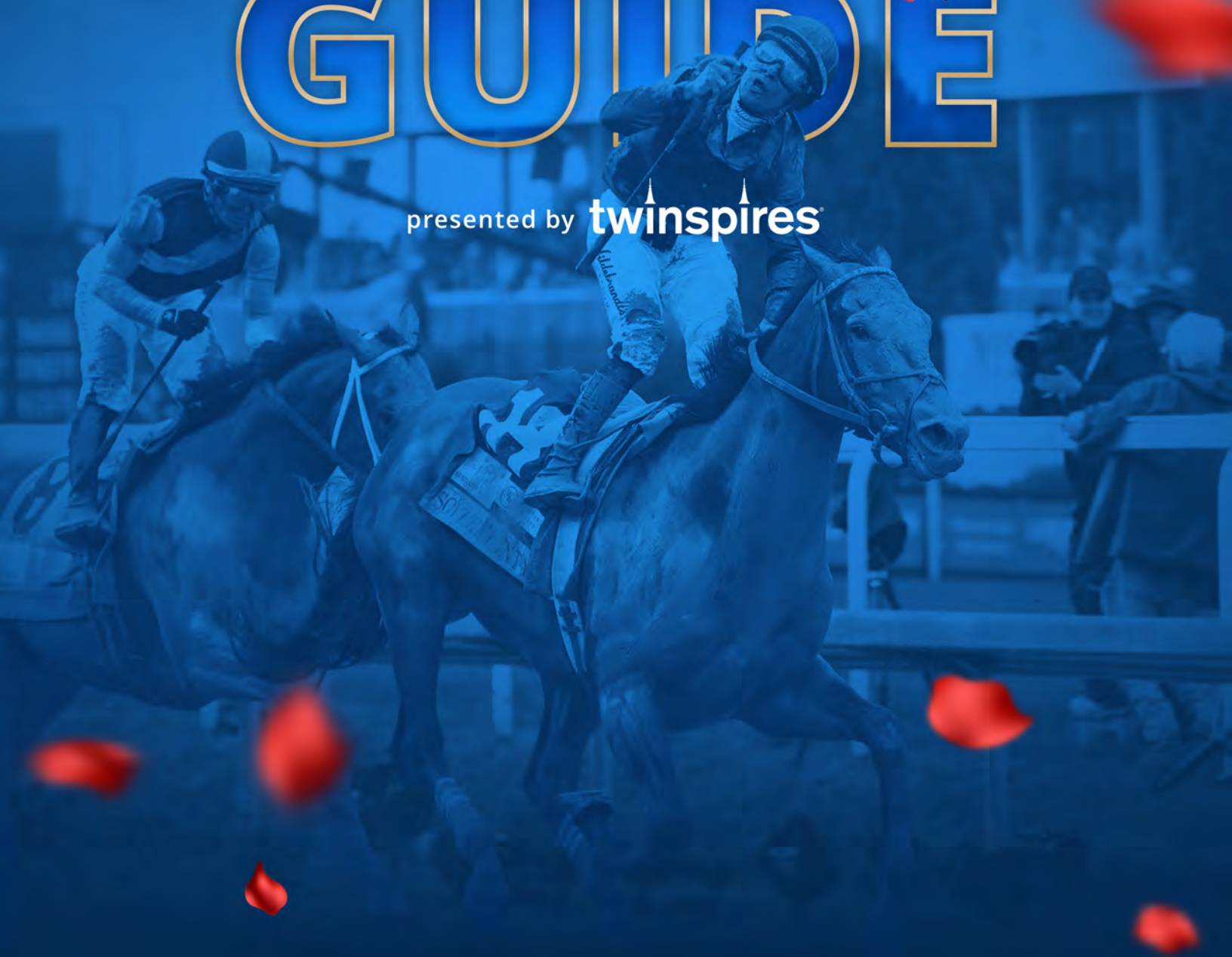




KENTUCKY  DERBY

HANDICAPPING BETTING GUIDE

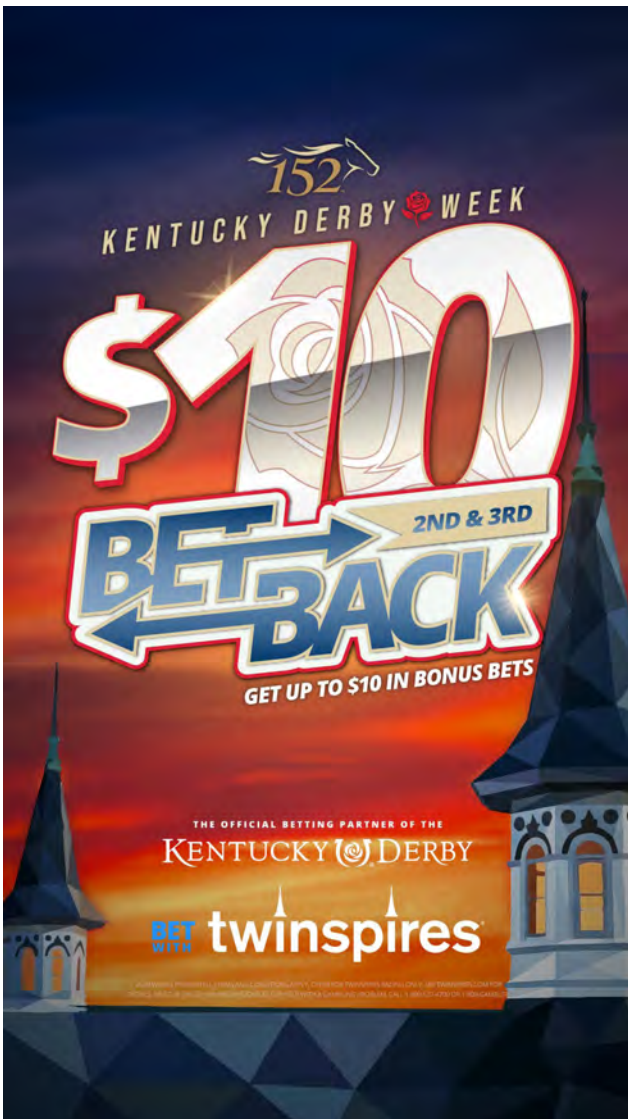
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HANDICAPPING BETTING GUIDE



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RACE SCHEDULE & LIVE BLOG

LIVE BLOG SCHEDULE

OPENING DAY

Saturday, April 25, 2026 12:45PM ET

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

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

AT A GLANCE

A look at the previous Churchill Downs meet: December 1, 2025.

AVG. WINNING ODDS: 5.10 - 1

FAVORITE WIN%: 38% **FAVORITE ITM%:** 67%

EXOTICS	PAYOFF
Exacta	83.00
Daily Double	83.07
Trifecta	612.03
Pick 3	585.08
Superfecta	4,595.27
Pick 4	4,688.98
Pick 5	25,635.22
Pick 6 Jackpot	286,890.17
Super High Five	5,377.79



TRACK BIAS MEET (10/26 - 11/30)

Distance	# Race	% Wire	Best Style	Best Posts
6.0fDirt	70	34%	E	Mid/Out
7.0fDirt	26	8%	E/P	Outside
1 MileDirt	37	19%	E/P	Rail/Ins
1 1/16mDirt	46	15%	S	Inside
Turf Sprint	13	23%	P	Rail
Turf Routes	34	12%	E/P	Middle

TRACK BIAS WEEK (11/24 - 11/30)

Distance	# Race	% Wire	Best Style	Best Posts
6.0fDirt	13	31%	P	Mid/Out
7.0fDirt	8	13%	E	Outside
1 MileDirt	9	11%	E	Rail/Ins
1 1/16mDirt	8	38%	E	Inside
Turf Sprint	4	50%	E	Rail
Turf Routes	7	14%	E/P	Rail/Ins

WHO'S HOT, WHO'S NOT

HOT TRAINERS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	WINNING FAVORITES	'24-'25 WIN %
Cox Brad H.	28	10	7	2	3.22	6	26%
McGee Paul J.	5	3	0	1	5.38	2	20%
Lynch Brian A.	8	3	4	0	3.99	1	19%
Shirer Matt A.	8	3	1	1	7.36	0	16%
Baffert Bob	3	2	0	0	2.34	1	29%
Ward Wesley A.	3	2	1	0	4.09	1	25%

HOT JOCKEYS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'24-'25 WIN %
Ortiz, Jr. Irad	47	13	9	3	4.55	8	21%
Cheminaud Vincent	8	2	1	1	21.18	0	13%

COLD TRAINERS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'24-'25 WIN %
Arnold II George R.	22	0	1	1	22.21	1	14%
Hartman Chris A.	15	0	1	2	21.49	0	15%
Garcia Genaro	13	0	2	2	27.49	0	14%
Wilkes Ian R.	12	0	0	2	25.58	0	12%

