



THOROUGHBRED DAILY NEWS KENTUCKY DERBY SPECIAL EDITION

MAY 7, 2022 • CHURCHILL DOWNS

ASMUSSEN FRONT AND 'CENTER' WITH POTENTIAL DERBY FAVORITE

by Steve Sherack

LOUISVILLE, KY – As the all-time leading trainer at Churchill Downs, no one has won more races beneath the Twin Spires than Hall of Famer Steve Asmussen. Just not on the first Saturday in May.

Heading into GI Kentucky Derby 148 with 7-2 morning-line second choice **Epicenter** (Not This Time), as expected, Asmussen's well-documented 23-0-2-2 record in the 'Run for the Roses' has been a major topic of discussion.

"I don't know if it's healthy to want *anything* that much," Asmussen said. "I grew up in horse racing. We've been unbelievably blessed with some of the greatest horses of all time, yet the Derby has eluded us. Going into this year, right now, I don't want to trade places with anybody. I love our chances."

This may arguably be Asmussen's best shot so far.

Ninth at 43-1 with his first Kentucky Derby starter Fifty Stars in

2001, the 56-year-old has never saddled the favorite. Believe it or not, neither of his future superstars Curlin or Gun Runner was the public's choice in the Derby and only three of his starters have gone off at single digits. **Cont. p2**



Epicenter looking the part training beneath the Twin Spires | Coady

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Taking a look back, Asmussen's confidence was at its highest approaching the 2007 renewal, he said.

"I never in my wildest dreams thought Curlin could lose," Asmussen said. "I did not. You could not get any more confident than that horse made you feel when you ran him. The walk back after he got beat was... Whew. Long. Like going across the Sahara Desert."



Steve Asmussen brings an 0-for-23 record to this year's Derby with Epicenter | Sarah Andrew

Unraced at two, making just his fourth lifetime start and backed as the narrowest of second choices at 5-1 off a trio of jaw-dropping victories, the mighty Curlin had to settle for a well-beaten third behind slightly favored Street Sense after some early trouble passing the crowd of 156,635 for the first time.

"Two weeks later, he proved it [by winning the GI Preakness S.]," Asmussen said of the two-time Horse of the Year and perennial leading sire. "Sometimes, it just isn't meant to be. He proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that he was good enough. But it didn't happen."

Carrying the same maroon-and-white silks of Winchell Thoroughbreds as Epicenter, the brilliant Gun Runner filled the third slot at 10-1 behind Nyquist after racing on a hot pace in the 2016 Kentucky Derby. The chestnut, of course, brought his game to an elite level as an older horse, led by wins in the GI Breeders' Cup Classic and GI Pegasus World Cup Invitational S. The 2017 Horse of the Year has excelled in his next career as well, setting a new record for progeny earnings as a first-crop sire last year.

"For him going into the breeding shed, and the success he's continuing, it's unbelievable to be a part of that," Asmussen said.

Nehro and Lookin At Lee provided Asmussen with his two best placings in the Kentucky Derby so far, finishing second in 2011 and 2017, respectively. **Cont. p3**



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Nehro, looking every bit a winner while looming boldly on the pacesetting Shackleford turning for home at a well-backed 8-1, couldn't withstand a devastating stretch run from Animal Kingdom. The rail-drawn Lookin At Lee enjoyed a perfect, ground-saving trip from far back and outran his 33-1 odds behind Always Dreaming.

"The visuals of those moments were goosebumps exciting," Asmussen said.

Derby also-rans like GI Belmont S. winner Creator (13th in 2016), GI Jockey Club Gold Cup S. winner Max Player (fifth in 2020) and the very popular, ill-fated GI Preakness S. and GI Runhappy Travers S. runner-up Midnight Bourbon (promoted to fifth via disqualification in 2021) enjoyed their share of top-level success afterward.

Albeit while racing for different connections, Asmussen Derby alumni also includes: GI Forego S. winner Pyro (eighth at 5-1 in 2008) and GI Santa Anita H. winner Combatant (18th in 2018), respectively.

"That's extremely important," Asmussen said of that aforementioned group's subsequent accomplishments. "Extremely proud of that."

A Deserving Choice...

Regardless of Mike Battaglia's much-discussed morning-line or where Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale's **expected \$3 to \$4 million wager** lands, Epicenter is every bit worthy of favoritism.

In key possession of a natural, high-cruising speed--more important than ever in the points system era **as detailed in this space** ahead of the 2018 Derby--Epicenter's resume is topped by a gate-to-wire success in a very live renewal of the GII Risen Star S. and a visually impressive, stalk-and-pounce victory with a career-best 102 Beyer Speed Figure in the GII TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby.

