



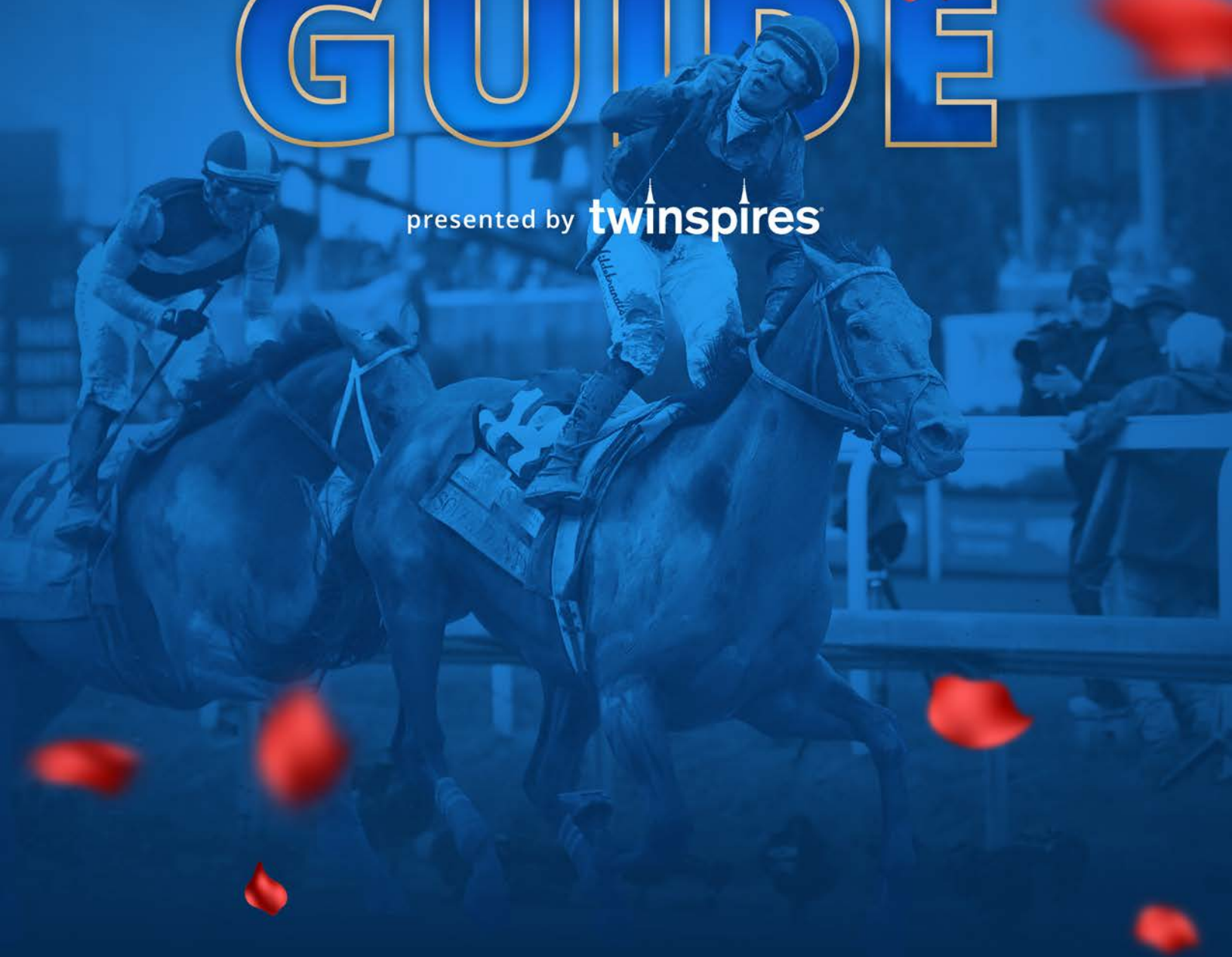
152™

KENTUCKY  DERBY

KENTUCKY DERBY 152

BETTING GUIDE

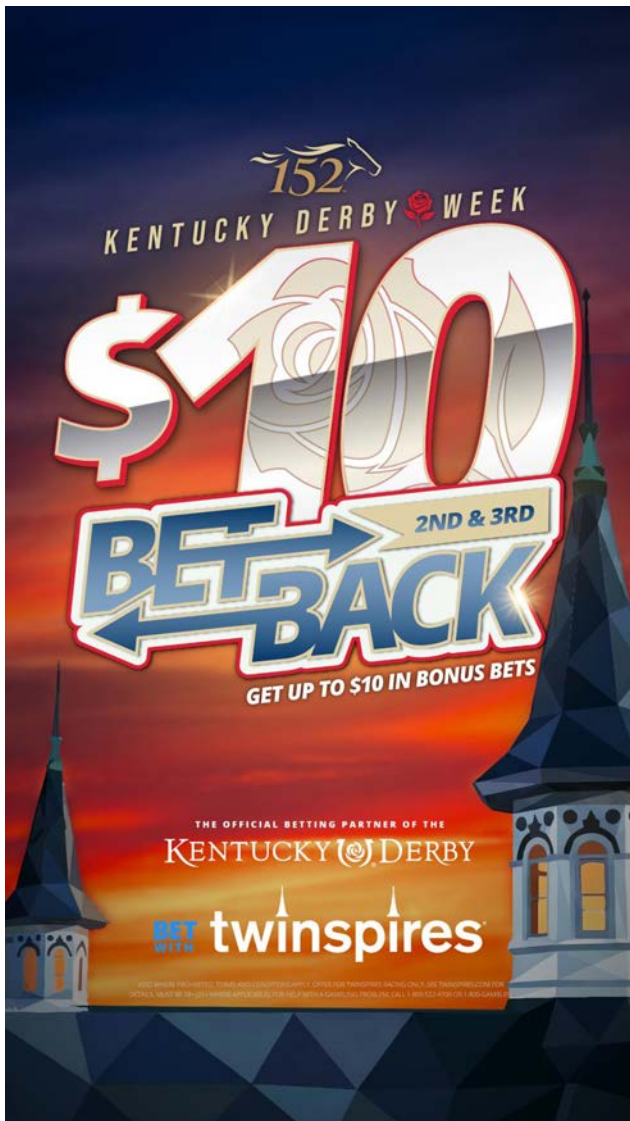
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KENTUCKY DERBY 152 BETTING GUIDE



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RACE & LIVE BLOG SCHEDULE

LIVE BLOG SCHEDULE

OPENING DAY

Saturday, April 25, 2026 12:45PM ET

- Kentucky Derby and
- Kentucky Oaks draw information 2:00PM ET

AMA on Reddit Featuring James Scully after post draw

THURBY

Thursday, Apr 30, 2026 12:45PM ET

KENTUCKY OAKS

Friday, May 1, 2026 12:30AM ET

KENTUCKY DERBY

Saturday, May 2, 2026 11:00AM ET



STAKES RACES SCHEDULE

DATE	GRADE	PURSE	RACE
Saturday, April 25	Listed	\$200,000	Roxelana Stakes
Wednesday, April 29	Listed	\$200,000	The Isaac Murphy Marathon
Wednesday, April 29	Black Type	\$250,000	Kentucky Juvenile Stakes
Thursday, April 30	Black Type	\$200,000	St. Matthews Overnight Stakes
Thursday, April 30	GI	\$400,000	UAE President Cup Arabian Stakes
Thursday, April 30	Listed	\$350,000	Opening Verse Stakes
Thursday, April 30	GIII	\$300,000	Mamzelle Stakes
Friday, May 1	GIII	\$750,000	Alysheba Stakes
Friday, May 1	GI	\$1,000,000	La Troienne Stakes
Friday, May 1	GI	\$1,500,000	Kentucky Oaks
Friday, May 1	GIII	\$700,000	Eight Belles Stakes
Friday, May 1	GII	\$500,000	Unbridled Sidney Stakes
Friday, May 1	GII	\$600,000	Edgewood Stakes
Friday, May 1	GIII	\$500,000	Modesty Stakes
Saturday, May 2	Listed	\$200,000	Knicks Go Overnight Stakes
Saturday, May 2	GII	\$750,000	Pat Day Mile
Saturday, May 2	GI	\$1,000,000	Churchill Downs Stakes
Saturday, May 2	GI	\$1,000,000	Derby City Distaff
Saturday, May 2	GI	\$5,000,000	Kentucky Derby
Saturday, May 2	GII	\$1,000,000	Churchill Distaff Turf Mile
Saturday, May 2	GII	\$600,000	Twin Spires Turf Sprint
Saturday, May 2	GI	\$1,000,000	American Turf Stakes
Saturday, May 2	GI	\$1,500,000	Turf Classic Stakes

MEET THE CONTENDERS

by Vance Hanson



KENTUCKY OAKS

1. MEANING



PRO: Showed improved speed winning SA Oaks (G2) as odds-on choice.

CON: Wasn't beating much in California aside from Explora.

2. LIFE OF JOY



PRO: Took massive step forward in FG Oaks (G2); blinkers have helped.

CON: Well held by Zany at Tampa Bay Downs.

3. PERCY'S BAR



PRO: Fired big off layoff in Ashland (G1), thus is relatively fresh.

CON: Has not been as dominant outside of Keeneland.

4. BELLA BALLERINA



PRO: Sis won the Kentucky Oaks and she's proven over the track.

CON: Final prep in FG Oaks was not overly fast; lifetime best needed.

5. COUNTING STARS



PRO: Eye-catching win in Fantasy (G3), albeit without Explora in the field.

CON: Not immune to running some head-scratching clunkers.

6. PROM QUEEN



PRO: Took huge step forward in GP Oaks (G2); sure to be overlooked a bit.

CON: Beat mostly one-turn types in that prep; waters much deeper here.

7. ALWAYS A RUNNER



PRO: Popped up to win Gazelle (G3) off slow debut score; has high ceiling.

CON: Faces a lot tougher here and lacks experience others have.

8. EXPLORA



PRO: Gem of consistency and form of Honeybee (G3) success was flattered.

CON: Missed intended last prep, thus enters off considerable layoff.

9. ZANY



PRO: Long-time Oaks favorite not disgraced when beaten first time in Ashland.

CON: Has yet to match Demoiselle (G2) effort this season; potentially overbet.



10. SHE BE SMOOTH



PRO: Very impressive in Davona Dale (G2), though took a step back in GP Oaks.

CON: Enters as barn's second string behind Zany.

11. MY MISS MO



PRO: Second best in two main Gulfstream preps, though lost ground late in both.

CON: Form so far suggests one turn might be more ideal.

12. SEARCH PARTY



PRO: Prevailed in blanket Martha Washington S. finish; second best in Fantasy.

CON: Gives vibes of being a cut or two below the top players.

13. LUV YOUR NEIGHBOR



PRO: A reliable check-getter at FG over the winter; lone dud was on Tapeta.

CON: Win-shy filly decisively beaten in FG Oaks; distance a concern, too.

14. PASHMINA



PRO: Second-place run in Gazelle her best run yet in a stakes.

CON: Losses in softer Oaks preps suggests she's not quite good enough.

15. PARADISE



PRO: In the money all four starts and barn has won this three times.

CON: Ten-length drubbing in Gazelle significant; would need to quicken.

16. BOTTLE OF ROUGE



PRO: Aside from Breeders' Cup flop, form has been consistently good.

CON: Wins have mostly come against easier (Sunland) or around one turn.

17. LORELEI LEE



PRO: Versatile in style and enjoyed routing in Bourbonette Oaks.

CON: Has only run over Tapeta and against softer company.

18. LABWAH



PRO: Last three wins have been vs. fillies; UAE Derby (G2) flub forgivable.

CON: How she stacks up against the USA's best a complete unknown.



MEET THE CONTENDERS

by Vance Hanson



1. COMMANDMENT



PRO: Prevailed in both major GP preps; winner here and plenty fast.

CON: Getting the right trip perhaps the biggest concern.

2. FURTHER ADO



PRO: Blue Grass (G1) win easily the fastest prep; tough if he repeats it.

CON: Runs lights out at Keeneland; not so much elsewhere, yet.

3. RENEGADE



PRO: Barely broke a sweat in Arkansas Derby (G1) and Irad sticks by him.

CON: Speed ratings perhaps not as high as some would prefer.

4. SO HAPPY



PRO: Much improved effort in SA Derby (G1), proving he can stay 9f at least.

CON: California contingent not overly deep and extra furlong might be a stretch.

5. FULLEFFORT



PRO: Experienced and consistent; could easily rally for a piece.

CON: Has raced exclusively on turf and synthetic to this point.

6. THE PUMA



PRO: Ran too good to lose in Florida Derby (G1); improving at right time.

CON: Debuted in January so has had to play a little catch-up.

7. SILENT TACTIC



PRO: Eye-catching Southwest (G3) winner never worse than second in six starts.

CON: Others seem to be improving ratings-wise at a faster rate.

8. EMERGING MARKET



PRO: Up in time to win Louisiana Derby (G2) despite relative inexperience.

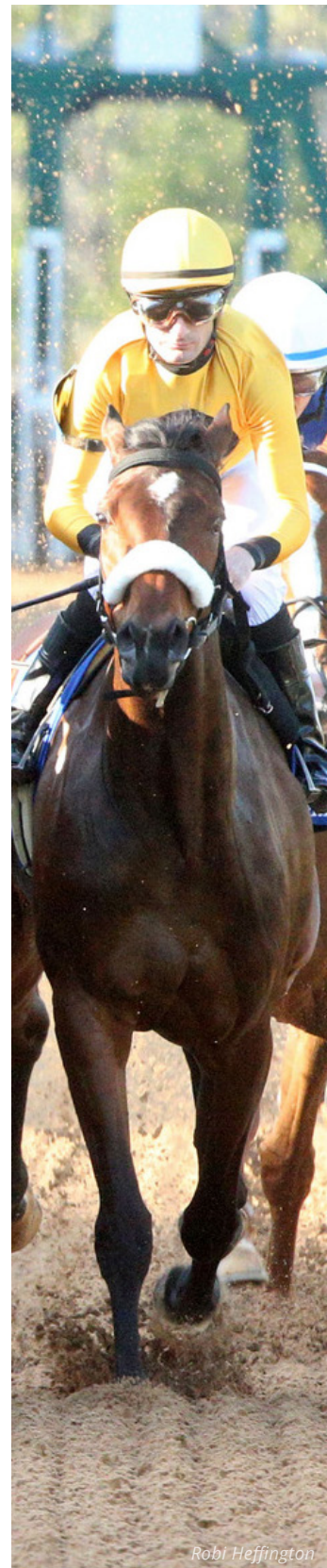
CON: That was not an especially deep prep; enters off only two starts.

9. ALBUS



PRO: Smart winner of the Wood Memorial (G2) coming off belated graduation.

CON: That was one of the slowest editions of the Aqueduct feature in a long time.



Robi Heffington

10. POTENTE



PRO: SA Derby runner-up has come a long way in a short time.
CON: Baffert's prior Derby winners seemed to have more going for them.

11. PAVLOVIAN



PRO: Much improved of late and narrowly missed upsetting Louisiana Derby.
CON: Consistently beaten by far lesser in the past.

12. RIGHT TO PARTY



PRO: Fared well stretching out two turns in Wood Memorial; capable of more.
CON: New York preps were not very fast, so hard to like in this spot.

13. INCREDIBOLT



PRO: Won Street Sense (G3) here and rebounded well in Virginia Derby.
CON: Enters off a longish break and speed ratings don't quite stack up.

14. GOLDEN TEMPO



PRO: Lecomte (G3) hero has never been out of the money; easily bred to stay.
CON: Plodding type will need a pace meltdown; other closers look speedier.

15. OTTINHO



PRO: Blue Grass effort far better than his one in the Withers.
CON: Not guaranteed to run and would need a lot more if he did.

16. STARK CONTRAST



PRO: Consistency a plus, though it's all been on turf and synthetic.
CON: Likely to bypass this for American Turf (G1).

17. CHIEF WALLABEE

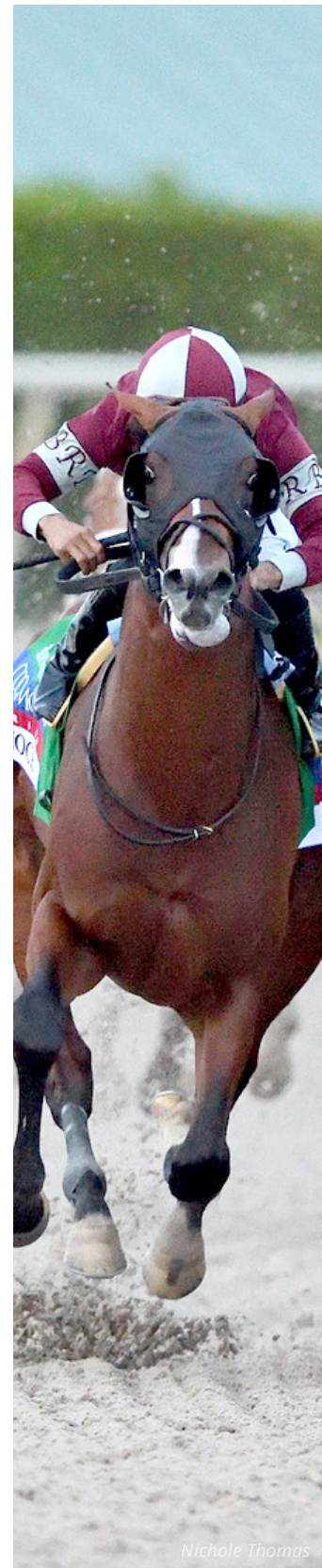


PRO: Fits on form, barn won this last year and he'll add blinkers for this.
CON: Down 0-2 to Commandment, plus must deal with other good ones.

18. CHIP HONCHO



PRO: Ran a good second in Risen Star (G2) to the now-sidelined Paladin.
CON: Inconsistency over the winter marks him as a big longshot.



Nichole Thomas

19. INTREPIDO



PRO: G1 winner at two, though form of that race hasn't held up too well.

CON: No factor in SA Derby and seems a "Derby Fever" entry.

20. DANON BOURBON



PRO: Untouchable in a trio of starts in Japan; sire liked this track.

CON: Relative class unknown and might need a wet track for best chance.

21. WONDER DEAN



PRO: Stamina should be no issue for UAE Derby (G2) winner.

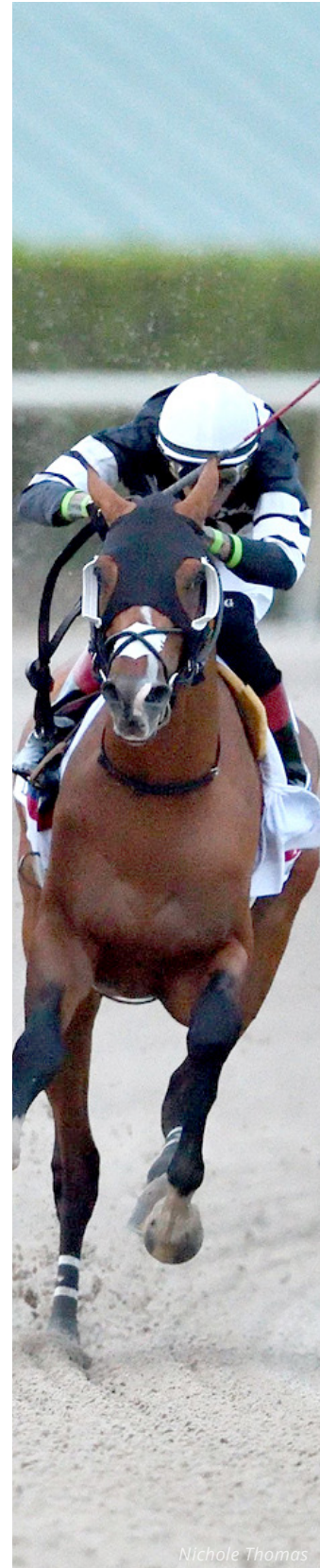
CON: Closest rival at Meydan had distance limitations; relative class in doubt.

22. SIX SPEED



PRO: Fast colt figures to help carve out the pace.

CON: Suspect to last this far after tiring late in shorter UAE Derby



Nichole Thomas



COMMANDMENT



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Can **Commandment** make history and become the fourth son of perennial leading North American sire Into Mischief to win the Kentucky Derby (G1)?

It's not out of the question. Winner of the Florida Derby (G1) in his final prep for the first Saturday in May, Commandment joined the Road to the Kentucky Derby with a rallying triumph in the Fountain of Youth (G2) at Gulfstream Park, the same race Into Mischief's son Sovereignty won in 2025. Sovereignty, of course, used the Fountain of Youth as a springboard to victories in the Kentucky Derby, Belmont (G1), and Travers (G1), in the process securing 2025 Horse of the Year honors.

Sovereignty is the latest Kentucky Derby winner, sired by Into Mischief. The first was Authentic, a late-blooming colt who won the Kentucky Derby as part of a 2020 Horse of the Year campaign bolstered by triumphs in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and Haskell (G1), plus a close runner-up finish in the Preakness (G1).

The year after Authentic won the roses, Into Mischief's son Mandaloun followed suit, claiming first prize in the 2021 Kentucky Derby thanks to the disqualification of Medina Spirit.

Into Mischief is one of five stallions to sire a record three Kentucky Derby winners, and he's the first to do so since Bull Lea completed his triple in 1957. For good measure, Into Mischief is the grandsire of 2024 Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan, who was sired by Into Mischief's two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Goldencents.

It's safe to say Into Mischief has been the dominant Kentucky Derby sire of the 2020s, and if Commandment prevails on the first Saturday in May, Into Mischief will stand alone as the only stallion to sire four Kentucky Derby winners.

Some pedigree handicappers will note that not all of Into Mischief's progeny shine over classic distances. While he's obviously capable of siring major winners over the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile journey—runaway Dubai World Cup (G1) winner Laurel River is another good example—many of Into Mischief's best runners have excelled as sprinters and milers.

In addition to the above-mentioned Goldencents, Into Mischief is the sire of Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile and Pegasus World Cup (G1) winner Life Is Good, Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) winner Gamine and Covfeffe, and the champion juveniles Ted Noffey, Citizen Bull,

and Wonder Wheel. The jury's still out on Ted Noffey's distance capabilities—he hasn't run farther than 1 1/16 miles yet—but the rest of these horses proved best racing seven furlongs to 1 1/8 miles.

While there are exceptions, Into Mischief's classic performers have tended to hail from strong female families. Sovereignty's dam sire is champion three-year-old male and Preakness winner Bernardini, while Mandaloun and Laurel River were produced from mares by 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) winner Empire Maker.

This is good news for Commandment. His dam, Sippican Harbor, is a daughter of 2013 Kentucky Derby winner Orb, so Commandment's pedigree is similar to those of Sovereignty and Mandaloun: by Into Mischief out of a daughter of a U.S. classic winner.

Orb competed with aplomb during his three-year-old campaign. His Kentucky Derby triumph was the culmination of a five-race win streak featuring triumphs in the Fountain of Youth and Florida Derby—the same Road to the Kentucky Derby prizes Commandment has won. Orb later finished third in the Belmont and Travers, reiterating his prowess over classic distances.

As a stallion, Orb achieved only limited success, and in 2021, he was sold to stand at stud in Uruguay. His lone U.S. Grade 1 winner was Commandment's dam, Sippican Harbor, though Orb also sired O Besos, who crossed the wire fifth (upgraded to fourth via disqualification) in the 2021 Kentucky Derby.

Sippican Harbor only raced at age two and scored her signature win in the seven-furlong Spinaway (G1). She may have been best as a sprinter, but her career was too brief to determine that for certain. It's worth noting Sippican Harbor's dam is Blossomed, who has also foaled 1 1/16-mile Sir Barton S. winner Crudo, plus Awesome Result, an eight-time winner over distances from 1,800 meters (about 1 1/8 miles) to 2,100 meters (about 1 5/16 miles) in Japan.

Blossomed, in turn, is a daughter of Deputy Minister, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Laurel Futurity (G1) and 1 1/16-mile Young American (G1). At stud, he enjoyed tremendous success; a select few of his best runners include the champion fillies and Hall of Fame inductees Go for Wand and Open Mind, Breeders' Cup Classic winner Awesome Again, and Belmont winner Touch Gold.

In short, there's enough stamina in the dam side of Commandment's pedigree to suggest he can become Into Mischief's record-breaking fourth Kentucky Derby winner.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

A winner of four consecutive races, Commandment established himself as a major Kentucky Derby (G1) contender by narrowly winning the Florida Derby (G1) and Fountain of Youth (G2) over quality competition, recording two of the fastest performances by a three-year-old this season. The bay colt romped by 5 1/4

COMMANDMENT CONT.

lengths when breaking his maiden at Churchill Downs last fall in his second start, and Commandment has displayed outstanding push-button acceleration and versatility, angling toward the rail in upper stretch to outfinish Chief Wallabee in the Fountain of Youth and circling rivals to edge The Puma in the Florida Derby. Seven of the last 20 Kentucky Derby winners prepped in the Florida Derby, which ranked as the deepest major qualifier this year, and Commandment appears poised to deliver another strong performance.

OWNER: Owned by Wathan Racing (Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani), Commandment will be their first Kentucky Derby starter.

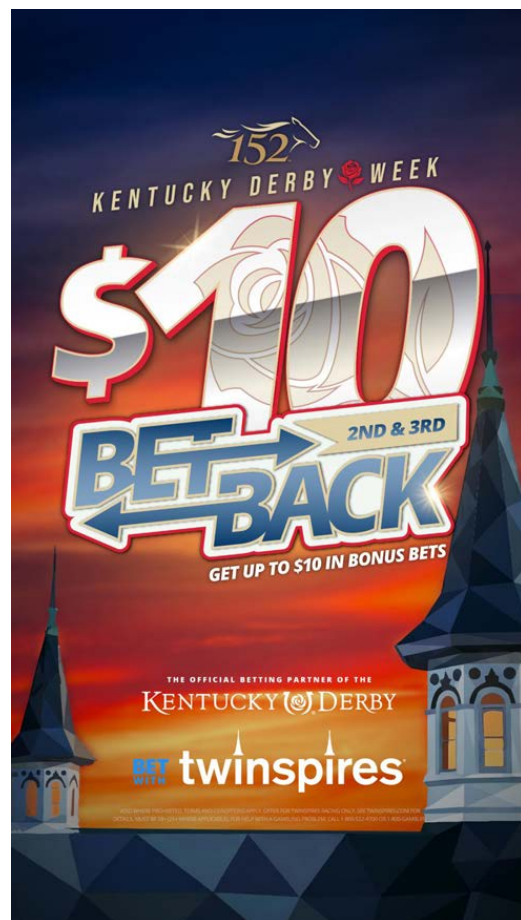
TRAINER: A native of Louisville, Ky., Brad Cox has been a presence on the Kentucky Derby scene since 2021, winning with Mandaloun and getting third with the eventual champion three-year-old male Essential Quality (both runners elevated one spot by disqualification) in his first appearance. The two-time Eclipse Award winner has saddled 10 runners over the last four years, finishing third with Angel of Empire in 2023 and fourth last year with Final Gambit, and Cox has two additional runners, Fulleffort and Further Ado, preparing for the 2026 Kentucky Derby.

JOCKEY: It's unusual for a top contender to keep replacing their rider while winning consecutive well-regarded prep races, but Luis Saez will pick up the Kentucky Derby mount after Irad Ortiz Jr. opted to ride Arkansas Derby (G1)-bound Renegade over Commandment in the Florida Derby and Flavien Prat selected Louisiana Derby (G2) winner Emerging Market over Commandment in the Kentucky Derby. Saez rode the Cox-trained Essential Quality, who captured the 2021 Belmont (G1) after finishing fourth in the Kentucky Derby, and that's his best official finish from 12 previous Kentucky Derby attempts. But he was up for Maximum Security, who was disqualified for interference after crossing first by 1 3/4 lengths in the 2019 Kentucky Derby. Saez also won in the 2024 Belmont with Dornoch.

BREEDER: Kentucky-bred Commandment will give Lee Pokoik his first Kentucky Derby starter as breeder. Commandment was entered but failed to sell (RNA) at a pair of sales before being purchased for \$500,000 as a yearling at the 2024 Keeneland September sale.

SIRE: Commandment is from the 14th crop of seven-time reigning leading sire Into Mischief, who achieved a record-tying third Kentucky Derby win as sire last year with Sovereignty, who came back to win the Belmont after skipping the Preakness. Into Mischief also produced back-to-back winners, Authentic and Mandaloun (2020-21). North America's most influential sire, Into Mischief's offspring earned more than \$31.8 million in 2025, and he's a son of Harlan's Holiday. Into Mischief will also be represented by Potente and Renegade this year.

