatsas Stables	George Weaver	\$351,590
9	Tenma	12-1	Baoma Corp	Bob Baffert	\$504,000
10	Take Charge Milady	12-1	Ball, James, Magdalena Racing (Sherri McPeck) and Rhodes, Kenneth	Kenny McPeck	\$336,875
11	Good Cheer	6-5	Godolphin, LLC	Brad Cox	\$785,470
12	Anna's Promise	30-1	Bell Racing LLC	Carlos David	\$49,500
13	Bless the Broken	30-1	Cypress Creek Equine, LLC (Kevin Moody) and Madaket Stables, LLC (Sol Kumin)	William Walden	\$238,060
14	Quietside	8-1	Shortleaf Stable, Inc.	John Ortiz	\$902,200



TWINSPIRES TIPSHEET



151ST RUNNING OF THE KENTUCKY OAKS

An overflow field of 14 three-year-old fillies has been entered to travel 1 1/8 miles on the Churchill Downs main track in Friday's \$1.25 million Kentucky Oaks (G1).

POST	HORSE	ML ODDS
1	Early On	30-1
2	Simply Joking	10-1
3	Fondly	30-1
4	Drexel Hill	30-1
5	Quickkick	30-1
6	Ballerina D'oro	10-1
7	La Cara	6-1
8	Five G	12-1
9	Tenma	12-1
10	Take Charge Milady	12-1
11	Good Cheer	6-5
12	Anna'a Promise	30-1
13	Bless the Broken	30-1
14	Quietside	8-1

TOP PICKS

#11 Good Cheer

#8 Five G

#2 Simply Joking

#7 La Cara

WAGERS

\$20 Exacta: 11 with 8

\$1 Trifecta: 11 with 2,7,8 with all

\$1 Superfecta: 8,11 with 8,11 with 2,7 with all

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#1 EARLY ON (30-1): Saffie Joseph trainee ran a lifetime best when runner-up in the Gazelle S. (G3) in her most recent performance. Union Rags filly has shown nice improvement since moving to route races and could grab a minor share with another step forward under Edgard Zayas.

#2 SIMPLY JOKING (10-1): Dual stakes winner suffered her first setback in the Fantasy S. (G2) last time out but rates a solid chance in the contest with continued ascension on this occasion. Whit Beckman pupil will be in the mix from the opening bell with Florent Geroux accepting the ride.

#3 FONDLY (20-1): Lightly raced daughter of Upstart is two-for-two, led by a game score in the Virginia Oaks last time out. Graham Motion trainee will have to get faster to win the race, but she has a bright future and can't be discounted with Irad taking the reins.

#4 DREXEL HILL (30-1): Second from the Beckman barn eclipsed the Busher S. at Aqueduct in her latest appearance. Bolt d'Oro filly is training well as of late, but she will need a big step forward to be in the mix late against this field.

#5 QUICKKICK (30-1): Grade-1 placed daughter of McKinzie has gone unplaced in two runs this campaign and would be a surprise for trainer Tom Amoss. The \$550,000 yearling purchase will have Umberto Rispoli in the silks.

#6 BALLERINA D'ORO (10-1): Gazelle S. (G3) heroine comes in with a trio of fine tries since moving to the dirt and will be a late threat for conditioner Chad Brown. The Kentucky-bred gray put in a good half-mile move on the surface in advance of Friday and will be doing her best work in the stretch beneath Flavien Prat.

#7 LA CARA (6-1): Ashland S. (G1) starlet has two wins and a second from a trio of outings in 2025 and might be the main threat to the favorite under Dylan Davis. The Mark Casse charge owns a Grade 3 victory on the course and the homebred will be forwardly placed from the opening bell.

#8 FIVE G (12-1): Dangerous daughter of fine young sire Vekoma comes off a gate-to-wire tally in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2) and gets a long look at a nice price. George Weaver trainee has been first or second in each of her trio of assignments this campaign and will force the tempo from the start under Manny Franco.

#9 TENMA (12-1): West Coast import from the Baffert barn is five-for-six in her lifetime with four graded tallies and is an obvious contender in the group. The \$850,000 daughter of Nyquist can win from on or off the pace, and the dark bay miss could sit a nice trip in the affair with regular pilot Juan Hernandez riding.

#10 TAKE CHARGE MILADY (12-1): Ashland S. (G1) second had a fine prep for the race and could be dangerous late with a move in the right direction on this occasion. Take Charge Lady filly comes in with a pair of bullet morning moves and will do her best work late with Brian Hernandez, Jr. in the silks.

#11 GOOD CHEER (6-5): Unbeaten daughter of Medaglia d'Oro has yet to be seriously challenged in six career events and is the clear one to beat for trainer Brad Cox. The bay is perfect from a trio of lifetime runs on the course and she will be a menacing figure turning for home under the guidance of Luis Saez.

#12 ANNA'S PROMISE (30-1): The chestnut daughter of Promises Fulfilled was a clear second in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2) in her second run off the claim and has some exotics appeal at a hefty price. Kentucky-bred sophomore will be asked for speed from the start beneath Junior Alvarado.

#13 BLESS THE BROKEN (30-1): Dark bay daughter of Laoban rallied in the lane to capture the Bourbonette Oaks at Turfway Park in her latest assignment. William Walden pupil will need a big move forward getting back on the dirt to make an impact on Friday, however, with John Velazquez in the stirrups.

#14 QUIETSID (8-1): Shortleaf Stable homebred has never finished out of the top three and is peaking right now for trainer John Ortiz. The Malibu Moon filly continues to train swiftly in advance of her toughest test to date, but she will also have to overcome the widest post slot in the group. Jose Ortiz will pilot the contender.



KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD

Updated: Sunday, April 27, 2025

HOW TO GET INTO THE KENTUCKY DERBY STARTING GATE

The Road to the Kentucky Derby Presented by TwinSpires.com is a 36-race series that awards points to the Top 5 finishers in each race. The Top 20 point earners will earn a spot in the starting gate for the 151st running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) on Saturday, May 3, 2025. The Kentucky Derby field has been limited to 20 starters since 1975. At least 20 horses have entered the 1 ¼-mile race for 3-year-olds every year since 2004, and 16 of the last 18 years.