COLD JOCKEYS	STARTS	WINS	PLACE	SHOW	AVG. ODDS	BEATEN FAVORITES	'24-'25 WIN %
Machado Luan	25	0	2	1	30.93	0	14%
Lanerie Corey J.	14	0	3	1	20.05	1	12%
Bejarano Rafael	10	0	1	0	34.61	0	14%
Beschizza Adam	10	0	0	1	25.76	0	12%
Saez Gabriel	10	0	0	0	46.29	0	7%

EXPERT PICKS FOR KENTUCKY DERBY WEEKEND

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

FRIDAY, MAY 1 Churchill Downs



ALYSHEBA STAKES (G2)

2 Baeza	8 Corporate Power	4 Tappan Street	7 SkippyLongstocking	8 Corporate Power
6 Nu What's New	2 Baeza	2 Baeza	2 Baeza	7 SkippyLongstocking
3 Grande	7 Disruptort	7 SkippyLongstocking	3 Grande	2 Baeza

EDGEWOOD STAKES (G2)

3 Imaginationthelady	9 Dandona	13 Indigo Woods	9 Dandona	5 Just Aloof
5 Just Aloof	3 Imaginationthelady	5 Just Aloof	3 Imaginationthelady	3 Imaginationthelady
1 Storm's Wake	1 Storm's Wake	11 Time to Dream	11 Time to Dream	8 Lion Lake

KENTUCKY OAKS (G1)

10 Prom Queen	10 Prom Queen	2 Zany	11 Percy's Bar	12 Bella Ballerina
2 Zany	11 Percy's Bar	9 Always a Runner	2 Zany	9 Always a Runner
9 Always a Runner	2 Zany	5 Meaning	4 Counting Stars	2 Zany

SATURDAY, MAY 2 Churchill Downs



PAT DAY MILE S. (G2)

4 Secured Freedom	6 Crude Velocity	6 Crude Velocity	1 Englishman	6 Crude Velocity
6 Crude Velocity	1 Englishman	4 Secured Freedom	6 Crude Velocity	4 Secured Freedom
1 Englishman	2 Trouble Calling	1 Englishman	2 Trouble Calling	1 Englishman

AMERICAN TURF S. (G1)

6 Black Hornet	6 Black Hornet	12 Remember Mamba	1 Street Beast	4 Stark Contrast
4 Stark Contrast	12 Remember Mamba	4 Stark Contrast	4 Stark Contrast	12 Remember Mamba
12 Remember Mamba	4 Stark Contrast	6 Black Hornet	12 Remember	5 Blackout Time

CHURCHILL DOWNS S. (G1)

8 T O Elvis	6 Knightsbridge	6 Knightsbridge	6 Knightsbridge	6 Knightsbridge
4 Hall of Fame	7 Imagination	8 T O Elvis	2 Cornucopian	2 Cornucopian
6 Knightsbridge	4 Hall of Fame	7 Imagination	5 Disruptor	7 Imagination

OLD FORESTER TURF CLASSIC S. (G1)

6 Rhetorical	6 Rhetorical	9 Test Score	6 Rhetorical	6 Rhetorical
3 Asbury Park	9 Test Score	6 Rhetorical	9 Test Score	3 Asbury Park
4 Program Trading	7 Gold Phoenix	3 Asbury Park	4 Program Trading	9 Test Score

KENTUCKY DERBY (G1)

18 Further Ado	6 Commandment	1 Renegade	9 The Puma	6 Commandment
15 Emerging Market	12 Chief Wallabee	9 The Puma	6 Commandment	7 Danon Bourbon
7 Danon Bourbon	1 Renegade	15 Emerging Market	12 Chief Wallabee	9 The Puma



KENTUCKY OAKS LEADERBOARD

Updated: Sunday, April 26, 2026.



HOW TO GET INTO THE KENTUCKY OAKS STARTING GATE

The Road to the Kentucky Oaks Presented by TwinSpires.com is a 31-race series that awards points to the Top 5 finishers in each race. The Top 14 point earners will earn a spot in the starting gate for the 152nd running of the \$1.5 million Kentucky Oaks Presented by Longines (Grade I) on Friday, May 1, 2026.

POST POSITIONS	HORSE	ML ODDS	OWNER(s)	TRAINER	Non-Restricted Stakes Earnings
1	Explora	6-1	Pegram, Michael E., Watson, Karl and Weitman, Paul	Bob Baffert	\$1,016,250
2	Zany	4-1	Repole Stable	Todd Pletcher	\$345,625
3	Search Party	30-1	Tracy Farmer	Mark Casse	\$409,025
4	Counting Stars	8-1	West Point Thoroughbreds	Mark Casse	\$834,156
5	Meaning	5-1	Bridlewood Farm and Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners	Michael McCarthy	\$280,000
6	My Miss Mo	SCR			
7	Dazzling Dame	30-1	Respect the Valleys, LLC	Brittany Russell	\$263,525
9	Always a Runner	10-1	Scharbauer, Douglas and Three Chimneys Farm, LLC (Goncalo B. Torrealba)	Chad Brown	\$110,000
10	Prom Queen	8-1	Gary and Mary West	Brad Cox	\$151,900
11	Percy's Bar	6-1	Hat Creek Racing	Ben Colebrook	\$962,808
12	Pashmina	12-1	Red White and Blue Racing LLC	Rob Atras	\$81,500
13	Bella Ballerina	12-1	Goldolphin, LLC	Brendan Walsh	\$498,440
14	Brooklyn Blonde	30-1	Sun-Kissed Stable and Bobby Flay	Michael McCarthy	\$40,000
15	Lovely Grey	30-1	Go Go Greys Stable LLC (Dave Portnoy)	Kelsey Danner	\$93,650



TWINSPIRES TIPSHEET



152ND RUNNING OF THE KENTUCKY OAKS

An overflow field of 14 three-year-old fillies has been entered to travel 1 1/8 miles on the Churchill Downs main track in Friday's \$1.5 million Kentucky Oaks (G1).

POST	HORSE	ML ODDS
1	Explora	14-1
2	Zany	6-1
3	Search Party	27-1
4	Counting Stars	15-1
5	Meaning	26-1
6	My Miss Mo	SCR
7	Dazzling Dame	75-1
9	Always A Runner	5-1
10	Prom Queen	3-1
11	Percy's Bar	4-1
12	Bella Ballerina	16-1
13	Pashmina	64-1
14	Brooklyn Blonde	51-
15	Lovely Grey	6-1
16	Nycon	75-1
17	Resist	30-1

TOP PICKS

#10 Prom Queen

#2 Zany

#11 Percy's Bar

#9 Always a Runner

WAGERS

\$25 win and place #10 Prom Queen

\$5 Exacta: key box 10 with 2,9,11

\$1 Trifecta: 2,10,11 with 2,9,10,11 with 2,4,9,10,11,12

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#1 EXPLORA (6-1): Grade 2 vixen from the Baffert barn has been first or second in each of her seven lifetime runs to date, with six coming in the stakes ranks. The consistently very good daughter of Blame was very professional in her victory in the Honeybee (G3) at Oaklawn Park most recently and comes in fresh with some nice morning moves to her credit as of late. The win threat will have Flavien Prat in the irons.

#2 ZANY (4-1): Ultra-talented daughter of American Pharoah suffered a first career setback when second in the Ashland (G1) at Keeneland in her latest venture, but the chestnut was clear while second in defeat in what might be an ideal prep for the Oaks. The Pletcher pupil ran her most commanding race to date at nine furlongs in her Demoiselle (G2) romp in December, and her best showing will have her right there late with Irad taking the reins.

#3 SEARCH PARTY (30-1): Stakes winner from the Casse shedrow has been well behind stablemate Counting Stars in her last two assignments and will need a career-best run to upset this field at expected huge odds. The homebred daughter of Gun Runner will come from off the pace once again while retaining Christian Torres.

#4 COUNTING STARS (8-1): Fantasy (G2) romper has never been better for trainer Mark Casse and had a pair of ideal prep races in advance of this endeavor. The bay daughter of Honor A. P. will appreciate the move to 1 1/8 miles over a surface where she broke her maiden at first asking as a juvenile on Sept. 25. The \$150,000 two-year-old purchase will have regular rider Francisco Arrieta in the irons.

#5 MEANING (5-1): Once-beaten daughter of Gun Runner is two-for-two this season and looked the part in her facile Santa Anita Oaks (G2) triumph most recently. The Michael McCarthy-trained sophomore has gate speed as well as a nice turn of foot, and the bay could peak while making her third run off the layoff, too. Juan Hernandez has the assignment atop the talented miss.