DAM: Commandment is the first stakes winner out of the Grade 1-winning Sippican Harbor, a daughter of 2013 Kentucky Derby winner Orb. By Malibu Moon, Orb disappointed as a sire, with Sippican Harbor being his only U.S. graded stakes winner. And Commandment easily tops a small sample size for Orb as broodmare sire.



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[VIEW THEIR COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

FURTHER ADO



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Further Ado joined the Road to the Kentucky Derby with a rallying win in the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2) at Churchill Downs.

A decade ago, the Kentucky Jockey Club marked the stakes debut of Further Ado's sire, Gun Runner. The future 2017 Horse of the Year struggled in the Kentucky Jockey Club, finishing fourth, but matured to win 10 graded stakes (including six Grade 1s) and finish third in the 2016 Kentucky Derby.

By virtue of his win in the Kentucky Jockey Club, Further Ado accomplished more as a juvenile than Gun Runner. And thanks to a recent 11-length romp in the Blue Grass (G1), Further Ado is ahead of his sire as a young three-year-old too. If Further Ado keeps improving with maturity the way Gun Runner did, he may exceed his sire in the Kentucky Derby as well.

Four previous sons of Gun Runner have participated in the Kentucky Derby. Their results have been mixed. Taiba and Cyberknife found the challenge too steep in 2022, finishing 12th and 18th. Even though they entered as Grade 1 winners, they improved with maturity and ran their best races after the Kentucky Derby.

Disarm performed better in the 2023 Kentucky Derby, finishing fourth as a longshot. Then in 2024, Gun Runner's most accomplished son, Sierra Leone, finished second by a nose in the 150th Kentucky Derby. Again, though, Disarm and Sierra Leone ran their best races after the Kentucky Derby, with Disarm finishing second in the Travers (G1) and Sierra Leone triumphing in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) to earn champion three-year-old male honors.

Across the board, Gun Runner's progeny tend to improve with maturity. Many have excelled over route distances, including 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1) winner Early Voting and 1 1/4-mile Santa Anita H. (G1) conqueror Locked. But others have been sprinters and milers, such as champion two-year-old filly Echo Zulu and Grade 1 winners Gunite, Society, Vahva, and Gun Pilot. Improving with age is a trend that unifies Gun Runner's progeny more than distance preferences.

Even Gun Runner's elite juveniles have trained on to enjoy success as older horses. Echo Zulu, Gunite, and Locked all scored Grade 1 wins as juveniles, and they were still winning at the Grade 1 level (and arguably running better than ever) as four-year-olds.

This is an exciting thought for Further Ado, and nothing in the bottom half of his pedigree disagrees with the notion he'll improve with maturity.

Further Ado's dam is Sky Dreamer, a debut-winning juvenile who ran second in the Arlington Oaks (G3) at age three. She's found greater success as a broodmare; prior to Further Ado, she foaled Kimbear, who peaked at age six with a triumph in the Al Maktoum Challenge Round 1 (G2).

Sky Dreamer is a daughter of Sky Mesa. While Sky Mesa peaked as a juvenile with wins in the Hopeful (G1) and Breeders' Futurity (G1), he also flashed talent during a brief three-year-old campaign, finishing 7 1/4 lengths ahead of Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Funny Cide when second in the Haskell (G1).

As a stallion, Sky Mesa is best known for siring General Quarters, a multi-surface route racer who won the Blue Grass (G1) on synthetic, the Woodford Reserve Turf Classic (G1) on turf, and the Sam F. Davis (G3) on dirt. Sky Mesa has also sired Canadian champions Ami's Mesa, Dynamic Sky, and Sky Promise; the first two excelled as older horses, while Sky Promise was an accomplished three-year-old.

Sky Mesa's record as a broodmare sire is similar. His daughters have foaled Harmonize, winner of three graded stakes—including the Del Mar Oaks (G1)—from ages two to four; Bowies Hero, winner of the Frank E. Kilroe Mile (G1) and Shadwell Turf Mile (G1) at ages four and five; Private Creed, a stakes-winning juvenile who matured to win the Franklin-Simpson (G2) at age three; and Mansetti, winner of the King's Plate S. and Marine (G3) as a three-year-old.

If there's one downside to Sky Mesa from a Kentucky Derby perspective, it's the fact that his progeny have compiled an average winning distance of 6.8 furlongs, indicating a stallion who sires plenty of sprinters and milers. But the average winning distance of Gun Runner's progeny is a stouter 7.5 furlongs, which should help counterbalance Sky Mesa's speedier genetics.

In any case, Further Ado is bred top and bottom to improve with maturity. If he turns out to be one of the long-winded Gun Runners like Sierra Leone or Locked—as his romping win in the 1 1/8-mile Blue Grass suggests will be the case—then Further Ado should be a force to reckon with in the 2026 Kentucky Derby and beyond.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT BY JAMES SCULLY

A romping winner of the Blue Grass (G1), Further Ado registered the top Brisnet Speed rating (105) for any 2026 Kentucky Derby contestant, posting an 11-length decision. His two best performances (from a numbers perspective) came at Keeneland, breaking his maiden by 20 lengths last fall, but the chestnut colt did capture the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2)

FURTHER ADO CONT.

at Churchill Downs in November. Further Ado ran well when opening 2026 in the Tampa Bay Derby (G3), missing by three-quarters of a length to The Puma in second, and his tactical ability (racing within a few lengths of the pacesetter from the start in all three stakes attempts) may prove advantageous in a bulky Kentucky Derby field filled with midpack stalkers and confirmed closers. The concern exists for a regression following a big effort, but we've witnessed Kentucky Derby winners run back to a massive showing in the final prep, and Further Ado will take some beating if he carries his form forward.

OWNER: Further Ado will be the fifth Kentucky Derby starter for Spendthrift Farm (Eric P. Gustavson) since B. Wayne Hughes purchased the historic stud farm in 2004. After initially serving as president, Gustavson and his wife, Tamara, took over stewardship when Hughes passed away in 2021. Spendthrift co-owned 2020 Kentucky Derby winner Authentic.

TRAINER: A native of Louisville, Ky., Brad Cox has been a presence on the Kentucky Derby scene since 2021, winning with Mandaloun and getting third with the eventual champion three-year-old male Essential Quality (both runners elevated one spot by disqualification) in his first appearance. The two-time Eclipse Award winner has saddled 10 runners over the last four years, finishing third with Angel of Empire in 2023 and fourth last year with Final Gambit, and Cox has two additional runners, Commandment and Fulleffort, preparing for the 2026 Kentucky Derby.

JOCKEY: With previous rider Irad Ortiz Jr. opting for Renegade, Further Ado will pick up the services of Hall of Famer John Velazquez. Velazquez is tied for the most Kentucky Derby wins by active jockeys, and tied for fourth in overall wins, guiding Animal Kingdom (2011), Always Dreaming (2017), and Authentic (2020) to glory. And he piloted Medina Spirit, who was disqualified post-race after leading all the way in 2021. From Puerto Rico, Velazquez made his first Kentucky Derby start in 1996, and his overall scorecard reads 26-3-2-0, finishing second aboard Invisible Ink (2001) and Code of Honor (2019). The Hall of Famer owns a personal sweep of the Triple Crown, winning the 2023 Preakness (G1) with National Treasure and the Belmont (G1) twice aboard Rags to Riches (2007) and Union Rags (2012), and Velazquez has won more than 6,800 races.

BREEDER: Further Ado was bred in Kentucky by John Oxley, who also bred Pyramid Peak, 17th in the 1995 Kentucky Derby. His wife, Deborah, bred 2024 Kentucky Derby runner-up Sierra Leone, and the Oxleys have been represented by eight Kentucky Derby runners as owners, including 2001 Kentucky Derby winner Monarchos. Further Ado passed through the sales ring twice, initially bringing \$275,000 as a yearling before selling for \$550,000 at the 2025 OBS April two-year-old sale.

SIRE: Further Ado is from the sixth crop of 2017 Horse of the Year Gun Runner. Third in the 2016 Kentucky Derby, Gun Runner made an immediate impact at stud, producing 2021 champion two-year-old filly Echo Zulu from his first crop, and

he's responsible for 2024 champion three-year-old male Sierra Leone, an earner of more than \$8.1 million who finished a nose second in the Kentucky Derby and third in the Belmont. Gun Runner also sired 2022 Preakness winner Early Voting.

DAM: A half-brother to Group 2-winning miler Kimbear, Further Ado is out of Grade 3 runner-up Sky Dreamer, who counts Grade 1 turf winner Dream Dancing as a half-sister. Further Ado counts 1999 champion older mare Beautiful Pleasure as his third maternal dam. Sky Dreamer is by Sky Mesa, a son of Pulpit who captured the Breeders' Futurity (G1) and Hopeful (G1) during an unbeaten juvenile campaign but was forced to miss the 2003 Triple Crown due to injury. As a broodmare sire, Sky Mesa is still looking to make a serious impact on the Triple Crown.

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RENEGADE



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Renegade has shown talent and stamina on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, winning the 1 1/16-mile Sam F. Davis S. and 1 1/8-mile Arkansas Derby (G1) in succession.

The testing 1 1/4-mile distance of the Kentucky Derby (G1) itself should be well within reach for Renegade. His pedigree is packed to overflowing with classic stamina.

A few years back, some pedigree handicappers might have doubted Renegade's ability to stay 1 1/4 miles. After all, he's a son of Into Mischief, winner of the 1 1/16-mile CashCall Futurity (G1) and runner-up in the seven-furlong Malibu (G1). Early in his stud career, Into Mischief was known for siring elite sprinters and milers, such as champion female sprinters Gamine and Covfefe—two winners of the seven-furlong Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1)—and also Life Is Good and Goldencents, who combined to win three editions of the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1).

But around the time Life Is Good was rising to prominence, Into Mischief began reinventing his stud career. He'd already sired 2018 Kentucky Derby third-place finisher Audible, and in 2020, Into Mischief's son Authentic won the Kentucky Derby and 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) during a Horse of the Year campaign, proving Into Mischief could sire an elite performer over classic distances.

The following year, Into Mischief sired a second Kentucky Derby winner when Mandaloun won the roses. In 2024, Into Mischief's son Laurel River dominated the 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Dubai World Cup (G1). And in 2025, Into Mischief became only the fifth stallion to sire three Kentucky Derby winners when Sovereignty claimed first prize under the Twin Spires.

Sovereignty reiterated his classic prowess by adding wins in the 1 1/4-mile Belmont (G1) and 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1) to his record. His Grade 1 triple secured 2025 Horse of the Year honors.

It appears many of Into Mischief's best route racers have inherited stamina from their dams. Sovereignty, for example, was produced by Crowned, a beautifully bred daughter of champion Bernardini out of the Empire Maker mare Mushka. Bernardini won the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1), Empire Maker took the 1 1/2-mile Belmont, and Mushka scored her signature win in the 1 1/8-mile Spinster (G1).

Fortunately for Renegade's Kentucky Derby chances, his female family is stuffed with stamina.

Renegade is the first foal produced by Spice Is Nice, a long-winded filly who scored her signature win in the 1 1/8-mile Allaire DuPont Distaff Match Series (G3). Spice Is Nice, in turn, is a daughter of Curlin out of the Bernardini mare Dame Dorothy.

Curlin needs no introduction. His exploits over classic distances earned him two Horse of the Year titles. Wins in the Preakness, Dubai World Cup, Breeders' Cup Classic, and two editions of the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) helped make him the first horse to earn over \$10 million in purse money.

If anything, Curlin has risen even higher at stud. He's arguably the most reliable source of classic dirt stamina in modern U.S. pedigrees. He's sired Preakness winners Exaggerator and Journalism (both runners-up in the Kentucky Derby), Belmont hero Palace Malice, and Kentucky Derby runner-up Good Magic. In addition, Curlin is the grandsire of Kentucky Derby winners Rich Strike (2022) and Mage (2023).

Now let's check out Dame Dorothy. Though she's best remembered for winning the seven-furlong Humana Distaff (G1), Dame Dorothy was also a capable route racer, winning the 1 1/16-mile Turnback the Alarm H. (G3) and running second in the 1 1/8-mile Santa Margarita (G1).

In addition to foaling Spice Is Nice, Dame Dorothy is the dam of Principe d'Oro (a four-time winner racing one mile to 1 1/8 miles on dirt) and Sgt. Pepper (a maiden winner racing 1 1/2 miles on turf).

We've already mentioned that Dame Dorothy's sire, Bernardini, won the Preakness. He also nabbed the Travers and Jockey Club Gold Cup on his way to earning champion three-year-old male honors. At stud, he counted Travers winners Stay Thirsty and Alpha among his best runners, but he's done even better as a broodmare sire.

Indeed, daughters of Bernardini have foaled not only Sovereignty, but also Kentucky Oaks (G1) winner Serengeti Empress, two-time Pegasus World Cup Turf (G1) winner Colonel Liam, Saudi Cup (G1) conqueror Emblem Road, four-time Grade 1 winner Clairiere, Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) victor Nysos, and Travers winner Catholic Boy, to name a few.

It's impossible to knock the pedigree of Renegade from a Kentucky Derby perspective. If he falls short on the first Saturday in May, his bloodlines won't be to blame.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

A smashing four-length winner of the Arkansas Derby (G1), Renegade is widely projected to be favored in the Kentucky Derby. The bay colt brings a formidable finishing kick,

RENEGADE CONT.

registering whopping triple-digit Brisnet Late Pace ratings for both outings this year, including a convincing triumph in Sam F. Davis at Tampa Bay Downs in early February. Since finishing second in the Remsen (G2) in early December, Renegade appears much improved at age 3, and his numbers suggest another forward move at Churchill Downs. He will need to work out a trip from off the pace, but Renegade rates as the horse to beat in the 2026 Run for the Roses.

OWNER: Robert and Lawana Low and Repole Stable (Mike Repole) campaign Renegade. The Lows retained an interest after selling at auction to Repole, and Renegade will be their third starter as owners, with Steppenwolfier finishing third in 2006 and Magnum Moon 19th in 2018. Repole has had seven runners in the Kentucky Derby, Mo Donegal's fifth in 2022 the best result, and he has had a pair of expected favorites, Forte (2023) and Uncle Mo (2011), withdrawn in the days leading up to the race. Mo Donegal gave Repole his first Triple Crown race winner when capturing the Belmont S.

TRAINER: A two-time winner, sending out Super Saver in 2010 and Always Dreaming in 2017, Hall of Fame trainer Todd Pletcher has had a record 65 starters in the Kentucky Derby. His first appearance came in 2000, sending four horses postward including third-placer Impeachment, and the Texas native has finished second with Invisible Ink (2001) and Bluegrass Cat (2006). Pletcher will be back in the 2026 Kentucky Derby after a one-year absence, missing only two editions since 2000, and he's sent out multiple runners 20 times. Pletcher also owns four Belmont wins: Rags to Riches (2007), Palace Malice (2013), Tapwrit (2017), and Mo Donegal (2022).

JOCKEY: A five-time Eclipse Award-winning jockey, Irad Ortiz Jr. will seek an elusive Kentucky Derby win in his 10th attempt this year. A fourth on Improbable in 2019 is his best result so far. Creator, winner of the 2012 Belmont S., provided Ortiz Jr. with his first Triple Crown race win, and he picked up a second Belmont victory with Mo Donegal, who finished fifth in the Kentucky Derby. Ortiz Jr. established a new single-season North American earnings record in 2025, with his mounts accumulating more than \$40 million, and he selected Renegade over a strong group of Kentucky Derby prep winners, guiding Commandment in the Fountain of Youth (G2), Fulleffort in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3), and Further Ado in the Blue Grass (G1).

BREEDER: Bred in Kentucky by Robert and Lawana Low, Renegade sold for \$950,000 as a yearling at the 2024 Keeneland September sale. After making their first appearance as breeders last year, with Citizen Bull finishing 15th, the Lows will be represented by their second consecutive Kentucky Derby starter.

SIRE: Renegade is from the 14th crop of seven-time reigning leading sire Into Mischief, who achieved a record-tying third Kentucky Derby win as sire last year with Sovereignty, who came back to win the Belmont after skipping the Preakness. Into Mischief also produced back-to-back winners Authentic and Mandaloun (2020-21). North America's most influential sire, Into Mischief's offspring earned more than \$31.8 million in 2025, and he's a son of Harlan's Holiday. Into Mischief will also be represented by Commandment Potente this year.

DAM: Renegade is the first foal to race out of the Grade 3-winning Spice Is Nice, who is by Curlin out of the Grade 1-winning Dame Dorothy. Dame Dorothy is by Bernardini, who is the broodmare sire of 2025 Kentucky Derby winner Sovereignty. Two-time Horse of the Year Curlin finished third in the 2007 Kentucky Derby, first in the Preakness, and second in the Belmont. His offspring include a pair of Preakness winners, Journalism (2025) and Exaggerator (2016), who both finished second in the Kentucky Derby; and 2013 Belmont S. winner Palace Malice. Curlin still looks to make an impact on Triple Crown races as a broodmare sire.

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SO HAPPY



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

After enjoying early success in sprints, **So Happy** stretched out over 1 1/8 miles to win the Santa Anita Derby (G1) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Having demonstrated his ability to handle two turns, So Happy now faces a new challenge: the 1 1/4-mile distance of the Kentucky Derby (G1). Is an additional furlong within his distance capabilities? Or will classic distances prove to be beyond his reach?

It's a fair question since So Happy is a son of Runhappy, the champion male sprinter of 2015. Runhappy excelled sprinting seven furlongs or less, going 7-for-7 while scoring wins in the Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1), King's Bishop (G1), and Phoenix (G3). In contrast, he failed to finish better than fourth in three starts over distances from one mile to 1 1/16 miles.

But even though Runhappy was a sprinter, his pedigree offered potential for success around two turns. His sire, Super Saver, won the 2010 Kentucky Derby and has since sired a handful of high-profile route racers. They include Happy Saver, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1); Letruska, a five-time Grade 1 winner over distances from 1 1/16 miles to 1 1/8 miles; Embellish the Lace, conqueror of the 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1); and Inside Straight, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Oaklawn H. (G2).

Furthermore, Runhappy's dam, Bella Jolie, scored her two wins racing 1 1/16 miles and one mile and 70 yards. Her other foals include Any Questions, a six-time winner over distances from one mile to 1 1/8 miles; Curlins Vow, a four-time winner from one mile to 1 1/8 miles; and Prayer Book, a two-time winner over one mile to 1 1/16 miles.

Bella Jolie, in turn, is a daughter of Broken Vow, winner of the Philip H. Iselin H. (G2) and Ben Ali (G3) racing 1 1/8 miles. Broken Vow's sire, Unbridled, won the 1990 Kentucky Derby, and Broken Vow's dam sire—Nijinsky II—swept the British Triple Crown.

With so many talented route racers in Runhappy's pedigree, he has the potential to pass on stamina at stud. And once in a while, he does. While the average winning distance of Runhappy's progeny is a sprint-oriented 6.6 furlongs, he's nevertheless the sire of Smile Happy, winner of the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2) and Alysheba (G2) over 1 1/16 miles, and Happy American, conqueror of the 1 1/16-mile Louisiana (G3) and a two-time winner racing 1 1/4 miles at Churchill Downs.

Even better, So Happy doesn't have to rely exclusively on Runhappy for stamina. The dam side of his pedigree may also contribute long-winded genetics to the mix.

So Happy was produced by the Blame mare So Cunning. Although So Cunning scored both of her wins in six-furlong sprints, she only ran three times in total and never tackled a two-turn race.

As a daughter of Blame, So Cunning might have proven effective running long if given sufficient opportunity. Blame was a top-tier route racer voted champion older male of 2010 after winning the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Whitney H. (G1), and Stephen Foster H. (G1) over distances from 1 1/8 miles to 1 1/4 miles.

Blame often passes on stamina at stud, with his progeny compiling a solid average winning distance of 7.3 furlongs. The best include Sibayan, winner of the 2,400-meter (about 1 1/2-mile) Preis von Europa (G1); Senga, triumphant in the 2,100-meter (about 1 5/16-mile) Prix de Diane (G1); Wet Paint, conqueror of the 1 1/8-mile Coaching Club American Oaks (G1); Nadal, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Arkansas Derby (G1); and Fault, victorious in the 1 1/8-mile Santa Margarita (G1).

Meanwhile, daughters of Blame have foaled major winners over a variety of distances. Simply in Front won the one-mile First Lady (G1). Forte won the 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1), 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1), and 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Futurity (G1), in addition to finishing second in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1). Reef Runner nabbed the 6 1/2-furlong Eddie D (G2) and 1,400-meter (about seven-furlong) 1351 Turf Sprint (G2), Switzerland took the 1,200-meter (about six-furlong) Coolmore Stud (G1), Kilwin starred in the seven-furlong Test (G1), and World Beater stayed 1 3/16 miles in the Saratoga Derby (G1).

So Happy doesn't have the strongest distance pedigree among potential 2026 Kentucky Derby contenders, and it's possible 1 1/8 miles is the upper end of his distance range. But there's also a chance the stoutest genetics of Runhappy have combined with the stamina of Blame to give So Happy a shot at staying 1 1/4 miles on the first Saturday in May.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

Winner of the San Vicente (G2) at seven furlongs earlier this year, So Happy faltered when trying two turns in the San Felipe (G2), checking in third, but rebounded stylishly while stretching to nine furlongs in the Santa Anita Derby (G1), punching his Kentucky Derby (G1) ticket with a comfortable 2 3/4-length win. The performance came back fast, generating triple-digit Brisnet Speed and Late Pace ratings for So Happy, and the bay colt possesses the tactical ability to race up close if desired. There are some concerns about the quality of the Santa Anita Derby field, and So Happy faces a distance check at 1 1/4 miles. But his numbers stack up well against his main rivals, and he'll aim to position himself for a serious challenge as the field turns for home in the Kentucky Derby.

SO HAPPY CONT.

OWNER: Norman Stables (Robbie Norman) and Saints or Sinners (Hans and Ana Maron) race So Happy. Norman will be in his second consecutive Kentucky Derby, finishing 11th with Coal Battle in 2025, and the Marons will experience their first Kentucky Derby as owners.

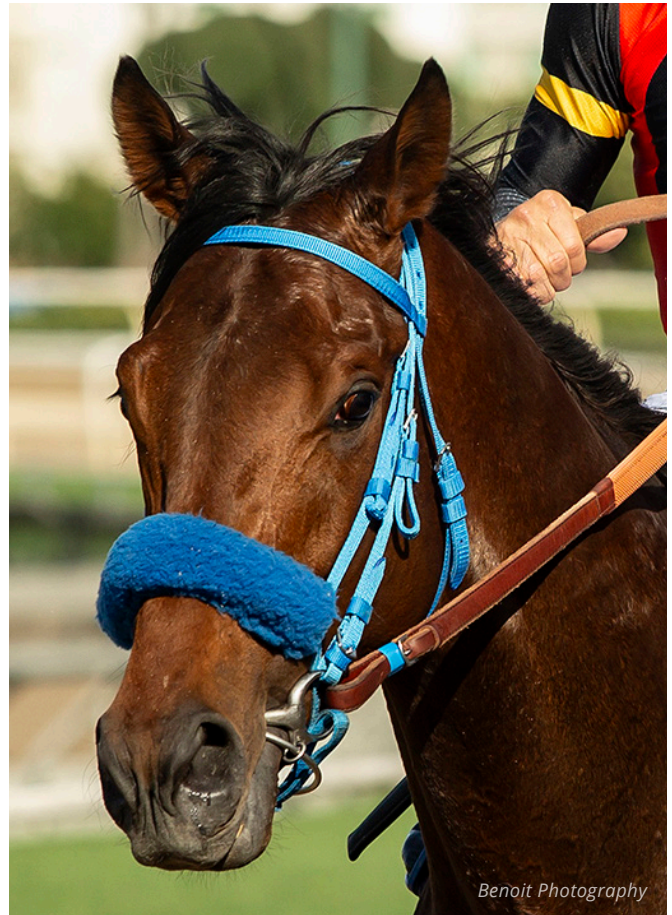
TRAINER: So Happy will be the first Kentucky Derby starter for Mark Glatt, who started his own stable in 1994 and has won more than 1,300 races. So Happy has provided a lift during an incredibly difficult year, with the sudden and tragic loss of Glatt's wife, Dena, in February. There wasn't a dry eye in the winner's circle following the Santa Anita Derby.

JOCKEY: In the 151-year Kentucky Derby history, Mike Smith is one of 27 jockeys to ride multiple winners, guiding Giacomo in 2005 and Triple Crown winner Justify in 2018. He's also finished second aboard Prairie Bayou (1993), Proud Citizen (2002), Lion Heart (2004), and Bodemeister (2012). His last Kentucky Derby appearance came in 2022. Besides Justify, Smith has won the Preakness (G1) with Prairie Bayou (1993) and Belmont (G1) with Drosselmeyer (2010) and Palace Malic (2013).

BREEDER: Bred in Kentucky by Leverett Miller, So Happy passed through the sales ring three times before being purchased for \$150,000 as a two-year-old at the 2025 OBS March sale, initially bringing \$12,000 as a weanling and \$20,000 as a yearling. Miller will be represented by his first Kentucky Derby runner as a breeder.

SIRE: So Happy is from the sixth crop of 2015 champion sprinter Runhappy, a son of 2010 Kentucky Derby winner Super Saver. Runhappy's offspring have yet to factor in any of the Triple Crown races.

DAM: So Happy is the first stakes winner for his dam, the Blame mare So Cunning. Named champion older male in 2010, Blame showed an affinity for Churchill Downs, winning the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Stephen Foster (G1), and Clark (G2). As a broodmare sire, Blame is still trying to make a serious impact on the Triple Crown. He was represented by champion two-year-old male and Belmont S. runner-up Forte, who was installed as the morning line favorite for the 2023 Kentucky Derby but forced to scratch due to a foot issue.



Benoit Photography

[VIEW THEIR COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

FULLEFFORT



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

After spending his first seven starts competing on turf and Tapeta, stretch-running Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) winner **Fulleffort** must switch to dirt for the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1).

Will Fulleffort successfully handle the transition, or will he struggle over the Churchill Downs main track? An analysis of his pedigree can provide clues to the answer.

Fulleffort is a son of 2015 Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Liam's Map, a speedy and high-class dirt star who also won the 1 1/8-mile Woodward (G1) and finished second in the 1 1/8-mile Whitney (G1).

Liam's Map may have been a dirt racer, but at stud, he's proven capable of siring dirt, turf, and synthetic horses alike. Some of his best runners, such as Manhattan (G1) winner Deterministic and two-time Pegasus World Cup Turf (G1) winner Colonel Liam, have starred on grass. Another, Roses for Debra, scored her biggest win in the Presque Isle Downs Masters (G2) on Tapeta.

But Liam's Map is also the sire of Grade 1-winning dirt horses like Blue Grass (G1) hero Burnham Square, Alcibiades (G1) conqueror Juju's Map, Hopeful (G1) hero Basin, Frizette (G1) winner Wicked Whisper, and runaway Champagne (G1) conqueror Napoleon Solo.

Liam's Map's accomplished dirt runners have tended to do their best work racing 1 1/8 miles or less (winning at an average distance of 7.0 furlongs), which is a concern since the Kentucky Derby takes place over the testing 1 1/4-mile distance. But dirt stamina in the bottom half of Fulleffort's pedigree should help counterbalance the speed of Liam's Map.

The dam of Fulleffort is Callmethesqueeze, a versatile miler who won a trio of stakes over distances from 7 1/2 furlongs to 1 1/16 miles on dirt and turf. Fulleffort is the third stakes winner she's produced; previously, Callmethesqueeze foaled Power Squeeze, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1) and two other graded stakes, and Call On Mischief, triumphant in the six-furlong Mahoning Distaff S. Both Power Squeeze and Call On Mischief performed best on dirt.

Callmethesqueeze, in turn, is a daughter of Awesome Again out of Mop Squeezer.

Awesome Again was a top-tier competitor over 1 1/4 miles, winning the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Saratoga Breeders' Cup H. (G2), Hawthorne Gold Cup H. (G3), and Queen's Plate S., all on dirt. He

passed on his stamina regularly, with his progeny compiling a solid average winning distance of 7.4 furlongs. Among the many high-class dirt routers sired by Awesome Again are the following names:

- Game On Dude, a three-time winner of the 1 1/4-mile Santa Anita H. (G1). He also won the 1 1/4-mile Hollywood Gold Cup H. (G1) twice and the 1 1/4-mile Pacific Classic (G1) once.
- Ghostzapper, who set a still-standing stakes record in the Breeders' Cup Classic.
- Awesome Gem, winner of the Hollywood Gold Cup H.
- Sir Winston, conqueror of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1).
- Oxbow, winner of the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1).
- Ginger Punch and Round Pond, winners of the 1 1/8-mile Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1).
- Bravazo, runner-up in the Preakness.
- Paynter, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Haskell (G1) and runner-up in the Belmont.