POST POSITIONS	HORSE	POINTS	OWNER(s)	TRAINER	Non-Restricted Stakes Earnings
1	Citizen Bull	20-1	SF Racing LLC, Starlight Racing, Madaket Stables LLC, Stonestreet Stables LLC, Bashor, Dianne, Determined Stables, Masterson, Robert E., Ryan, Tom J., Waves Edge Capital LLC and Donovan, Catherine	Bob Baffert	\$1,406,000
2	Neoequos	30-1	C2 Racing Stable LLC, Parsard, Ian, Shining Stables LLC and Stefania Farms LLC	Saffie A. Joseph, Jr	\$153,250
3	Final Gambit	30-1	Juddmonte	Brad H. Cox	\$446,400
4	Rodriguez	12-1	SF Racing LLC, Starlight Racing, Madaket Stables LLC, Stonestreet Stables LLC, Bashor, Dianne, Determined Stables, Masterson, Robert E., Ryan, Tom J., Waves Edge Capital LLC and Donovan, Catherine	Bob Baffert	\$476,000
5	American Promise	30-1	BC Stables LLC	D. Wayne Lukas	\$335,000
6	Admire Daytona (JPN)	30-1	Junko Kondo	Yukihiro Kato	\$72,621
7	Luxor Cafe	15-1	Koichi Nishikawa	Noriyuki Hori	\$228,341
8	Journalism	3-1	Bridlewood Farm, Don Alberto Stable, Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners, Elayne Stables 5 LLC, LaPenta, Robert V., Magnier-Lessee, Mrs. John, Smith-Lessee, Derrick and Tabor-Lessee, Michael B	Michael W. McCarthy	\$600,000
9	Burnham Square	12-1	Whitham Thoroughbreds LLC	Ian R. Wilkes	\$927,325
10	Grande	10-1	Repole Stable	Todd A. Pletcher	\$140,000
11	Flying Mohawk	30-1	Two Eight Racing, Berry Family Racing LLC and Kaleta Racing	D. Whitworth Beckman	\$156,800
12	East Avenue	20-1	Godolphin, LLC	Brendan P. Walsh	\$612,500
13	Publisher	20-1	King, Gus and Estate of Brereton C. Jones	Steven M. Asmussen	\$355,000
14	Tiztastic	20-1	Winchell Thoroughbreds LLC, Magnier, Mrs. John, Tabor, Michael B. and Smith, Der	Steven M. Asmussen	\$1,395,800
15	Render Judgment	30-1	Baccari Racing Stable LLC, Dream Walkin Farms, Inc., MJM Racing and Rocket Ship Racing	Kenneth G. McPeck	\$163,172
16	Coal Battle	30-1	Norman Stables LLC	Lonnie Briley	\$1,169,500
17	Sandman	6-1	D. J. Stable LLC, St. Elias Stable, West Point Thoroughbreds and CJ Stable	Mark E. Casse	\$1,117,995
18	Sovereignty	5-1	Godolphin	William I. Mott	\$548,800
19	Chunk of Gold	30-1	Terry L. Stephens	Ethan W. West	\$324,400
20	Owen Almighty	30-1	Flying Dutchmen Breeding and Racing LLC	Brian Lynch	\$430,935



TWINSPIRES TIPSHEET



151ST RUNNING OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY

The 151st running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby (G1) at Churchill Downs is upon us and attracted a field of 21 three-year-olds for the historic 1 1/4-mile contest.

POST	HORSE	ML ODDS
1	Citizen Bull	20-1
2	Neoequos	30-1
3	Final Gambit	30-1
4	Rodriguez	12-1
5	American Promise	30-1
6	Admire Daytona (JPN)	30-1
7	Luxor Cafe	15-1
8	Journalism	3-1
9	Burnham Square	12-1
10	Grande	10-1
11	Flying Mohawk	30-1
12	East Avenue	20-1
13	Publisher	20-1
14	Tiztastic	20-1
15	Render Judgment	30-1
16	Coal Battle	30-1
17	Sandman	6-1
18	Sovereignty	5-1
19	Chunk of Gold	30-1
20	Owen Almighty	30-1

TOP PICKS
#8 Journalism
#3 Final Gambit
#18 Sovereignty
#1 Citizen Bull

WAGERS
\$20 Exacta: 8 with 1,3,18
\$3 Trifecta: 8 with 1,3,18 with 1,3,7,13,14,17,18
\$1 Superfecta: 3,18 with 1,3,8,18 with 1,3,8,18 with 1,3,7,8,13,14,17,18

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#1 CITIZEN BULL (20-1): Champion juvenile didn't fire his best shot in the Santa Anita Derby (G1) last time out and received the dreaded rail post in the massive field, but the Bob Baffert trainee remains a contender, nonetheless. By top sire Into Mischief, the massive colt has an abundance of speed and class, and he could be dangerous at a big number if Martin Garcia can navigate a sensible trip atop the Kentucky-bred.

#2 NEOEQUOS (30-1): Speedy sort from the Saffie Joseph shedrow finished third in both the Florida Derby (G1) and Fountain of Youth S. (G2) in advance of Saturday. The son of Neolithic is a question mark at the 1 1/4-mile distance, but he gets Prat to ride and will likely be part of the early action in the event, as well.

#3 FINAL GAMBIT (30-1): Major win threat ran a lifetime best when drawing off late in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) most recently and will relish the move to 10 furlongs in his dirt debut. Juddmonte homebred has reportedly trained in good fashion on the local strip and the Brad Cox pupil will be rolling home in the lane under Luan Machado.

#4 RODRIGUEZ (12-1): Second from the Baffert barn led throughout in a convincing tally in the Wood Memorial S. (G2) in his latest venture. The rapidly developing son of Authentic has good gate presence and will be forwardly placed from the break with Mike Smith in the irons.

#5 AMERICAN PROMISE (30-1): D. Wayne Lukas trainee comes in off a dominant victory in the Virginia Derby at Colonial Downs in his latest appearance. The chestnut son of Justify has good early foot, and he will be in the hunt late if he repeats his latest performance. Nik Juarez will take the reins.

#6 ADMIRE DAYTONA (30-1): First of the pair of Japanese imports was ultra game in eclipsing the UAE Derby (G2) at Meydan for Kato. Drefong colt is a wildcard in the cast and will have the excellent Christophe Lemaire in the silks.

#7 LUXOR CAFE (15-1): Bay son of American Pharoah has been sharp during his current four-race win streak and can't be overlooked while making his stateside debut. The Kentucky-bred colt has displayed a big turn of foot on multiple occasions this campaign, and he is bred to run in a race like this one, too. 'Magic Man' Moreira retains the ride.

#8 JOURNALISM (3-1): Top pick and horse to beat has won four races in succession for Mike McCarthy and checks all the boxes to succeed in this historic contest. Curlin colt has tactical speed combined with a devastating closing burst, and he will be tough to upend with a clear voyage beneath regular pilot Umberto Rispoli.

#9 BURNHAM SQUARE (12-1): Blue Grass S. (G1) hero from the Ian Wilkes barn has elevated his game since adding blinkers in December and appears to be the type to handle 1 1/4 miles. The gelded son of Liam's Map has a sustained closing kick and will be passing numerous runners in the lane with Brian Hernandez, Jr. accepting the mount.

#10 GRANDE (20-1): Lightly raced colt from the Pletcher barn was last seen coming home a clear second in the Wood Memorial S. (G2) while making his stakes debut. By Curlin, the Repole color bearer will need to take a step forward to challenge for the win in the race, but he's far from impossible with John Velazquez taking the reins.