#6 MY MISS MO (20-1): Speedy sort from the barn of Saffie Joseph led to the turn for home and held well late to be a smart second in the Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2) in her first two-turn affair. The Florida-bred daughter of Uncle Mo has been working in swift fashion leading up to the race and will be forwardly placed from the break beneath Micah Husbands.

#7 DAZZLING DAME (30-1): Three-time stakes heroine was a clear second in the recent Virginia Oaks in her latest run and will bring pace to the field for standout conditioner Brittany Russell. The Girvin filly will need a big step forward to take down a field of this caliber, but the filly is training swiftly as of late and will be forcing the action from the break in this heat with Luis Saez picking up the mount.

#9 ALWAYS A RUNNER (10-1): Chad Brown trainee is two-for-two in her career and was a strong late-running winner of the Gazelle (G3) at this distance in her latest performance. The seven-figure yearling purchase has room for improvement with just a pair of starts to her credit, and the daughter of Gun Runner will be rallying with good energy in the stretch in her local bow with Jose Ortiz on board.

#10 PROM QUEEN (8-1): Top choice in the well-matched field has improved her Brisnet Speed rating with each lifetime run to date and comes off a stylish tally in the Gulfstream Park Oaks for Brad Cox. The Gary and Mary West homebred has trained in strong fashion at this locale in advance of the big event and will be seen stalking the pace from the opening bell on Friday. Javier Castellano will guide the leading selection.

#11 PERCY'S BAR (6-1): Upstart filly was visually impressive when quickly spurting away from her foes in the Ashland at Keeneland in her 2026 unveiling. The Ben Colebrook charge has been working in fine fashion all season and is also a stakes winner from her lone prior run at Churchill, too. Regular pilot Luan Machado will pilot the versatile win contender.

#12 BELLA BALLERINA (10-1): Two-time Grade 2 victress bagged the Golden Rod (G2) beneath the Twin Spires in her juvenile finale and seems all set for her local return for Brendan Walsh. The Street Sense lass is a half-sister to an Oaks heroine (Pretty Mischievous) and has to be considered a major player in the affair with Tyler Gaffalione in the stirrups.

#13 PASHMINA (30-1): Interesting longshot exotics contender was well clear of her foes in second in the Gazelle at Aqueduct last time and continues to show improvement for trainer Rob Atras. The daughter of Constitution has a versatile running style and could be in a good spot at the top of the lane to receive a minor award at a healthy number with Ramon Vazquez signed on.

#14 BROOKLYN BLONDE (30-1): Gun Runner sophomore has improved her Brisnet Speed rating with every run to date and comes off a nice try when a clear second in the Santa Anita Oaks in her stakes debut last time out. The Michael McCarthy trainee received an impossible post for her second run with winners, but she is improving and also has the gate presence to avoid being left behind in the affair. Kaz Kimura will be on board.

#15 LOVELY GREY (30-1): Vekoma filly was a close second in the Bourbonette Oaks in her latest venture and will make just her second run on the dirt in the Oaks. The Kentucky-bred gray has good current form and has moved forward since getting more ground to work with for conditioner Kelsey Danner. Dylan Davis is named to guide the ascending three-year-old lass who has exotics intrigue.

#16 NYCON (Also-Eligible) (50-1): Nyquist filly was outrun in the Gazelle last time out and would be a big surprise on this occasion. The well-bred Beckman trainee has flashed potential in advance of this, but the sophomore will need a major step forward to be in the mix late against this cast under Jaime Torres.

#17 RESIST (Also-Eligible) (30-1): Tom Drury trainee has never run on the dirt and will have to negotiate a good trip while widest of all in the group if she draws into the field. The Maclean's Music three-year-old is talented for sure, but this is an ambitious placement with Brian Hernandez, Jr. in the irons.



KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD

Updated: Sunday, April 26, 2026

HOW TO GET INTO THE KENTUCKY DERBY STARTING GATE

The Road to the Kentucky Derby Presented by TwinSpires.com is a 36-race series that awards points to the Top 5 finishers in each race. The Top 20 point earners will earn a spot in the starting gate for the 152nd running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) on Saturday, May 2, 2026. The Kentucky Derby field has been limited to 20 starters since 1975. At least 20 horses have entered the 1 ¼-mile race for 3-year-olds every year since 2004, and 17 of the last 19 years.

POST POSITIONS	HORSE	POINTS	OWNER(S)	TRAINER	Non-Restricted Stakes Earnings
1	Renegade	4-1	Low, Robert, Low, Lawana L. and Repole Stables.	Todd Pletcher	\$1,002,500
2	Albus	30-1	Pin Oak Stud LLC	Riley Mott	\$400,000
3	Intrepido	50-1	Dutch Girl Holdings LLC and Irving Ventures LLC	Jeff Mullins	\$290,000
4	Litmus Test	30-1	SF Racing LLC, Starlight Racing et al	Bob Baffert	\$429,688
5	Right to Party	30-1	Chester Broman, Sr.	Kenny McPeck	\$176,000
6	Commandment	6-1	Wathnan Racing	Brad Cox	\$943,020
7	Danon Bourbon	20-1	Danox Co. Ltd.	Manabu Ikezoe	\$222,762
8	So Happy	15-1	Norman Stables LLC (Robbie Norman) & Saints or Sinners (Hans & Ana Maron)	Mark Glatt	\$444,000
9	The Puma	10-1	OGMA Investments LLC, JR Ranch & High Step Racing LLC	Gustavo Delgado	\$428,000
10	Wonder Dean (JPN)	30-1	Yoshinari Yamamoto	Daisuke Takayanagi	\$725,172
11	Incredibolt	20-1	Pin Oak Stud LLC	Riley Mott	\$424,570
12	Chief Wallabee	8-1	Ball, Michael and Ball, Katherine G.	Bill Mott	\$175,800
13	Silent Tactic	SCR			
14	Potente	20-1	Speedway Stables LLC (Peter Fluor & K.C. Weiner)	Bob Baffert	\$220,000
15	Emerging Market	15-1	Klaravich Stables Inc. (Seth Klarman)	Chad Brown	\$600,000
16	Pavlovian	30-1	Reddam Racing LLC	Doug O'Neil	\$527,000
17	Six Speed	50-1	Brunetti Dugan Stables, Black Type Thoroughbreds (Jake Ballis), Steve Adkisson, Swinbank Stables (Reagan Swinbank)	Bhupat Seemar	\$314,366
18	Further Ado	6-1	Spendthrift Farm LLC	Brad Cox	\$1,068,095
19	Golden Tempo	30-1	Phipps Stable (Ogden Mills Phipps) & St. Elias Stable (Vincent Viola)	Cherie DeVaux	\$300,000
20	Fulleffort	20-1	St. Elias Stable and Starlight Racing	Brad Cox	\$507,900
21	Great White	50-1	Three Chimneys Farm (Goncalo B. Torrealba) & John Ennis	Stud TNT, LLC	\$144,003
AE	Ocelli	50-1	Ashley Durr, Anthony Tate and Front Page Equestrian LLC	Rosedown Racing	\$80,200
AE	Robusta	50-1	Calumet Farm (Brad Kelley)	Stables, LLC	
AE	Corona De Oro	50-1	On Our Own Stable LLC, Commonwealth Stable, U Racing Stables LLC, Saints or Sinn	Calumet Farm	\$38,000

TWINSPIRES TIPSHEET

152ND RUNNING OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY

The 152nd running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby (G1) at Churchill Downs is upon us and attracted a field of 20 three-year-olds for the historic 1 1/4-mile contest.



POST	HORSE	ML ODDS
1	Renegade	4-1
2	Albus	30-1
3	Intrepido	50-1
4	Litmus Test	30-1
5	Right to Party	30-1
6	Commandment	6-1
7	Danon Bourbon	20-1
8	So Happy	15-1
9	The Puma	10-1
10	Wonder Dean (JPN)	30-1
11	Incredibolt	20-1
12	Chief Wallabee	8-1
13	Silent Tactic	SCR
14	Potente	20-1
15	Emerging Market	15-1
16	Pavlovian	30-1
17	Six Speed	50-1
18	Further Ado	6-1
19	Golden Tempo	30-1
20	Fulleffort	20-1

TOP PICKS
#6 Commandment
#12 Chief Wallabee
#1 Renegade
#8 So Happy
#19 Golden Tempo

WAGERS
\$40 win and place #6 Commandment
\$10 Exacta: key box 6 with 1,8,12,19
\$1 Trifecta: 1,6,12 with 1,6,8,12,19 with 1,6,8,9,12,14,15,18,19

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#1 RENEGADE (4-1): Powerful son of Into Mischief was visually excellent when dusting his foes in the Arkansas Derby (G1) at Oaklawn Park in advance of his initial run beneath the Twin Spires. The sure win threat boasts a robust turn of foot and appears to be coming up to a peak effort in his third run of the season, as well. Irad Ortiz, who has piloted numerous contenders in the race in the past, opts to guide the morning-line favorite from the tricky rail slot. The colt will be formidable if he has clear sailing in the stretch.