Meanwhile, daughters of Awesome Again have foaled champion Accelerate, winner of the Breeders' Cup Classic, Santa Anita H., Hollywood Gold Cup, and Pacific Classic; Keen Ice, victorious in the 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1); Highland Falls, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1); Everfast, runner-up in the Preakness; and Next, a dominant performer in U.S. dirt marathons.

Now, how about Mop Squeezer? She won a couple of minor stakes racing 1 1/16 miles on dirt, in addition to placing third in the one-mile and 70-yard Sabin H. (G3). As a broodmare, she produced an impressive collection of stakes performers, including:

Squeezer's Palace, winner of the Norm Barron Queen City Oaks racing 1 1/8 miles on dirt.

Royal Squeeze, winner of the Big Drama S. and Jebbar S., dashing seven furlongs on dirt.

King's Over, a top-three finisher in the seven-furlong Florida Stallion Affirmed S. and 1 1/16-mile Skip Trial S. on dirt.

Burley's Gold, runner-up in the one-mile Jerome H. (G2) on dirt. The above-mentioned Callmethesqueeze, the dam of Fulleffort.

In short, the pedigree of Fulleffort is packed with dirt influences. Switching to dirt for the Kentucky Derby shouldn't be an obstacle, and the stamina of Awesome Again should help him see out the 1 1/4-mile distance on the first Saturday in May.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

After blossoming on Turfway Park's synthetic track this winter, Fulleffort will make his first dirt start in the Kentucky Derby (G1). The gray colt made his first four starts on turf last year, winning the third time out and taking an entry-level allowance at Keeneland in late October. Fulleffort moved to the Tapeta surface at Turfway in January, recording back-to-back seconds in the Leonatus S. and John Battaglia Memorial a month later. He improved while stretching out in distance for the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3), getting in gear sooner and powering into a clear lead by midstretch, and Fulleffort has some pedigree influences for dirt. The late-running colt will look to make a serious impact if he can transfer his form to the main track at Churchill Downs.

FULLEFFORT CONT.

OWNER: St. Elias Stable (Vinnie Viola) and Starlight Racing (Jack Wolf et al) campaign Fulleffort. Viola co-owned 2017 Kentucky Derby winner Always Dreaming and has been involved in other Kentucky Derby partnerships, including Sandman, seventh in last year's Run for the Roses. He also co-owns Golden Tempo and Iron Honor, which both earned a berth to the 2026 Kentucky Derby. Starlight Racing partnered to win the Kentucky Derby with Justify (2018) and Authentic (2020), also finishing third with Audible (2018), from 15 Kentucky Derby starts.

TRAINER: A native of Louisville, Ky., Brad Cox has been a presence on the Kentucky Derby scene since 2021, winning with Mandaloun and getting third with the eventual champion three-year-old male Essential Quality (both runners elevated one spot by disqualification) in his first appearance. The two-time Eclipse Award winner has saddled 10 runners over the last four years, finishing third with Angel of Empire in 2023 and fourth last year with Final Gambit, and Cox has two additional serious contenders, Commandment and Further Ado, preparing for the 2026 Kentucky Derby.

JOCKEY: A 14-time leading rider at Churchill Downs, Tyler Gaffalione missed by a nose in second in his last Kentucky Derby appearance aboard Sierra Leone in 2024, his best result from seven attempts. The Florida native was named champion apprentice rider in 2015 and has been a dominant force in the Kentucky jockey colony for nearly a decade, but Gaffalione was forced to miss last year's Kentucky Derby due to injury. He returned in late summer and promptly won the September meet at Churchill Downs. Gaffalione, who guided War of Will to victory in the 2019 Preakness, will pick up the mount on Fulleffort in the Kentucky Derby.

BREEDER: Bred Athens Woods (Reiley McDonald), Fulleffort sold for \$425,000 as a yearling at the 2024 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga August sale. The Kentucky-bred will be the fourth Kentucky Derby starter as breeder for McDonald, the best result being an eighth from eventual champion three-year-old male Will Take Charge in 2013.

SIRE: Fulleffort is from the seventh crop of multiple Grade 1-winning millionaire Liam's Map. He's by Unbridled's Song, a son of 1990 Kentucky Derby winner Unbridled who finished fifth as the favorite in the 1996 Kentucky Derby. Liam's Map is still looking to make an impact on Triple Crown races with his offspring.

DAM: Fulleffort is the third stakes winner out of Callmethesqueeze, a hard-hitting, versatile racemare who won a pair of stakes on turf and one on the main track. Her first two stakes winners came on dirt, including Power Squeeze, winner of the 2024 Alabama (G1) at 1 1/4 miles. Callmethesqueeze is a daughter of Awesome Again, who earned more than \$3.4 million winning nine of 12 career starts, including the 1998 runnings of the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and Stephen Foster (G2) at Churchill Downs. He's yet to make an impact on the Kentucky Derby as a broodmare sire, but Awesome Again will be represented by three runners in the 2026 Kentucky Derby, with Incredibolt and Potente also in the field.

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THE PUMA



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

A relentless outside rally from last place carried **The Puma** to a determined victory in the 1 1/16-mile Tampa Bay Derby (G3) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

The Puma showed similar tenacity in the Florida Derby (G1) just three weeks later. In a head-bobbing finish, he failed by only a nose to hold off a late charge from Commandment, finishing second against a strong field.

The Puma's grit and determination is reminiscent of his sire, two-time champion Essential Quality. While Essential Quality fell short in his own bid for Kentucky Derby (G1) glory, perhaps The Puma can make amends for his sire on the first Saturday in May.

The Puma didn't debut until January of his three-year-old year, which stands in stark contrast to Essential Quality. Essential Quality went 3-for-3 at age two, most notably launching a sustained rally from off the pace to win the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) by three-quarters of a length. He also won the Breeders' Futurity (G1) and earned champion two-year-old male honors.

Seven starts at age three reiterated Essential Quality's championship credentials. He proved his worth over classic distances in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) and 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1), gallantly triumphing in prolonged battles with stubborn rivals. For good measure, he won the Blue Grass (G2), Jim Dandy (G2), and Southwest (G3). His only blemishes for the season were respectable third-place finishes in the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), and he ended the season as champion three-year-old male.

The Puma hails from Essential Quality's first crop of foals. While Essential Quality has yet to sire a Grade 1 winner, several of his runners have shown stakes-caliber talent. My World won the one-mile Jerome S. on the Road to the Kentucky Derby (as well as the one-mile Nashua S.), while Chopsticks took the seven-furlong Ellis Park Debutante S., Black Hornet starred in the 1 1/16-mile Black Gold S., Bull by the Horns nabbed the 1 1/16-mile Rushaway S., and Essential Time prevailed in the 6 1/2-furlong Clever Trevor S.

All told, the progeny of Essential Quality have compiled an average winning distance of 7.3 furlongs, which is respectably stout for a young stallion. There's no reason to think Essential Quality can't sire a notable winner of classic distances, especially since he's a son of Tapit, the three-time leading North American sire who counts

four Belmont winners (Essential Quality, Tonalist, Creator, and Tapwrit) among his numerous Grade 1 winners.

The Puma has likely inherited additional stamina from his dam, Eve of War. Though never victorious at the stakes level, Eve of War showed talent and versatility during her racing career, winning a maiden special weight sprinting six furlongs on dirt and a \$75,000 allowance optional claimer over 1 1/8 miles on turf. She also ran third in the 1 1/16-mile Monmouth Oaks (G3) on dirt.

Eve of War is a daughter of Declaration of War, and here's where an abundance of stamina comes into play. Declaration of War was a top-tier talent who excelled over a variety of distances and surfaces. He won minor races over synthetic tracks before developing into a grass star with wins in the one-mile Queen Anne (G1) and 1 5/16-mile Juddmonte International (G1) on his record. He ended his career in the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic on dirt, finishing third by a head in a three-way photo finish.

At stud, Declaration of War has consistently passed on stamina, with his progeny compiling a remarkably long-winded average winning distance of 8.2 furlongs. The best of them include:

- Vow and Declare, winner of the Melbourne Cup (G1), racing 3,200 meters (about two miles).
- Gufo, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Belmont Derby (G1) and two editions of the 1 1/2-mile Sword Dancer (G1).
- Fire At Will, triumphant in the one-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G1).
- Warning, winner of the Victoria Derby (G1) over 2,500 meters (about 1 9/16 miles).
- Olmedo, triumphant in the 1,600-meter (about one-mile) Poule d'Essai des Poulains (G1).
- Decorated Invader, winner of the one-mile Summer (G1).
- Winning Ways, heroine of the 2,200-meter (about 1 3/8-mile) Queensland Oaks (G1).
- The cross of Essential Quality with a Declaration of War mare should provide The Puma with plenty of stamina for the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

After breaking his maiden in the Tampa Bay Derby (G3), The Puma stepped up in the Florida Derby (G1), taking the lead off the far turn and missing by a nose in a head-bobbing photo finish. He recorded his first triple-digit Brisnet Speed rating for the excellent runner-up effort, and the Florida Derby has produced seven of the last 20 Kentucky Derby (G1) winners, with the two most recent, Sovereignty (2025) and Mage (2023), finishing second in the prep race. Since making his career debut in mid-January, The Puma has improved in every start, and the stalker will look to offer a serious challenge in the final furlongs of the Kentucky Derby.

THE PUMA CONT.

OWNER: OGMA Investments (Gustavo Delgado), JR Ranch (Ramiro Restrepo et al), and High Step Racing (Randy Guy, Joe Noble, Kevin Avera, Jim Ferreira, and Todd Perry) campaign The Puma. Restrepo, part of the ownership group that raced 2023 Kentucky Derby winner Mage, will have his second Kentucky Derby starter. It's the third for Delgado, who co-owned Mage and Bodexpress (14th in 2019). The remaining partners will be in the Kentucky Derby for the first time.

TRAINER: A native of Venezuela, Gustavo Delgado Sr. needed three attempts before winning his first Kentucky Derby, sending Mage to a 15-1 upset in 2023, and The Puma will be his fourth starter. Before moving to the U.S. at age 60 in 2014, Delgado established himself as one of the most prominent trainers in his homeland, winning the Venezuelan Triple Crown four times and being inducted into the Caribbean Racing Hall of Fame. He didn't need long to build up his South Florida stable, sending out his first Grade 1 winner in 2016.

JOCKEY: After making his debut in 2007, Javier Castellano earned his first Kentucky Derby win in his 16th attempt, rallying Mage from far off the pace to a one-length decision in 2023. He also owns a third, Audible in 2018, from 17 previous starts. Castellano has a total of four Triple Crown race wins, capturing the Preakness (G1) with Bernardini (2006) and Cloud Computing (2017) and the 2013 Belmont (G1) on Arcangelo.

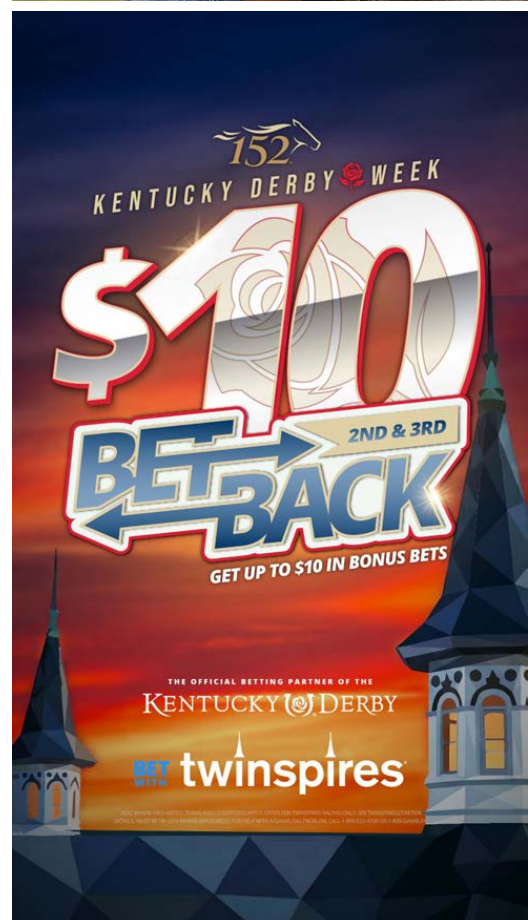
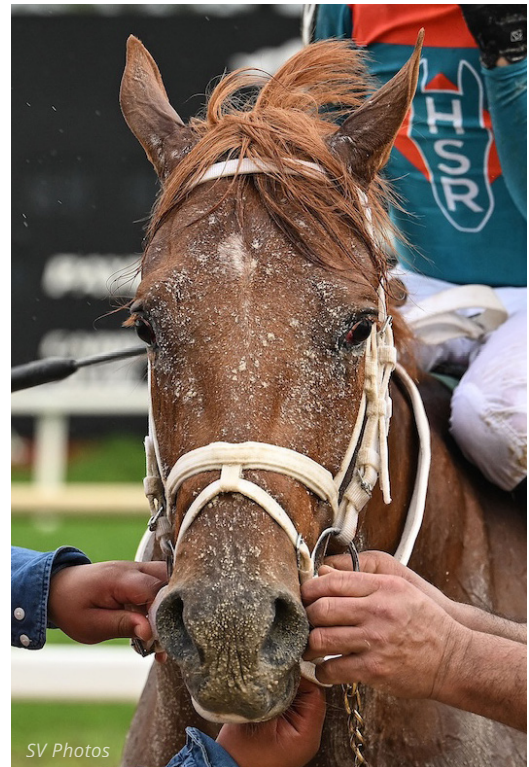
BREEDER: Bred in Kentucky by Hidden Brook Farm (Sergio de Sousa, Jack Brothers, Dan Hall, and Mark Roberts) and Brian Kahn, The Puma was purchased for \$150,000 as a two-year-old at the 2025 OBS April sale. He will be the first Kentucky Derby runner bred by Hidden Brook Farm and Kahn.

SIRE: The Puma is from the first crop of Essential Quality, who was named champion two-year-old male and champion three-year-old male in 2020-21. After sustaining his first career defeat in the 2021 Kentucky Derby, being elevated one spot to third by disqualification, Essential Quality rebounded in the Belmont five weeks later, providing sire Tapit his fourth Belmont winner.

DAM: The Puma is the fourth foal to race out of Grade 3-placed Eve of War, a daughter of multiple Group 1 turf winner Declaration of War, who finished a commendable neck third behind Mucho Macho Man and Will Take Charge when trying dirt in the 2013 Breeders' Cup Classic (G1). From a small sample size as a broodmare sire, The Puma is the lone graded stakes winner on dirt for Declaration of War.

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SILENT TACTIC



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

A powerful rally from off the pace carried **Silent Tactic** to a decisive win in the Southwest (G3) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Like clockwork, Silent Tactic has unleashed productive late charges in four straight Kentucky Derby qualifiers. In addition to his Southwest win, he's finished second in the Arkansas Derby (G1), Rebel (G2), and Smarty Jones S.

Silent Tactic's stretch-running style is reminiscent of his sire, Tacitus. Tacitus fell short in his bid for Kentucky Derby (G1) glory, but perhaps Silent Tactic—the first stakes winner sired by Tacitus—has the talent to rise higher.

Tacitus won three of his first four starts, including the Tampa Bay Derby (G2) and Wood Memorial (G2) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby. He started as the 5-1 third choice in the 2019 Kentucky Derby, racing 1 1/4 miles, and pretty much ran to expectations, closing from 16th place to cross the wire in fourth place. He was upgraded to third via the disqualification of preliminary winner Maximum Security, who caused interference.

Unfortunately for Tacitus, the Kentucky Derby was the first in a string of frustrating defeats at the Grade 1 level. There's no doubt he was a Grade 1-caliber runner over classic distances on dirt; by the time Tacitus retired, he'd recorded top-three finishes in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1), 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1), 1 1/4-mile Woodward H. (G1), and two editions of the 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1). But he never did manage to win at the Grade 1 level, instead scoring his greatest triumph in the 1 1/4-mile Suburban (G2).

It's easy to find the source of Tacitus' classic stamina. He's a son of three-time leading North American sire Tapit (who has sired Belmont winners Tonalist, Creator, Tapwrit, and Essential Quality) out of Close Hatches, a five-time Grade 1-winning route racer voted 2014 champion older female at the Eclipse Awards. This makes Tacitus a full-brother to 1 1/8-mile Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1) winner Scylla and 1 1/8-mile Ohio Derby (G3) conqueror Batten Down.

The bottom half of Silent Tactic's pedigree also offers potential for success over classic distances.

Magical Sign's dam is Malvinia, a daughter of A.P. Indy. Malvinia failed to win in five starts, but she's fared better as a broodmare. Her most accomplished foal to date is Moraz, a participant in the 2021 Kentucky Oaks (G1) and a top-three finisher in the 1 1/16-mile Santa Anita Oaks (G2), 1 1/16-mile Santa Ysabel (G3), and one-mile Las Virgenes (G3).

That Malvinia produced a graded stakes-caliber route racer is to be expected. After all, she's a daughter of one of the most renowned sources of stamina in modern pedigrees. A.P. Indy earned 1992 Horse of the Year honors after winning the Belmont, Breeders' Cup Classic, and 1 1/8-mile Santa Anita Derby (G1).

At stud, A.P. Indy carved out an illustrious career. His best runners were almost exclusively router racers, led by 2003 Horse of the Year Mineshaft, champion and Preakness winner Bernardini, and champion and Belmont winner Rags to Riches. His record as a broodmare sire has been similarly impressive; his daughters have foaled Kentucky Derby winner Super Saver, Preakness winner Cloud Computing, 1 1/4-mile Dubai World Cup (G1) winner Mystic Guide, and 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks winners Malathaat and Plum Pretty, to name a select few.

Taking all of these pedigree elements together, it's clear that Silent Tactic is bred to shine racing classic distances on dirt. It's possible his pedigree is a little light on speed (which is often a key component in the pedigree of Kentucky Derby winners), and that's reflected in his late-running style. But if the 2026 Kentucky Derby turns into a test of stamina, Silent Tactic should not be found wanting.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

A confirmed closer, Silent Tactic rallied to win the Southwest (G3) in early February and took runner-up honors in three other Kentucky Derby (G1) prep races at Oaklawn Park over the winter/early spring, most recently finishing a clear second to Renegade in the Arkansas Derby (G1). The bay colt will need to keep improving his Brisnet numbers, but promises to be finishing fast if the early pace is hot and/or contested, and Silent Tactic arguably fits the profile of multiple Kentucky Derby winners in recent years, with no Kentucky Derby winner since Justify in 2018 winning their final prep race (in a non-COVID year).

OWNER: John C. Oxley campaigned eight previous Kentucky Derby starters, with Monarchos winning in 2001. His wife, Deborah, bred 2024 Kentucky Derby runner-up Sierra Leone.

TRAINER: Mark Casse made his first Kentucky Derby appearance in 2006, finishing 10th with Seaside Retreat, and his best result from 11 starters is a fourth by Classic Empire in 2017. A member of the U.S. and Canadian Racing Hall of Fames, Casse recorded his 4,000th career win last summer, and he trained War of Will and Sir Winston, who won the Preakness (G1) and Belmont (G1) in 2019.

SILENT TACTIC CONT.

JOCKEY: Christian Torres will make his first Kentucky Derby start. The Puerto Rican native launched his riding career in 2019 in South Florida and started riding at Oaklawn Park in 2021, winning back-to-back riding titles in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

BREEDER: Silent Tactic was bred in Kentucky by Don Alberto Corporation (Liliana Solari and Carlos Heller Solari), who count 2025 runner-up Journalism and 2020 third-placer Mr. Big News among three previous Kentucky Derby runners as breeders. Don Alberto was also among the partnerships that owned Journalism and Midway Road, third in the 2017 Kentucky Derby. Silent Tactic passed through the auction ring multiple times, ultimately selling for \$500,000 at the 2025 OBS April two-year-old sale.

SIRE: Third in the 2019 Kentucky Derby, Tacitus won multiple Grade 2 races and earned more than \$2.2 million before retiring in 2021. Silent Tactic is the lone stakes winner from his first crop of runners, and Tacitus is by leading sire Tapit, who is known for producing four winners of the Belmont.

DAM: Silent Tactic is the lone foal to race out of Magical Sign, who is from the first crop of 2017 Horse of the Year Gun Runner, whose sixth crop are two-year-olds in 2026. Third in the 2016 Kentucky Derby, Gun Runner is such a young broodmare sire that Silent Tactic is the first and only runner in that capacity so far. By Candy Ride, Gun Runner is the sire of Further Ado, who established himself as a major Kentucky Derby contender, winning the Blue Grass (G1).



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EMERGING MARKET



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

It wasn't surprising to see **Emerging Market** handle 1 3/16 miles with aplomb in the Louisiana Derby (G2), charging with determination to win the Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifier by a head.

After all, Emerging Market is bred top and bottom to relish classic distances. Tackling an additional sixteenth of a mile in the 1 1/4-mile Kentucky Derby (G1) shouldn't be any issue for the lightly raced chestnut colt.

Emerging Market is a son of the versatile Argentine-bred Candy Ride, who went undefeated in six starts. He was brilliant on turf, winning the 1,600-meter (about one-mile) Joaquin S. de Anchorena (G1) in the blazing time of 1:31.01. But he also proved exceptional over 1 1/4 miles on dirt, winning the Pacific Classic (G1) over a strong field in the still-standing track-record time of 1:59.11.

At stud, Candy Ride has sired all types of runners—sprinters, routers, dirt horses, turf runners, and synthetic stars. A large handful have excelled racing 1 1/4 miles, including 2017 Horse of the Year and Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) winner Gun Runner, Santa Anita H. (G1) and Pacific Classic winner Shared Belief, Dubai World Cup (G1) conqueror Hit Show, Santa Anita H. winner Misremembered, and Manhattan (G1) winner Ascend.

The bottom half of Emerging Market's pedigree is packed with stamina and increases the likelihood of the chestnut colt developing into one of Candy Ride's 1 1/4-mile star.

Emerging Market is the first foal produced by Wild Empress, a daughter of Empire Maker out of the Seeking the Gold mare Trappings. Wild Empress wasn't much of a racehorse, failing to finish better than fifth in three starts, but thanks to her breeding, she has the potential to be a top-notch broodmare.

Consider her sire, Empire Maker, a son of 1990 Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Unbridled. Empire Maker could only finish second in the 2003 Kentucky Derby, but he snagged a classic win in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1), and then he developed into a successful stallion who sired Kentucky Derby runners-up Pioneer of the Nile and Bodemeister. Pioneer of the Nile went on to sire 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, while Bodemeister begot 2017 Kentucky Derby conqueror Always Dreaming.

Meanwhile, daughters of Empire Maker have produced runaway Dubai World Cup winner Laurel River and 2021 Kentucky Derby hero Mandaloun.

Empire Maker is one of many graded stakes winners produced by the remarkable mare Toussaud, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Gamely H. (G1). Toussaud also foaled 1 1/4-mile Arlington Million (G1) winner Chester House, 1 1/4-mile Secretariat (G1) winner Chiselling, seven-furlong Santa Monica H. (G1) victor Honest Lady, and Frank E. Kilroe Mile H. (G2) winner Decarchy.

Getting back to Wild Empress, her dam, Trappings, failed to crack the trifecta in eight starts. However, she left her mark as a broodmare, foaling 2009 champion two-year-old filly and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1) winner She Be Wild.

The sire of Trappings, Seeking the Gold, proved to be a top-class performer over 1 1/4 miles, winning the Super Derby (G1) and finishing second in the Breeders' Cup Classic and Travers (G1). He passed on his stamina at stud. A few of his top runners include:

- Dubai Millennium, winner of the Dubai World Cup on dirt and the 1 1/4-mile Prince of Wales's (G1) on turf.
- Heavenly Prize, winner of the Alabama (G1) and John A. Morris H. (G1) over 1 1/4 miles, plus six other Grade 1 prizes over distances from one mile to 1 1/8 miles.
- Jazil, triumphant in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont.
- Pleasant Home, conqueror of the 1 1/8-mile Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1).
- Cape Town, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1).
- Cash Run, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies.
- Daughters of Seeking the Gold have been every bit as productive. They've foaled a bevy of talented and long-winded runners, including champion and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Blame, 1 1/8-mile Clark H. (G1) conqueror Seeking the Soul, two-time 1 1/4-mile Flower Bowl (G1) winner Riskaverse, and Point of Entry, a five-time Grade 1 winner over distances from 1 1/8 miles to 1 1/2 miles.

With so much class and stamina in Emerging Market's pedigree, he's cut out for success in Triple Crown races.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT BY JAMES SCULLY

Unbeaten in two starts, Emerging Market broke his maiden going two turns at Tampa Bay Downs in early February and gamely captured the 1 3/16-mile TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (G2) at Fair Grounds six weeks later, rallying from just off the pace to prevail by a head. The progressive chestnut colt rates as extremely promising, netting a triple-digit Brisnet Speed rating last out, but his inexperience must be noted: no three-year-old has won the Kentucky Derby in the third start since Leonatus in 1883, according to the Kentucky Derby

EMERGING MARKET CONT.

Media Guide. Only six have tried since 1937, with T O Password's fifth in 2024 the best result, but Kentucky Derby runners are more lightly raced in this era. We'll find out if Emerging Market is talented enough to buck a long-standing trend.

OWNER: Emerging Market will be the fourth Kentucky Derby starter for Klaravich Stables (Seth Klarman), Practical Joke's fifth in 2017, the best result. A billionaire financial expert and noted philanthropist, Klarman was born in New York City and grew up near Pimlico in Baltimore. He has campaigned a pair of Preakness (G1) winners, Cloud Computing (2016) with William H. Lawrence and Early Voting (2022).

TRAINER: Since making his first Kentucky Derby appearance in 2013, Chad Brown has saddled Good Magic (2018) and Sierra Leone (2024) to runner-up finishes and Zandon (2022) to a third, recording an overall 9-0-2-1 record. He trained Klaravich Stables' Preakness winners, Cloud Computing (2016) and Early Voting (2022), and is a five-time Eclipse Award-winning trainer. A native of upstate New York, Brown served as an assistant to Hall of Fame trainer Bobby Frankel before starting his own stable in late 2007.

JOCKEY: Flavien Prat won the 2019 Kentucky Derby in his third attempt, with Country House being placed first via disqualification at 65-1 odds. A French native, Prat has also ridden runner-up Hot Rod Charlie (2021) and third-place finishers Midway Road (2017), Zandon (2022), and Angel of Empire (2023). The reigning two-time Eclipse Award-winning jockey owns an overall record of 8-1-1-4.

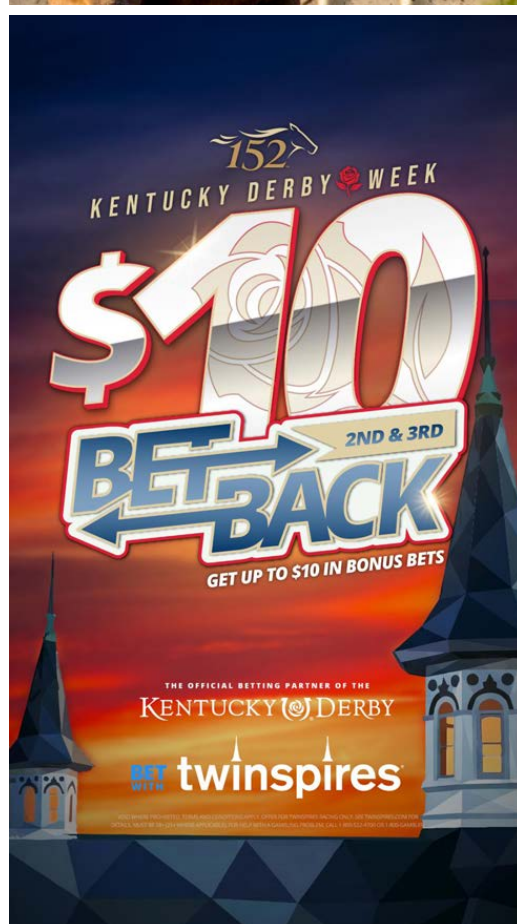
BREEDER: Bred in Kentucky by Stoneriggs Farm (Robert Slack), Emerging Market will be Stoneriggs' first Kentucky Derby starter as breeder.