#11 FLYING MOHAWK (30-1): Jeff Ruby runner-up has put in a trio of very good runs in succession leading up to this and will race with blinkers off on Saturday. Whit Beckman charge has improved his Brisnet Speed figure in each lifetime run, and if he handles the move to the dirt, then the son of Karakontie could challenge for a top-five finish under Joseph Ramos.

#12 EAST AVENUE (20-1): Grade 1 winner was a game second in the Blue Grass S. (G1) most recently and could be the pacesetter in the big field for Brendan Walsh. Medaglia d'Oro colt will be sent hard from the start and might get brave if he clears under the guidance of Manny Franco.

#13 PUBLISHER (30-1): Arkansas Derby (G1) second ran a big one in advance of the Run for the Roses and will attempt to break his maiden in this endeavor. The first of two from the Asmussen shedrow is a consistent late runner on the improve, and I love that Irad Ortiz, Jr. will be in the silks atop the deep-closing son of American Pharoah.

#14 TIZTASTIC (20-1): Win threat was very impressive in his convincing Louisiana Derby (G2) triumph in his latest showing for Asmussen. The son of young sire Tiz the Law could be in line for a big result if he moves forward off his last performance beneath Joel Rosario.

#15 RENDER JUDGMENT (30-1): Blue Grass S. (G1) fifth was a late addition to the field and looks like an outsider at this stage of his development. Blame colt will be fit with six route races under his belt to date, but he'd be a surprise with Julien Leparoux signed on.

#16 COAL BATTLE (30-1): Exotics contender is a major question mark at 10 furlongs, but the Rebel S. (G2) star has the talent and versatility to be in the mix turning for home at a huge number. Lonnie Briley pupil will be making his move approaching the turn for home with Juan Vargas staying in the silks.

#17 SANDMAN (6-1): Arkansas Derby (G1) winner has been in consistently good form in 2025 and rates as a logical win threat for trainer Mark Casse. The \$1.2 million yearling purchase will handle the distance with relative ease, and if he receives a favorable trip, he could be the one under Jose Ortiz.

#18 SOVEREIGNTY (5-1): Prime contender was a five-length winner of the Street Sense S. (G3) in his lone prior run beneath the Twin Spires. The Bill Mott charge had two very good prep races this season leading up to the Derby, and the Godolphin homebred will be charging home in the lane while reuniting with Junior Alvarado.

#19 CHUNK OF GOLD (30-1): \$2,500 bargain purchase checked in second in both the Risen Star S. (G2) and Louisiana Derby (G2) for conditioner Ethan West. The Kentucky-bred gray will need a major move forward to get a piece from this post slot, but he's training swiftly, and I expect the colt to give a nice account of himself with Jareth Loveberry in the stirrups.

#20 OWEN ALMIGHTY (30-1): Tampa Bay Derby (G3) hero showed some distance limitations when sixth in the Blue Grass S. in his latest offering and looks to be in a tough spot from the widest post position. Brian Lynch trainee is quick and figures to be forwardly placed from the break, however. Javier Castellano has the call.

#21 BAEZA (12-1): Shirreffs pupil is on the also-eligible list, but he could be a contender if he gets into the main body of the group. The \$1.2 million son of McKinzie was only three-quarters of a length behind Journalism in the Santa Anita Derby (G1), and he has room to grow with the move to 1 1/4 miles, as well. He will have Flavien Prat riding if he gets in.

BETTING THE 2025 KENTUCKY DERBY ON DIFFERENT BUDGETS

by John Mucciolo

The much-anticipated 2025 Kentucky Derby (G1) will take place at Churchill Downs on Saturday. Run at 1 1/4 miles on the dirt, the \$5 million extravaganza attracted 21 three-year-olds in what promises to be a memorable event.

With larger fields of high-quality horses, there are many angles to take when finding selections for betting. Here are suggestions on approaching your bets with a variety of budgets.

The pair of morning-line choices, **#8 Journalism (3-1)** and **#18 Sovereignty (5-1)**, are each formidable contenders that could be peaking as they both make their third run of 2025. Trained by Mike McCarthy, Journalism is clearly the king of the west after posting impressive wins in the San Felipe S. (G2) and Santa Anita Derby (G1) this campaign. The son of Curlin seems poised to thrive at 1 1/4 miles with his abundance of class, fine tactical speed, and stout closing kick, too. If there is a knock, it would be that the colt has been beating small fields along the way, but I'm not overly concerned about that.

Sovereignty broke his maiden beneath the Twin Spires in the Street Sense S. (G3) in the fall and has posted a pair of very good runs at Gulfstream Park in 2025. The impressive Fountain of Youth (G2) victor closed from off the pace to finish a clear second in the Florida Derby (G1) in his most recent assignment, and he also gives the impression of a colt who will prosper at class distances, too. Junior Alvarado will guide the late-running Godolphin homebred.

What my lifelong friend and astute handicapper Frank Isidori reminds me of each year is that you have to spot a few under-the-radar longshot contenders to pair with your favorite(s), if you want to make a substantial windfall in the Derby. **#3 Final Gambit (30-1)** is surely a horse that has grown on me in recent weeks following his stylish score in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) at Turfway Park, and the gray could be the hidden gem in the cast. Trained by Brad Cox, the son of Not This Time, took a huge step forward moving out to 1 1/8 miles in his victory most recently, and getting more ground on Saturday will play right into his wheelhouse, as well. He will be passing multiple runners in the stretch under Luan Machado.

I have long been a big fan of **#1 Citizen Bull (20-1)**, and I love how trainer Bob Baffert has put numerous morning drills into him over a short period of time to be fit for the Derby. The son of Into Mischief was the Champion Two-Year-Old in 2024 and is another prospect that can peak while making his third run of the season. He was assigned the dreaded rail post, and while it's going to make things even more difficult for him in his local debut, I have faith that Martin Garcia will figure out a way to give him a sensible voyage in the race while likely forcing the tempo.

The pace of the race will likely be swift and contested, which will aid some of the deep-closing types in the field. Impressive Japanese import **#7 Luxor Cafe (15-1)**, Arkansas Derby (G1) second **#13 Publisher (30-1)**, Louisiana Derby (G2) star **#14 Tiztastic (20-1)**, and **#17 Sandman (6-1)**, who bagged the Arkansas Derby (G1) last time out for Mark Casse, will be included in my vertical wagers.

\$30 BUDGET

\$2 Exacta: key box 3 with 1,8,18 (\$12)

50-cent Trifecta: 8 with 1,3,18 with 1,3,7,13,14,17,18 (\$9)

50-cent Trifecta: 18 with 1,3,8 with 1,3,7,8,13,14,17 (\$9)

\$60 BUDGET

50-cent Trifecta: 8,18 with 1,3,7,8,13,14,17,18 with 1,3,7,8,13,14,17,18 (\$42)

50-cent Trifecta: 1,3 with 1,3,8,18 with 1,3,7,8,13, 14,17,18 (\$18)

\$90 BUDGET

\$4 Exacta: box 1,3,8,18 (\$48)

50-cent Trifecta: 8,18 with 1,3,7,8,13,14,17,18 with 1,3,7,8,13,14,17,18 (\$42)



2025 KENTUCKY DERBY BRISNET SPEED RATING REPORT

by James Scully

Thirteen of the last 15 **Kentucky Derby (G1)** winners had registered a triple-digit Brisnet Speed rating. The exceptions were 80-1 Rich Strike in 2022 and 20-1 Animal Kingdom in 2011, with the latter making his dirt debut in the Kentucky Derby following a smashing win in the Spiral (G3) (now the Jeff Ruby Steaks) over a synthetic track.