#2 ALBUS (30-1): Riley Mott trainee has improved his Brisnet Speed rating in each lifetime run to date and comes off a late-running score in the Wood Memorial (G2) most recently. The Pin Oak colorbearer is obviously on the improve, and he does possess a nice turn of foot, so the son of Yaupon could make some noise in the latter stages of the tilt with Manny Franco on board.

#3 INTREPIDO (50-1): Jeff Mullins pupil earned his biggest win to date when taking the 2025 American Pharoah (G1). The son of Maximus Mischief faltered in the stretch in the Santa Anita Derby (G1) in his latest, and will need a big step forward to challenge for a share against this group, with Hector Berrios signed on for the voyage.

#4 LITMUS TEST (30-1): Baffert trainee has been outrun in a pair of outings in 2026, including a seventh-place result in the Arkansas Derby (G1) in his most recent run. The Grade-2 winning son of Nyquist will have the blinkers back on in the Derby, but he is hard to back with confidence in his current form cycle. Martin Garcia will have the talented colt involved from the break on Saturday.

#5 RIGHT TO PARTY (30-1): One-run closing type from the barn of Kenny McPeck was third in the Gotham (G3) two back, which preceded a runner-up result in the Wood Memorial (G2) in his latest effort. The chestnut son of Constitution will need the pace to back up in a big way to make an impact in the Run for the Roses, with jockey Christopher Elliot making his riding debut in the storied event.

#6 COMMANDMENT (6-1): Florida Derby (G1) star comes to Louisville on a four-race win streak and will likely be among the favorites at post time for Brad Cox. The \$500,000 yearling purchase has earned Brisnet Late Pace ratings of 104 and 121 in his pair of two-turn races to date, and the son of Into Mischief was also a big maiden winner in his lone prior run beneath the Twin Spires, as well. Luis Saez will guide the powerful colt, who is my top pick in the 152nd Kentucky Derby.

#7 DANON BOURBON (20-1): Unbeaten Kentucky-bred romped in the Fukuryu S. in his latest venture and comes in with a perfect three-for-three mark in advance of his U.S. debut. The Manabu Ikezoe trainee is bred to handle the distance and has room for improvement with just three lifetime showings to date. Atsuya Nishimura will be in the silks atop the wildcard.

#8 SO HAPPY (15-1): Mark Glatt charge was a sharp winner of the Santa Anita Derby (G1) in his most recent effort and will be a contender with even slight improvement off of that coup. The Kentucky-bred son of Runhappy is three-for-four with a third in his career, and he answered the 1 1/8-mile question last time, as well. The bay has excellent tactical speed and wouldn't be a surprise with Mike Smith staying on board.

#9 THE PUMA (10-1): Gustavo Delgado pupil rallied to take the Tampa Bay Derby (G3) two races back and checked in a very close second in the Florida Derby most recently. The chestnut son of Essential Quality has knocked heads with some of the best sophomores in training all season long and deserves a lot of attention in the contest. Javier Castellano will take the reins.

#10 WONDER DEAN (30-1): Japanese-bred grandson of Deep Impact put in a fine stretch run to collar a clear one in his UAE Derby (G2) tally most recently. The dark bay colt has run well in his four races at nine furlongs or longer, and the import could be any kind in his initial run in the U.S. The Takayanagi pupil will have Ryusei Sakai in the silks.

#11 INCREDIBOLT (20-1): Virginia Derby star bagged the Street Sense S. (G3) on the course as a juvenile and will make his third run of the year for Riley Mott. The son of Bolt d'Oro looks to be a cut below the big guns in the group, but he did thrive in his first run at nine panels last time, and the added distance could be to his benefit on Saturday, too. Regular pilot Jaime Torres will be in the silks once again.

#12 CHIEF WALLABEE (8-1): Constitution homebred was a flashy debut winner on Jan. 10 and has run big while close in both the Fountain of Youth (G2) and Florida Derby as of late. Trained by Bill Mott, the talented colt will be equipped with blinkers for the initial time in the Derby, and if the equipment change moves him forward, then the bay will be a major player inside the final furlong beneath regular pilot Junior Alvarado.

#13 SILENT TACTIC (20-1): Grade 3 winner from the barn of Mark Casse has been first or second in each of his six lifetime runs to date and has exotics appeal at a big price in his first run over the surface. The \$500,000 son of Tacitus was clear in second in the Arkansas Derby most recently, and the bay will be seen making his move approaching the turn for home with Christian Torres retaining the ride.

#14 POTENTE (20-1): The \$2.4 million yearling purchase dueled on the front end and stayed on well in the lane when a clear runner-up in the Santa Anita Derby for Bob Baffert. The San Felipe (G2) victor has improved with each run to date and will likely do so again for a barn that has endured so much success with six winners in the race to date. The Into Mischief colt is training well and has a lot of top-four appeal with Juan Hernandez in the irons.

#15 EMERGING MARKET (15-1): Chad Brown pupil is two-for-two in his career, led by a game victory in the Louisiana Derby (G2) in his most recent performance. The chestnut son of Candy Ride is short on experience but long on talent, and he has reportedly been working well leading up to his third lifetime appearance, too. The Klaravich color bearer is expected to rally from off the pace with Flavien Prat retaining the ride.

#16 PAVLOVIAN (30-1): California-bred son of Pavel is peaking at the right time for two-time Derby-winning trainer Doug O'Neill. The Reddam homebred has good early speed in a field lacking an abundance of pace, and the gray figures to be forcing the tempo from the break if he gets away cleanly from the gate in his local debut. Edwin Maldonado will be in the silks once again.

#17 SIX SPEED (50-1): Fleet son of Not This Time was clear in second after dictating the tempo in the UAE Derby (G2) in preparation for his stateside debut. The Kentucky-bred colt had won a trio of races in succession prior to his latest outing at Meydan, and the colt will be forwardly placed from the break beneath Brian Hernandez, Jr. for conditioner Bhupat Seemar.

#18 FURTHER ADO (6-1): Blue Grass (G1) romper is a Grade 2 winner over the Churchill Downs strip and could peak while making his third run of the season. The Gun Runner sophomore has progressed steadily since stretching out in distance, and the \$550,000 purchase has to be considered one of the major contenders in the cast beneath the ageless John Velazquez.

#19 GOLDEN TEMPO (30-1): Cherie DeVaux trainee earned his biggest win of the season in the Leconte (G3) at Fair Grounds, and the talented late runner was last seen rallying to be a close third in the Louisiana Derby. The homebred son of Curlin has upped his Brisnet Speed rating in every lifetime run to date and will be a late factor with continued ascension, with Jose Ortiz retaining the ride.

#20 FULLEFFORT (20-1): Brad Cox trainee ran his best race to date when rallying home to post a strong score in the Jeff Ruby Steaks (G3) on the Tapeta at Turfway Park on March 21. The gray son of Liam's Map has been first or second in a handful of races in succession and will go on the dirt for the initial time on Saturday. The dangerous late runner will have Tyler Gaffalione in the stirrups.

BETTING THE 2026 KENTUCKY DERBY ON DIFFERENT BUDGETS

by John Mucciolo



The 152nd Kentucky Derby (G1) is upon us, and another full and fantastic field of sophomores will go postward at Churchill Downs for the first leg of the Triple Crown.

As is the case in many editions of the tilt, one can make an argument for the majority of the field in the sensational event, but I have narrowed my top selections down to three.

\$30 BUDGET

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

\$24 BUDGET

\$8 win #6 Commandment (\$8)

\$2 Exacta: key box 6 with 1,12 (\$8)

\$1 Trifecta: 6 with 1,12 with 1,8,12,14,19 (\$8)

\$48 BUDGET

\$4 Exacta: box 1,6,12 (\$24)

\$2 Trifecta: 6 with 1,12 with 1,8,12,14,19 (\$16)

\$1 Trifecta: 1,12 with 6 with 1,8,12,14,19 (\$8)

\$96 BUDGET

\$1 Superfecta: 6 with 1,12 with 1,8,12,14,19 with 1,8,9,12,14,15,18,19,20 (\$48)

\$1 Superfecta: 1,12 with 6 with 1,8,12,14,19 with 1,8,9,12,14,15,18,19,20 (\$48)

Florida Derby (G1) winner #6 Commandment (6-1) comes into Louisville with four wins in succession for Brad Cox. The son of the incomparable Into Mischief became my leading pick with his professional score in the Fountain of Youth (G2) two starts back, and he followed that victory up with an impressive tally in the Florida Derby in his latest showing. The Wathnan Racing color bearer broke his maiden beneath the Twin Spires, and he checks all of the boxes for me.