SIRE: A world-class sire and noted sire of sires, Candy Ride is 27. The Argentinian-bred son of Ride the Rails proved to be a turf champion in Argentina and established a new track when capturing the 2003 Pacific Classic (G1) on dirt, and he's best known for siring 2017 Horse of the Year Gun Runner, the record-breaking freshman sire of 2021 and sire of 2022 Preakness winner Early Voting and 2024 Kentucky Derby runner-up Sierra Leone, the latter named champion three-year-old male.

DAM: Emerging Market hails from a stamina-infused female family and is the first foal to race out of Wild Empress, a daughter of Empire Maker who counts 2009 champion two-year-old filly She Be Wild as a half-sister. By 1990 Kentucky Derby winner Unbridled, Empire Maker won the Belmont (G1) and finished second in the Kentucky Derby in 2003. His offspring include 2009 Kentucky Derby runner-up Pioneerof the Nile, sire of 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah. As a broodmare sire, Empire Maker counts 2021 Kentucky Derby winner Mandaloun among his notable runners.

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ALBUS



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Can **Albus**, a son of tried-and-true sprinter Yaupon, handle the testing distance of 1 1/4 miles in the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1)?

It's a tough question. Albus demonstrated enough stamina to stay 1 1/8 miles in the Wood Memorial (G2), rallying from eighth place to win the Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifier by 1 1/4 lengths. But stretching another furlong in distance for the Kentucky Derby is a meaningful obstacle to overcome. Not every horse that handles 1 1/8 miles maintains their form over classic distances.

The concern for Albus from a pedigree perspective is his sire, Yaupon, who scored his signature wins in the seven-furlong Forego (G1), six-furlong Amsterdam (G2), and a six-furlong Chick Lang (G3). Speed was the name of the game for Yaupon, and so far in his brief stud career, he's passed on that speed with consistency.

Indeed, the progeny of Yaupon have compiled a sprint-oriented average winning distance of 6.2 furlongs. Some of the best include:

- Sassy C W, winner of the Prairie Gold Lassie S. and Astoria S., sprinting 5 1/2 furlongs.
- Crown the Buckeye, winner of the six-furlong Best of Ohio Cleveland Kindergarten S. and 1 1/16-mile Best of Ohio Juvenile S.
- Solitude Dude, winner of the seven-furlong Swale S.
- Goodall, conqueror of the six-furlong Purple Martin S.
- Mohaven, victorious in the 6 1/2-furlong Evening Jewel S.
- Arctic Beast, winner of the seven-furlong Damon Runyon S.
- Letmecounttheways, winner of the one-mile Maid of the Mist S.
- Woodstock, a 10 1/2-length winner of the 6 1/2-furlong E. L. Gaylord Memorial S.
- Yaupon De Replay, triumphant in the six-furlong Blenheim S.

Thanks in no small part to the numerous stakes winners he's sired, Yaupon ranked as the runaway leading first-crop sire of 2025 by progeny earnings. However, Albus is the first son or daughter of Yaupon to win a stakes running farther than 1 1/16 miles. At least so far, Yaupon is primarily a source of sprinters and milers.

Still, there are a couple of important caveats to note. One, Yaupon never attempted to run farther than seven furlongs, so we can't say

with certainty that he wouldn't have handled classic distances. Also, Yaupon is a son of Uncle Mo, the sire of Kentucky Derby winner Nyquist and 1 1/2-mile Belmont winner Mo Donegal. Uncle Mo is generally a source of stamina in pedigrees, so there's a chance Yaupon will—at least occasionally—pass on stamina too.

Perhaps Albus is an example. And fortunately for Albus, he won't have to rely exclusively on Yaupon for stamina, because the bottom half of his pedigree is geared strongly toward success over classic distances.

The dam of Albus is Adream, a daughter of Bernardini out of the Unbridled mare Turbo Dream. Adream wasn't much of a racehorse, failing to finish better than fifth in three starts, but she's achieved excellent results as a broodmare. In addition to Albus, she's foaled Song of Spring, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Allaire du Pont Distaff (G3).

Bernardini earned champion three-year-old male honors after winning the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1), 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1), and 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1). His progeny have compiled a strong average winning distance of 7.5 furlongs, with the best including Travers winners Alpha and Stay Thirsty. Plus, daughters of Bernardini have foaled Kentucky Derby, Belmont, and Travers winner Sovereignty, 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Dubai World Cup (G1) winner Magnitude, 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1) heroine Serengeti Empress, Travers winner Catholic Boy, 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1) victor Dunbar Road, and Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) conqueror Nysos.

Turbo Dream enjoyed success as a broodmare, foaling Dream Rush, winner of the seven-furlong Test (G1) and six-furlong Prioress (G1). Dream Rush, in turn, produced notable stakes horses like one-mile Frizette (G1) winner Dreaming of Julia and two-time Grade 3-winning sprinter Dream Pauline.

As for Unbridled, he won the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic, earning champion three-year-old male honors. Unbridled left a giant impact at stud, siring Kentucky Derby winner Grindstone, Preakness winner Red Bullet, and Belmont winner Empire Maker. Male-line descendants of Empire Maker include Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, Kentucky Derby conquerors Mine That Bird and Always Dreaming, and Belmont victor Summer Bird.

While it's possible the sprinting speed of Yaupon will limit Albus' distance capabilities to 1 1/8 miles or less, if there's any chance of Yaupon siring a major winner over classic distances, the abundant stamina of Bernardini and Unbridled should help it happen.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

A versatile type, Albus raced up close to the pace when breaking his maiden in his 2026 opener, rolling to a 6 3/4-length decision at Tampa Bay Downs in late February. The dark bay colt switched to rating tactics in the Wood Memorial

ALBUS CONT.

(G2) next out, earning a Kentucky Derby berth by rallying to an 11-1 upset. The Wood did not attract a proven field, and Albus will need to improve to challenge at Churchill Downs. But the improving sophomore is coming on at the right time and Albus will look to keep stepping up in the Kentucky Derby (G1).

OWNER: Pin Oak Stud (Dana Bernhard) will have its first Kentucky Derby runners in 2026, with Albus being joined by Virginia Derby winner Incredibolt in the starting gate. Located in Versailles, Ky., Pin Oak Stud was sold to the Bernhards from the Abercrombie family in 2022.

TRAINER: Riley Mott will saddle his first Kentucky Derby starters, sending out Albus and Incredibolt. Former assistant and son of two-time Kentucky Derby winner Bill Mott, Riley Mott went out on his own in late 2022 and was represented by his first Grade 1 winner in 2025, World Beater, who is owned by Pin Oak Stud.

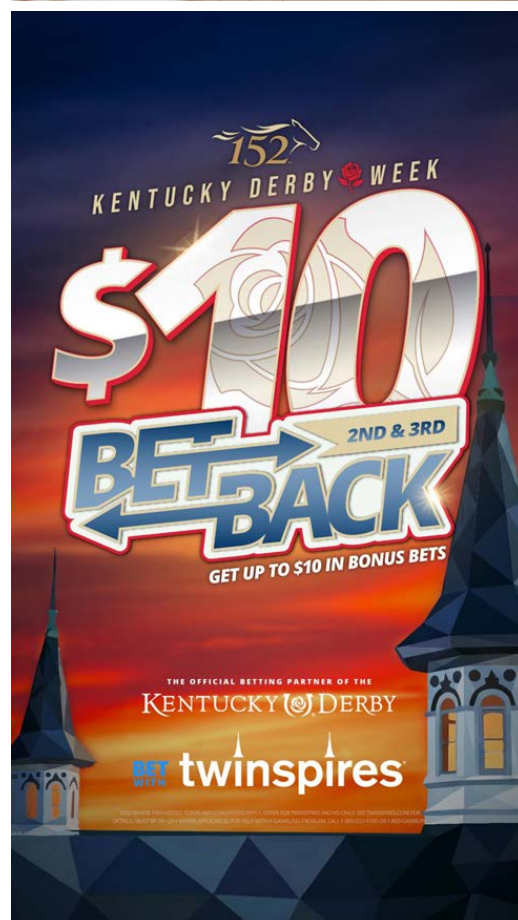
JOCKEY: Manny Franco will pick up the mount on Albus. A top jockey in New York, the Puerto Rican native made his first Kentucky Derby appearance in 2015, and his best result from six attempts came on Tiz the Law, who finished second in the 2020 Kentucky Derby and captured the Belmont (G1).

BREEDER: Albus was bred in Kentucky by Susan Casner, who will be represented by her first Kentucky Derby starter as breeder. Her husband, William Casner, co-owned WinStar Farm with Kenny Troutt until 2010, and WinStar bred Kentucky Derby winners Funny Cide (2003) and Super Saver (2010) during his tenure. Albus sold for \$320,000 as a yearling at the 2024 Keeneland September sale.

SIRE: Albus is from the first crop of Grade 1-winning sprinter Yaupon, the leading freshman sire by progeny earnings in 2025. Yaupon is by Uncle Mo, who sired 2016 Kentucky Derby winner Nyquist, and Albus is one of 10 stakes winners so far for Yaupon.

DAM: While there's speed on top of his bloodlines, Albus is eligible to receive a healthy dose of stamina from his female family. He's the second graded stakes winner out of the unraced Adream, a daughter of 2006 Preakness winner Bernardini, the broodmare sire of 2025 Kentucky Derby winner Sovereignty. Albus' half-sister, Grade 3 winner Song of Spring, preferred longer distances, and Adream is out of the unraced Turbo Dream, a daughter of 1990 Kentucky Derby winner Unbridled and half-sister to multiple Grade 1 winner Dream Rush, the dam of champion three-year-old filly and 2021 Kentucky Oaks (G1) winner Malathaat.

[VIEW THEIR COMPLETE PROFILE](#)



POTENTE



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

It's safe to say Into Mischief is the dominant Kentucky Derby (G1) sire of the 2020s. His influence extends not only to Kentucky Derby Day but throughout the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

The progeny of Into Mischief won left and right on the 2025-26 Road to the Kentucky Derby. Ted Noffey took the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) and Breeders' Futurity (G1). Commandment starred in the Fountain of Youth (G2) and Florida Derby (G1). Plutarch triumphed in the Robert B. Lewis (G3). Renegade dominated the Sam F. Davis S. and Arkansas Derby (G1), and **Potente** joined the fray with a late-running win in the San Felipe (G2) and a pacesetting second-place finish in the Santa Anita Derby (G1).

Potente seeks to become the fourth son of Into Mischief to win the Kentucky Derby, following Authentic (2020), Mandaloun (2021), and Sovereignty (2025). Into Mischief has also sired 2018 Kentucky Derby third-place finisher Audible, and he's the grandsire of 2024 Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan.

Into Mischief has led all North American sires by progeny earnings every year since 2019, a string of dominance not seen since the 1960s, when Bold Ruler topped the charts for seven consecutive years from 1963-1969. Should Into Mischief secure his eighth straight title in 2026, he'll be the first to lead the list for eight consecutive years since Lexington achieved 14 in a row from 1861-1874.

Into Mischief's resounding success has been powered by a wide variety of horses. His best runners have excelled over many different distances. Some have been top-tier sprinters, such as Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) conquerors Gamine and Covfefe. Others have excelled in miles and short routes, including Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) heroes Life Is Good and Goldencents. And some have handled the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance with aplomb; in addition to his Derby winners, Into Mischief is the sire of runaway Dubai World Cup (G1) winner Laurel River.

Some of Into Mischief's most long-winded runners likely inherited stamina from their female families. The dams of Mandaloun and Laurel River were sired by Empire Maker, winner of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) and runner-up in the Kentucky Derby. The dam sire of Sovereignty is Bernardini, voted champion three-year-old male after winning the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1), 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1), and 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1).

Potente has a strong chance to follow the examples of Mandaloun, Laurel River, and Sovereignty, because the dam side of his pedigree is packed with classic stamina.

The dam of Potente is Sweet Sting, who displayed some stamina on turf, winning a 1 1/8-mile maiden special weight and placing third in the 1 1/16-mile Memories of Silver S. Her foals prior to Potente included Reverse Merger, a son of Into Mischief who won twice for claiming tags over distances of one mile and 1 1/16 miles.

Sweet Sting, in turn, is a daughter of Awesome Again out of the Red Ransom mare Perfect Sting.

Awesome Again was a top-tier competitor over 1 1/4 miles, winning the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Hawthorne Gold Cup H. (G2), Saratoga Breeders' Cup H. (G2), and Queen's Plate S., in addition to taking the Whitney H. (G1) and Stephen Foster H. (G2) over 1 1/8 miles. At stud, he sired a bevy of major winners over classic distances, including Preakness winner Oxbow, Belmont hero Sir Winston, three-time 1 1/4-mile Santa Anita H. (G1) conqueror Game On Dude, and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Ghostzapper.

Daughters of Awesome Again have extended his legacy, foaling champion and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Accelerate (a four-time Grade 1 winner over 1 1/4 miles), Travers winner Keen Ice (the sire of 2022 Kentucky Derby winner Rich Strike), and standout dirt marathoner Next, to name a few.

Perfect Sting was likewise a top-tier racehorse, winning nine graded stakes and a trio of Grade 1s across her decorated career. She was highly effective over route distances and earned champion turf female honors after ending her 2000 season with a triumph in the 1 3/8-mile Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf (G1).

Perfect Sting passed on her stamina to her most successful foal, Smart Sting, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Maple Leaf S. and 1 1/16-mile Selene (G3).

As for Red Ransom, he failed to win at the stakes level but enjoyed a successful stud career. In addition to Perfect Sting, he sired Dubai World Cup winner Electrocutonist and the talented Australian mare Typhoon Tracy, who won half a dozen Group 1 races over distances from 1,400 meters (about seven furlongs) to 1,600 meters (about one mile) on turf.

In short, it's impossible to knock the pedigree of Potente as far as the Kentucky Derby is concerned. He's bred to relish racing 1 1/4 miles on the first Saturday in May.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

After making a belated career debut in late January, winning a six-furlong maiden at Santa Anita, Potente followed with a game win in the San Felipe (G2) five weeks later, rallying from just off the pace to prevail by a head. The bay colt

POTENTE CONT.

switched back to frontrunning tactics in the Santa Anita Derby (G1), establishing a contested pace through fast early fractions, and Potente weakened in deep stretch to finish a clear second. Connections hope the experience serves him well, sharpening up Potente for a good showing on the front end in the Kentucky Derby (G1), and the up-and-coming type merits respect despite any concerns about the quality of competition he's faced.

OWNER: Potente will be the second Kentucky Derby starter for Speedway Stables (Peter Fluor and K.C. Weiner), who owned Roadster (15th) in 2019.

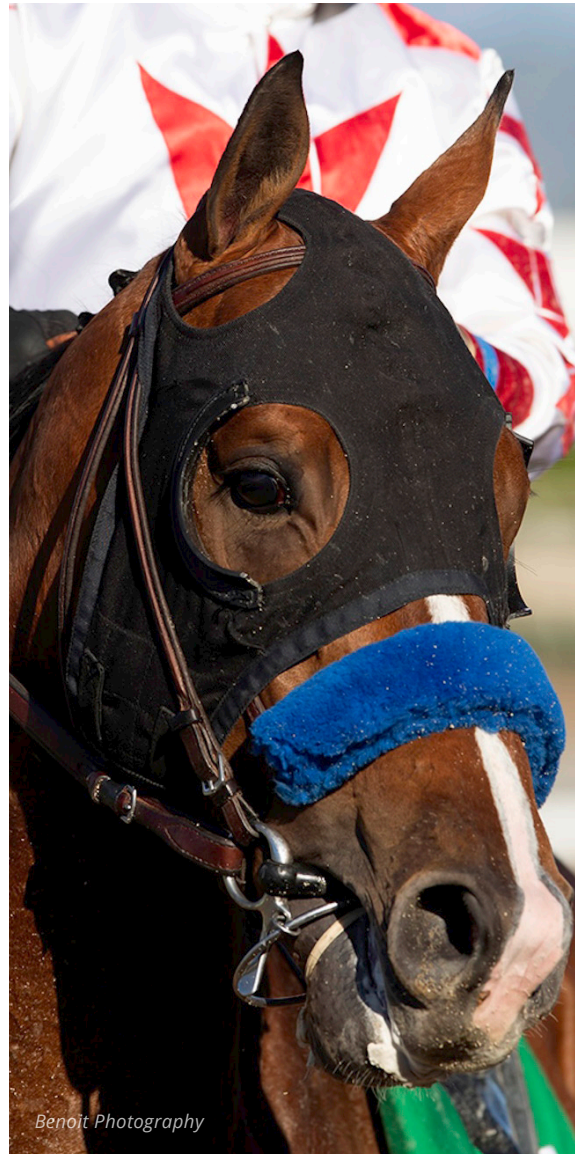
TRAINER: Bob Baffert enters with a record-tying six Kentucky Derby wins. After finishing second with his first starter, Cannonier in 1996, the Arizona-raised conditioner won the next two runnings with Silver Charm and Real Quiet, who were followed by War Emblem (2002), Triple Crown winners American Pharoah (2015) and Justify (2018), and Authentic (2020). Baffert has also compiled a record eight Preakness (G1) wins, holding the mark for the most Triple Crown race wins (17), as well as record-tying 21 Breeders' Cup race wins. The Hall of Famer has found controversy, returning to the Kentucky Derby from a three-year suspension in 2025, and Baffert owns a 35-6-3-3 Kentucky Derby record.

JOCKEY: Juan Hernandez will make his first Kentucky Derby start. A native of Mexico, Hernandez started riding in the U.S. in 2010, and after being based in Northern California, moved his tack to Southern California in 2020. He won his ninth riding title at Santa Anita last fall and seventh at Del Mar last summer, and Hernandez has ridden some premier horses over recent years, serving as first-call rider at times for Bob Baffert.

BREEDER: Potente was bred in Kentucky by Pam and Martin Wygod, who will have their second Kentucky Derby starter as a breeder. The Wygods also bred Resilience, sixth in the 2024 Kentucky Derby, and they sold Potente for \$2.4 million as a yearling at the 2024 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga August sale.

SIRE: Potente is by seven-time reigning leading sire Into Mischief, who achieved a record-tying third Kentucky Derby win as sire last year with Sovereignty, who came back to win the Belmont after skipping the Preakness. Into Mischief also produced back-to-back winners Authentic and Mandaloun (2020-21). North America's most influential sire, Into Mischief's offspring earned more than \$31.8 million in 2025, and he's a son of Harlan's Holiday. Into Mischief will also be represented by Commandment and Renegade this year.

DAM: The first stakes winner from a quartet of foals to race, Potente is out of stakes-placed Sweet Swing. She's by Awesome Again out of the champion turf mare Perfect Sting. Awesome Again earned more than \$3.4 million winning nine of 12 career starts, including the 1998 runnings of the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and Stephen Foster (G2) at Churchill Downs. He's yet to make an impact in the Kentucky Derby as a broodmare sire, but Awesome Again will be represented by three runners in the 2026 Kentucky Derby, with Fulleffort and Incredibolt also in the field.



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PAVLOVIAN



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

After launching a tenacious late charge to win the Sunland Park Derby by a nose, **Pavlovian** emerged as a candidate for the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1). He reiterated his credentials with a close runner-up finish in the Louisiana Derby (G2).

Pavlovian seeks to become the third Kentucky Derby winner owned by Reddam Racing and trained by Doug O'Neill, following I'll Have Another (2012) and Nyquist (2016). But whereas those two Derby heroes were auction acquisitions, Pavlovian is a Reddam Racing homebred.

Pavlovian's sire is Pavel, one of the best horses to campaign for Reddam Racing and O'Neill. He emerged as a three-year-old during the summer of 2017 and quickly rose to prominence, winning the 1 1/16-mile Smarty Jones (G3) and finishing third against older rivals in the 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1).

Pavel peaked at age four and reiterated his prowess as a route racer with a 3 3/4-length triumph in the 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster H. (G1) and a runner-up effort in the 1 1/4-mile Pacific Classic (G1).

The sources of Pavel's stamina are easy to find. His sire, Creative Cause, won the 1 1/16-mile Norfolk (G1) and recorded top-three finishes in the 1 1/8-mile Santa Anita Derby (G1) and 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1). Plus, Pavel's dam—the unraced mare Mons Venus—is a daughter of Maria's Mon, the sire of Kentucky Derby winners Monarchos (2001) and Super Saver (2010).

At stud, Pavel has found only modest success, and his progeny have compiled a speed-oriented average winning distance of 6.1 furlongs. However, the best of Pavel's runners have achieved their signature wins running long. In addition to Pavlovian, Pavel is the sire of Madison Rae, who won the one-mile Soviet Problem S.

Pavlovian's dam is another Reddam Racing colorbearer, Mandy's Grace. Under O'Neill's tutelage, Mandy's Grace raced three times and showed some stamina when breaking her maiden by four lengths in a one-mile \$30,000 maiden claimer at Oaklawn Park. Prior to Pavlovian, she foaled O Mandy (winner of a 5 1/2-furlong maiden special weight) and Coralgableskaylin (a two-time winner sprinting five furlongs and seven furlongs).

Mandy's Grace is a daughter of Bellamy Road, who famously won the 1 1/8-mile Wood Memorial (G1) by 17 1/2 lengths in a stellar

performance. He could only finish seventh as the favorite in the 2005 Kentucky Derby, but he bounced back during the summer to run second in the 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1).

At stud, Bellamy Road sired a handful of high-class runners. His best son, Diversify, proved effective over the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance, winning the Jockey Club Gold Cup (with Pavel among his beaten rivals) and the Suburban (G2). He also conquered the 1 1/8-mile Whitney (G1).

Other accomplished horses sired by Bellamy Road include Toby's Corner, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Wood Memorial; Land Over Sea, conqueror of the 1 1/16-mile Fair Grounds Oaks (G2) and runner-up in the 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1) and 1 1/16-mile Chandelier (G1); Constellation, winner of the seven-furlong La Brea (G1) and runner-up in the seven-furlong Madison (G1); All Squared Away, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Lexington (G3) and runner-up in a trio of Grade 2 stakes over distances from 1 1/4 miles to 1 3/4 miles; and Sisterly Love, winner of the Doubledogdare (G3) and Ontario Matron (G3) racing 1 1/16 miles.

Daughters of Bellamy Road have produced a mix of sprinters and route racers. Case Creed won two editions of the one-mile Fourstardave H. (G1), but also scored over six furlongs in the Jaipur (G1). Deep Monster won the Tokyo Daishoten (G2) and H.H. The Amir Trophy (G1) racing 2,400 meters (about 1 1/2 miles). Bright Future battled to victory in the 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup. Cave Rock scored in the seven-furlong Del Mar Futurity (G1) and 1 1/16-mile American Pharoah (G1). Booth took the Maryland Sprint (G3) and Count Fleet Sprint H. (G3), dashing six furlongs, and Musical Mischief nabbed the 1 1/16-mile Locust Grove (G2).

Overall, there's a mix of speed and stamina in the pedigree of Pavlovian. That blend is often a recipe for success in the Kentucky Derby. There's a good chance Pavlovian will find the Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance within his wheelhouse.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

Much improved since adding blinkers two starts back, Pavlovian flashed early ability, breaking his maiden the second time out at Santa Anita and finishing second in the Best Pal (G3) at Del Mar, but the gray colt struggled to get out of the starting gate and failed to factor when making three consecutive starts versus restricted stakes rivals during late fall/winter. He turned things around with a frontrunning Sunland Derby win in mid-February, and Pavlovian exits an encouraging runner-up effort in the TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (G2), yielding grudgingly late to miss by a head. The Kentucky Derby (G1) represents a significant class check, but Pavlovian can make his own trip with tactical speed and enters on an upward trajectory.

OWNER: Reddam Racing (J. Paul Reddam) owned Kentucky Derby winners I'll Have Another (2012) and Nyquist (2016). His first two Kentucky Derby starters, Ten Most Wanted (ninth) in 2003 and Wilko (sixth) in 2005, came in partnership, and

PAVLOVIAN CONT.

Pavlovian will be his first Kentucky Derby starter since Irap finished 18th in 2017. A Canadian businessman and former philosophy professor at California State University, Reddam bought his first racehorse in 1998.

TRAINER: In his second Kentucky Derby appearance, Doug O'Neill saddled I'll Have Another to a 15-1 upset in 2012. The 57-year-old trainer added a second Kentucky Derby victory four years later, with Nyquist scoring as the 2-1 favorite, and Hot Rod Charlie provided a runner-up finish in 2021 (placed second via disqualification). O'Neill will be back in the Kentucky Derby for the first time since Happy Jack's 14th in 2022. His overall Kentucky Derby record reads 8-2-1-0. Based primarily in California, O'Neill has won five Breeders' Cup races and a Preakness (G1) (I'll Have Another).

JOCKEY: Edwin Maldonado will make his first Kentucky Derby start. After growing up in Puerto Rico, Maldonado launched his riding career in 2002, riding primarily in Texas and Louisiana before moving his tack to Southern California in 2010. He's consistently been ranked among the top 10 jockeys on the circuit, winning three riding titles, and Maldonado is known for his proficiency with speed horses. Pavlovian has been prominent from the starting gate since adding Maldonado and blinkers two starts ago.

BREEDER: Bred in California, Pavlovian will be the first Kentucky Derby starter as a breeder for Reddam Racing.

SIRE: Pavlovian is from the third crop of Pavel, who didn't make his career debut until July of his three-year-old season. Campaigned by Reddam Racing, Pavel won the Smarty Jones (G3) a few months later, and the son of Creative Cause recorded his biggest triumph as a four-year-old, taking the Stephen Foster (G1) at Churchill Downs. Pavlovian is only the second stakes winner by Pavel, but the sample size is relatively small.

DAM: Pavlovian is the first stakes winner out of Mandy's Grace, a daughter of Bellamy Road who was owned by Reddam Racing and won one of three career starts. Mandy's Grace is out of the multiple Grade 2-winning Storm Cat mare Magicalmysterycat. Bellamy Road finished seventh as the 5-2 favorite in the 2005 Kentucky Derby after winning the Wood Memorial (G1) by 17 1/2 lengths. He has yet to make an impact on any Triple Crown races as a broodmare sire.

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RIGHT TO PARTY



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Right to Party, a late nominee to the Triple Crown, stamped his ticket to the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1) with top-three finishes in the Gotham (G3) and Wood Memorial (G2) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

So far, Right to Party has tackled distances up to 1 1/8 miles without issue. But the 1 1/4-mile journey of the Kentucky Derby is a new challenge. Can he handle the extra furlong of the Run for the Roses? Perhaps an analysis of his pedigree will reveal the answer.

Right to Party is a son of Constitution, who twice displayed top-level form over 1 1/8 miles, winning the Florida Derby (G1) and Donn H. (G1) at Gulfstream Park. Unfortunately, an injury caused Constitution to miss an expected start in the 2014 Kentucky Derby, and by the time he tackled 1 1/4 miles in the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) at age four, he was out of form and finished last of six.

Constitution retired to stud following the Jockey Club Gold Cup, and he's since developed into a high-profile stallion with dozens of stakes winners among his progeny. He's best known for siring Tiz the Law, who won a shortened 1 1/8-mile edition of the Belmont (G1), as well as the Florida Derby and 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1) en route to earning 2020 champion three-year-old male honors. Tiz the Law also finished second in the Kentucky Derby.

Many other sons and daughters of Constitution have scored notable victories over route distances. Mindframe won the 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster (G1). Americanrevolution took the one-mile Cigar Mile H. (G1). Catching Freedom nabbed the 1 3/16-mile Louisiana Derby (G2) and achieved a classic placing when third in the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1). Parchment Party showed enough stamina to win over 1 3/4 miles in the Belmont Gold Cup (G3) and Birdstone S.

Also, from his Southern Hemisphere foal crops, Constitution has sired multiple group stakes winners over classic distances. For example, First Constitution won the Gran Criterium Mauricio Serrano Palma (G1) over 1,900 meters (about 1 3/16 miles) before taking the 1 3/8-mile Flat Out S. in the United States. And Medjool placed in multiple Group 1 races over 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles) and won the 2,000-meter Verano Arturo Cousino L. (G2).

Constitution's ability to sire long-winded route racers isn't surprising since he's a son of Tapit, a three-time leading North American sire best known for siring four winners of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont: Tonalist, Creator, Tapwrit, and Essential Quality.

This is all good news for Right to Party's Kentucky Derby chances, but it's worth noting that the bottom half of his pedigree is geared more toward speed than stamina.