Slight Kentucky Derby morning-line favorite and the very talented GI Toyota Blue Grass S. winner Zandon (Upstart) was back in third following an eventful journey while making his sophomore debut in the Risen Star.

A maiden winner at Churchill Downs at two, Epicenter has gradually been stretched in distance from seven furlongs on debut last September all the way to 1 3/16 miles in his final Derby prep in late March. His speed figures have improved with each and every one of his six career starts as well.

Jockey Joel Rosario, aboard 2013 Kentucky Derby winner Orb, has the call.

"I love where he's at--mentally and physically--and how he's getting over the racetrack," Asmussen said. "He's had a lovely progression with a gradual stretchout. He's got nice gate speed and plenty of pace. In the Louisiana Derby, he showed that he can be more tractable and still have that burst going 1 3/16

miles. We're very fortunate to be associated with him. We have the one we want for running in the 2022 Derby."

Bred in Kentucky by Westwind Farms, Epicenter brought \$260,000 from the Winchell family on day six of the 2020 Keeneland September Yearling sale. Hailing from the second crop of leading young sire Not This Time, Epicenter is out of the stakes-winning and graded-stakes placed Candy Ride (Arg) mare Silent Candy.



Epicenter | Hodges Photography

It promises to be a huge weekend for Asmussen and owner Ron Winchell at Churchill Downs. North America's all-time winningest trainer will also be shooting for his third GI Longines Kentucky Oaks win for the Winchells with unbeaten champion Echo Zulu (Gun Runner) on Friday.

"There's a lot of focus on the 0-for-23 and my pursuit of the Derby, but I've heard Ron [Winchell] in interviews recalling conversations that he had with his father [the late Verne Winchell] about his own pursuit of winning the Derby," Asmussen said. "It's very meaningful. The association between the Winchells and Asmussens was started long before me and Ron."

Asmussen concluded with a laugh, "We got to listen to conversations, but make no decisions."

At 6:57 p.m. Saturday, Asmussen and Winchell will be more than happy to let Epicenter do all the talking.

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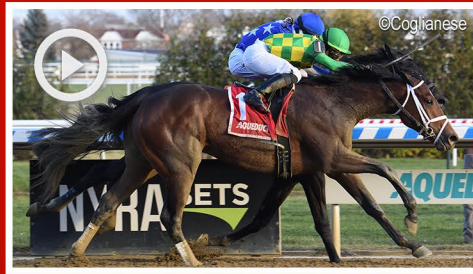
Top Beyer Speed Figures for 2022 Derby Horses:

Messier - 103
 Taiba - 103
 Epicenter - 102
 Taiba - 102
 Messier - 99
 Epicenter, Zandon, Zozos - 98

DERBY PREP RACE REPLAYS



Nov. 27: **GII Kentucky Jockey Club S.**
Winner: **Smile Happy**



Dec. 4: **GII Remsen S.**
Winner: **Mo Donegal**



Feb. 19: **GII Risen Star S.**
Winner: **Epicenter**



Feb. 26: **GII Rebel S.**
Winner: **Un Ojo**



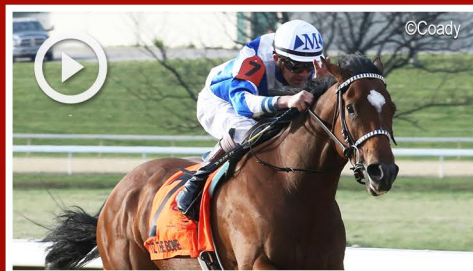
Mar. 5: **GII Fasig-Tipton Fountain of Youth S.**
Winner: **Simplification**



Mar. 26: **G2 UAE Derby**
Winner: **Crown Pride (Jpn)**



Mar. 26: **GII Twinspires.com Louisiana Derby**
Winner: **Epicenter**



Apr. 2: **GIII Jeff Ruby Steaks S.**
Winner: **Tiz the Bomb**



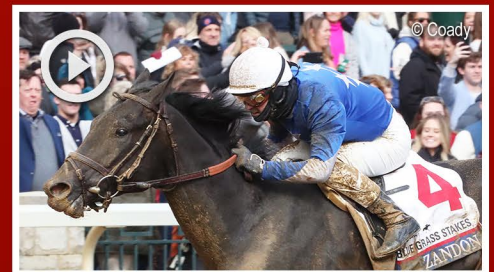
Apr. 2: **G1 Arkansas Derby**
Winner: **Cyberknife**