The Bill Mott-trained #12 Chief Wallabee (8-1) has been just behind the aforementioned colt in his two stakes tries and might have the highest ceiling of any contender in the field. The Constitution homebred has earned strong Brisnet Late Pace ratings in each career run to date, and while I'm not sure about the addition of blinkers, I will trust his Hall of Fame conditioner and expect that the hood going on will move the super-talented bay up a length or two. He possesses useful tactical speed and could get the jump on the deeper closing types in the race beneath Junior Alvarado.

Some will fade morning-line choice #1 Renegade (4-1) after he was assigned the often-dreaded rail post in the Run for the Roses, but I actually feel that the inner slot will not be a hindrance for the powerful sophomore. I thought that his Arkansas Derby (G1) score was even more impressive than it appears to be on paper, as Irad Ortiz, Jr. had a ton of horse under him for much of that 1 1/8-mile event before unleashing him in the stretch. The Into Mischief colt will be imposing if he endures a sensible trip, which I feel that he will.

For the lower rungs of my plays, I have a trio of value horses that deserve inclusion in the competitive contest, in my opinion. Santa Anita Derby (G1) star #8 So Happy (15-1) has been growing on me. Mark Glatt pupil aced his test at 1 1/8 miles last out, and while he's by a sire in Runhappy that is not known for his prowess with horses running classic distances, the colt surely doesn't seem like he has distance limitations to me. Mike Smith will ride.

Lecomte (G3) star #19 Golden Tempo (30-1) ran a close third in the Louisiana Derby (G2) in his latest effort and will run with the blinkers on for the second time in his lifetime. The Cherie DeVaux trainee has reportedly been working in sharp fashion as of late, and any horse that has improved its Brisnet Speed rating in each lifetime run has to be paid attention to. He will be coming from well off the early tempo under regular rider Jose Ortiz.

Bob Baffert's #14 Potente (20-1), a clear second in the Santa Anita Derby, has come a long way in a short amount of time and runs for a trainer who has come out on top in the race on six prior occasions. Also by Into Mischief, the \$2.4 million yearling purchase could be peaking on Saturday after recording a rapid morning move in his most recent drill, and the longshot will have regular jockey Juan Hernandez in the silks.



THE BEST LONGSHOT TO BET IN THE 2026 KENTUCKY DERBY

by Vance Hanson

The bulk of the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1) win pool is likely to center on the handful or so of leading contenders, but are there win threats percolating under the radar? Although logic would suggest it's unlikely, the proposition can not be entirely discounted.

Here are a couple of entries that offer some intrigue at a price.

SILENT TACTIC

From a consistency perspective, Silent Tactic is hard to knock. Although he's lost twice as often as he's won, the son of Tacitus has never finished worse than second from six attempts.

His victory in the Southwest (G3) was impressive, at least visually. Near the tail of the field behind a pace faster than the one that compromised him in the Smarty Jones S., Silent Tactic smoothly improved position while wide and won going away by more than three lengths. It was disappointing, though, that the Brisnet Speed rating came back a modest 92.

There wasn't much improvement in that department in either the Rebel (G2), when Silent Tactic appeared to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory against Class President, and in the Arkansas Derby (G1), where he was finished four lengths adrift of Renegade.

There is something to admire, though, about the colt's ability to travel smoothly, secure position, and pick up readily when asked. To my eyes, it's reminiscent of Sea Hero's better races in the 1992-93 era (including the Kentucky Derby).

Silent Tactic has to improve several lengths to win this Derby, and on bare form is one that's best used in the lower rungs of vertical exotics. He remains with a high ceiling.

INCREDIBOLT

Incredibolt enters the Kentucky Derby off of a long layoff, dating back to his impressive win in the Virginia Derby at Colonial Downs on March 14. He won by four lengths over a one-turn 1 1/8 miles, highly suggesting the extra furlong of this classic will be no problem.

The Virginia Derby was a vastly better race than the Holy Bull (G3), where Incredibolt basically retreated after a quarter mile. Draw a line through that race, and his overall form is likable.

Even more intriguing is that Incredibolt is 2-for-2 over the Churchill Downs surface, including a 1 3/4-length success in the Street Sense (G3) last October. That's a race Sovereignty won before winning the 2025 Kentucky Derby.

It would have been interesting to see if Incredibolt would have improved on his Virginia Derby effort if he had taken in one of the April preps. Be that as it may, the seven-week gap between starts is something he will have to overcome. Like Silent Tactic, we haven't yet seen the best of him.



2026 KENTUCKY DERBY BRISNET SPEED RATING REPORT

by James Scully

Sovereignty became only the third horse in 16 years to win the Kentucky Derby without earning a triple-digit Brisnet Speed Rating beforehand, registering a top number of 99, winning the Fountain of Youth (G2) two starts prior to the first Saturday in May last year. He received a 94 Speed rating, finishing second in the final prep, the Florida Derby (G1).

Speed ratings remain an important tool toward identifying a Kentucky Derby winner, but Sovereignty serves as a reminder that most are poised to move forward with a career-best in the Kentucky Derby. There are exceptions – eventual Triple Crown winner Justify proved too talented for rivals in 2018, failing to improve on a whopping 114 Speed rating from the Santa Anita Derby (G1) – but the Kentucky Derby often comes up more evenly matched, requiring the winner to deliver a career-best performance.

The 2026 Kentucky Derby looks very competitive, with Renegade, Further Ado, and Commandment eligible to compete for favoritism and possibly a few runners right behind them in wagering, and there's always a potential for a wildcard in Kentucky Derby Win-Place-Show pools that exceeded \$122 million last year.

The top half of the projected 20-horse field is within five points of each other, registering career-high Speed ratings in the 100-105 range, and that doesn't include expected morning line favorite Renegade, who posted back-to-back 97 Speed figures winning the Arkansas Derby (G1) and Sam F. Davis S. this year.

It promises to be a fun and challenging Kentucky Derby.

DERBY WINNERS

Let's review Brisnet Speed ratings earned by the last five Kentucky Derby winners, as well as their final prep. All improved by at least four points.

Winner	Derby	Last prep
Sovereignty	103	94
Mystik Dan	97	92
Mage	103	99
Rich Strike	102	95
Mandaloun (placed first DQ)	100	83

KENTUCKY DERBY FIELD

Focusing on the final two prep races, the Kentucky Derby field is ranked by last-out Brisnet Speed number (U.S.-based horses; Speed ratings not available for international races). Horses listed with an asterisk are outside the projected 20-horse field at publication, needing at least one defection.

Horse	Last race	Two back
Further Ado	105	92
So Happy	103	94
Emerging Market	102	99
Pavlovian	101	95
Commandment	100	103
The Puma	100	93
Potente	100	97
Incredibolt	100	69
Golden Tempo	100	91
Chief Wallabee	100	103
Fulleffort	99	92
Renegade	97	97
Stark Contrast	96	91
Silent Tactic	93	93
*Intrepido	92	93
Albus	91	87
Right to Party	90	86
*Ocelli	90	92
*Chip Honcho	89	97
Iron Honor	86	95
*Litmus Test	83	87
*Great White	80	92

TAKEAWAYS

Further Ado will take some beating if he runs back to his final prep, an 11-length victory in the Blue Grass (G1) at Keeneland that netted a field-best 105 Brisnet Speed rating. He improved 13 points from his seasonal comeback, a runner-up in the Tampa Bay Derby (G3), and that makes Further Ado a candidate for regression. The chestnut must also carry his form outside of Keeneland, where he broke his maiden by 20 lengths and easily registered his top two Speed figures. Further Ado is only 1-for-4 at other tracks, but he did capture his lone appearance at Churchill Downs, taking the Kentucky Jockey Club (G2) last fall. And Further Ado appears to be training forwardly at Churchill for the Kentucky Derby.

Santa Anita Derby (G1) winner So Happy (103) and Louisiana Derby (G2) winner Emerging Market (102) come next in last-out Speed ratings. They did not appear to face the deepest competition in their final prep, and inexperience looms as a possible factor for Emerging Market, who remains promising but is trying to become the first horse to win the Kentucky Derby in the third start in more than 150 years. The stretch out to 1 1/4 miles represents a challenge for So Happy, who appears geared for shorter distances based on bloodlines, but his tactical ability and impressive last-out showing merit respect. Louisiana Derby runner-up Pavlovian will be tested for class, but he brings improving form and rates as a possible pace player if he breaks well in the Kentucky Derby.