Of the 19 North American-based horses entered (Speed ratings not available for internationals Admire Daytona and Luxor Café), including also-eligible Baeza, 11 have registered a triple-digit Speed rating, including eight in the final prep race.

We will focus on the final two prep races, ranking the Kentucky Derby field by last-out number.

TAKEAWAYS

Let's preview the major players.

Journalism easily tops the main body of the field, netting a 108 Speed rating when winning the Santa Anita Derby (G1) by about a length. Listed as the 3-1 morning line favorite, Journalism towers over most of the field in terms of numbers. He registered a 104, posting a convincing win in the San Felipe (G2) two back that has been eclipsed by only three entrants this year.

The Mike McCarthy-trained colt is by Curlin, who is seeking a well-deserved Kentucky Derby win as a sire after producing winners of the Preakness (G1) and Belmont (G1). And Curlin's son, Good Magic, sired Mage.

Baeza, who needs one defection to make the starting gate, received a 107, finishing second to Journalism in the Santa Anita Derby. The number is imposing at face value, and Baeza may be talented enough to overcome any obstacles, but there are red flags. Baeza lacks seasoning, breaking his maiden two starts previously, and will try to avoid a regression after a significant increase to a career-best figure.

Rodriguez has made a favorable impression locally after running the second-fastest Wood Memorial (G2) in the last 20 years, receiving a 105 Speed rating. However, the speedy colt lacks options from post 4 and exits a 14-point jump in numbers, earning a pair of 91s for his two previous stakes attempts in Southern California.

American Promise will face a serious class test following a frontrunning romp in the Virginia Derby seven weeks earlier. His 105 Speed rating last time merits respect, but one can question whether the chestnut will be able to run back to it given his numbers from two previous stakes efforts this year (85 and 91).

Grande (101 Speed rating for runner-up in the Wood) is a lightly raced colt from the barn of two-time Kentucky Derby winner Todd Pletcher, and his numbers increased nicely in his stakes debut last time.

Final Gambit is inexperienced, breaking his maiden two back at Turfway, and his numbers increased significantly in his stakes debut last out, registering a 101 for a 3 1/2-length victory in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3). But I'm not as concerned about a regression given that he's switching surfaces; Final Gambit appears to be training forwardly at Churchill Downs and the late runner will be one to consider for exotics at long odds.

Sandman registered a 101 Speed rating winning the Arkansas Derby (G1), his first triple-digit number in five stakes attempts. But considering he received respectable numbers for troubled trips in his first two stakes this year (95 in his previous start), Sandman figured to earn a better Speed rating stretching out in distance with a favorable setup if he could avoid trouble. He's eligible to receive another favorable setup in a speed-laden Kentucky Derby field, and Sandman rates as one to consider based on numbers.

Florida Derby (G1) runner-up **Sovereignty** lacks a triple-digit Speed rating, but he came close, earning a 99 for his Fountain of Youth (G2) win two back. A smashing stakes winner at Churchill Downs last fall, Sovereignty may not have appreciated the Gulfstream surface as much, and he's a candidate to keep progressing with a career-best effort that easily nets a triple-digit Speed rating.

Blue Grass (G1) winner **Burnham Square** received a 101 Speed rating winning the Holy Bull (G3) three back, and the late runner can't be dismissed from top three contention based on numbers. **Tiztastic** put it all together upsetting the Louisiana Derby (G2), earning a 100 Speed rating, and the late runner is one to add when building exactas, trifectas, and superfectas.

Citizen Bull netted triple-digit numbers winning his final two starts last year, the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) and American Pharoah (G1), but he will need to step forward for six-time Kentucky Derby winner Bob Baffert after failing to run as fast in a pair of starts this year.

Publisher and **Chunk of Gold** also deserve mention after earning a 98 Speed rating in the final prep; they face a tall challenge for the win, but rate as viable candidates for the minor awards.

Good luck playing Kentucky Derby 151!



THE BEST LONGSHOT TO BET IN THE 2025 KENTUCKY DERBY

by Vance Hanson

Determining the best longshot to play in the Kentucky Derby (G1) is very much like choosing your top selection. You want to find a horse with acceptable current form who is likely to adapt well to the conditions of the race in terms of distance, surface condition, and probable pace. The likelihood of him improving off his recent performances is also imperative. The only grace to be given is on past accomplishments, hence the reason why they will be longer price compared to other contenders.

Unlike the last two editions of the Derby, there is very little pressure this year on owner Mike Repole and trainer Todd Pletcher. They were under the microscope in 2023 and 2024 by virtue of having the Derby favorite in the barn, neither of which turned out satisfactorily. Forte was scratched on Derby morning in 2023 due to a bruised hoof, and last year Fierceness turned in the worst performance of his career after racing far too close to a blistering early pace.

#10 Grande (20-1) doesn't enter this year's Derby with the accomplishments of those two juvenile champions, but he does fit much of the criteria noted above. Grande was impressive enough in winning the first two starts of his career at Gulfstream over the winter, and displayed improvement again when finishing second in his stakes debut, the Wood Memorial (G2), to a loose-on-the-lead Rodriguez.

With only three career starts, Grande's future remains bright, and in a race seemingly chock-full of speed, his rating ability might ultimately prove the preferred style. But the main drawback for Grande is also that relative inexperience. Despite the recent heroics by Justify (2018) and Mage (2023), the Kentucky Derby remains a tough nut to crack for horses without any juvenile foundation.

One prime example of this is Grande's own sire, Curlin. While that bloodline ensures Grande is bred to handle 1 1/4 miles with ease, recall that Curlin himself could only finish third in the 2007 Kentucky Derby despite having won the Rebel (G2) and Arkansas Derby (G1) en route to Churchill Downs. Curlin wound up being Horse of the Year, but on the first Saturday in May, had not quite the foundation and experience to beat a vintage group of three-year-olds.

Nonetheless, Grande's attributes arguably outweigh the negatives. If not a top selection, Grande is certainly deserving of attention in most wagering plans.



2025 KENTUCKY DERBY BRISNET LATE PACE RATING REPORT

by Keeler Johnson

In the 2024 Kentucky Derby (G1), only six entrants had posted a triple-digit Brisnet Late Pace rating in either of their previous two starts. This small group produced upset winner Mystik Dan plus runner-up Sierra Leone and fourth-place finisher Catching Freedom.