Right to Party is the second winning foal produced by Havin' a Party. As a racehorse, Havin' a Party showed little, failing to finish better than seventh in three starts. She's off to a much stronger start as a broodmare. In addition to Right to Party, she has foaled Woodhull, the winner of a maiden special weight racing one mile at Lone Star Park.

Havin' a Party is a daughter of Emcee, who proved highly effective sprinting seven furlongs or less. Emcee peaked at Saratoga during the summer of 2012, dominating the seven-furlong Forego (G1) by 4 1/2 lengths after running a close third (beaten two necks) in the six-furlong Alfred G. Vanderbilt H. (G1).

Emcee hasn't made a major mark at stud, though one of his best runners—the mare Omsiyaatee—showed stamina when dominating a minor race over 2,000 meters in Saudi Arabia, triumphing by 9 3/4 lengths. Another of Emcee's runners, Corral Nocturne, won four times in Japan over distances from 1,400 meters (about seven furlongs) to 1,800 meters (about 1 1/8 miles).

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

A deep closer, Right to Party broke his maiden when stretching to a mile at Aqueduct the second time out in mid-January. The chestnut colt rallied belatedly for third in the Gotham (G3) seven weeks later, and Right to Party punched his Kentucky Derby (G1) ticket in the Wood Memorial (G2), getting up from far back for second at 38-1 odds. The Kentucky Derby will be Right to Party's first start outside of Aqueduct.

OWNER: Right to Party will be the second Kentucky Derby starter for Chester Broman Sr., who has been racing and breeding horses since the 1990s, but the first since Friends Lake finished 15th in 2004.

TRAINER: Kenny McPeck became the first trainer to sweep the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks in the same year since Ben Jones in 1952, winning with Mystik Dan and eventual Horse of the Year Thorpedo Anna in 2024. Mystik Dan provided McPeck with a personal sweep of the Triple Crown, as Swiss Skydiver captured the 2020 Preakness and Sarava the 2002 Belmont S., and all three were double-digit longshots. McPeck made his first Kentucky Derby appearance in 1995, finishing second with Tejano Run, and his overall record reads 11-1-1-0.

RIGHT TO PARTY CONT.

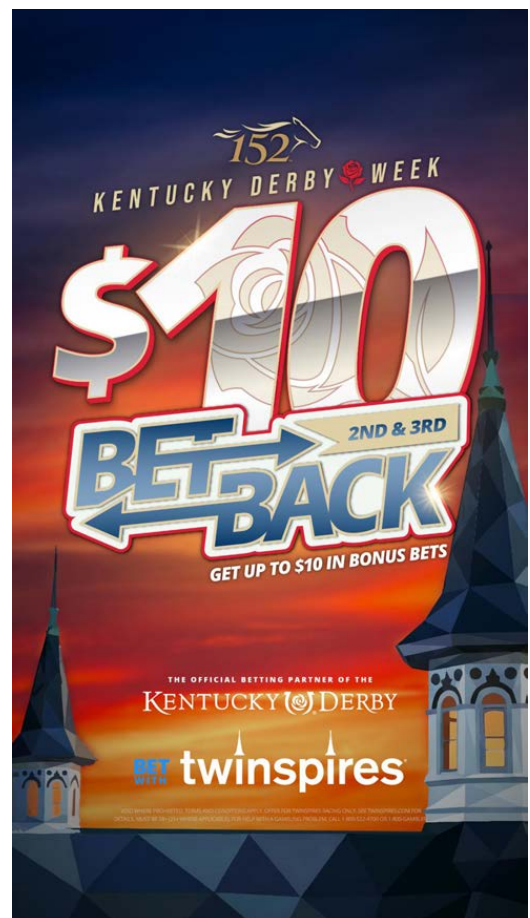
JOCKEY: Chris Elliott will make his first Kentucky Derby start. Raised in New Jersey, the 19-year-old rider won his first race in 2024 and was named an Eclipse Award finalist for leading apprentice jockey in 2025. He's the son of jockey Stewart Elliott, winner of the 2004 Kentucky Derby and Preakness (G1) on Smarty Jones.

BREEDER: Right to Party was bred in Kentucky by Tony Holmes and Timothy Thornton. Holmes bred 2007 Kentucky Derby runner Zanero (12th) in partnership, and Right to Party will be the first starter as breeder for Thornton. Right to Party sold for \$325,000 as a yearling at the 2024 Keeneland September sale.

SIRE: After winning the Florida Derby (G1), Constitution was forced to miss the 2014 Kentucky Derby due to injury. His most notable Triple Crown offspring, 2020 Belmont (G1) winner Tiz the Law, finished second in the Kentucky Derby, and Constitution is by leading Tapit, who is best known for siring four winners of the Belmont. Constitution will also be represented by Chief Wallabee in the 2026 Kentucky Derby.

DAM: Havin' a Party, a daughter of the Grade 1-winning sprinter Emcee, has produced three foals, with Right to Party the only stakes-placed runner. By Unbridled's Song, who finished fifth as the 7-2 favorite in the 1996 Kentucky Derby, Emcee produced four crops in America, with little success, before being sent to Brazil. Havin' a Party's foals are his only runners as a broodmare sire.

[VIEW THEIR COMPLETE PROFILE](#)



INCREDIBOLT



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Incredibolt joined the Road to the Kentucky Derby sooner than many horses. The early-maturing colt won the Street Sense (G3) during the fall meet at Churchill Downs with a last-to-first rally.

Incredibolt's success from an early age isn't surprising. His sire, Bolt d'Oro, was a star two-year-old who won the Del Mar Futurity (G1) and FrontRunner (G1) before finishing third in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1).

However, Bolt d'Oro failed to progress as a three-year-old and finished 12th in the 2018 Kentucky Derby (G1). Will a similar fate befall Incredibolt? Or can he take the next step, improve at age three, and vie for victory in the 2026 Kentucky Derby?

We got a glimpse of the possible answer when Incredibolt reiterated his racing prowess with a four-length romp in the Virginia Derby on March 14 at Colonial Downs, his second start as a three-year-old. And a thorough review of Incredibolt's entire pedigree hints he has a good chance to enjoy additional success at age three.

Since retiring to stud, Bolt d'Oro has proven to be a capable sire of stakes winners. Many have emulated Bolt d'Oro with success at age two. Tamara won the Del Mar Debutante (G1), Major Dude took the Pilgrim (G2), Instant Coffee nabbed the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2), and Boppy O prevailed in the With Anticipation (G3).

But some of Bolt d'Oro's best runners have trained on to enjoy success at age three and beyond. Tamara won the Chillingworth (G3) as a four-year-old. Major Dude took the Penn Mile (G2) and Kitten's Joy (G3) at age three before adding the Ft. Lauderdale (G2) as a four-year-old. Furthermore, Bolt d'Oro is the sire of Eight Belles (G2) winner Look Forward, three-time Grade 2 and Grade 3 winner Destino d'Oro, and Buena Vista (G2) winner Ruby Nell, three fillies who scored graded wins at ages three and/or four.

More so than early maturity, a limiting factor for Bolt d'Oro's progeny has been distance. His runners win at an average distance of 6.9 furlongs, indicating a stallion who sires primarily sprinters and milers. Indeed, Bolt d'Oro's best runners have excelled racing 1 1/8 miles or less (especially one mile or less), and he's yet to sire a major winner over classic distances.

Does this mean the Kentucky Derby's testing 1 1/4-mile distance is out of reach for Incredibolt? Not necessarily. Bolt d'Oro is a stoutly bred son of 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1) winner Medaglia d'Oro out of Globe Trot, a daughter of 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) winner and legendary stamina influence A.P. Indy. Globe Trot has also foaled Global Campaign, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Woodward H. (G1), so Bolt d'Oro's pedigree is packed with stamina, and there's no reason to think he can't sire a major winner over 1 1/4 miles.

Furthermore, the bottom half of Incredibolt's pedigree is stuffed with stamina, too.

Incredibolt's dam is Sapphire Spitfire, who posted three maiden and allowance wins over distances from one mile to one mile and 70 yards. Prior to Incredibolt, she foaled Fire On Time, a sprinter who finished second in the Winning Colors (G2), but who also proved sufficiently long-winded to win a one-mile allowance.

Sapphire Spitfire, in turn, is a daughter of Awesome Again out of the Mineshaft mare Sapphiresndiamonds.

Awesome Again was a top-tier route racer who won the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Saratoga Breeders' Cup H. (G2), Hawthorne Gold Cup (G3), and Queen's Plate S. over 1 1/4 miles. At stud, his progeny compiled a solid average winning distance of 7.4 furlongs, with the best including record-setting Breeders' Cup Classic winner Ghostzapper, Belmont conqueror Sir Winston, three-time 1 1/4-mile Santa Anita H. (G1) hero Game On Dude, 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1) winner Oxbow, and 1 1/8-mile Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1) winners Ginger Punch and Round Pond.

Classic stamina is also evident in Awesome Again's record as a broodmare sire. His daughters have foaled Accelerate, winner of the Breeders' Cup Classic, Santa Anita H., Pacific Classic (G1), and Gold Cup at Santa Anita (G1) racing 1 1/4 miles; Keen Ice, winner of the Travers and Suburban (G2) over 1 1/4 miles; Highland Falls, triumphant in the 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1); and Next, victorious in a bevy of stakes over distances from 1 3/8 miles to 1 3/4 miles.

As for Sapphiresndiamonds, she failed to win in nine starts, but she's the dam of Americanus, who finished third against a quality field in the 1 1/16-mile Unbridled S.

Sapphiresndiamonds' sire, Mineshaft, achieved far more as a racehorse. He earned 2003 Horse of the Year honors after rattling off four Grade 1 wins over distances from 1 1/8 miles to 1 1/4 miles, including the Jockey Club Gold Cup.

Mineshaft has passed on stamina as a stallion, siring 1,800-meter (about 1 1/8-mile) Saudi Cup (G1) winner Senor Buscador, Breeders' Cup Classic runner-up Effinex, Belmont runner-up Fly Down, and Kentucky Derby runner-up Nehro, to name a few. His daughters have foaled notable winners over a variety of distances; some of the best include Santa Anita

INCREDIBOLT CONT.

H. hero Express Train and 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1) heroine Cathryn Sophia.

Notably, early-maturing juveniles have been outnumbered by star three-year-olds and older horses among the leading descendants of Awesome Again and Mineshaft. They both peaked as older horses, and they often pass on their late-maturing, stamina-oriented genetics.

As a result, mixing Bolt d'Oro with Awesome Again and Mineshaft has the potential to yield an ideal Kentucky Derby pedigree. Don't be surprised if Incredibolt outperforms his sire at age three and beyond.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT BY JAMES SCULLY

After showing an affinity for Churchill Downs last fall, comfortably winning the Street Sense (G3) and a maiden special weight race, Incredibolt failed to break well from his innermost post and never fired when opening 2026 in the Holy Bull (G3) at Gulfstream Park, checking in last of six runners. The dark bay colt rebounded spectacularly in the Virginia Derby at Colonial Downs, stamping his Kentucky Derby (G1) ticket with a dominant four-length win, and displayed an improved turn of foot to blow open a wide-open race in upper stretch. The performance came back fast, and while Incredibolt will step up to face steeper competition in the Kentucky Derby, the midpack stalker remains a candidate to keep progressing while returning to an oval he favors.

OWNER: Pin Oak Stud (Dana Bernhard) will have its first Kentucky Derby runners in 2026, with Incredibolt being joined by Wood Memorial (G2) upsetter Albus in the starting gate. Located in Versailles, Ky., Pin Oak Stud was sold to the Bernhards from the Abercrombie family in 2022.

TRAINER: Riley Mott will saddle his first Kentucky Derby starters, sending out Incredibolt and Albus. Former assistant and son of two-time Kentucky Derby winner Bill Mott, Riley Mott went out on his own in late 2022 and was represented by his first Grade 1 winner in 2025, World Beater, who Pin Oak Stud owns.

JOCKEY: After riding Incredibolt in his first five outings, Jaime Torres will make his Kentucky Derby debut. The Puerto Rican native earned his biggest career win in the 2024 Preakness (G1), guiding Seize the Grey for the late D. Wayne Lukas. Torres launched his riding career in 2022 and ranked as the leading apprentice on the NYRA circuit in 2023.

BREEDER: Incredibolt was bred in Kentucky by Deann and Greg Baer, who will be represented by their first Kentucky Derby starter as a breeder. Incredibolt sold for \$75,000 as a yearling at the Keeneland September sale.

SIRE: Incredibolt is from the fourth crop of Grade 1 winner Bolt d'Oro, who finished 12th in the 2018 Kentucky Derby. The leading first-crop sire in 2022, Bolt d'Oro, still looks to make an impact on Triple Crown races at stud. He's a son of noted sire Medaglia d'Oro.

DAM: Incredibolt is the fifth foal to race out of Sapphire Spitfire, who is also the dam of Grade 3 runner-up Fire on Time. She's out of Awesome Again, who earned more than \$3.4 million winning nine of 12 career starts, including the 1998 runnings of the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and Stephen Foster (G2) at Churchill Downs. He's yet to make an impact in the Kentucky Derby as a broodmare sire, but Awesome Again will be represented by three runners in the 2026 Kentucky Derby, with Fulleffort and Potente also in the field.

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GOLDEN TEMPO



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Can **Golden Tempo** go where no son of Curlin has gone before: to the Kentucky Derby (G1) winner's circle? It's a distinct possibility after the bay colt stormed from last place to win the Lecomte (G3) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Coming off a debut victory sprinting six furlongs, Golden Tempo relished stretching out over 1 1/16 miles in the Lecomte. He launched an eye-catching rail rally to prevail by three-quarters of a length. Subsequent third-place finishes in the 1 1/8-mile Risen Star (G2) and 1 3/16-mile Louisiana Derby (G2) have reiterated his credentials as a Kentucky Derby contender.

Golden Tempo's pedigree suggests he'll relish the 1 1/4-mile distance of the Kentucky Derby, even though the Run for the Roses has proven to be an elusive prize for Curlin and his sons.

In terms of combined prowess on track and at stud, Curlin ranks among the all-time great racehorses. He was a tremendous performer over classic distances, winning the Preakness (G1), Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Dubai World Cup (G1), and two editions of the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1). Along the way, he earned two Horse of the Year titles.

One of Curlin's relatively few defeats came in the 2007 Kentucky Derby. He was unbeaten at the time and started as the 5-1 second choice, but he could only rally belatedly to finish third by eight lengths. He redeemed himself in the Preakness and later finished a close second in the Belmont (G1).

Curlin has passed on his classic ability at stud. The list of elite route racers he's sired goes on and on. Vino Rosso won the Breeders' Cup Classic. Idiomatic and Malathaat nabbed the Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1). Good Magic prevailed in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1). Journalism and Exaggerator took the Preakness. Palace Malice starred in the Belmont. Bright Future, Global Campaign, Highland Falls, Idol, Keen Ice, and Nest have all won Grade 1 races over 1 1/4 miles.

But Curlin has yet to sire a Kentucky Derby winner. He's come mighty close: Exaggerator, Good Magic, and Journalism have all finished second in the Run for the Roses. There's no reason to think Curlin can't sire a Kentucky Derby winner, but if Golden Tempo pulls it off, he'll make history where Curlin and his other sons have previously faltered.

Bolstering Golden Tempo's Kentucky Derby credentials is a strong female family.

Golden Tempo is the first winning foal produced by Carrumba, a daughter of Bernardini out of the El Prado mare Castanet. Carrumba was a capable route racer, winning the 1 1/8-mile Top Flight H. (G3) and finishing third against an excellent field in the 1 1/16-mile Ogden Phipps (G1).

Carrumba surely inherited some of her class and stamina from Bernardini, the champion three-year-old male of 2006 after winning the Preakness, Jockey Club Gold Cup, and Travers (G1) over classic distances. He tended to pass on stamina at stud. Some of his best runners included Travers winners Stay Thirsty and Alpha, Pegasus World Cup (G1) conqueror Art Collector, and Woodward (G1) hero To Honor and Serve.

But Bernardini is compiling an even stronger record as a broodmare sire. In 2025, his daughter Crowned made headlines as the dam of Sovereignty, winner of the Kentucky Derby, Belmont, and Travers, during a powerful campaign. In both the Derby and the Belmont, Sovereignty defeated Curlin's son Journalism.

Other daughters of Bernardini have foaled Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) hero Nysos, Travers winner Catholic Boy, and multiple Grade 1 winners Clairiere, Colonel Liam, La Cara, and Maxfield.

The specific cross of Curlin with Bernardini mares has proven highly effective. It's yielded Clairiere, a four-time-Grade 1 winning route racer; Paris Lights, winner of the Coach Club American Oaks (G1); Point of Honor, a Black-Eyed Susan (G2) winner who placed five times at the Grade 1 level; Cornishman, triumphant in the Prairie Meadows Cornhusker H. (G3); Cezanne, winner of multiple graded stakes sprinting; Spice Is Nice, winner of the Allaire DuPont Distaff (G3); and Travers third-place finisher Miles D.

Getting back to Carrumba, her dam, Castanet, failed to win in two starts. But she likely contributes additional stamina to Golden Tempo's pedigree through her sire, El Prado. A Group 1-winning grass racer, El Prado sired top-tier runners on dirt and turf alike, including multiple Grade 1 winner Medaglia d'Oro and champion Kitten's Joy.

Both Medaglia d'Oro and Kitten's Joy have enjoyed successful stud careers of their own. Medaglia d'Oro has sired Kentucky Oaks (G1) winners Good Cheer, Plum Pretty, and Rachel Alexandra; the latter also won the Preakness. Kitten's Joy is responsible for an impressive array of major grass stars, including Breeders' Cup winners Stephanie's Kitten, Oscar Performance, and Bobby's Kitten.

With classic stamina emanating from every corner of his pedigree, Golden Tempo may be one of Curlin's most promising Kentucky Derby contenders to date.

GOLDEN TEMPO CONT.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

A dedicated late runner, Golden Tempo closed last-to-first in his first two starts, winning January's Lecomte (G3) at Fair Grounds by nearly a length in his stakes debut, and the bay colt followed with a non-threatening third in the Risen Star (G2). Golden Tempo was more of a late factor while adding blinkers for his final prep, the TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (G2), rallying to finish third by a length. And if he can keep improving in the Kentucky Derby (G1), Golden Tempo will look to make a serious impact from off the pace.

OWNER: Golden Tempo races under the colors of Phipps Stable (Daisy Phipps Pulito) and St. Elias Stable (Vincent Viola). Pulito and Viola were among partners in Dynamic One, who finished 17th in the 2021 Kentucky Derby. Viola co-owned 2017 Kentucky Derby winner and been involved in other Kentucky Derby partnerships including Sandman, seventh in last year's Run for the Roses. He also co-owns Fulleffort and Iron Honor, who both earned a berth to the 2026 Kentucky Derby.

TRAINER: Cherie DeVaux will send out her first Kentucky Derby starter. From Saratoga Springs, N.Y., DeVaux worked for trainers Chad Brown and Chuck Simon before going out on her own in 2018, and her stable has become prominent in recent years, with DeVaux ranking 17th by earnings among North American trainers in 2025. Notable trainees include 2025 champion turf mare She Feels Pretty and 2024 Breeders' Cup Mile (G1) winner More Than Looks.

JOCKEY: Jose Ortiz finished second on Good Magic in 2018 and third on Tacitus in 2019, his best results from 11 previous Kentucky Derby starts. An Eclipse Award winner and leading jockey at the Fair Grounds the last two years, Ortiz started his riding career in New York in 2012. The Puerto Rican native has won the other two legs of the Triple Crown, taking the 2022 Preakness (G1) with Early Voting and the 2017 Belmont (G1) with Tapwrit.

BREEDER: A Kentucky-bred, Golden Tempo will be the first Kentucky Derby starter bred by Phipps Stable and the second for St. Elias Stable, who also bred/owned Known Agenda, eighth in the 2021 Kentucky Derby.

SIRE: A two-time Horse of the Year and winner of the 2007 Preakness, Curlin developed into one of the world's top sires, producing numerous champions and Horse of the Year Cody's Wish. His offspring include a pair of Preakness winners, Journalism (2025) and Exaggerator (2016), who both finished second in the Kentucky Derby, and 2013 Belmont winner Palace Malice. Curlin still seeks an elusive Kentucky Derby win as a sire, but his son, Good Magic, produced 2023 Kentucky Derby winner Mage.

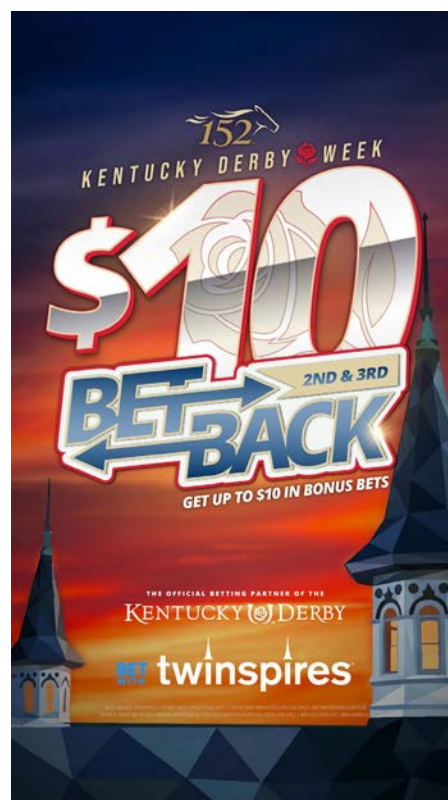
DAM: Golden Tempo is the first stakes winner out of the Grade 3-winning Carrumba, a daughter of Bernardini who is from the same immediate family as champion three-year-old filly Heavenly Prize. Winner of the 2006 Preakness, champion three-year-old male Bernardini has proved to be a leading sire and influential broodmare sire. His unraced daughter Crowned is the dam of 2025 Kentucky Derby and Belmont winner Sovereignty.



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STARK CONTRAST



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Does **Stark Contrast** have the pedigree to handle racing on dirt in the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1)?

Stark Contrast earned his way into the Derby field by finishing second in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby. The Jeff Ruby took place over the synthetic Tapeta track at Turfway Park, and Stark Contrast previously showed talent on turf, winning two stakes and finishing second in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G1).

But racing on dirt is a question mark for Stark Contrast. He's only tried the surface once, finishing fourth on debut in a six-furlong maiden special weight at Del Mar. Was the distance too short? Has Stark Contrast subsequently improved with experience and maturity? Or did he simply dislike racing on dirt? His pedigree may provide clues to the answer.

Stark Contrast is a son of Caravaggio, a highly accomplished European turf sprinter. Across two seasons of racing, Caravaggio won the Phoenix (G1), Commonwealth Cup (G1), Coventry (G2), and Lacken (G3) sprinting six furlongs and the Flying Five (G2) dashing five furlongs. He also won his debut in a maiden race sprinting five furlongs over the synthetic track at Dundalk.

At stud, Caravaggio has proven to be a source of turf prowess. Some of his best runners include Porta Fortuna, winner of the Matron (G1), Falmouth (G1), Coronation (G1) racing one mile and the Cheveley Park (G1) dashing six furlongs; Tenebrism, a Cheveley Park winner who also took the Prix Jean Prat (G1) over 1,400 meters (about seven furlongs); Whitebeam, a two-time winner of the 1 1/8-mile Diana (G1); and Maljoom, conqueror of the Mehl-Mulhens-Rennen (G2, German 2000 Guineas) over a metric mile.

Many of Caravaggio's sons and daughters have been sprinters and milers, which is another possible obstacle standing between Stark Contrast and victory in the Kentucky Derby. The Derby takes place over 1 1/4 miles, and both of Stark Contrast's stakes wins have come racing one mile.

But on the bright side, it's worth noting that Caravaggio's son, The Grey Wizard, displayed an abundance of stamina, most notably winning the Belmont Gold Cup (G2) over two miles. And since Caravaggio is a son of 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1) winner and

Kentucky Derby participant Scat Daddy—the sire of 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify—there's at least some amount of dirt and stamina in the sire line leading to Stark Contrast.

However, the bottom half of Stark Contrast's pedigree continues the overall trend of turf influences dominating his bloodlines.

Stark Contrast's dam is Catch the Eye, a daughter of Quality Road out of the Montjeu mare Turns My Head. Catch My Eye scored both of her wins racing 1 1/8 miles on turf, and she finished a good third in the John C. Mabee (G2) over the same configuration.

Quality Road was an accomplished dirt horse who won four Grade 1 races over distances from one mile to 1 1/8 miles. However, at stud, he's not a pure source of dirt talent—he's sired high-class dirt and turf horses alike. Some, such as champions National Treasure, Abel Tasman, Caledonia Road, and Corniche, have been clear-cut dirt stars. But 1 1/4-mile Manhattan (G1) winner Spring Quality, 1 1/4-mile New York (G1) victor Bleecker Street, and one-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G1) conqueror Hootenanny have scored top-level wins on turf.

This versatility can be found in Quality Road's record as a broodmare sire as well. His daughters have foaled capable dirt racers like 1 1/16-mile Rebel (G2) winner Class President and 1 1/16-mile Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2) heroine Five G, but also grass stars like one-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1) winner Hard to Justify and 1 1/8-mile Pucker Up (G3) victor Waves of Mischief.

Turns My Head, the dam of Catch the Eye, won twice over distances of 1 1/16 miles and 1 1/8 miles on turf. That's not surprising since her sire, Montjeu, was a top-tier grass racer who won half a dozen Group 1 prizes—including the prestigious Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (G1)—over distances from 1 5/16 miles to 1 1/2 miles.

Montjeu later enjoyed a stellar stud career. He sired four winners of England's historic 1 1/2-mile Derby (G1) at Epsom (Motivator, Authorized, Pour Moi, and Camelot), along with other major winners like Arc de Triomphe hero Hurricane Run and 1 1/2-mile Breeders' Cup Turf (G1) winner St Nicholas Abbey.

The stamina in the bottom half of Stark Contrast's pedigree—courtesy of Quality Road and Montjeu—increases his chances of successfully handling 1 1/4 miles. But doing so on dirt in the Kentucky Derby could be challenging, given the abundance of grass breeding throughout the overall pedigree.

STARK CONTRAST CONT.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT BY JAMES SCULLY

A multiple turf stakes winner and runner-up in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G1), Stark Contrast secured a spot in the Kentucky Derby field finishing second in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) on Turfway Park's synthetic track. The bay colt finished a well-beaten fourth when debuting on Del Mar's main track last summer, recording back-to-back wins when switching to turf the second time out, and Stark Contrast remains under consideration for the \$1 million American Turf (G1) on the Kentucky Derby undercard. He will try to outrun projected long odds if connections opt for the Kentucky Derby.

OWNER: Amerman Racing (John and Jerry Amerman) will be represented by their second Kentucky Derby if Stark Contrast enters the Kentucky Derby, the first start coming with Endlessly, who finished ninth when making his first dirt start in the 2024 Kentucky Derby.

TRAINER: A former assistant for two-time Kentucky Derby winner Todd Pletcher, Michael McCarthy has sent out a pair of runners in the Kentucky Derby, finishing second with subsequent Preakness (G1) winner Journalism last year. Born in Ohio and raised near Santa Anita, McCarthy went out on his own in 2014.

JOCKEY: A Japanese native, Kazushi Kimura, has ridden Stark Contrast in all six career starts. Kimura won the Eclipse Award for champion apprentice jockey in 2019 and has made two previous appearances in the Kentucky Derby, most recently recording his best finish when fifth on T O Password in 2024.

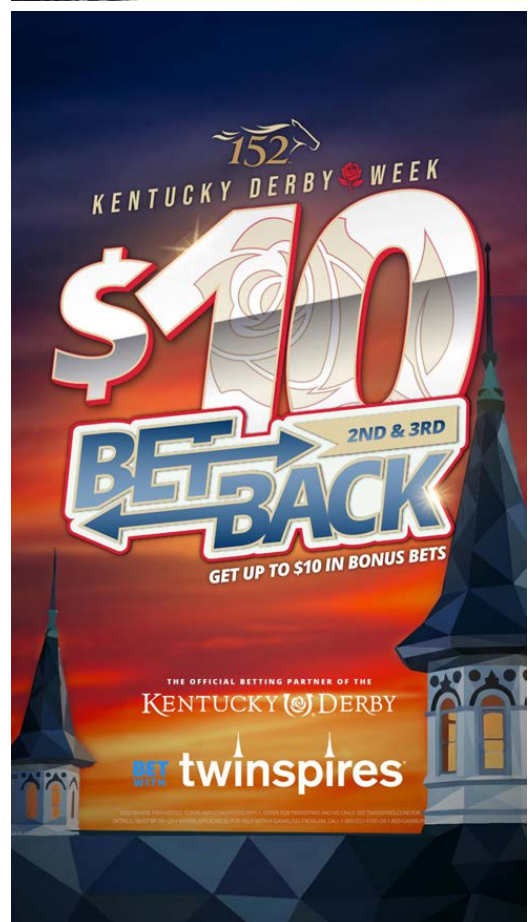
BREEDER: Bred in Kentucky by Jerry Amerman, Stark Contrast would be the third Kentucky Derby starter bred by the Amermans.