Commandment won the deepest prep races and rates as a serious Kentucky Derby win contender based on Speed ratings. A winner of four consecutive races, including a maiden tally at Churchill Downs last fall, Commandment's pattern bears some similarity to Sovereignty; both were juvenile winners at Churchill and posted a career best Speed number in the penultimate prep (Fountain of Youth) before running well in the Florida Derby.

2026 KENTUCKY DERBY RUN STYLE ANALYSIS

by James Scully

A 20-horse field will be set for the 2026 Kentucky Derby (G1), with all types of run styles incorporated into the mix. The last four editions of the Kentucky Derby have featured blazing fast paces, with early runners dueling themselves into submission and setting the table for late runners, but there's no guarantee of a grueling pace scenario despite the presence of multiple frontrunners in the starting gate.

Brisnet Past Performances utilizes the following four categories for run styles.

"E," early types, prefer to race up front, either on or very close to the early lead.

"E/P," early/pressers, prefer to race in proximity to the early lead; they're versatile enough to show the way if the pace is moderate or settle farther back behind a hot tempo.

"P," pressers, prefer to stalk the early action, generally towards midpack if the pace is honest, before offering their best run.

"S," sustained runners, are generally classified as confirmed closers, horses who do their best running in the latter stages.

KENTUCKY DERBY FIELD

Handicappers will project run styles for Kentucky Derby runners, but it doesn't always go to plan. Runners will experience troubled trips that put them out of position. Others will display surprising speed or intentionally take back farther than in previous races.

I have classified the 2026 Kentucky Derby field's run styles in four quadrants.

EARLY

Six Speed: Speed appears to be the only chance for a runner initially pegged as a more sprint/middle-distance type.

Pavlovian: Much improved speed since putting blinkers back on two starts ago, needs a clean break and projects to be sent hard.

Chip Honcho: His best efforts are frontrunning, no point rating if he breaks running.

Potente: Showed high speed before weakening to second in Santa Anita Derby (G1); may sit close here, but there's a chance he'll be showing the way with an alert break.

So Happy: Possesses triple-digit Early Pace numbers, needs to be prominently placed to be effective.

EARLY/PRESSER

Danon Bourbon: Japanese shipper is very tactical, eligible to race closer.

Further Ado: Owns speed to make his own trip, shown a preference for racing within a few lengths of the pacesetter.

Intrepido: Rating didn't work in Santa Anita Derby, proven more effective racing within striking range, but fair to question how quick he is.

Chief Wallabee: More of an off-the-pace type in both stakes, but the addition of blinkers and sharp works may suggest he'll be more forwardly placed this time.

Albus: No telling how far back he will be early following rallying Wood Memorial (G2) win, but he did race up close in previous outings.

PRESSER

The Puma: Last early in recent preps but always within about five lengths of pace in tightly bunched fields. Needs to establish position from the gate, doesn't want to be too far back given the abundance of deep closers entered.

Emerging Market: Also looks to avoid getting shuffled too far back in the opening stages, but his best running comes from off the pace.

Incredibolt: Showed more tactical ability, establishing early positioning in the Virginia Derby romp, not quick from the gate, but may be hustled in an attempt to be more midpack.

Commandment: May be relatively far back but eligible to settle ahead of deep closers; will look to pack a serious punch in the latter stages.

Renegade: Closed last-to-first in the Arkansas Derby (G1), but talented late runner possesses the gears to race closer than projected.

SUSTAINED

Fulleffort: Dedicated closer produced a career-best while being ridden a little more aggressively during the opening stages of the final prep race.

Silent Tactic: Doesn't break sharply, will look to start picking up rivals after opening three-quarters of a mile.

Golden Tempo: Won't be taken out of running style, likes to drop far back and offer a big late run.

Wonder Dean: Has broken poorly while possessing little gate speed, eligible to get lost towards the back of the pack if he breaks tardily again.

Right to Party: Came from the clouds to finish second in Wood Memorial, has proven devoid of early speed.

ALSO-ELIGIBLES

In order of preference for inclusion, with run styles listed, the also-eligible runners for the Kentucky Derby: Litmus Test (P), Great White (E/P), and Ocelli (S).

2026 KENTUCKY DERBY BRISNET LATE PACE RATING REPORT

by Keeler Johnson

Brisnet Late Pace ratings are a powerful tool for identifying key win contenders and live longshots in the Kentucky Derby (G1).

Ten of the last 15 Kentucky Derby winners posted a triple-digit Late Pace rating in one or both of their final starts leading up to the first Saturday in May.

In the 2024 Kentucky Derby, only six horses met this standard of excellence. They included the victorious Mystik Dan, an 18-1 longshot, plus runner-up Sierra Leone (4-1) and fourth-place finisher Catching Freedom (7-1). By mixing them with international challenger and well-regarded 7-1 shot Forever Young (who had yet to earn a Late Pace rating), bettors had a chance to cash a \$1 superfecta worth \$8,254.07.

In 2025, another six horses matched the recent triple-digit Late Pace rating requirement. Five of them—Sovereignty (7-1), Journalism (3-1), Baeza (13-1), Final Gambit (17-1), and Owen Almighty (40-1)—finished 1-2-3-4-5. Boxing all six horses in a \$1 Super High 5 would have cost \$720 for a return of \$38,405.96.

Will Late Pace ratings prove similarly predictive in the 2026 Kentucky Derby? Let's cross our fingers and hope so.

Brisnet Late Pace ratings in the 2026 Kentucky Derby Here are the last two Late Pace ratings posted by each 2026 Kentucky Derby contender, including possible also-eligible entrants Litmus Test and Great White, but excluding Wonder Dean, Six Speed, and Danon Bourbon, three international shippers for whom Late Pace ratings are unavailable:

Horse	Latest start	Two starts back
Commandment	121	104
Chief Wallabee	117	104
The Puma	117	93
Incredibolt	115	53
Renegade	109	111
Further Ado	101	90
Golden Tempo	100	94
So Happy	100	77
Silent Tactic	98	95
Emerging Market	96	106
Fulleffort	96	103
Potente	93	85
Right to Party	92	79
Pavlovian	91	86
Albus	89	95
Litmus Test	85	82
Intrepido	82	90
Chip Honcho	70	88
Great White	56	93

TAKEAWAYS

This year, 10 horses have posted a triple-digit Brisnet Late Pace rating in one or both of their last two starts.

The group is led by Florida Derby (G1) winner Commandment (121 and 104), Florida Derby third-place finisher Chief Wallabee (117 and 104), and Arkansas Derby (G1) conqueror Renegade (109 and 111). They're the only three entrants boasting back-to-back triple-digit Late Pace ratings.

Other entrants with particularly strong Late Pace ratings on their record include Florida Derby runner-up The Puma (117) and Virginia Derby winner Incredibolt (115). The Florida Derby featured a slow early/fast late race shape, which is why Commandment, The Puma, and Chief Wallabee all managed to crack the 117 mark.

Eight horses posted a triple-digit Late Pace rating in their final start before the Derby. Two others failed in their latest start, but achieved the standard two starts back: Emerging Market (106 in a maiden special weight) and Fulleffort (103 in the John Battaglia Memorial S.).

A couple of horses who appeared to be closing strongly in their final prep race actually earned modest Late Pace ratings. Albus and Right to Party rallied from far back to finish first and second in the Wood Memorial (G2), but the pace was decelerating sharply through the final three furlongs, so they earned Late Pace ratings of 89 and 92.

After averaging the last two Late Pace ratings earned by each horse in the prospective 2026 Kentucky Derby field, here's how the U.S.-based contenders stack up:

Horse	Average Late Pace rating, last two starts
Commandment	112.5
Chief Wallabee	110.5
Renegade	110
The Puma	105
Emerging Market	101
Fulleffort	99.5
Golden Tempo	97
Silent Tactic	96.5
Further Ado	95.5
Albus	92
Potente	89
Pavlovian	88.5
So Happy	88.5
Intrepido	86
Right to Party	85.5
Incredibolt	84
Litmus Test	83.5
Chip Honcho	79
Great White	74.5

Last year, the top four horses ranked by average Late Pace rating were Journalism, Final Gambit, Baeza, and Sovereignty. Boxing them in a \$1 superfecta would have cost \$24 for a return of \$1,682.27.

Perhaps Commandment, Chief Wallabee, Renegade, and The Puma can repeat the feat in 2026.

WHICH RUNNING STYLE WINS THE MOST KENTUCKY DERBYS: FRONTRUNNERS, STALKERS, OR CLOSERS?

by Keeler Johnson

When 20 talented racehorses vie for victory in the Kentucky Derby (G1), which running style is most likely to succeed?

Will the race go to a frontrunner who seizes the lead and stays out of trouble? A stalker who settles behind the leaders before pouncing to the front? Or a late runner who conserves energy early before rallying down the homestretch?