Late Pace ratings have done well identifying potential Kentucky Derby winners in recent years. Nine of the last 14 Kentucky Derby winners posted a triple-digit Late Pace rating in one or both of their final two races leading up to Derby Day.

The list includes Triple Crown winners American Pharoah (2015) and Justify (2018) plus betting favorites Orb (2013), Nyquist (2016), and Always Dreaming (2017), but also double-digit longshot winners Animal Kingdom (2011), I'll Have Another (2012), Rich Strike (2022), and the above-mentioned Mystik Dan.

Here are the last two Late Pace ratings posted by each 2025 Kentucky Derby contender, excluding Admire Daytona and Luxor Cafe, a pair of international shippers for whom Late Pace ratings are unavailable:

HORSE	LATEST START	TWO STARTS BACK
Final Gambit	112	96
Journalism	109	113
Baeza	102	101
Flying Mohawk	102	88
Rodriguez	101	87
Sovereignty	97	103
Grande	97	84
American Promise	93	71
Burnham Square	89	95
Sandman	88	95
Publisher	87	95
Neoequos	83	87
East Avenue	83	50
Citizen Bull	82	94
Tiztastic	81	83
Render Judgment	80	84
Owen Almighty	76	108
Chunk of Gold	72	81
Coal Battle	70	93

TAKEAWAYS

Only seven horses, including also-eligible entrant Baeza, have managed to post a triple-digit Late Pace rating in one or both of their last two races. Five have done so in their latest start: Final Gambit (112), Journalism (109), Baeza (102), Flying Mohawk (102), and Rodriguez (101). Four achieved the standard two starts back: Journalism (113), Owen Almighty (108), Sovereignty (103), and Baeza (101). Journalism and Baeza, the top two finishers from the Santa Anita Derby (G1), are the only Kentucky Derby horses entering off back-

to-back triple-digit Late Pace ratings. Actually, Journalism has posted four straight triple-digit numbers. He posted a 104 when taking the Los Alamitos Futurity (G2) three starts back and a 101 when breaking his maiden four starts ago. From a Late Pace rating perspective, Journalism is hands-down the horse to beat in the Kentucky Derby.

The Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) was one of the strongest Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifiers from a Late Pace rating perspective. The victorious Final Gambit earned a 112, the highest last-out number in the Kentucky Derby field, while runner-up Flying Mohawk earned a respectable 102.

The Wood Memorial (G2) also produced reasonably strong Late Pace ratings. Gate-to-wire winner Rodriguez posted a 101 while runner-up Grande earned a 97, respectively the fifth-best and co-sixth-best last-out numbers in the Derby field.

Several accomplished horses who appeared to be closing strongly in their final Kentucky Derby preps earned modest Late Pace ratings. Burnham Square got up in the shadow of the wire to beat pacesetter East Avenue in the Blue Grass (G1), but they respectively earned Late Pace ratings of 89 and 83.

Sandman and Publisher closed from far back to run 1-2 in the Arkansas Derby (G1), but earned Late Pace ratings of 88 and 87.

Tiztastic rallied from 9 1/2 lengths behind to win the Louisiana Derby (G2) over midpack closer Chunk of Gold, but they ran Late Pace ratings of 81 and 72, two of the five lowest last-out numbers in the Kentucky Derby field.

By averaging the last two Late Pace ratings earned by each horse in the Kentucky Derby field, the top six U.S.-based contenders are as follows. All have posted at least one triple-digit number in their last two starts:

HORSE	AVERAGE BRISNET LATE PACE RATING (LAST TWO STARTS)
Journalism	111
Final Gambit	104
Baeza	101.5
Sovereignty	100
Flying Mohawk	95
Rodriguez	94

In 2024, the Kentucky Derby third- and fifth-place finishers were Forever Young and T O Password of Japan, who entered without any Late Pace ratings on their records. By mixing and matching the strongest-finishing U.S. contenders with the international challengers, a bettor would have had every chance to cash a \$1 Super High 5 ticket worth \$316,920.10.

Perhaps the same strategy will reap dividends in 2025. Bet the horses with recent triple-digit Late Pace ratings alongside Japanese raiders Admire Daytona and Luxor Cafe, and you might just cash a lucrative exotic wager.

STUDY: DOES JOCKEY EXPERIENCE INFLUENCE WIN RATES AND EARNINGS?

by Keeler Johnson

DOES THE NUMBER OF YEARS A THOROUGHBRED JOCKEY HAS BEEN RIDING INFLUENCE THEIR WIN RATE AND EARNINGS?

The career of an elite jockey can last for decades. It's not uncommon for jockeys to win major races in their 40s and 50s. But does years of experience counterbalance the benefits of youth, which can be an advantage for athletes in so many other sports?

To find out how experience affects the win rates and earnings of top jockeys, we've crunched a wealth of numbers and analyzed the results.

JOCKEY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

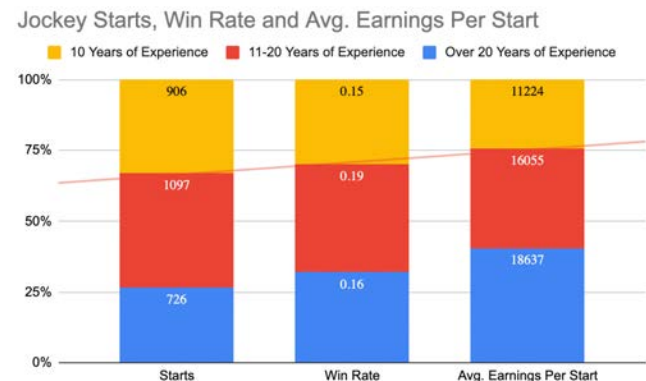
Our analysis covers the top 30 jockeys of 2024 according to the purse money they earned. This allows up to sample a group of accomplished jockeys who frequently ride with success in races where there's significant money on the line.

We've divided these 30 jockeys into three categories based on the year of their earliest ride in North America per industry database Equibase. The largest group of jockeys, 16, boasted between 11-20 years of experience. Nine jockeys claimed more than 20 years of experience, and five had been riding for 10 years or less.

JOCKEY DATA ANALYSIS

Below is a table showing the overall starts, win rates, and average earnings per start for the three jockey experience categories:

Years of experience	Starts	Win rate	Average earnings per start
10 years or less	906	15%	\$11,224
11-20 years	1097	19%	\$16,055
Over 20 years	726	16%	\$18,637



Jockeys with a decade or less of riding experience had the lowest overall win rate, 15%. This was mildly lower than jockeys with over 20 years of experience (16%) and several points lower than jockeys with 11-20 years of experience, who topped the rankings with an average win rate of 19%.

Digging into these numbers a little further, seven of the 16 jockeys in the 11-20 years category boasted win rates between 20% and 24%, whereas none of the jockeys with over 20 years of experience exceeded 19% and those with 10 or fewer years of experience achieved a maximum 18% win rate.