SIRE: Stark Contrast is from the fifth crop of multiple Group 1 winner and Irish highweight Caravaggio, who raced exclusively on turf after breaking his maiden on a synthetic track in Ireland. The accomplished sprinter is by Scat Daddy, sire of 2018 Triple Crown winner Justify, and Caravaggio has shown more versatility with his offspring at longer distances, albeit on turf.

DAM: Stark Contrast is the first foal to race out of turf specialist Catch the Eye, who was Grade 2-placed. She's by four-time Grade 1 winner and \$2.2 million earner Quality Road, a son of Elusive Quality, the sire of 2004 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Smarty Jones. Quality Road is responsible for the 2023 Preakness winner National Treasure, and he looks to make an impact on Triple Crown races as a broodmare sire.

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CHIEF WALLABEE



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

There are no certainties in horse racing, but it seems reasonable to conclude **Chief Wallabee** has the pedigree to relish racing 1 1/4 miles in the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1).

Chief Wallabee prepped for the first Saturday in May with top-three finishes in the 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1) and 1 1/16-mile Fountain of Youth (G2) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby. He ran strongly in both races and shouldn't have any trouble stretching out over 1 1/4 miles in the Run for the Roses.

Chief Wallabee is a son of Constitution, a talented route racer who won the Florida Derby (G1) and Donn H. (G1) over 1 1/8 miles. An injury forced Constitution to miss the Triple Crown, but that hasn't stopped him from enjoying a productive stud career.

Constitution's first crop of foals yielded Tiz the Law, the champion three-year-old male of 2020 after rattling off wins in the Florida Derby, 1 1/8-mile Belmont (G1), and 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1). He also nabbed the one-mile Champagne (G1) as a juvenile and finished second in the 2020 Kentucky Derby.

All told, the progeny of Constitution have compiled an average winning distance of 7.4 furlongs, indicating a stallion who consistently passes on stamina. Many of Constitution's best runners have excelled running one mile or farther, including 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster (G1) winner Mindframe, 1,900-meter (about 1 3/16-mile) Gran Criterium Mauricio Serrano Palma (G1) conqueror First Constitution, 1 3/16-mile Louisiana Derby (G2) winner Catching Freedom, and 1 3/4-mile Belmont Gold Cup (G3) victor Parchment Party.

The dam side of Chief Wallabee's pedigree is likewise strong in the stamina department.

Chief Wallabee is the first starter produced by the unraced mare A La Lucie, a daughter of Medaglia d'Oro out of the Ghostzapper mare Glorzapper.

Medaglia d'Oro ranks as one of the most accomplished sires of the last two decades. To detail all the exploits of his best runners would require a book, but some of his most notable stars include:

- Rachel Alexandra, voted 2009 Horse of the Year and champion three-year-old filly after beating males in the 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1), 1 1/8-mile Haskell (G1), and 1 1/8-mile Woodward (G1). She also trounced fellow fillies by 20 1/4 lengths in the 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1).
- Golden Sixty, a Hong Kong sensation whose 26-for-31 lifetime record included 10 Group 1 wins over distances from 1,600 meters (about one mile) to 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles).
- Songbird, a two-time champion filly who won nine Grade 1 races, including eight over distances from 1 1/16 miles to 1 1/4 miles.
- Nitrogen, a champion three-year-old filly who scored her biggest win in the 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1).
- Talismanic, winner of the 1 1/2-mile Breeders' Cup Turf (G1).
- Good Cheer, winner of the Kentucky Oaks.
- Plum Pretty, conqueror of the Kentucky Oaks and 1 1/16-mile Apple Blossom H. (G1).
- Elate, winner of the Alabama and Delaware H. (G2) over 1 1/4 miles, plus the Beldame (G1) racing 1 1/8 miles.
- Marketing Mix, who won seven graded stakes over distances from one mile to 1 1/2 miles, including the 1 1/4-mile Rodeo Drive (G1).
- Higher Power, a runaway winner of the 1 1/4-mile Pacific Classic (G1).
- New Money Honey, a one-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1) conqueror who later stretched out over 1 1/4 miles to win the Belmont Oaks (G1).

Medaglia d'Oro is also compiling an excellent record as a broodmare sire. Already, his daughters have foaled Preakness winner and champion older dirt male National Treasure, 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) winner Olympiad, and 1 1/8-mile Arlington Million (G1) winner Santin.

Moving on, the dam of A La Lucie—Glorzapper—proved best as a sprinter, winning the 6 1/2-furlong L. A. Woman S. But she nevertheless has the potential to pass on stamina thanks to her sire, Ghostzapper.

Ghostzapper was a sensational and versatile racehorse who won Grade 1 races over distances from 6 1/2 furlongs to 1 1/4 miles. He earned 2004 Horse of the Year honors after winning the 2004 Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) in the still-standing stakes-record time of 1:59.02.

At stud, Ghostzapper has sired major winners over an incredibly wide variety of distances and surfaces. Some have been sprinters, such as champions and Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) winners Goodnight Olive and Judy the Beauty. Others have excelled over classic distances, such as 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Dubai World Cup (G1) winner Mystic Guide, 1 1/4-mile Santa Anita H. (G1) conqueror Shaman Ghost, and 1 3/8-mile Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf (G1) winner Moira.

CHIEF WALLABEE CONT.

The same versatility is apparent in Ghostzapper's record as a broodmare sire. His daughters have foaled the champion male sprinters Drefong and Book'em Danno, but also champion turf male Up to the Mark and 2018 Horse of the Year Justify. The latter proved his worth over classic distances on dirt when sweeping the Triple Crown.

With Constitution, Medaglia d'Oro, and Ghostzapper in his pedigree, Chief Wallabee is cut out for success racing 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT

BY JAMES SCULLY

After commendable showings in the Florida Derby (G1) and Fountain of Youth (G2), Chief Wallabee will look to break through in the Kentucky Derby (G1). The bay colt impressively captured his career debut at Gulfstream Park in mid-January and followed with a strong showing in the Fountain of Youth, missing by a neck to Commandment after a wide trip. Chief Wallabee didn't have a clean trip off the far turn but still performed well to finish a close third behind Commandment and The Puma, and the last two experiences may have him primed for a career best in the Kentucky Derby. The Florida Derby has produced seven 20 Kentucky Derby winners in the last 20 years.

OWNER: A homebred for Mike and Katherine (K.K.) Ball, Chief Wallabee will be the first Kentucky Derby starter to race under their colors.

TRAINER: A South Dakota native, two-time Kentucky Derby winner Bill Mott became more involved in the Kentucky Derby during the last decade, winning with Sovereignty in 2025 and Country House by disqualification in 2019. After saddling his first Kentucky Derby starter in 1984, the five-time Eclipse Award winner sent out only six runners over the next 34 years, but Mott is responsible for seven starters since 2018, including third-placer Tacitus in 2019. His Kentucky Derby ledger reads 14-2-0-1, and Mott won the Belmont S. with Drosselmeyer (2010) and Sovereignty.

JOCKEY: Junior Alvarado won his first Kentucky Derby aboard the Bill Mott-trained Sovereignty in 2025, and his last three starts have been on Mott trainees, with Resilience finishing fifth in 2024 and Rocket Can ninth in 2023. His first appearance came in 2016, a fourth aboard Mohaymen, and Chief Wallabee will be his seventh starter.

BREEDER: Kentucky-bred Chief Wallabee will be the first Kentucky Derby starter as breeder for Mike and Katherine (K.K.) Ball.

SIRE: Chief Wallabee is from the seventh crop of Constitution. After winning the Florida Derby (G1), Constitution was forced to miss the 2014 Kentucky Derby due to injury. His most notable Triple Crown offspring, 2020 Belmont (G1) winner Tiz the Law, finished second in the Kentucky Derby, and Constitution is by leading Tapit, who is best known for siring four winners of the Belmont. Constitution will also be represented by Chief Wallabee in the 2026 Kentucky Derby.

DAM: Chief Wallabee is the first foal to race out of the unraced A

La Lucie, a daughter of Medgalia d'Oro, a multiple Grade 1-winning millionaire who competed in all three legs of the 2002 Triple Crown, finishing fourth in the Kentucky Derby, eighth in the Preakness, and second in the Belmont. By El Prado, Medgalia d'Oro proved to be an outstanding stallion, producing more than 100 graded/group stakes winners, including Kentucky Oaks (G1) winners Rachel Alexandra (2009), Plum Pretty (2011), and Good Cheer (2025). Rachel Alexandra won the Preakness (G1) during her Horse of the Year campaign. As a broodmare sire, Medgalia d'Oro has been responsible for 2020 Belmont winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Tiz the Law, 2024 Belmont runner-up Mindframe, and 2024 Preakness third Catching Freedom.

[VIEW THEIR COMPLETE PROFILE](#)



DANON BOURBON



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

A powerful homestretch drive carried **Danon Bourbon** to a 3 1/2-length victory in the Fukuryu S. on the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby.

The unbeaten colt finished fastest of anyone over a muddy track at Nakayama and completed 1,800 meters (about 1 1/8 miles) in 1:50.9, a stakes record. This eye-catching performance has stamped Danon Bourbon as a serious contender for the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1), and his pedigree suggests he's well-suited for success on the first Saturday in May.

Danon Bourbon hails from the first crop of foals sired by Maxfield, who earned \$2,001,812 across three seasons of racing. As a juvenile, he dominated the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Futurity (G1) by 5 1/2 lengths. Then—after an abbreviated sophomore season highlighted by a score in the Matt Winn (G3)—Maxfield regrouped at age four to win four more graded stakes, including the 1 1/8-mile Clark (G1).

It's possible the 1 1/4-mile distance of the Kentucky Derby was a bit farther than Maxfield wanted to run. His lone try over the trip produced a third-place finish as a short-priced favorite in the Santa Anita H. (G1).

But there's no reason to think Maxfield can't sire a major winner over 1 1/4 miles. After all, he's a son of 2007 Kentucky Derby winner Street Sense out of the Bernardini mare Velvety. Bernardini needs no introduction—he was the champion three-year-old male of 2006 after winning the Preakness (G1), Travers (G1), and Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) over classic distances—and Velvety is the dam of runaway 1 1/8-mile Falls City (G3) winner Loved.

Digging deeper into Maxfield's pedigree, Velvety's dam is Cares, winner of the 1 1/8-mile Athena H. (G3) on dirt and the 1 1/16-mile Beaugay H. (G3) and one-mile Poker (G3) on turf. In addition to Velvety, she's the dam of two stakes winners: Sky Mesa, winner of the seven-furlong Hopeful (G1) and 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Futurity (G2), and Golden Velvet, conqueror of the 1 1/8-mile Sixty Sails H. (G3) and one-mile Sabin H. (G3).

In short, there's plenty of route racing prowess in the lineage of Maxfield, and there's even more to be found in the bottom half of Danon Bourbon's pedigree.

Danon Bourbon is the first stakes winner produced by Wild Ridge, a daughter of Tapit out of Wild Gams. Wild Ridge wasn't a remarkable racehorse, winning only a one-mile turf maiden special weight from six starts, but she's proven more productive as a broodmare. Five of her foals have won, including The Filter, an 11-time claiming winner over distances from five to six furlongs; Marvelous Marlene, winner of a one-mile maiden special weight on grass; Clubhouse, runner-up in the six-furlong Jimmy Winkfield S. and a four-time winner over distances up to seven furlongs; and Cajun Cruiser, winner of a six-furlong maiden claimer.

Despite Wild Ridge's tendency to produce sprinters and milers, she has the potential to pass on stamina, as she evidently did with Danon Bourbon. Her sire, Tapit, has topped the North American sire rankings three times and is responsible for some of the best classic dirt racers in the U.S. over the last dozen years. Tapit has sired four winners of the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1)—Tonalist, Creator, Tapwrit, and Essential Quality—as well as the undefeated Flightline, who trounced the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) by the record margin of 8 1/4 lengths.

Meanwhile, daughters of Tapit have foaled champion and Belmont winner Arcangelo, Horse of the Year and two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) conqueror Cody's Wish, champion and 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1) winner Pretty Mischievous, 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Dubai World Cup (G1) winner Hit Show, and 1 3/16-mile Preakness runner-up Gosger, to name a few.

As for Wild Gams, she proved best as a sprinter, winning a trio of Grade 3s. But although some of her foals have followed suit as sprinters—including Nearctic (G2) and Bashford Manor (G3) hero Cazadero—she's also the dam of 1 1/8-mile Remsen (G2) winner Dubyuhnell and 1 1/16-mile Matt Winn (G3) third-place finisher Almost Famous.

Throughout the pedigree of Danon Bourbon, there's abundant class to be found. There's also stamina in sufficient doses to suggest the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance won't be an issue.

KENTUCKY DERBY INTERNATIONAL SCOUTING REPORT

Danon Bourbon earned his Kentucky Derby (G1) ticket via the Japan Road, where he captured the final leg in race-record time to remain perfect in three starts.

Although Danon Bourbon brings the panache of an unbeaten colt, he doesn't have the same degree of experience as fellow Japanese shipper Wonder Dean, the UAE Derby (G2) winner. The question is whether Danon Bourbon's raw talent is enough to compensate for the lack of seasoning that can catch up with three-year-olds in the Derby.

DANON BOURBON CONT.

CHURCHILL DOWNS AFFINITY IN HIS BLOOD

The “Bourbon” in his name is a clue that the Japan Road invitee is a Kentucky-bred making his homecoming for the first Saturday in May. He was bred by Blue Heaven Farm, the same nursery responsible for last year’s Florida Derby (G1) hero Tappan Street.

Sold for \$450,000 as a Keeneland September yearling, Danon Bourbon has a pedigree oriented toward the U.S. Triple Crown. He is from the first crop of \$2 million-earner Maxfield, who stamped himself as a leading Derby hopeful with his dominant victory in the 2019 Breeders’ Futurity (G1). Unfortunately, injuries ruled him out of the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (G1) as well as the pandemic-delayed 2020 Kentucky Derby. Maxfield was able to compile a complete season at four, including sweeping the Alysheba (G2), Stephen Foster (G2), and Clark (G1) at Churchill Downs.

The affinity for Churchill might well be hereditary, since Maxfield is by champion Street Sense. A 10-length romper in the 2006 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile held at Churchill Downs, Street Sense became the first to turn the double in the Derby. Street Sense’s sire, Street Cry, displayed his fondness for the surface when crushing the 2002 Stephen Foster.

Maxfield is out of blueblood Velvety. As a daughter of champion Bernardini and the accomplished Storm Cat mare Caress, Velvety is closely related to Grade 1 winner and successful sire Sky Mesa (the broodmare sire of Derby rival Further Ado).

A similar pedigree pattern appears in Danon Bourbon’s own dam, Wild Ridge, who is by Tapit (likewise an A.P. Indy-line sire) and out of a Storm Cat-line mare, the smart sprinter Wild Gams (by Forest Wildcat). Danon Bourbon’s pedigree therefore doubles up on A.P. Indy and Storm Cat, both duplicated in the fourth generation (4x4).

HUMAN CONNECTIONS

If “Bourbon” is a nod to his Kentucky heritage, “Danon” is the giveaway to his ownership. He races for Masahiro Noda’s Danox Co., whose horses carry the trademark Danon prefix. The operation’s flagbearers on the world stage include Danon Decile, the 2024 Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby) (G1) champion who defeated Calandagan and Rebel’s Romance in the 2025 Dubai Sheema Classic (G1), and Danon Smash, hero of the 2020 Hong Kong Sprint (G1).

Trainer Manabu Ikezoe, 45, boasts a stint at Aidan O’Brien’s Ballydoyle on his resume. The son of retired trainer Kaneo Ikezoe and brother of jockey Kenichi, Manabu worked in his father’s yard from 2006 until setting out on his own in 2015. He has experience in shipping internationally with both of his Grade 1 winners, Dura Erede and Mad Cool. Dura Erede is particularly notable for his ventures to Dubai, where he was runner-up in the 2023 UAE Derby and fifth in the 2024 Dubai World Cup (G1).

Jockey Atsuya Nishimura, 26, has won 18 graded stakes in Japan so far. While the 2024 Sprinters (G1) on turf ranks as his biggest win, as a top-level event under the auspices of the Japan Racing Association, he’s scored a couple of majors on the National Association of Racing’s dirt circuit. Nishimura landed the 2024 Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun – the nation’s most significant race for two-year-olds on dirt – on the Japan Road, and on April 8, he just masterminded a front-running coup in the Kawasaki Kinen.



ROMPS AT KYOTO

Danon Bourbon was unveiled in a newcomers’ race over 1800 meters (about 1 1/8 miles) at Kyoto in October, much like globetrotting champion Forever Young. Unlike Forever Young, who rolled from off the pace, Danon Bourbon readily took the early lead, dictated a steady tempo, and powered away down the lane.

No more than a hand ride was required for him to draw off by 10 lengths, with his ears upright most of the way. The only time Danon Bourbon had to concentrate was at the top of the lane, when he delivered the coup de grace. Then the ears went back up in deep stretch, as if he reverted to routine mode.

“He was quick out of the gate just like in training,” jockey Kohei Matsuyama said in a report picked up by en.netkeiba.com, “and I was able to keep him in a good rhythm. He still had plenty left at the finish. He was very strong.”

Danon Bourbon motored his final 600 meters (about three furlongs) in :36.1, by far the fastest in the field by 1.2 seconds, on a track labeled muddy. Interestingly, he was only the third choice at 4.40-1, revealing that his demolition job was a pleasant surprise.

“That was impressive,” Ikezoe said. “He hadn’t shown any particularly eye-catching times in training, so I didn’t expect such a performance first-up. We’ll take good care of him going forward.”

When Danon Bourbon resurfaced in a Feb. 15 allowance back at Kyoto, the big colt weighed in 14 kilograms (30.8 pounds) heavier than on debut. He was no longer a secret, bet down to 9-10 favoritism, and lived up to expectations.

With Nishimura aboard for the first time, Danon Bourbon switched to stalking tactics in the about 1 3/16-mile affair. He traveled strongly under a hold, but did not get rank or overeager as the pace slackened. Smoothly circling the leaders turning for home, he again delivered the fastest closing split (:36.6) to assert by five lengths, ears up.

DANON BOURBON CONT.

FUKURYU TEST AT NAKAYAMA

Danon Bourbon advanced to the Fukuryu S., the final leg of the Japan Road series. Although fans believed in him as the 1.10-1 favorite, he had to pass several tests to qualify for the Derby.

The first was better opposition in the form of established stakes competitors, including the top three from the Hyacinth S. on the Japan Road.

Another test was shipping to a different region. Because Danon Bourbon is based at the Ritto Training Center in the west of Japan, his races at Kyoto were like home games. His journey east to Nakayama was a new experience.

The third test was the different track dimensions. Although both Nakayama and Kyoto are right-handed tracks, Kyoto is bigger in circumference, with a descent from its hill on the far turn to a flat homestretch. Nakayama is a tighter circuit, with a shorter homestretch (308 meters or about 1,010 feet) that features an uphill climb inside the final 200 meters (about a furlong).

There also turned out to be a fourth test that Danon Bourbon aced as well – the ability to track a more demanding pace and pack a punch late. That tactical challenge was served up by Japan Road veteran Don Erectus, who changed tactics in a daring front-running bid.

Danon Bourbon accosted Don Erectus turning into the stretch, and the uphill finish separated the man from the boys. Driving 3 1/2 lengths clear, Danon Bourbon continued his pattern of throwing in the best final sectional in :37.3.

More significant was his final time of 1:50.9, the fastest in the 27-year history of the Fukuryu. If the muddy surface made it glib, that was not reflected in the four other races at the about 1 1/8-mile distance on that day. The next-best time on March 28 was an allowance for older horses in 1:52.3. On the following day, a graded stakes for older horses, the March (G3), went in 1:51.2.

The faster pace and stiffer topography were quite a contrast from his Kyoto cakewalks, implying that Danon Bourbon has the scope to handle greater challenges.

“He’s a really good horse,” Nishimura said in a Yahoo! Japan report. “There are no other words to describe it.”

“He has overcome the challenges of transportation and tight turns,” Ikezoe said. “The fact that transportation was not a problem at all is a particularly good result.”

FUKURYU FORM STACKS UP

The collateral form from the Fukuryu is enticing, tying in with the Euro/Mideast Road and Japan’s own burgeoning dirt series.

Don Erectus is a valuable reference point as the runner-up in three Japan Road events. (Note that he collected as many points as Danon Bourbon did [40], and with the tiebreaker based on earnings, Don Erectus technically topped the leaderboard. He would have earned

the Japan Road invitation if his connections had been interested in nominating to the Triple Crown.)

In the Japan Road opener, the Cattleya S., Don Erectus chased home Satono Voyage, who went on to place third in the Saudi Derby (G3). The fourth-placer in Saudi, Wonder Dean, later starred in the UAE Derby.

Another pointer to Wonder Dean comes via the third-placer in the Fukuryu, Charlie. In a key Kyoto allowance last November, Charlie had been unplaced behind Pyromancer and Wonder Dean.

Charlie has improved since, but his recent form reinforces the point. Through his third in the Bluebird Cup, Charlie has interlocking form with the smart Rock Ptarmigan, who had beaten Wonder Dean in December. Rock Ptarmigan recently defeated the top two from the Bluebird Cup, Finger and Katarite, to stamp himself as an exciting contender for Japan’s Dirt Triple Crown.

DANON BOURBON’S DERBY CHANCES

The Derby will mark Danon Bourbon’s first race going left-handed, his first attempt in a black-type stakes, and his first taste of the globetrotting lifestyle. He’s worked out straightforward trips in his three races so far, without having a straw in his path. Chances are that trend won’t continue in a frenetic Run for the Roses, and there’s no telling how he might react, or recoil, if he’s suddenly thrust outside of his comfort zone.

Hence, Danon Bourbon doesn’t offer the total package that Japan’s best-ever Derby hopeful, Forever Young, did when he went agonizingly close in 2024. Forever Young checked the boxes for exceptional talent, proven ability to overcome adversity, and battle-tested experience in international competition.

Yet Japan’s next-best Derby finisher, T O Password, had even less experience when fifth in the same 2024 edition. So there’s already a precedent for a sparingly-raced Japan Road winner to transfer his game to Churchill, and Danon Bourbon has a stronger profile than T O Password.

Indeed, Danon Bourbon appears to have a higher ceiling than most of the others who have tried. If he can adhere to his stalking style, he’ll give himself a chance to emulate grandsire Street Sense.

[VIEW THEIR COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

WONDER DEAN



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Wonder Dean stamped his ticket to the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1) with a determined victory in the UAE Derby (G2) on dirt at Meydan in Dubai, the final leg of the European/Middle East Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Wonder Dean relished the 1,900-meter (about 1 3/16-mile) distance of the UAE Derby, gradually kicking away from pacesetter Six Speed in the homestretch to triumph by 2 1/2 lengths.

This marked a big step forward from Wonder Dean's previous fourth-place finish in the Saudi Derby (G3), racing 1,600 meters (about one mile). His improvement while stretching out in distance isn't surprising; after all, his pedigree is packed with stamina, suggesting he'll appreciate the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile journey.

Wonder Dean is a son of Dee Majesty, a classic-caliber campaigner on turf in Japan. Dee Majesty scored his signature win in the 2,000-meter (about 1 1/4-mile) Satsuki Sho (G1), the first leg of the Japanese Triple Crown. He also won the St. Lite Kinen (G2) racing 2,200 meters (about 1 3/8 miles) and the Kyodo Tsushin Hai (G3) over 1,800 meters (about 1 1/8 miles), in addition to placing third in the Tokyo Yushun (G1)—the Japan Derby—over 2,400 meters (about 1 1/2 miles).

Dee Majesty, in turn, is a son of Japan's legendary Triple Crown winner Deep Impact, who won a bevy of top-tier prizes over distances from 2,000 meters to 3,200 meters (about two miles). Deep Impact has sired some of Japan's greatest horses in recent memory, including Triple Crown winner Contrail and two-time Japan Cup (G1) winner Gentildonna.

Deep Impact was at his best on turf, and his progeny—including Dee Majesty, Contrail, and Gentildonna—have largely followed suit. So where does Wonder Dean's dirt prowess come from? There are a few possible sources.

One is a bit distant. The sire of Deep Impact, Sunday Silence, enjoyed a stellar career competing on dirt in the U.S., winning the Kentucky Derby, Preakness (G1), Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Super Derby (G1), and Santa Anita Derby (G1) en route to 1989 Horse of the Year honors.

A more immediate source of dirt talent is Wonder Dean's dam, Wonder Siang Praw. She recorded a trio of wins over distances from 1,700 meters (about 1 1/16 miles) to 1,800 meters on dirt in Japan.

Wonder Siang Praw is a daughter of Wonder Acute, a high-quality dirt racer in Japan. On the primary Japan Racing Association (JRA) circuit, he finished second twice in the 1,800-meter Champions Cup (G1) and third in the 1,600-meter February (G1). On the National Association of Racing (NAR) circuit, he won a trio of local Group 1s racing 1,600 meters, 2,000 meters, and 2,100 meters, in addition to finishing second or third in 10 other local Group 1s over the same distance range.

Wonder Acute hails from a line of American classic winners. His sire, Charismatic, won the 1999 Kentucky Derby and Preakness before finishing third by 1 1/2 lengths in the Belmont, emerging from the latter race with a career-ending injury. Charismatic, in turn, is a son of 1990 Preakness winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Summer Squall.

Meanwhile, Wonder Acute's dam is Wonder Heritage, who previously foaled Wonder Speed, a capable dirt racer. On the JRA circuit, Wonder Speed nabbed the 2,300-meter (about 1 7/16-mile) Tokai (G2), 1,800-meter Heian (G3), and 1,800-meter Antares (G3). On the NAR circuit, he twice prevailed in the 2,500-meter (about 1 9/16-mile) Nagoya Grand Prix, a local Group 2.

Wonder Heritage is a daughter of Pleasant Tap, the third-place finisher from the 1990 Kentucky Derby. Pleasant Tap eventually matured to win the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) and Suburban H. (G1) over 1 1/4 miles. That's fitting since Pleasant Tap's sire, Pleasant Colony, was an elite performer over classic distances, winning the 1981 Kentucky Derby and Preakness before running third in the Belmont. Later on, Pleasant Colony added the 1 1/8-mile Woodward (G1) to his record and earned champion three-year-old male honors.

Clearly, the bottom half of Wonder Dean's pedigree contains ample dirt talent. And with so many stamina influences in his bloodlines, the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance is easily within reach. If Wonder Dean falters on the first Saturday in May, no one will blame it on insufficient dirt breeding or on lack of endurance.

KENTUCKY DERBY INTERNATIONAL SCOUTING REPORT BY KELLIE REILLY

The fifth straight Japanese-trained winner of the UAE Derby (G2), and sixth overall, Wonder Dean will try to score an historic breakthrough in the Kentucky Derby (G1) that has eluded his compatriots so far.

Wonder Dean followed the same Saudi Derby (G3) to Dubai route that nearly worked for Forever Young, a near-miss third in the epic 2024 Run for the Roses. In 2023, Derma Sotogake likewise competed in both races before finishing sixth at Churchill Downs.

WONDER DEAN CONT.

But neither of those furnishes a real parallel with Wonder Dean. He doesn't have the superstar swagger of Forever Young, who was operating at an historic level in Japan even before he took to the world stage.

Wonder Dean didn't have a juvenile campaign equivalent to Derma Sotogake, who captured the marquee dirt race for two-year-olds, the Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun, before his Mideast swing. Unlike Forever Young, who turned the Saudi/UAE Derby double, Derma Sotogake was third in Saudi before dominating in Dubai.

This season, Wonder Dean echoes Derma Sotogake in that he made a similar improvement from a fourth in Saudi to triumph in the UAE Derby. But the manner of Wonder Dean's Dubai victory offers a more reliable pointer to his Derby prospects than "Derma's" wire job did.