It's a tricky question to answer. The Kentucky Derby boasts a long history dating back to 1875. Through the decades, the race has changed in meaningful ways. For example:

- The definition of a gate-to-wire winner has shifted. Prior to 1960, a horse was required to leave the starting gate quickest in order to count as the early leader. Since 1960, a horse needs only to make the front by the end of the opening quarter-mile to count as the early leader.
- The Kentucky Derby field size has varied widely through the years. In the early decades, field sizes were much smaller than today, with as few as three horses competing. Through the years, there have been 23 gate-to-wire Kentucky Derby winners, but 14 of those achieved their wins prior to 1927.

As a result, studying running style statistics from the full 151 years of Kentucky Derby history fails to illustrate where the race stands today. That's why we're going to take a deep dive into the statistics, researching the most effective running styles methodically to deliver answers applicable to modern-day Kentucky Derbys.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

First, we must choose a relevant time period of Kentucky Derby history to study. We chose 2000-2025. The last 26 editions of the Kentucky Derby have been largely consistent in terms of field size; 23 out of 26 contained between 18 and 20 horses, and none featured fewer than 15 horses. This stands in contrast to the 1990s, when field size varied considerably from year to year and dropped as low as 13 horses in 1997.

Next, we'll group the 26 Kentucky Derby winners into six categories, based on where they were positioned at the six official points of call in the result charts: the 1/4-mile call, the 1/2-mile call, the 3/4-mile call, the mile call, the stretch (1 1/8-mile) call, and the finish call.

The six categories we've chosen are as follows:

- Horses that led all the way.
- Horses that raced in the front five throughout, but did not lead all the way.
- Horses that raced in the front half of the field throughout, but who raced outside the front five at some point.
- Horses that raced in the back half of the field throughout, but who avoided dropping into the back five of the field.
- Horses that raced in the back five at some point, but who avoided trailing the field.
- Horses that trailed the field at some point.
- Now we'll compare the results of each category to determine which running styles produce the most Kentucky Derby winners.

DATA ANALYSIS

The 26 Kentucky Derby winners break down into our six categories as follows:

Gate to wire winner	Front 5 throughout	Front half throughout	Back half at some point	Back 5 at some point	Trailed at some point
War Emblem	Funny Cide	Big Brown	Animal Kingdom	Fusaichi Pegasus	Mine That Bird
Authentic	Smarty Jones	Super Saver		Monarchos	
	Barbaro	I'll Have Another		Giacomo	
	California Chrome	Country House		Street Sense	
	American Pharoah	Mystik Dan		Orb	
	Nyquist			Rich Strike	
	Always Dreaming			Mage	
	Justify			Sovereignty	
	Mandaloun				

Immediately, several takeaways are obvious:

- In this day and age, it's difficult to win the Kentucky Derby in gate-to-wire fashion. Out of 26 Kentucky Derby winners in our sample size, only two (8%) led all the way: War Emblem and Authentic. Of course, only one horse per year has a chance to lead from start to finish, so that's a caveat to keep in mind.
- It's even harder to win the Kentucky Derby while rallying from last place. Among Kentucky Derby winners since 2000, only one (4%)—Mine That Bird—has achieved the feat.
- Horses that raced in the front five throughout, without leading from start to finish, have enjoyed the most success in the Kentucky Derby since 2000. Nine out of 26 winners (35%) utilized this running style.
- That said, horses who raced in the back five at some point (without trailing the field) have also done well. This category has yielded eight out of 26 Kentucky Derby winners (31%) since 2000.
- The back end of midfield rarely produces Kentucky Derby winners. Out of 26 Derby winners since 2000, only one (4%)—Animal Kingdom—raced in the back half of the field without ever dropping into the back five.

By combining categories, broader trends become apparent. Horses who raced in the front half of the field throughout (including gate-to-wire winners and those who raced in the front five throughout) have won 16 out of 26 (62%) Kentucky Derbys since 2000. They've outperformed horses who raced in the back half of the field at some point; the latter category has produced 10 winners from 26 Derbys (38%).

Front half throughout	Back half at some point
War Emblem	Fusaichi Pegasus
Funny Cide	Monarchos
Smarty Jones	Giacomo
Barbaro	Street Sense
Big Brown	Mine That Bird
Super Saver	Animal Kingdom
I'll Have Another	Orb
California Chrome	Rich Strike
American Pharoah	Mage
Nyquist	Sovereignty
Always Dreaming	
Justify	
Country House	
Authentic	
Mandaloun	
Mystik Dan	

Also, horses that raced in the front five throughout (including gate-to-wire winners) and horses that raced in the back five throughout (including trailers) have combined to win 20 out of 26 Kentucky Derbys (77%) in our sample size.

Conclusions

Since 2000, Kentucky Derby winners have been 1.6 times more likely to race in the front half of the field than the back half. Tactical speed is an asset in the Run for the Roses.

However, the greater takeaway is one of extremes. A whopping 77% of Kentucky Derby winners since 2000 raced either in the front five throughout or in the back five at some point in the race. Only 23% of Kentucky Derby winners employed the seemingly conservative "midfield" approach, racing outside of the front five at some point in the race, but without ever dropping into the back five.

To have the best chance at winning the Kentucky Derby, horses must commit to racing at one end of the pack or the other. Horses who raced in the front five throughout have won 11 out of 26 Derbys (42%) since 2000. Horses that raced in the back five at some point have won nine out of 26 Derbys (35%) during the same timeframe.

Stick close to the lead, or drop far behind. Those are the two running styles that win most Kentucky Derbys.



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ELITE CONTENDERS EMERGE FROM TOP-TIER PATHS TO KENTUCKY DERBY AND OAKS

by Sara Dacus



The 2026 Road to the Kentucky Derby stretched to 50 races across the country and around the world, while the Road to the Oaks unfolded across 33 contests of its own. Both paths culminated with a championship series: races offering 100 points to the winner and the best shot of securing a spot in the starting gate. Here's a look at five of these top-tier Kentucky Derby and Oaks preps.

LOUISIANA DERBY AND FAIR GROUNDS OAKS

On March 21, jockey Flavien Prat had a banner day, winning the Fair Grounds Oaks (G2) aboard Life of Joy, then returning to the winner's circle in the Louisiana Derby (G2) with Emerging Market.

Life of Joy's win was a mild upset over favorite and Rachel Alexandra S. (G2) victress Bella Ballerina. Life of Joy has been withdrawn from the Oaks due to a minor setback. Bella Ballerina—who won her other three career starts—figures to be a major player.

Emerging Market enters the Derby with just two career starts. Only one horse—Leonatus in 1883—has won the Derby under the same circumstances. However, trainer Chad Brown isn't concerned: he believes Emerging Market is more talented than some recent Derby winners. Brown has saddled nine Derby starters and is looking for his first win.

ARKANSAS DERBY AND FANTASY S.

The following weekend, Oaklawn Park hosted the Fantasy S. (G2) on March 27 and the Arkansas Derby (G1) on March 28.

Bob Baffert-trained Explora, winner of Oaklawn's prior prep, scratched due to a fever, paving the way for the Mark Casse exacta of Counting Stars and Search Party. All three fillies are prepping for the race at Churchill.

Renegade dominated the Arkansas Derby, cruising to a four-length victory under Irad Ortiz Jr. for trainer Todd Pletcher and owner Repole Stables. Although Ortiz is a five-time Eclipse Award-winning jockey, he is winless in the Derby in nine mounts. Repole is as well, having gone 0-for-8 with two likely favorites scratched late.

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FLORIDA DERBY AND GULFSTREAM PARK OAKS

While the Arkansas Derby was underway at Oaklawn, trainer Brad Cox recorded career highlights at Gulfstream, first capturing the Gulfstream Park Oaks (G2) with Prom Queen, and then taking the Florida Derby (G1) with Commandment. In her second start, Prom Queen bested maidens by eight lengths. She answered any questions about her jump up in class with her 2 3/4-length win. She is a daughter of Florida Derby winner Quality Road.

Five races later, Commandment—who captured the Fountain of Youth S. (G2) by a neck—edged the Florida Derby by a nose, vaulting himself into the top picks of early Derby selections.

BLUE GRASS AND ASHLAND S.

In the final weekend of the championship series, Percy's Bar won hearts in the April 3 Ashland S. (G1) at Keeneland. Named for the second-floor bar at Keeneland—long manned by the late Percy Pool—he is trained by Ben Colebrook. Colebrook has already saddled one Kentucky Derby starter, Raise Cain, who finished eighth in 2023, and Percy's Bar will mark his first Oaks entry.