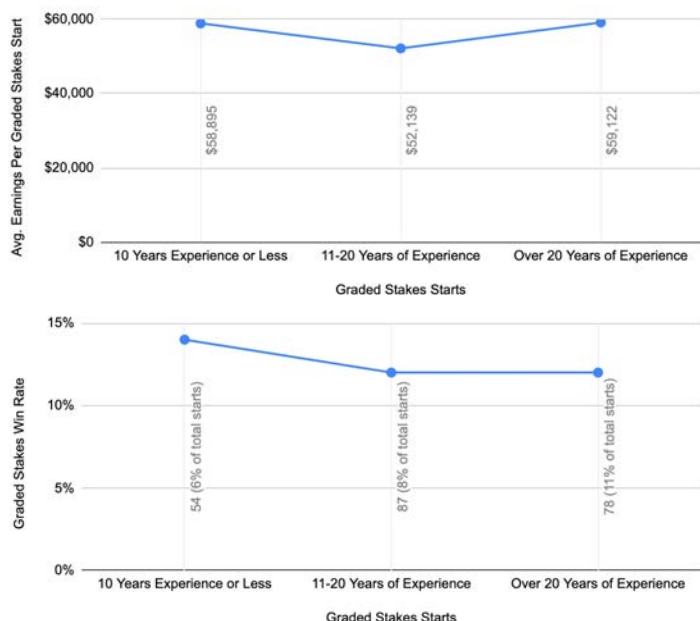
The least-experienced jockeys also had the lowest average earnings per start at \$11,224. Jockeys with 11-20 years of experience fared better with average earnings of \$16,055 per start, but it was the jockeys with over 20 years of experience who earned the most per ride at \$18,637, topping the other two categories by 66% and 16%, respectively.

WHAT IS DRIVING THE HIGH WIN RATES FOR JOCKEYS WITH 11-20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE?

It may be partly the fact jockeys in this experience bracket ride the most races. In 2024, they averaged 1,097 rides compared to 726 for jockeys with over 20 years of experience and 906 for jockeys who had been riding for 10 years or less. It stands to reason that jockeys in the 11-20 years bracket are in high demand and thus ride a large number of well-regarded horses, though this hypothesis can't be tested with our dataset.

However, we can gain additional clues by digging into the fact jockeys with over 20 years of experience earn more per start than jockeys in the 11-20 years group. This monetary success is driven in part by the fact veteran jockeys are often named to ride high-profile horses in rich graded stakes races. Their experience is valued on big days, and this shows up when analyzing the win rates and earnings per start of the three jockey categories in graded stakes:

Years of experience	Graded stakes starts	Graded stakes win rate	Average earnings per graded stakes start
10 years or less	54 (6% of total starts)	14%	\$58,895
11-20 years	87 (8% of total starts)	12%	\$52,139
Over 20 years	78 (11% of total starts)	12%	\$59,122



Here we find a few interesting data points. Jockeys with 10 or fewer years of riding experience have the highest win rate in graded stakes, 14%. They also have the second-highest earnings per start, \$58,895.

The win rate for jockeys with 11-20 years of experience drops sharply, from 19% overall to 12% in graded stakes. The win rate for jockeys with over 20 years of experience is likewise 12%, dropping a smaller amount from 16% overall. Even though jockeys in these two categories win at an identical 12% rate, the average amount they earn per start varies widely. Jockeys with over 20 years of experience earned \$59,122, about 13% more than the \$52,139 average compiled by jockeys with 11-20 years of experience.

Another important note: jockeys with over 20 years of experience rode in an average of 78 graded stakes in 2024, representing nearly 11% of their total rides. Jockeys with 11-20 years of experience rode only 8% of the time in graded stakes (averaging 87 rides), while

jockeys with 10 or fewer years of experience rode in an average of 54 graded stakes, 6% of their rides.

CONCLUSIONS

One year and 30 of the most accomplished jockeys is a limited sample size. But there are a few notable takeaways from the data:

- Jockeys with 11-20 years of riding experience are in the primes of their careers and widely in demand. They often ride over 1,000 horses a year and win a higher percentage of starts (19% on average) than jockeys with more experience, over 20+ years (16%), and less experience, under 11 years (15%).
- Notwithstanding the above, win rates in graded stakes are similar for jockeys of all experience levels.
- Jockeys with over 20 years of experience make a higher percentage of their starts (11%) in graded stakes, compared to jockeys in the 11-20 years bracket (8%) and jockeys who have been riding 10 years or less (6%).
- Presumably because they spend more of their time riding in graded stakes, jockeys with over 20 years of experience earn 16% more purse money per start than jockeys with 11-20 years of experience and 66% more than jockeys with 10 or fewer years of experience.

Combining all of these elements together, it appears the win rates and earnings of North America's top Thoroughbred jockeys are influenced by the types and number of races they ride—which is affected by their years of experience—instead of their years of experience directly. When riding in a specific subset of lucrative races (graded stakes), the jockeys in all three experience categories recorded similar success metrics.



STUDY: IS THE AVERAGE AGE OF KENTUCKY DERBY-WINNING JOCKEYS RISING?

by Keeler Johnson

AVERAGE AGE OF KENTUCKY DERBY-WINNING JOCKEYS: DATA ANALYSIS

The following chart shows the ages of every Kentucky Derby-winning jockey of the past 100 years, along with the average age for each 10-year period:

YEAR	AVERAGE AGE IN YEAR OF DERBY WIN
1925-1934	26.7
1935-1945	24.8
1945-1954	26.4
1955-1964	27.1
1965-1974	32.2
1975-1984	31.3
1985-1994	36
1995-2004	34.7
2005-2014	38.1
2015-2024	40

From 1925 through 1964, the average age of Kentucky Derby-winning jockeys held fairly steady, ranging from a low of 24.8 years to a high of 27.1 years. A handful of teenage jockeys won the Derby during this 40-year timeframe, while the oldest Derby-winning jockeys turned 36 years old the year they won.

However, the average winning age jumped to 32.2 years in the 1965-1974 period. Eight of the 10 jockeys in the timeframe were in their 30s the year they won the Derby, whereas none of the previous 10-year samples contained more than three Derby-winning jockeys in their 30s.

The story was much the same from 1975-1984. While Steve Cauthen (18) and Ronnie Franklin (20, though actually 19 on the day of his Derby win) lowered the average winning age slightly to 31.3 years, the remaining eight Derby-winning jockeys ranged in age from 31 years to 38 years.

Cauthen and Franklin remain the last teens to win the Kentucky Derby. From 1985-1994 the average age of Derby-winning jockeys climbed to 36 years. In 1985, Angel Cordero Jr. became the first jockey in our 100-year sample to win the Derby past the age of 40, and the following year Bill Shoemaker became the first winner past the age of 50. Seven of the 10 Derby-winning jockeys were in their 30s or older, and the youngest was 25.

Without Shoemaker contributing a record, the average age of Kentucky Derby-winning jockeys from 1995-2004 decreased slightly to 34.7 years. But nine of the 10 were aged 30 or older, including two who turned 40 the year they won.