Hence, Wonder Dean arguably arrives with stronger claims than Derma Sotogake. Although Wonder Dean didn't contest juvenile stakes at home, he was runner-up to a couple of high-profile performers in the division. Those solid efforts presaged his development at three, when a longer distance brought out the best in him.

The main question is whether Wonder Dean can build up to another peak after his heroics to top the Euro/Mideast Road. And is he, in principle, the best Japanese dirt three-year-old – or is it Japan Road invitee Danon Bourbon? Might it even be a Triple Crown nominee who stayed home?

On the plus side, Wonder Dean's human connections have done well here before. He picks up Forever Young's jockey, Ryusei Sakai, and trainer Daisuke Takayanagi sent out T O Password to a respectable fifth-place finish in the 2024 Derby.

SUNDAY SILENCE/CHARISMATIC CROSS

Wonder Dean is the first graded stakes winner by the Deep Impact stallion Dee Majesty. He's also the first to make any sort of mark for his broodmare sire, the venerable \$9.6 million-earner Wonder Acute, a three-time runner-up in the Japan Cup Dirt (G1) (2011-13).

As the "Wonder" prefix implies, the homebred hails from lines cultivated by Yoshinari Yamamoto's family. Wonder Acute and older half-brother Wonder Speed, both homebreds for Nobuyuki Yamamoto, were hard-knocking veterans whose talent and longevity made them money-spinners. Wonder Dean could very well carry on that legacy.

At the same time, Wonder Dean's pedigree isn't just a cause for sentimentality. He represents a combination of Japanese, European, and U.S. classic influences.

Sire Dee Majesty won the first jewel of Japan's Triple Crown on turf, the 2016 Satsuki Sho (G1), and placed third in the Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby) (G1). By Sunday Silence's greatest son, Deep Impact, Dee Majesty is out of a Brian's Time mare from the family of European celebrities Generous and Trillion.

Sunday Silence isn't the only Kentucky Derby and Preakness (G1) champion to factor prominently in Wonder Dean's bloodlines. Broodmare sire Wonder Acute is by Charismatic, the 1999 Derby and Preakness star, himself a son of 1990 Preakness victor Summer Squall (A.P. Indy's half-brother). Wonder Acute is out of a mare by the remarkably versatile Pleasant Tap (a son of 1981 Derby/Preakness hero Pleasant Colony).

Although Wonder Dean's immediate female line is light on black-type, the bottom half of his pedigree is bolstered by stallions of the highest racing class – Bago, Pilsudski, and all-time great Dancing Brave.

TRAINER AND JOCKEY ON A MISSION

Takayanagi, 48, learned his craft as an assistant for about 14 years before becoming a trainer in his own right. In 2017, he spent time at Churchill Downs as part of his study of U.S. racing, part of his long-term preparation to achieve his Derby goal.

Only six years after sending out his first starter, Takayanagi made it to the Derby with T O Password, who qualified via the Japan Road. He faced a tall task in attempting the Run for the Roses in just his third career start, but the 48-1 shot ran a mighty race to finish fifth.

At home, Takayanagi has won majors on both dirt and turf. His first stable star was T O Keynes, Japan's champion dirt horse of 2021. Ten Happy Rose became his first Grade 1 winner on turf when pulling a monumental upset in the 2024 Victoria Mile (G1), a Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In." She outperformed her 58-1 odds when fourth in that fall's Breeders' Cup Mile (G1) at Del Mar.

Takayanagi's older brother, Mizuki, is a classic-winning trainer himself, and Daisuke joined the club last year. He celebrated his first classic success in the Satsuki Sho with Museum Mile, who clinched the three-year-old male title by beating elders in the prestigious Arima Kinen (G1) in December. Another highlight of Takayanagi's 2025 season was the emergence of exciting sprinter T O Elvis, who will contest the Churchill Downs (G1) on Derby Day.

Jockey Sakai will reunite with T O Elvis on the undercard before guiding Wonder Dean for the first time in the Derby. Although known worldwide for his stellar partnership with Forever Young, the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and two-time Saudi Cup (G1) winner, he has won more than 50 graded races already at the age of 28.

Sakai has scooped the past three editions of the Champions Cup (formerly the Japan Cup Dirt) with two-time champion Lemon Pop and current titleholder W Heart Bond, shocked the 2022 Godolphin Mile (G2) aboard Bathrat Leon, and lifted Stunning Rose in that year's Shuka Sho (G1), the final jewel in the Fillies' Triple Crown.

PROMISING EFFORTS AT TWO

Wonder Dean raced exclusively over 1800 meters (about 1 1/8 miles) as a juvenile, suggesting that stamina was his forte. He debuted in a newcomers' race in July on the Hakodate turf, which was apparently an educational outing. The 63-1 longshot ran very greenly, and veered out from the crop, but still closed from last for an encouraging fourth. Note that the winner's time was a juvenile course record for the distance in 1:48.1.

WONDER DEAN CONT.

Next seen on the dirt at Nakayama, Wonder Dean was much more clued in as the 4.60-1 second choice. He secured a better early position to stalk the pace, launched his bid turning for home, and easily skipped away by eight lengths.

Wonder Dean settled for second in his two remaining starts as a juvenile. But he was bumping into an above-average rival on both occasions.

In a historically informative Kyoto allowance, won in the past by eventual UAE Derby winners Crown Pride (2021) and Derma Sotogake (2022), Wonder Dean dropped further off the pace and had to work his way into the clear in the stretch. Godolphin's favored Pyromancer got the crucial jump on him and held on by a half-length. The form was boosted when Pyromancer came back to win the Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun on the Japan Road.

Wonder Dean reverted to handier tactics with new rider Florent Geroux in the Dec. 20 Poinsettia S. at Hanshin. Settled just off the pace, he quickened to challenge front-running Rock Ptarmigan, who found more to hold him at bay. But Wonder Dean posted the fastest final 600 meters (about three furlongs) in :35.9, with the last furlong uphill.

Rock Ptarmigan was planning to target the UAE Derby himself until the outbreak of hostilities in the region prompted connections to pursue domestic options. He has since won the Keihin Hai, a stepping stone to Japan's Dirt Triple Crown, in even more authoritative fashion.

SAUDI PREP TO DUBAI BREAKTHROUGH

Wonder Dean's venture to the Saudi Derby not only gave him an introduction to Group-level international competition. The race conditions were a brand new experience for him as well. All of his prior starts came in routes on right-handed tracks. Now he was cutting back to a metric mile for the first time, going around one turn, left-handed.

In the circumstances of a race that was bound to be too short for him, Wonder Dean reported home a better-than-appears fourth. Jockey Oisin Murphy steered him to the extreme outside down the backstretch, presumably to avoid kickback.

Eventual winner Al Haram saved a lot more ground as he commenced his rally from the rear. For some way in upper stretch, Wonder Dean and Al Haram were moving in tandem. But inside the final furlong, Al Haram delivered the knockout punch and swept past the leaders, while Wonder Dean made no further impression.

Third-placer Satono Voyage, the beaten favorite, gives collateral form that complements Japan Road invitee Danon Bourbon. Both defeated the reliable yardstick of the series, Don Erectus, who was runner-up in three Japan Road events. Satono Voyage held off Don Erectus in the opening leg of the series, last November's Cattleya S. Danon Bourbon dismissed Don Erectus more emphatically in the finale, the Fukuryu S.

But it's hazardous to lean too heavily on that comparison because of the different distances involved. Moreover, Wonder Dean was much better suited to the UAE Derby. The step up to about 1 3/16 miles played to his strengths, especially when pacesetter Six Speed turned it into an unforgiving test.

Six Speed's relentless gallop took almost everyone else out of their comfort zones. Wonder Dean, under a very heady ride by Cristian Demuro, improved his position on the backstretch to stay within striking range. He had the gears to go after Six Speed when he tried to give them the slip rounding the far turn, and the superior stamina to outlast him.

"I was truly impressed by his performance," Takayanagi told the Dubai Racing Club. "I was confident beforehand, as I thought the extra distance would definitely help, and that Meydan would suit him.

"I was expecting the leader, Six Speed, to stop a lot earlier than he did, and so I was a bit worried, but I always thought he would get there."

The sectionals illustrate that the UAE Derby was a war of attrition. Wonder Dean's final 400 meters (about a quarter-mile) elapsed in :27.06 as he pulled 2 1/2 lengths clear of the tiring Six Speed.

The only one gaining late was Wonder Dean's familiar foe, Pyromancer, who did not enjoy the best passage (and wound up wearing two hoods, thanks to a mix-up with the equipment declaration). Even his belated rally, in :27.44, left him another six lengths behind Six Speed.

WONDER DEAN'S DERBY CHANCES

With his experience in navigating different types of trips, with different jockeys, in big fields, around different tracks, in three countries, Wonder Dean has the foundation and seasoning to cope with the unique demands of the Kentucky Derby. He proved his stamina in the UAE Derby, but as his finishing speeds at home attest, he's no plodder.

If a pace meltdown would increase his win chances, he's not beholden to it to run well. Wonder Dean has the tactical ability for Sakai to place him in a sensible spot, depending on how the race unfolds.

[VIEW THEIR COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

SIX SPEED



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Six Speed flaunted his speed in the UAE 2000 Guineas (G3) at Meydan in Dubai, carving out the pace on his way to winning the European/Middle East Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifier by five lengths.

Having previously won back-to-back sprints at Meydan in decisive fashion, Six Speed gave the impression he might be cut out for success racing seven furlongs or shorter. But the UAE 2000 Guineas took place over a metric mile, and Six Speed's strong finish down the homestretch suggested he had stamina to spare. He subsequently demonstrated that stamina when finishing a pacesetter second in the UAE Derby (G2) over 1,900 meters (about 1 3/16 miles).

Six Speed's pedigree has always indicated he has potential for success over classic distances. Even the 1 1/4-mile distance of the Kentucky Derby (G1) may be within reach for the speedy sophomore.

Six Speed is a son of Not This Time, one of the hottest and most versatile sires standing at stud in North America. Sons and daughters of Not This Time have excelled over an incredibly wide variety of distances and surfaces. A few of the most prominent include:

- Epicenter, the champion three-year-old male of 2022, after winning the 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1) and placing second in the Kentucky Derby and 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1) on dirt.
- Magnitude, winner of the Dubai World Cup (G1) over 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles) on dirt.
- Up to the Mark, the champion turf male of 2023, after winning three Grade 1 races over distances from one mile to 1 1/4 miles. He also ran second in the 1 1/2-mile Breeders' Cup Turf (G1).
- Cy Fair, winner of the five-furlong Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint (G1).
- Cogburn, a top-tier turf sprinter who ran 5 1/2 furlongs in the North American record time of :59.80 to win the Jaipur (G1).
- Sibelius, Just One Time, Princess Noor, and Goal Oriented, all Grade 1 winners, sprinting on dirt.
- Troubleshooting, winner of the Franklin-Simpson (G1) sprinting on turf.

- Sacred Wish and Rhetorical, Grade 1-winning grass milers.
- Next, a standout dirt marathoner with wins in the 1 5/8-mile Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance (G2) and two editions of the 1 3/8-mile Brooklyn (G2) on his record.
- The most long-winded of Not This Time's top progeny—Epicenter, Magnitude, Up to the Mark, and Next—were produced by daughters of stallions who won Grade 1 races over 1 1/4 miles. Epicenter's dam sire is Pacific Classic (G1) winner Candy Ride. The dams of Up to the Mark and Next were respectively sired by Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) winners Ghostzapper and Awesome Again. And the dam is Magnitude is a daughter of Bernardini, a champion who won the Travers and Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) in addition to the Preakness.

This bodes well for Six Speed. His dam, Browse, is a daughter of Medaglia d'Oro, a top-tier competitor racing 1 1/4 miles.

First, a quick look at Browse. She was versatile, counting a 5 1/2-furlong dirt sprint and a 1 1/16-mile grass route among her four wins. While she failed to win at the stakes level, she did finish second in the Our Mims S. racing one mile and 70 yards on dirt.

As a broodmare, Browse is finding greater success. In addition to Six Speed, she's the dam of Pipit, an early-maturing filly who won the 5 1/2-furlong Victoria S. on synthetic.

Getting back to Medaglia d'Oro, he competed in all three legs of the 2002 Triple Crown, finishing second in the 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1), fourth in the Kentucky Derby, and eighth in the Preakness. Afterward, he never finished out the exacta while competing in some of the world's most important dirt races. Over 1 1/4 miles (or the metric equivalent), he won the Travers and placed second in the Pacific Classic, Dubai World Cup (G1), and two editions of the Breeders' Cup Classic. He also won strong editions of the Donn H. (G1) and Whitney H. (G1) racing 1 1/8 miles.

Yet for all his racing success, Medaglia d'Oro has risen even higher at stud. Like Not This Time, he's sired elite racers on dirt and turf alike. Hong Kong sensation Golden Sixty, Breeders' Cup Turf winner Talismanic, and Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1) heroine New Money Honey rank among his numerous Grade/Group 1 winners on grass. Meanwhile, his dirt stars include champion three-year-old fillies Songbird, Nitrogen, and Rachel Alexandra. The latter won the Preakness and 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1), and later Medaglia d'Oro sired additional Kentucky Oaks winners Plum Pretty and Good Cheer.

The progeny of Medaglia d'Oro have compiled an average winning distance of 7.7 furlongs, indicating that he's a strong source of stamina at stud. That remains apparent in his record as a broodmare sire. While daughters of Medaglia d'Oro have foaled some capable sprinters and milers, they're better known for producing Preakness winner National Treasure and Breeders' Cup Classic runner-up Olympiad. The latter won five graded stakes during an accomplished career, including the 1 1/4-mile Jockey Club Gold Cup.

SIX SPEED CONT.

With the stamina of Medaglia d'Oro backing up the versatility of Not This Time, Six Speed is cut out for success racing 1 1/4 miles. Also, there's plenty of turf prowess in this pedigree cross, so if Six Speed ever falters on dirt, a switch to grass could unlock a whole new avenue for success.

KENTUCKY DERBY INTERNATIONAL SCOUTING REPORT BY KELLIE REILLY

Dubai-based Six Speed was purchased privately by an American ownership group before he jumped on the Euro/Mideast Road. He repaid their investment by qualifying for the Kentucky Derby (G1) as the UAE 2000 Guineas (G3) winner and the UAE Derby (G2) runner-up. But Six Speed must defy the stats against UAE Derby alumni on the first Saturday in May.

According to the Kentucky Derby media guide, 20 horses have arrived via the UAE route, and 19 have failed to crack the superfecta at Churchill Downs. The lone exception is Japan's Forever Young, the near-miss third in the 2024 Kentucky Derby, who was already stamping himself as an historical outlier.

Six Speed's trainer, Bhupat Seemar, experienced that stat himself in his first attempt at the Run for the Roses in 2022. His speedy colt Summer Is Tomorrow, likewise the runner-up in his UAE Derby, set a ferocious pace and ultimately faded to last. His main contribution was teeing it up for the 80-1 Rich Strike to come from the clouds.

While Six Speed shares superficial similarities with Summer Is Tomorrow, he has a stronger profile overall. Both were Kentucky-breds sourced at European two-year-olds in training sales, with similarly aggressive running styles. But Six Speed appears to have greater talent, a deeper pedigree, and potentially more favorable race dynamics.

The rub is if Six Speed can stay the trip, a question that's been at the top of Seemar's mind every time he stepped up in distance at Meydan.

"He's brilliant – he's got tons of speed," Seemar told the Dubai Racing Club in advance of the UAE Derby. "I hope he stays, but you can only find that out once you're in the race. If he does stay, he's a very, very serious horse."

Six Speed didn't quite see it out in the about 1 3/16-mile UAE Derby, where Japan's Wonder Dean overhauled him late. He'll need to learn from that experience and harness his energy more effectively to hang around at the finish in the Kentucky Derby.

KENTUCKY-BRED FROM A DEEP PHIPPS FAMILY

Six Speed has the pedigree to inspire hopes, although it's not conclusive. He's by the red-hot and versatile sire Not This Time, whose champion son Epicenter was runner-up as the favorite in that wild 2022 Derby. Not This Time's latest star over the classic distance on dirt, Magnitude, just wired the Dubai World Cup (G1) to upset Forever Young.

Six Speed's female line is likewise rippling with quality, but incapable of being typecast. He's not the first Derby runner bred by KatieRich Farms, which also produced Instilled Regard, the fourth-placer as an 85-1 shot in 2018. Instilled Regard went on to become a Grade 1 winner on turf.

Like Instilled Regard, Six Speed is out of a mare who was herself a Phipps Stable blueblood. KatieRich bought Six Speed's dam, stakes-placed Browse, for \$350,000 as a broodmare at the 2021 Keeneland November Breeding Stock Sale. Her foal of that year, Pipit (by Quality Road), is a stakes-winning sprinter.

Browse, by the outstanding Medaglia d'Oro, is a half-sister to Grade 1-winning millionaire Imagining. Their dam, Grade 2 vixen Daydreaming, is a full sister (by A.P. Indy) to 2010 Vosburgh (G1) winner Girolamo, a one-turn specialist despite his pedigree.

Daydreaming's sisters are noteworthy as Derby producers. She is a full sister to Supercharger, the dam of 2010 Derby hero Super Saver, and another sister, She's a Winner, is responsible for 2006 Haskell (G1) victor Bluegrass Cat, runner-up in the Derby, Belmont (G1), and Travers (G1).

SCOUTED BY THE EAGLE-EYED O'TOOLE

Six Speed sold for just \$50,000 as a yearling at Keeneland September. But the buyer was a giant clue that there was more here than met the eye. He was discovered by Margaret ("Mags") O'Toole, well known for her scouting out of young prospects on both the Flat and the jumps. She clearly rated him as a worthwhile "pinhook" for resale as a juvenile.

Exported to Ireland, the colt learned the ropes at Eddie O'Leary's Lynn Lodge Stud, whose graduates logically tend to be turf performers. But Lynn Lodge did develop a high-caliber dirt operator in Gronkowski, second to Justify in the 2018 Belmont and the near-misser to Thunder Snow in the 2019 Dubai World Cup.

Six Speed was offered at the Tattersalls Craven Breeze Up Sale, where Seemar purchased him for about \$304,680. He was bought for the Blue Blood Racing Syndicate of Kamlesh Mahtani and Dhruv Sani, Seemar's friends from his college days.

THREE-TIME CHAMPION UAE TRAINER

Recently crowned the champion trainer for the 2025-26 UAE season – this third title in just five years of operating his own stable – Seemar remains the only local trainer (i.e., not affiliated with Godolphin) to take the Dubai World Cup. That landmark victory came with Laurel River (2024), who was completing a big-race double after stablemate Tuz landed the Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1).

But Seemar has plenty of experience on the U.S. scene. He interned at Taylor Made Farm in Kentucky, the birthplace of leading 2026 contenders Renegade and Commandment, and served as an assistant to Hall of Famer Bob Baffert, who's tied for the all-time record with six Kentucky Derby wins.

SIX SPEED CONT.

Seemar then assisted his uncle Satish, a longtime fixture in Dubai, before taking over the helm. He was an instant success, winning the trainers' championship in his first season (2021-22) that also featured a World Cup night victory, courtesy of Switzerland in the Golden Shaheen.

THE NAME SAYS IT ALL

Six Speed's first public appearance at Meydan came in an Oct. 29 trial. Although it was a low-key practice session, he easily strode forward and breezed home much the best.

As a result, Six Speed was the international market favorite for his first real start on Nov. 7, the opening night of the Dubai Carnival. But he got off to a slow and awkward start that compromised his trip. After hustling from the outside post to clear the field, he tired in the stretch yet kept trying and held third.

Seemar later said that "his homework was so good" going into his debut that "he did disappoint us a little bit," but noted that the troubled break was a factor.

Remedial gate work was prescribed, and Six Speed benefited from the extra schooling. He promptly made amends in a conditions race over the same 1200-meter (about six-furlong) trip. Again drawn on the outside, he broke running, forced the pace, outdueled the early leader, and gradually edged away.

"I'm not sure how far will he go," Seemar said in the postrace interview. "He does have a lot of speed – that's why he's called Six Speed.

"He's a bit of a fidgety horse, so you don't want to overcook him."

Six Speed looked even stronger going up a furlong in the UAE 2000 Guineas Trial, sponsored by Churchill Downs. Interestingly, the yard's go-to rider, Tadhg O'Shea, went with stablemate Lino Padrino, who was proven at the distance and ranked as the favorite.

With no Godolphin runner involved, William Buick was available for the spare ride on Six Speed, and he worked out the winning trip. He broke well, took up a handy tracking position on the inside, and showed professionalism to sneak through a tight spot on the rail.

Argentine-bred Legalized was making a bold run at the same time wider out, and Six Speed found plenty to outkick him. Although a 12-pound weight concession assisted him, Six Speed still turned in a very promising performance. He drew three lengths clear of Legalized, a listed stakes winner, with a gap back to the rest, including slow-starting Lino Padrino in fourth.

Buick was complimentary of his professional attitude, describing Six Speed as "very likable" if "not the biggest" colt.

"He does have a lot of speed, a lot of natural speed," Buick noted, recapping that he was "quick into stride" and "in his comfort zone the whole way." As soon as the seam appeared, "he was straight in and gone," and "very strong at the line."

AMERICANS SWOOP AHEAD OF THE UAE 2000 GUINEAS

The next class and distance test would come in the UAE 2000 Guineas itself, a new addition to the Euro/Mideast Road to the Kentucky Derby. Six Speed would sport new silks in the metric mile affair, for U.S. interests had taken note of his Guineas Trial victory.

A partnership including Brunetti Dugan Stables, Jake Ballis's Black Type Thoroughbreds, Steve Adkisson, and Swinbank Stables struck a deal to acquire the colt. Most of those names have been seen in various ownership permutations before.

Ballis and Reagan Swinbank were part of a quartet of co-owners involved in Join in the Dance (seventh in the 2009 Kentucky Derby). Black Type, Swinbank, and Adkisson were among the partners in Grade 1-winning millionaire Sacred Wish, while Swinbank is involved (with others) in reigning Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint (G1) victress Cy Fair.

Six Speed needed a new rider again for the Guineas. Buick was required for Godolphin's favored Devon Island, and O'Shea stuck with Lino Padrino. Mickael Barzalona picked up the mount and masterminded his most impressive win so far.

Up with the strong pace, Six Speed beat off his early rival and kept motoring by five lengths. Devon Island was no match when along for second, and Lino Padrino wilted to fourth.

"We didn't know if he was going to get that distance," Seemar said afterward. "Good horses have speed, and then they can have stamina, so I guess he's probably one of them.

"He's got so much natural speed," Seemar continued. "He just proves us wrong....he's just so easy, a tractable horse, he breaks well, he sits up there on the speed, and then he kicks on. He's every jockey's dream and every trainer's dream, to be honest."

TEMPO TAKES TOLL IN UAE DERBY

Six Speed kept Barzalona aboard for the UAE Derby. O'Shea kept faith with another highly-regarded stablemate, Salloom, who had a star-crossed Carnival. Salloom's misfortune continued in the UAE Derby, as his blindfold wasn't released in time when the gate opened, and his race was over.

If Salloom had been able to deploy his tactical speed, how might that have affected Six Speed's chances? I'd suspect that Six Speed was going to be faster early in any event, although Salloom might have had the stamina to track him and still be involved late.

Six Speed dished out taxing splits, with a series of 200-meter sectionals in :10.84, :11.53, :11.52, and :11.61. He couldn't maintain that for long, but still clocked his next two furlongs in :12.12 and :12.56 before beginning to tire.

By that point, most of the field was strung out behind him, except for Wonder Dean, who gained when Six Speed decelerated. The final 600 meters were a long, exhausting slog for Six Speed, elapsing in :12.96, :13.36, and :14.45. He was on fumes, unable to withstand Wonder Dean.

SIX SPEED CONT.

"We knew there was a chance he might not stay because he has so much speed," Barzalona said, "but I let him roll on the way he likes. At the end, he was very tired, and it was his heart that kept him in it."

"He just didn't stay," Seemar summed up. "He doesn't help himself. He's got so much speed, but he needs to learn to relax."

The final time of the UAE Derby was an uninspiring 1:59.19, although Magnitude's time in the about 1 1/4-mile World Cup was also a slow 2:04.38.

KENTUCKY DERBY CHANCES

Off that evidence, Six Speed is liable to flame out at Churchill, much as Summer Is Tomorrow did. On the other hand, a direct comparison suggests that Six Speed is better.

Summer Is Tomorrow took three tries to break his maiden, and he also lost his first two condition races before breaking through. He did not compete in the UAE Guineas or even stretch out beyond about seven furlongs until the UAE Derby. When tiring late in second, Summer Is Tomorrow did not run away from the rest of the UAE Derby field. He had just 1 1/4 lengths to spare over third; in contrast, Six Speed was six lengths clear of Godolphin's well-fancied Japanese colt, Pyromancer.

Even if Six Speed is in principle superior to Summer Is Tomorrow, that's not a ringing endorsement for the Derby. Seemar has other talented sophomores, as we saw with O'Shea's riding choices, and Salloom in particular brings up the tantalizing counterfactual. If Salloom hadn't been bedeviled by his gate issues, might he have been the one capable of flying the UAE flag to best effect?

Six Speed has a stiff task of trying to ration out his speed at this stage of his career. It's tough to see how he manages that on the class hike here, in America's iconic race, when he couldn't do it on his home track at Meydan. And Wonder Dean's not the only strong finisher on the scene.

Moreover, Six Speed has to navigate a challenging travel protocol. Unlike Wonder Dean, who jetted in early from Dubai, Six Speed had to ship to Newmarket for a stint in quarantine before he could complete his trek to Louisville. Ironically, he found himself there during the same week as his Craven sale a year ago.

Seemar, speaking to Racing971.ae, commented on the abrupt weather change from Dubai to cold, damp England, and on the problematic shipping arrangements:

"We have to do it the hard way this time, coming from the UAE and going through the UK. They need to make a little better system, I think, to be able to compete because when you're going into one of the biggest races in the world against the best horses. They already have a home-court advantage, while we have to go around the world with 14 days in the UK and then to America. Unfortunately, it goes against good horses, so hopefully that will be looked into, and something can be done to streamline it a bit better."



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CHIP HONCHO



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Chip Honcho joined the Road to the Kentucky Derby with a determined win in the 1 1/16-mile Gun Runner S. at Fair Grounds. But his pedigree is a bit unorthodox for a Kentucky Derby (G1) contender.

So far, Chip Honcho has performed best in races from one mile to 1 1/8 miles in distance. That's unsurprising on one hand, since his sire—Connect—showed a similar tendency during his racing career.

Five of Connect's six career victories came in races between one mile and 1 1/8 miles in length. He scored his signature win in the Cigar Mile H. (G1) racing one mile, but also defeated future Horse of the Year Gun Runner in the 1 1/8-mile Pennsylvania Derby (G2), displaying a bit more stamina than a pure miler.

Connect likely inherited that extra dose of staying power from his sire, Curlin, a two-time Horse of the Year who won the Preakness (G1), Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Dubai World Cup (G1), and two editions of the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) over distances from 1 3/16 miles to 1 1/4 miles. Curlin is a renowned source of classic stamina at stud, with his top progeny including Belmont (G1) winner Palace Malice, Preakness hero and Kentucky Derby runner-up Exaggerator, and Kentucky Derby runners-up Good Magic and Journalism.

However, Connect has proven to be a more reliable sire of milers than classic types. His graded stakes winners to date include Rattle N Roll, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Futurity (G1); Candy Quest, triumphant in the one-mile Ontario Colleen (G3); Hidden Connection, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Pocahontas (G3); Implicated, heroine of the one-mile Nassau (G2); Witwatersrand, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Mazarine (G3); and Apple Picker, winner of the seven-furlong Barbara Fritchie (G3).

Every now and then, one of Connect's runners will show talent over classic distances. Forever After All triumphed in the Bewitch (G3) and La Prevoyante (G3) racing 1 1/2 miles, Rattle N Roll won the 1 3/16-mile Pimlico Special (G3), and Candy Quest finished second in the 1 5/16-mile Dueling Grounds Oaks (G3). But while the average winning distance of Connect's progeny (7.2 furlongs) is respectable, it does suggest he's a source of milers first and foremost.

If we looked only at Connect, we might conclude that Chip Honcho is likely to remain a miler, with stamina reserves topping out around 1 1/16 miles to 1 1/8 miles. But the bottom half of Chip Honcho's pedigree contains vastly different influences, suggesting he could turn into any sort of racehorse.

Consider Connect's dam, Miss My Rose. She started twice, winning a six-furlong maiden special weight and the seven-furlong Angels Flight S., both on dirt at Santa Anita. Sprinting was clearly a strong suit for Miss My Rose, but her first foal to race—Red Rose Rockin—has developed into a turf miler at the claiming level.