The next day, Further Ado emerged as a top Derby wagering interest with a rollicking 11-length romp in the Blue Grass S. (G1). A son of 2017 Horse of the Year Gun Runner, he earned his maiden victory at Keeneland last October by 20 lengths. Irad Ortiz Jr., who has elected to ride Renegade in the Derby, was in the irons. Three-time Kentucky Derby winner and Hall of Fame jockey John Velazquez has picked up the mount.



STUDY: DOES JOCKEY EXPERIENCE INFLUENCE WIN RATES AND EARNINGS?

by Keeler Johnson

reprint from 2025

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

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

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

JOCKEY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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

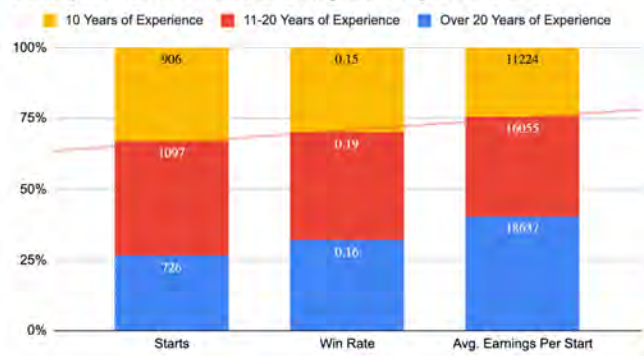
We've divided these 30 jockeys into three categories based on the year of their earliest ride in North America per industry database Equibase. The largest group of jockeys, 16, boasted between 11-20 years of experience. Nine jockeys claimed more than 20 years of experience, and five had been riding for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

JOCKEY DATA ANALYSIS

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

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

Jockey Starts, Win Rate and Avg. Earnings Per Start



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

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

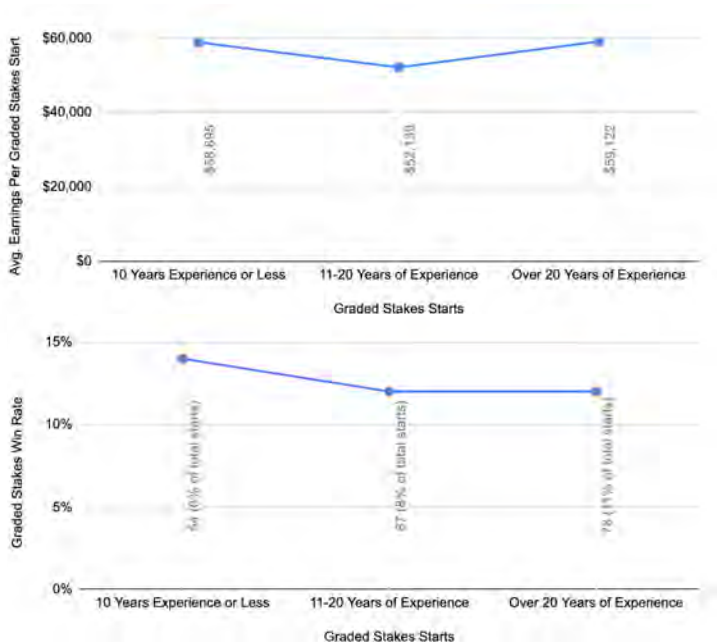
The least-experienced jockeys also had the lowest average earnings per start at \$11,224. Jockeys with 11-20 years of experience fared better with average earnings of \$16,055 per start, but it was the jockeys with over 20 years of experience who earned the most per ride at \$18,637, topping the other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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

CONCLUSIONS

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

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

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



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

by Keeler Johnson

reprint from 2025



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

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

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

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

AVERAGE AGE OF KENTUCKY DERBY-WINNING JOCKEYS: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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

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

AVERAGE AGE OF KENTUCKY DERBY-WINNING JOCKEYS: DATA ANALYSIS

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

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

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

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

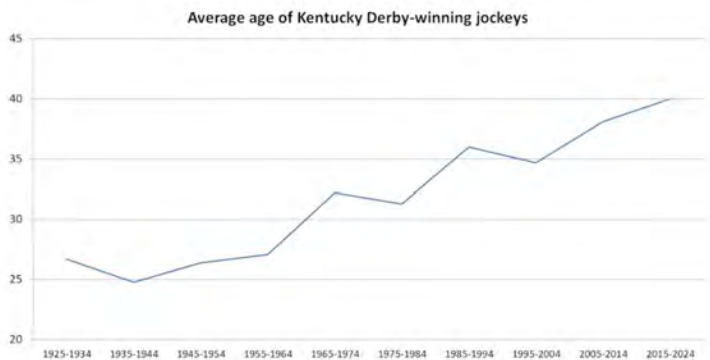
The story was much the same from 1975-1984. While Steve Cauthen (18) and Ronnie Franklin (20, though actually 19 on the day of his Derby win) lowered the average winning age slightly to 31.3 years, the remaining eight Derby-winning jockeys ranged in age from 31 years to 38 years.

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

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

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

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



CONCLUSIONS

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

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

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

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

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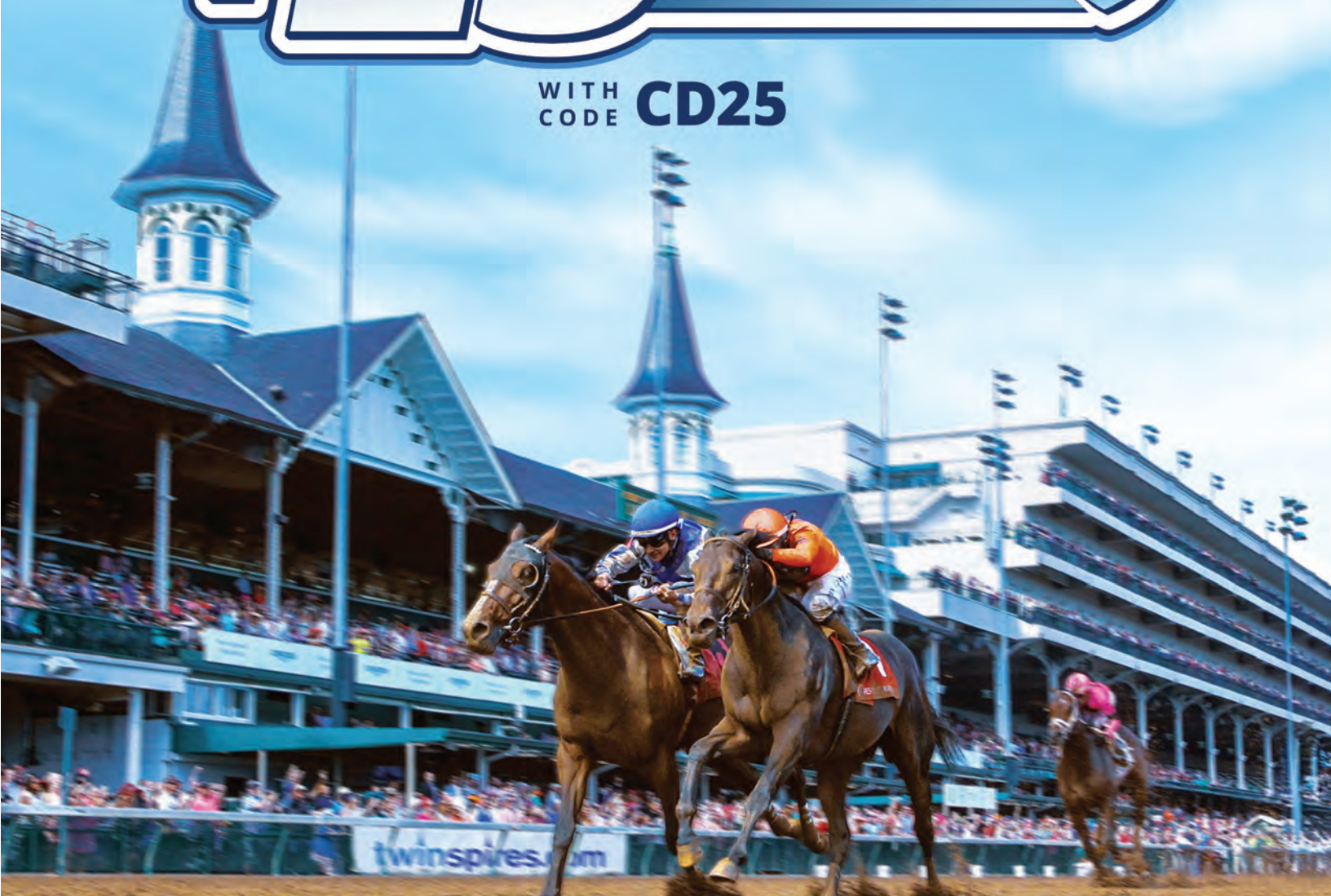
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