In the early days of the Kentucky Derby (G1), the winning jockeys were often young. Alonzo Clayton and James “Soup” Perkins were only 15 years old when they won the Derby in 1892 and 1895, respectively.

Kentucky Derby starters were asked to carry less weight in those days; as little as 97 or 100 pounds in the first few editions following the Derby’s 1875 inauguration. The current standard weight of 126 pounds (121 pounds for fillies) didn’t come into play until 1920.

In decades since, it’s become rare for teenage jockeys to win the Kentucky Derby. At the same time, jockeys in their 40s and even their 50s have enjoyed increasing success in the Run for the Roses.

Anecdotally, it appears the average age of Kentucky Derby-winning jockeys has increased over the past 100 years. Does this hold up under closer scrutiny? Let’s analyze the data and find out.

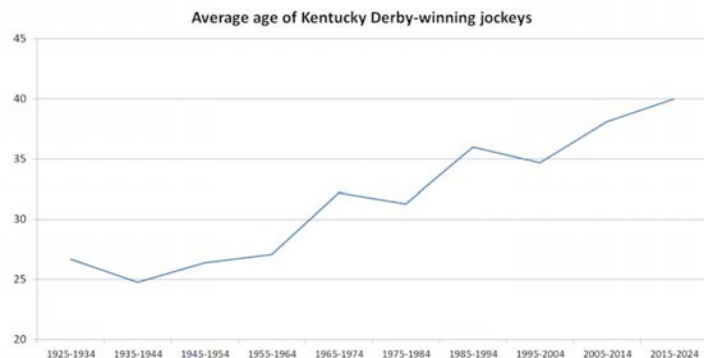
AVERAGE AGE OF KENTUCKY DERBY-WINNING JOCKEYS: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We’ve reviewed 100 years of Kentucky Derby history from 1925 through 2024. We’ve listed the age of every Derby-winning jockey and calculated the average age of the winning jockeys across 10-year periods (1925-1934, 1935-1944, 1945-1954, etc.). This will allow us to chart whether the average age of Kentucky Derby-winning jockeys is indeed increasing.

One note: the listed jockey ages are based on the birthday the jockey celebrated in the year of his Kentucky Derby win. Bill Shoemaker is listed as winning the 1986 Kentucky Derby at age 55 because he turned 55 in 1986, even though he didn’t celebrate his 55th birthday until 3 1/2 months after the 1986 Kentucky Derby.

The average age of Derby-winning jockeys climbed to 38.1 years in 2005-2014, when six Derby-winning jockeys turned 40 or older in the year of their triumph. Two others were in their 30s, and the youngest—Mario Gutierrez—turned 26 the year he won.

The latest sample, 2015-2024, saw the average age of Kentucky Derby-winning jockeys climb again to a record 40 years. Mike Smith (who turned 53 in 2018), John Velazquez (49 in 2020), and Javier Castellano (46 in 2023) became the second-, third-, and fourth-oldest winning jockeys in Derby history. The youngest winner in the sample was Flavien Prat, who turned 27 in 2019.



CONCLUSIONS

Starting in the late 1960s, the average age of Kentucky Derby-winning jockeys has steadily climbed with only minor setbacks along the way. The average for 2015-2024—40 years—is 48% higher than the 27.1 years from 1955-1964 and 61% higher than the low of 24.8 years from 1935-1944.

Furthermore, in the 50 years from 1925-1974, the average age of Kentucky Derby-winning jockeys was 27.4 years. That number increased 31% to an average age 36 years from 1975-2024.

Many factors may be influencing the rising average age of Kentucky Derby-winning riders. Just to speculate, the average age of all jockeys may be increasing, and there may be fewer jockeys getting started as teenagers than there were a century ago.

Also, the Kentucky Derby is a challenging race to ride. It's the only Thoroughbred horse race in North America that routinely features a 20-horse field. Judging the pace and navigating through traffic isn't easy, and experience may be one reason why older jockeys are enjoying increasing success in the Run for the Roses.

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HOW OLD CAN A THOROUGHBRED HORSE JOCKEY BE? SUCCESS STORIES AFTER AGE 50

by Keeler Johnson

How old can a Thoroughbred horse jockey be?

In many sports, youth is an advantage for athletes. That's not always the case with jockeys in Thoroughbred horse racing. Experience goes a long way in helping jockeys judge pace and guide horses through traffic. And while many top jockeys are in their 20s and 30s, it's common to see riders in their 40s and 50s achieve success as well.

Which brings us back to our opening question: **how old can a jockey be?** Horse racing's treasure trove of historical data can provide us with the answer.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We'll begin by establishing a baseline: what is the average age of jockeys competing at the highest level of U.S. Thoroughbred horse racing? To answer this question, we'll calculate the average age of the top 10 leading jockeys by earnings every year from 2015-2024, as recorded by industry database Equibase.

Then we'll pour over other types of statistical data—winning percentages, all-time wins and earnings rankings, lists of Kentucky Derby (G1)-winning and Breeders' Cup-winning jockeys—and search for jockeys who achieved success at ages at least 50% older than the baseline average age of leading jockeys.

ANALYSIS

Between 2015 and 2024, the average age of the top 10 jockeys by earnings ranged from 30.6 years to 35.5 years. The average age for the entire decade was 32.56 years.

AVERAGE AGE OF THE TOP 10 HIGHEST-EARNING JOCKEYS, BY YEAR

Year	Average age
2024	34.7
2023	35.4
2022	32.9
2021	31.9
2020	32.4
2019	30.8
2018	30.6
2017	33.2
2016	32.2
2015	31.5
2015-2024	32.56

This means **a jockey 50% older than the average leading rider would be 48.84 years old, which we'll round to 49 years.**

RECENT LEADING JOCKEYS BY EARNINGS

From 2015 through 2024, two jockeys in the 49-and-older bracket finished among the top 10 jockeys by earnings.

Mike Smith cracked the top 10 at age 51 in 2016 and again at 52 in 2017. John Velazquez turned 49 in 2020 and has finished in the top 10 every year since then, most recently at age 53 in 2024.

ALL-TIME LEADING JOCKEYS BY WINS

Unsurprisingly, the winningest jockeys of all time have enjoyed long careers allowing them to accumulate thousands of wins. They've demonstrated that top-tier success can be found at ages much older than average for leading jockeys.