Red Rose Rockin's turf prowess may have been inherited from Miss My Rose's sire, Magician. Whereas Miss My Rose was a dirt sprinter, Magician was anything but. He was a grass star through and through, winning the 1 1/2-mile Breeders' Cup Turf (G1), one-mile Irish 2,000 Guineas (G1), and two other group stakes.

Magician hasn't set the world on fire at stud, but unsurprisingly, he tends to sire turf horses, some of them quite long-winded. One of his better runners, Fenwick Station, prevailed in a 1 1/2-mile allowance at Keeneland. Another son, Mister Nino, won four times in France over distances from 2,400 meters (about 1 1/2 miles) to 3,000 meters (about 1 15/16 miles).

The sources of Magician's turf strength are easy to find. His sire, Galileo, was a top-tier Epsom Derby (G1) winner who developed into a legendary sire of over 100 Grade/Group 1 winners. Magician's dam, Absolutelyfabulous, has also foaled Magician's full-siblings Apple Betty and Outstanding, both stakes winners on turf.

All told, Chip Honcho's sire was a dirt miler, his dam was a dirt sprinter, and his dam sire was a grass star who passes on stamina. It's difficult to predict what this means for Chip Honcho's long-term racing potential, but the stamina of Magician should help his chances of staying 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby.

Furthermore, since Connect has shown an ability to sire capable grass runners like Forever After All, Candy Quest, and Implicated, Chip Honcho may have a future on turf if his Kentucky Derby aspirations don't pan out.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT BY JAMES SCULLY

A close second to (now sidelined) Paladin in the Risen Star (G2), Chip Honcho will try to rebound from a fifth in the TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (G2). The dark bay colt led all the way when capturing a maiden at Churchill Downs last November and followed with a frontrunning victory in the Gun Runner S. at Fair Grounds a month later. Chip Honcho didn't perform as well when settling just off the pace in January's Lecomte (G3), checking in fourth, but he bounced back with a strong showing

CHIP HONCHO CONT.

in the Risen Star, leading all the way until grudgingly giving way by a half-length in deep stretch. Rating tactics didn't work again in the Louisiana Derby, and Chip Honcho projects to show early speed if he makes the Kentucky Derby field (outside top 20 at publication).

OWNER: Chip Honcho would be the first Kentucky Derby starter for Leland Ackerley Racing (Lee Ackerley), James Sherwood, Jode Shupe, and John Cilia.

TRAINER: North America's all-time leading trainer by wins, Steve Asmussen, has won more than 11,000 races, with earnings of nearly \$500 million, since recording his first victory in July 1986. The Kentucky Derby is one of the few major races missing from his resume, compiling a 28-0-3-2 mark. He finished second with Nehro (2011), Lookin At Lee (2017), and Epicenter (2022), and the Hall of Famer saddled a pair of eventual Horse of the Year winners, Curlin (2007) and Gun Runner (2016), to thirds in the Kentucky Derby. Asmussen owns more wins at Churchill Downs than any trainer, and the 60-year-old horseman looks to complete a personal sweep of the Triple Crown, sending out Preakness winners Curlin and Rachel Alexandra (2009) and 2016 Belmont winner Creator.

JOCKEY: TBD

BREEDER: Bred in Kentucky by Venneri Racing (Alex Venneri) and Tony Fanticola, Chip Honcho was purchased for \$210,000 as a yearling at the 2024 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July sale. He would be the first Kentucky Derby starter as breeder for Venneri and Fanticola.

SIRE: Chip Honcho is from the fifth crop of Grade 1-winning dirt miler Connect, a son of two-time Horse of the Year Curlin and a winner in six of eight career starts. Among his many accomplishments as a sire, Curlin produced 2025 Kentucky Derby runner-up and Preakness (G1) winner Journalism, but Connect still looks to make an impact on the Triple Crown with his offspring.

DAM: Chip Honcho is the first stakes winner out of the stakes-winning Miss My Rose, a daughter of 2013 Breeders' Cup Turf (G1) winner Magician. From a small sample size, Chip Honcho is the most successful runner as broodmare sire for Magician, a son of Epsom Derby (G1) winner and world-renowned sire Galileo.

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INTREPIDO



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

In recent years, the dominant sire (and grandsire) of Kentucky Derby (G1) winners has been Into Mischief.

Since 2020, Into Mischief has sired a record-equaling three Derby winners: Authentic (2020), Mandaloun (2021), and Sovereignty (2025). In addition, Into Mischief's son Goldencents sired 2024 Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan, which means Into Mischief is either the sire or grandsire of four of the last six Derby winners.

Perhaps Into Mischief's sire line will strike again in the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1). His son Maximum Mischief is the sire of **Intrepido**, who unleashed a big late rally to win the American Pharoah (G1) on the 2025-26 Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Some pedigree handicappers might be skeptical of Maximum Mischief's ability to emulate Goldencents and sire a Kentucky Derby winner. Although Maximum Mischief carried his speed over 1 1/8 miles to win the Remsen (G2), at stud, he's proving to be a source of speed. So far, his top progeny include:

- Raging Torrent, winner of the one-mile Metropolitan H. (G1), seven-furlong Malibu (G2), 1,600-meter Godolphin Mile (G2), and seven-furlong Pat O'Brien (G2).
- Ms. Tart, winner of the 6 1/2-furlong Royal North (G3).
- Irish Maxima, conqueror of the seven-furlong Distaff (G3).
- Let Them Watch, winner of the Sandpiper S. and Sharp Susan S. sprinting six furlongs.
- Maximus Meridius, victorious in the seven-furlong Toboggan S.
- Baby Dukes, triumphant in the 1 1/16-mile City of Brotherly Love S.
- Glengarry, winner of the six-furlong Iowa Sprint S.
- Baby Max, star of the one-mile Leonatus S.
- Carmelina, winner of four sprint stakes over distances from six to seven furlongs.
- Regalo, winner of the one-mile Petramalo Mile S.
- All told, the progeny of Maximum Mischief have compiled a highly sprint-oriented average winning distance of 6.3 furlongs, much lower than proven sires of classic winners like Curlin (7.7 furlongs) and Tapit (7.6 furlongs). Even Into Mischief, who sires plenty of sprinters and milers, sees his progeny win at an average distance of 6.9 furlongs.

But these facts don't necessarily disqualify Maximum Mischief from siring a Kentucky Derby winner. Consider Goldencents mentioned above. A two-time Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner, Goldencents was

at his best racing 1 1/8 miles or less, and his progeny win at an average distance of just 6.5 furlongs. Nevertheless, his son Mystik Dan lasted 1 1/4 miles to beat a strong field in the 150th Kentucky Derby.

Mystik Dan likely inherited some stamina from his female family. His dam, Ma'am, is a daughter of Colonel John, winner of the 1 1/4-mile Travers (G1).

This is a good sign for Intrepido, because he likewise boasts a strong female family to counterbalance the speed of Maximus Mischief.

Intrepido's dam is Overly Indulgent, an unremarkable race mare who failed to win in five starts at the maiden claiming level. Her first two winning foals prior to Intrepido, including Intrepido's full-sister Amy Z, were sprinters. But there's actually a great deal of class and stamina in Overly Indulgent's pedigree.

Overly Indulgent is a daughter of Pleasantly Perfect out of the Smart Strike mare Witternberg Miss. Pleasantly Perfect was a top-tier performer over the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile distance, winning the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1), Dubai World Cup (G1), and Pacific Classic (G1). At stud, he sired runners as wide-ranging as champion male sprinter Whitmore and 1 3/8-mile Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf (G1) winner Shared Account, but generally his progeny showed stamina, winning at an average distance of 7.5 furlongs.

Witternberg Miss failed to win in two starts, and her record as a broodmare is modest, with the multiple stakes-placed sprinter/miler Bourbon Empire ranking as her top runner. But she brings Smart Strike into the mix, and that's a positive when analyzing a potential Kentucky Derby pedigree.

Smart Strike was a talented racehorse best known for winning the 1 1/16-mile Philip H. Iselin H. (G1). Still, he achieved far greater renown as a stallion, siring two-time Horse of the Year Curlin, champion turf male English Channel, Preakness (G1) winner and two-time champion Lookin At Lucky, and a bevy of other elite runners.

Curlin won the Preakness, Breeders' Cup Classic, and Dubai World Cup, and he's the sire of Preakness winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Exaggerator, Belmont (G1) hero Palace Malice, and Kentucky Derby runners-up Good Magic and Journalism.

Meanwhile, Lookin At Lucky is the sire of Kentucky Derby winner Country House, plus Horse of the Year and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Accelerate.

Smart Strike's record as a broodmare sire is also worth highlighting. His daughters have foaled Kentucky Derby winners Mine That Bird and Rich Strike, as well as Preakness winner Seize the Grey and Kentucky Derby third-place finisher Dullahan.

The abundant classic stamina in the bottom half of Intrepido's pedigree may balance the speed of Maximus Mischief and allow him to shine over 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby, much like fellow Into Mischief grandson Mystik Dan did in

INTREPIDO CONT.

2024.

KENTUCKY DERBY CONTEXT BY JAMES SCULLY

A Grade 1-winning juvenile, Intrepido opened his three-year-old season with a close second in the Robert B. Lewis (G3) at Santa Anita in early February. Connections opted to skip the next prep out west, the San Felipe (G2), and Intrepido came back from a two-month freshening in the Santa Anita Derby (G1). After offering a menacing move on the far turn, the bay colt came up empty in the stretch, finishing 10 lengths back in fourth, and Intrepido hasn't been the most consistent performer, finishing a well-beaten fifth in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) following a commendable win in the American Pharoah (G1) last fall. But Intrepido possesses the tactical ability to make his own trip and will look to outrun projected long odds if he makes the Kentucky Derby field (outside top 20 at publication).

OWNER: Dutch Girl Holdings (Michele Arthur) and Irving Ventures (Ruben Isla) campaign Intrepido, who would be their first Kentucky Derby starter.

TRAINER: Jeff Mullins has trained four Kentucky Derby runners, the best result being Buzzards Bay's fifth in 2005. That's also Mullins last Kentucky Derby appearance. Born in Utah and based in Southern California, Mullins was forced to scratch Kentucky Derby morning line favorite I Want Revenge in 2009 because of a leg issue.

JOCKEY: A native of Chile, Hector Berrios has been Intrepido's regular rider for the last five starts. Berrios moved his tack from Florida to Southern California in 2022 and enjoyed a career-best year in 2025, winning 114 races with earnings of more than \$9 million. He's never ridden in the Kentucky Derby.

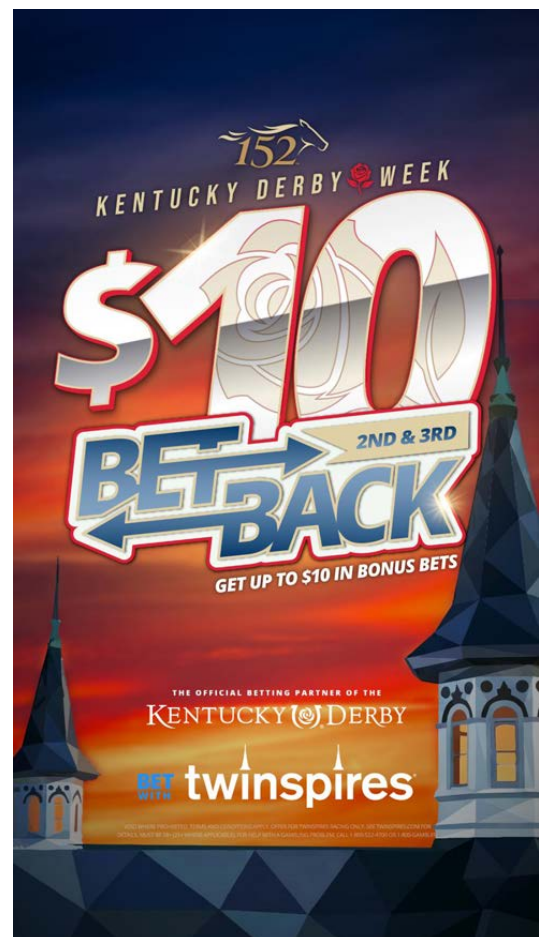
BREEDER: Bred in Kentucky by Sierra Fria Farm (Juan Luis Hernandez), Intrepido passed through the sales ring twice, initially bringing \$30,000 as a yearling before being purchased for \$385,000 at the 2025 OBS April two-year-old sale. He will be the first Kentucky Derby runner produced by his breeder.

SIRE: Intrepido is from the third crop of Grade 2 winner Maximus Mischief, a son of the great sire Into Mischief, who has three sons in the 2026 Kentucky Derby field and is responsible for a co-record three Kentucky Derby winners. Best known for producing 2025 Met Mile (G1) winner Raging Torrent, Maximus Mischief still looks to factor as a sire in Triple Crown races.

DAM: Intrepido is the first stakes winner out of Overly Indulgent, a daughter of 2003 Breeders' Cup Classic (G1) and 2004 Dubai World Cup (G1) winner Pleasantly Perfect. By 1981 Kentucky Derby and Preakness (G1) winner Pleasant Colony, Pleasantly Perfect's most successful offspring as sire, champion male sprinter Whitmore, cut back in distance after finishing 19th in the 2016 Kentucky Derby. As a broodmare sire, Pleasantly Perfect has yet to make an impact on Triple Crown races.

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LITMUS TEST



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

After recording top-four finishes in a trio of Grade 1 races, **Litmus Test** scored his first stakes win in a Road to the Kentucky Derby qualifier, nabbing the Los Alamitos Futurity (G2) to conclude a productive two-year-old season.

Litmus Test tracked the pace in second place for six furlongs before gradually wearing down the leader and edging away to prevail by 1 1/4 lengths, completing 1 1/16 miles in 1:42.38.

Success as a juvenile was always in the cards for Litmus Test. The \$875,000 yearling acquisition boasts a pedigree containing several early-maturing influences. However, there are also reasons to believe he can be a competitive player as a three-year-old in the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1).

Litmus Test is a son of Nyquist, the champion two-year-old male of 2015. Nyquist's unblemished 5-for-5 juvenile campaign included wins in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1), FrontRunner (G1), and Del Mar Futurity (G1). While he did rally from as far back as eighth place in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile, Nyquist typically tracked or pressed the pace in second place, the same style Litmus Test employed in the Los Alamitos Futurity.

Nyquist maintained his strong form during the first half of his three-year-old year. He won the San Vicente (G2), Florida Derby (G1), and Kentucky Derby in succession; in the Kentucky Derby, he raced second for most of the way before taking over to beat a strong field by 1 1/4 lengths.

Unfortunately, Nyquist lost his final three starts after the Kentucky Derby, but ending on a down note hasn't stopped him from carving out a successful stud career. He's repeatedly shown the ability to sire early-maturing juveniles, including Vequist and Immersive, a pair of champion two-year-old fillies who won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1); Argos and Gretzky the Great, winners of the Summer (G1); and Tenma, heroine of the Del Mar Debutante (G1).

But Nyquist has also sired capable three-year-olds and older horses, including Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Nysos, Alabama (G1) heroine Randomized, Awesome Again (G1) conqueror Slow Down Andy, Shoemaker Mile (G1) winner Johannes, B. Wayne Hughes Beholder Mile (G1) winner Cavalieri, and Del Mar Oaks (G1) winner Velocity.

In this respect, Nyquist is much like his own sire, Uncle Mo, who earned 2010 champion two-year-old male honors after winning the Breeders' Cup Juvenile and Champagne (G1). Certainly, Uncle Mo has sired his fair share of top two-year-olds—Nyquist is a prime example, as is Golden Pal, winner of the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint (G2). But Uncle Mo has developed an even stronger reputation for siring elite three-year-olds and older horses. Even Golden Pal trained on to win the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint (G1) at age three.

Turning now to the bottom half of Litmus Test's pedigree, his dam is Study Hard, a daughter of Malibu Moon who failed to finish better than sixth in three starts. Study Hard wasn't much of a racehorse, but she's fared better as a broodmare, foaling a trio of winners so far. Litmus Test is the most accomplished, but Study Hard has also produced Calmate (winner of a 1 1/8-mile turf maiden special weight at Santa Anita) and Home School (a four-time claiming winner over distances from one mile to 1 1/8 miles on dirt and turf).

It appears Study Hard is consistently passing on stamina to her foals, which isn't surprising since she's a daughter of Malibu Moon. While Malibu Moon raced only twice and scored his lone win in a five-furlong maiden special weight, he was bred to excel over classic distances, being a son of 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) winner and renowned stamina influence A.P. Indy out of a mare by Mr. Prospector, whose male-line descendants have won an almost countless number of Triple Crown races.

At stud, Malibu Moon carved out a successful career highlighted by the triumph of his son Orb in the 2013 Kentucky Derby. But the list of graded stakes winners sired by Malibu Moon goes on and on, spanning a wide variety of sprinters, milers, route racers, early-maturing two-year-olds, talented three-year-olds, and accomplished older horses.

Daughters of Malibu Moon are extending his influence. They've foaled Sierra Leone, the champion three-year-old male of 2024 best known for winning the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1); Stellar Wind, the champion three-year-old filly of 2015 who won half a dozen Grade 1 races; Locked, dominant winner of the Santa Anita H. (G1); Girvin, winner of the Haskell (G1) and a starter in the Kentucky Derby; and Midnight Bourbon, runner-up in the Preakness (G1) and a top-three finisher in several other Grade 1 races.

In short, the pedigree of Litmus Test suggests there's a good chance we haven't seen his best yet. Perhaps he'll emulate his sire and parlay his accomplished juvenile campaign into a triumphant outing on the first Saturday in May.

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GREAT WHITE



KENTUCKY DERBY PEDIGREE PROFILE

BY J. KEELER JOHNSON

Does **Great White** have the pedigree to excel racing 1 1/4 miles on dirt in the Kentucky Derby (G1)? That's an important question to ask.

Both of Great White's wins have come over the synthetic Tapeta track at Turfway Park. Also, he's yet to win running farther than 1 1/16 miles, the distance over which he held off late challengers to win the John Battaglia Memorial S. by a neck. When he tried 1 1/8 miles on dirt in the Blue Grass (G1) at Keeneland, he set the pace before tiring to finish a distant fifth.

Despite his misfire in the Blue Grass, there's nothing in Great White's pedigree to suggest he can't be effective racing on dirt.

Consider the racing record of his sire, Volatile. He competed exclusively on dirt, winning five out of his six starts. He peaked with a gate-to-wire triumph in the six-furlong Alfred G. Vanderbilt H. (G1), in which he defeated future Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) winner Whitmore and multiple Grade 1 winner Mind Control in a strong performance.

Volatile, in turn, is a son of Violence out of the Unbridled's Song mare Melody Lady. Violence scored his biggest win in the 1 1/16-mile CashCall Futurity (G1) on synthetic, but also won the one-mile Nashua (G2) on dirt. Melody Lady showcased dirt prowess when dominating the 6 1/2-furlong El Paso Times S., and Unbridled's Song scored top-level wins in the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) and 1 1/8-mile Florida Derby (G1) on dirt.

Volatile is passing on dirt ability at stud. His first foals reached the races in 2024, and they've included the classy dirt runners Speed King and Tip Top Thomas. Speed King won the 1 1/16-mile Southwest (G3) on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, while Tip Top Thomas ran second in the one-mile Champagne (G1) on the Kentucky Derby trail before maturing to win the 1 1/16-mile Indiana Derby (G3) and 1 1/16-mile Smarty Jones S.

The bottom half of Great White's pedigree likewise contains dirt influences. He's the first foal produced by Kelly Bag, who recorded her best finishes on dirt even though she failed to win in four starts.

Kelly Bag is a daughter of Uncle Mo out of the Elusive Quality mare Birkin Bag, and here we find an abundance of racing class. Uncle Mo

earned champion two-year-old male honors after winning the Champagne and Breeders' Cup Juvenile. Later on, he added the one-mile Kelso H. (G2) to his record.

Uncle Mo has sired some high-class turf horses, including Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint (G1) conqueror Golden Pal, but many of his best runners have starred on dirt. They include Kentucky Derby winner Nyquist, 1 1/2-mile Belmont (G1) hero Mo Donegal, 1 1/4-mile Pacific Classic (G1) winner Arabian Knight, 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster (G1) victor Kingsbarns, and two-time 1 1/16-mile Clement L. Hirsch (G1) winner Adare Manor, to name only a few.

Daughters of Uncle Mo are proving similarly productive, foaling Horse of the Year and 1 1/8-mile Kentucky Oaks (G1) winner Thorpedo Anna, 1 3/16-mile Preakness (G1) conqueror Journalism, champion three-year-old filly and 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1) winner Nitrogen, and 1 1/8-mile Arkansas Derby (G1) victor Muth.

Getting back to Birkin Bag, the dam of Kelly Bag, she performed best on turf, winning the Grande Premio Diana (G1) over 2,000 meters (about 1 1/4 miles) in her native Brazil. Her turf talent isn't surprising since her sire, Elusive Quality, set a world record when dominating the one-mile Poker H. (G3) on grass in the blazing time of 1:31.63.

But Elusive Quality was also a capable dirt racer, finishing second by a nose in the seven-furlong King's Bishop (G2), and at stud, he's sired all types of runners. He's best known for his son Smarty Jones, a Hall of Fame inductee who won the Kentucky Derby and Preakness on dirt. But another son, Raven's Pass, starred in grass miles and also won on synthetic when taking the 1 1/4-mile Breeders' Cup Classic (G1).

Elusive Quality's versatility shows up in his record as a broodmare sire. His daughters have foaled numerous classy grass racers, including Guelph, a four-time Group 1 winner over distances from 1,400 meters (about seven furlongs) to 1,600 meters (about one mile) in Australia. But they've also produced two-time champion and Belmont winner Essential Quality, two-time champion and back-to-back Breeders' Cup Sprint winner Roy H, and 1 1/4-mile Alabama (G1) winner Randomized.

Another excellent runner produced from an Elusive Quality mare is Shamrock Rose. She won a couple of route races over synthetic tracks before switching to dirt to win the Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1) and Raven Run (G2) sprinting seven furlongs.

Clearly, there are plenty of dirt influences in Great White's pedigree. Stretching out over 1 1/4 miles in the Kentucky Derby is the bigger question since Volatile was a sprinter, but his brief stud record suggests he's capable of siring route racers. Furthermore, the presence of Uncle Mo and Elusive Quality (both sires of Kentucky Derby winners) in the bottom half of Great White's pedigree offers hope for his chances of staying the Derby distance.

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A rallying third-place finish in the 1 1/8-mile Wood Memorial (G2) launched **Ocelli** into the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1) picture.

Even though Ocelli is winless in six starts, he's earned 25 points on the Road to the Kentucky Derby and could become the fifth maiden since 2016 to compete in the Run for the Roses. Should he prevail on the first Saturday in May, he'll join Buchanan (1884), Sir Barton (1919), and Brokers Tip (1933) as one of four horses to score their first career win in the Kentucky Derby.

It's a tall task, but as history shows, not an insurmountable one. Much the same can be said of Ocelli's ability to handle the Kentucky Derby's 1 1/4-mile pedigree. His pedigree is arguably geared toward success over 1 1/8 miles or less, but there's a chance he's inherited enough stamina to stay the Derby distance.

Ocelli is a son of Connect, a high-class performer over middle distances. He scored his signature win in the one-mile Cigar Mile H. (G1), but also stretched out over 1 1/8 miles to defeat future Horse of the Year Gun Runner in the Pennsylvania Derby (G2).

Connect faltered in his lone try over 1 1/4 miles, finishing a non-threatening sixth in the Travers (G1). But perhaps he had an off day. As a son of two-time Horse of the Year Curlin (a renowned source of classic stamina) out of a mare by Holy Bull (the sire of 2005 Kentucky Derby winner Giacomo), there's nothing in Connect's pedigree to

suggest he couldn't have been effective over 1 1/4 miles.

It's encouraging to note that Connect has proven capable of passing on stamina at stud. His runners win at the respectable average distance of 7.2 furlongs, and a few have shown promising form over classic distances. Rattle N Roll, winner of the 1 1/16-mile Breeders' Futurity (G1), also stretched out over 1 3/16 miles to take the Pimlico Special (G3). Forever After All stayed 1 1/2 miles to win the Bewitch (G3) and La Prevoyante (G3), and Candy Quest—conqueror of the one-mile Ontario Colleen (G3)—showed enough stamina to run second in the 1 5/16-mile Dueling Grounds Oaks.

It's worth noting, however, that Forever After All and Candy Quest proved best on turf. Connect has proven less reliable as a source of dirt stamina, which could potentially limit Ocelli's distance range to 1 1/8 miles or less.

But Connect represents only one half of Ocelli's pedigree. Does his female family bring more dirt stamina to the table?

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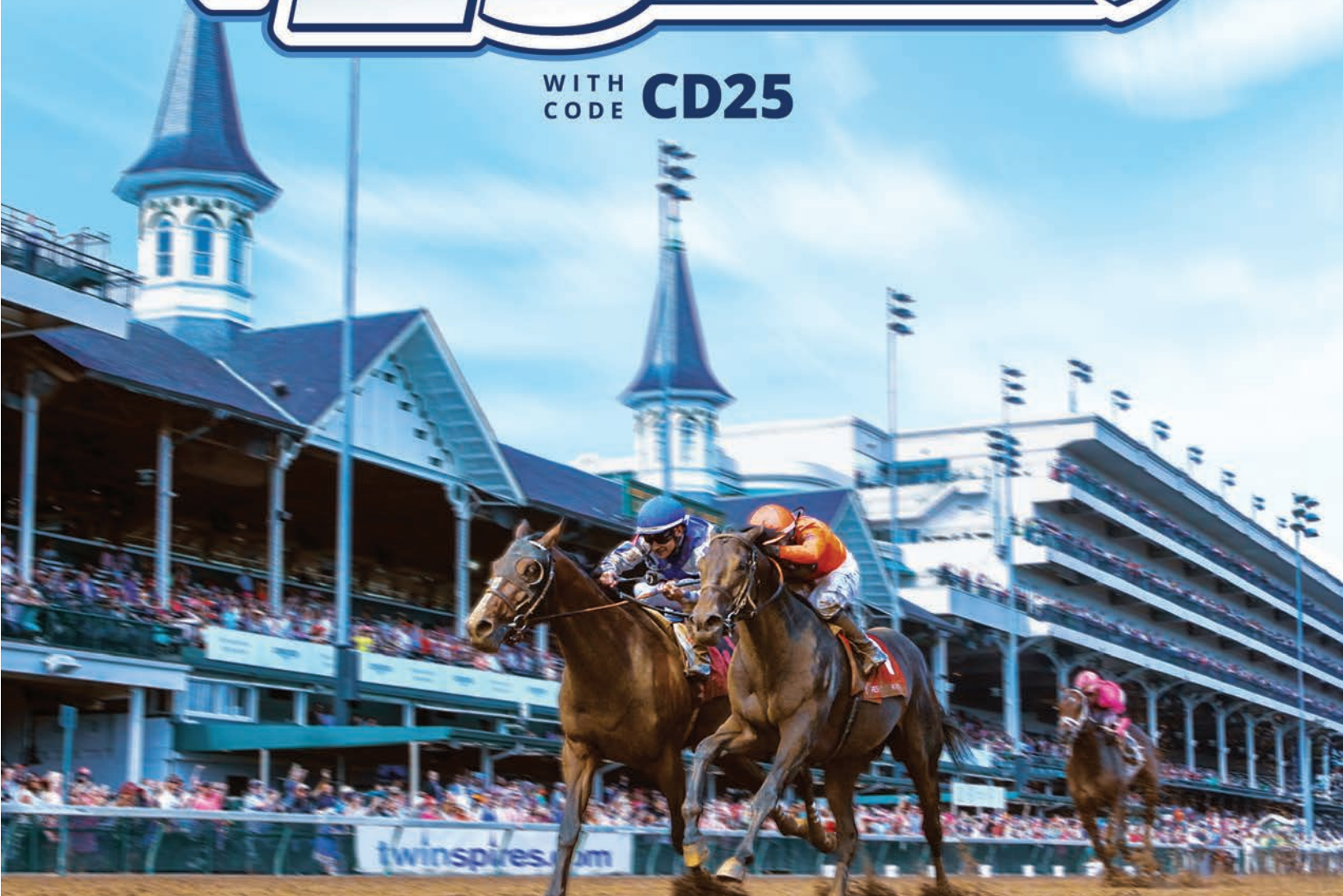


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