Russell Baze is the winningest jockey in U.S. and Canadian history. In 2008, the year he turned 50, Baze became the first rider on the Equibase rankings to win 10,000 races. He broke the 11,000 milestone in 2010, cracked 12,000 in 2013, and **retired in 2016—a couple months shy of his 58th birthday—with a grand total of 12,842 victories.**

OLDEST JOCKEY TO WIN A RACE

The **winningest jockey currently active is Perry Wayne Ouzts**, fifth all-time with 7,488 wins through the end of 2024. In 2024, **the year he turned 70, Ouzts won 69 out of 295 races, compiling a lofty 23% win rate** that ranks as his highest since at least 1976. Records indicate that **Ouzts is the oldest jockey (and only septuagenarian) to win a Thoroughbred race at an officially recognized U.S. racetrack.**

OLDEST JOCKEY TO RIDE IN A RACE

In 2005, jockey **Frank Amonte Sr. rode his last winning horse at age 69.** But he didn't stop riding for several more years. On Sept. 6, 2011—the day after turning 76—**Amonte finished second in his final race. He's the oldest jockey to ride a Thoroughbred in a race at a recognized U.S. racetrack.**

KENTUCKY DERBY-WINNING JOCKEYS

The **oldest jockey to win the Kentucky Derby (G1) is Bill Shoemaker.** About 3 1/2 months before turning 55 years old, Shoemaker guided Ferdinand to a decisive triumph in the 1986 Kentucky Derby.

Two other jockeys have won the Kentucky Derby at roughly age 49 or older. **John Velazquez was less than three months away from turning 49 when he won the 2020 Kentucky Derby aboard Authentic.** In 2018, not long before **turning 53 years old, Mike Smith rode Justify to sweep the 2018 Triple Crown.**

BREEDERS' CUP-WINNING JOCKEYS

The **oldest jockey to win a Breeders' Cup race** is Bill Shoemaker. In 1987, after **turning 56**, Shoemaker rode Ferdinand to win the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1).

Mike Smith nearly matched the record, **winning the 2021 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1)** aboard Corniche at age 56, but he was technically a few days younger than when Shoemaker won the Classic.

Several other jockeys have won Breeders' Cup races in their 50s, including Frankie Dettori, John Velazquez, Lester Piggott, and Gary Stevens. Piggott was only **nine days short of 55** when he won the 1990 Breeders' Cup Mile (G1) aboard Royal Heroine.

GRADE 1-WINNING JOCKEYS

Jockeys approaching 60 years of age have been known to win races of the highest caliber.

In 2024, **59-year-old Mike Smith rode Subsanador to win the California Crown (G1)** by a head in a three-horse photo finish.

Smith's drive to the wire was almost as exciting as the stretch run of the 1966 San Juan Capistrano Handicap, which marked the final ride of **59-year-old Johnny Longden**. In an incredible conclusion to a much-publicized race, **Longden guided George Royal to win by a nose**, retiring as the winningest jockey to that point in time with 6,032 wins.

Although races weren't graded in 1966, the San Juan Capistrano was a top-tier race of the era, and it carried Grade 1 status from the introduction of grading in 1973 until 2003.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the average age of leading jockeys in the U.S. and Canada is about 32.5 years old, **jockeys at least 50% older—ages 49 and up—regularly achieve high levels of success. Jockeys between the ages of 50 and 59 have won many Grade 1 races and are occasionally seen in the winner's circle at the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup.**

Meanwhile, **Perry Wayne Ouzts has demonstrated that it's possible for a jockey to compile an elite win percentage at the age of 70**, and **Frank Amonte Sr. showed age 76 isn't too old to ride competitively.** If a jockey stays healthy and fit, it's not impossible for a successful career to span more than half a century.



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<div><div>12</div><div>Cathryn Sophia (E/P 5) ⑨</div><div>Own: Cash Is King Lic</div><div>Green, Multi-colored Crown, Green Shamrocks On White</div><div>CASTELLANO JAVIER (0 0-0-0 0%)</div><div><div>2016</div><div>494</div><div>22%</div><div>54%</div><div>-0.54</div></div><div><div>+JKYw/EP types</div><div>591</div><div>26%</div><div>57%</div><div>-0.15</div></div><div><div>+JKYw/Trn L60</div><div>2</div><div>50%</div><div>100%</div><div>+10.60</div></div><div><div>+JKYw/ Routes</div><div>107</div><div>22%</div><div>54%</div><div>-0.28</div></div></div> <div><div>7</div><div>B. f. 3 FTMSEP 2014 \$30k</div><div>Sire: Street Boss (Street Cry (IRE)) \$12,500</div><div>Dam: Sheave (Mineshaft)</div><div>Brdr: Robert T Manfuso (MD)</div><div>Trnr: Servis John C (0 0-0-0 0%)</div></div> <div><div>8</div><div>Prime Power: 147.1 (1st)</div></div> <div><div>12</div><div>Life: 5 4- 0- 1</div><div>2016 3 2- 0- 1</div><div>2015 2 2- 0- 0</div><div>CD 0 0- 0- 0</div><div>\$385,520 102</div><div>\$295,520 99</div><div>\$90,000 102</div><div>\$0 0</div><div>Fst (109)</div><div>Off (109)</div><div>Dis (108)</div><div>Trf (110)</div><div>AW</div></div> <div><div>10</div><div>5 4- 0- 1</div><div>0 0- 0- 0</div><div>0 0- 0- 0</div><div>0 0- 0- 0</div><div>\$385,520 102</div><div>\$0</div><div>\$0</div><div>\$0</div><div>\$0</div></div> <div><div>1</div><div>E1 92</div><div>E2/Late 99</div><div>SPD 90</div><div>99</div></div> <div><div>5</div><div>Sire Stats: AWD 6.7</div><div>Dam's Sire: AWD 7.3</div><div>Dam's Stats: Unraced</div><div>Sold At: FTMSEP 2014</div><div>15% Mud</div><div>15% Mud</div><div>100% 2yo</div><div>241 MudSts</div><div>820 MudSts</div><div>1str</div><div>1.57spi</div><div>2.23spi</div><div>1w 1sw 18.02dpi</div><div>StudFee: \$15,000</div></div> <div><div>14</div><div>★ Finished 3rd in last race ★ Best Dirt Speed is fastest among today's starters</div><div>★ Hot Jockey in last 7 days (13 4-5-1)</div></div> <div><div>15</div><div>★ Failed as favorite in last race</div><div>★ Poor 'Graded Stakes' trainer record: 7% wins 28 sts</div></div> <div><div>15</div><div>DATE TRK</div><div>09Apr16Kee6</div><div>27Feb16GP5</div><div>30Jan16GP3</div><div>05Dec15Lrl5</div><div>30Oct15Prx5</div><div>16</div><div>DIST</div><div>1 1/16 ft</div><div>1m ft</div><div>7 ft</div><div>7 ft</div><div>6 ft</div><div>17</div><div>TIME</div><div>:24</div><div>:24</div><div>:223</div><div>:23</div><div>:222</div><div>18</div><div>FRACTIONAL TIMES</div><div>:47 1:11</div><div>:47 1:11 1:363</div><div>:452 1:094 1:22</div><div>:463 1:11 1:23</div><div>:463 1:11 1:11</div><div>19</div><div>RACE TYPE</div><div>1000</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>20</div><div>RACE TYPE</div><div>1000</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>21</div><div>RACE TYPE</div><div>1000</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>1100</div><div>22</div><div>RACE 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