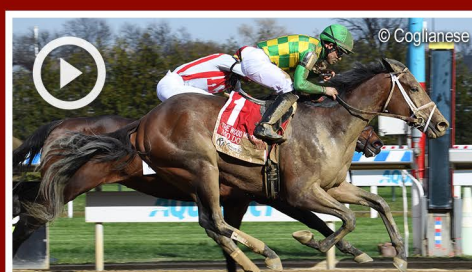
Apr. 2: **G1 Curlin Florida Derby**
Winner: **White Abarrio**



Apr. 9: **G1 Runhappy Santa Anita Derby**
Winner: **Taiba**



Apr. 9: **G1 Toyota Blue Grass S.**
Winner: **Zandon**



Apr. 9: **GII Wood Memorial S.**
Winner: **Mo Donegal**



Apr. 16: **GIII Stonestreet Lexington S.**
Winner: **Tawny Port**



#1 Mo Donegal 10-1

(c, Uncle Mo--**Callingmissbrown**, by Pulpit) (\$250,000 Ylg '20 KEESEP)
 O-Donegal Racing (KY) | T-Todd Pletcher | J-Irad Ortiz, Jr.
 Lifetime Record: MGSW, 5-3-0-2, \$621,800

PROS: Mo Donegal has steadily progressed through his five-race career, winning three times and having legitimate excuses for his two third-place runs. Slow and steadied early in his debut sprinting at Belmont, he finished full of run to fill the trifecta and graduated next out when stretched to 1 1/16 miles. He narrowly bested morning-line favorite Zandon (Upstart) in a controversial and roughly-run renewal of the GII Remsen S. before being left behind early and attempting to close into a slow pace making his 3-year-old debut in the GIII Holy Bull S. The Todd Pletcher trainee then ran down loose-on-the-lead GI Preakness S. contender Early Voting (Gun Runner) in the GII Wood Memorial S., clicking his last furlong off in :11.99 and strongly signaling potential improvement getting an extra furlong to work with.



Mo Donegal | Sarah Andrew

CONS: Mo Donegal is habitually slow out of the gate, which may be a fatal flaw in a 20-horse field, particularly breaking from the rail. It's been well documented how big of a weapon tactical speed has been in the Derby's points era, with only Orb in 2013 managing to close for a victory in the past decade. Though the 96 Beyer he earned in the Wood is in the ballpark of the top contenders, it's still likely too slow to win and he earned it with a perfect ground-saving trip under Joel Rosario, who bails to ride Epicenter instead.

PEDIGREE: Super-stallion Uncle Mo has already been represented by a Derby winner in Nyquist, and his horses can do anything so there shouldn't be any distance concerns there. Mo

Donegal's second dam is GISW millionaire Island Sand, who ran the best race of her life going 1 1/4 miles in the GII Delaware H., winning by 3 3/4 lengths with a 105 Beyer. Add that to the way Mo Donegal finishes his races, and it seems clear he will be improving late while a lot of others are tiring. It's just a matter of whether he gave the field too much of a head start.



Donegal Racing principal Jerry Crawford leading Mo Donegal in after his win in the Wood | Sarah Andrew

VERDICT: Mo Donegal is a horse I would definitely not leave out of the lower rungs of exotics, but his lack of early speed and slight figure deficit makes me look elsewhere on the win end at 10-1. --Joe Bianca

Last 10 Wood Memorial Winners in the Derby:

- 2021: Bourbonic - 13th
- 2020: No Race
- 2019: Tacitus - 3rd
- 2018: Vino Rosso - 9th
- 2017: Irish War Cry - 10th
- 2016: Outwork - 14th
- 2015: Frosted - 4th
- 2014: Wicked Strong - 4th
- 2013: Verrazano - 14th
- 2012: Gemologist - 16th
- 2011: Toby's Corner- SCR



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Mo Donegal



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#2 Happy Jack 30-1

(c, Oxbow--~~Tapit~~stry, by Tapit)

O/B-Calumet Farm (KY) | T-Doug O'Neill | J-R Bejarano

Lifetime Record: GISP, 4-1-0-2, \$182,200.

PROS:

Happy Jack earned his way into the Derby with a pair of third-place efforts behind highly hyped contenders, filling that spot behind Forbidden Kingdom in the Mar. 5 GII GII San Felipe S. and behind Taiba in the Apr. 9 GI Runhappy Santa Anita Derby. Before traveling to Louisville, the bay colt worked a mile in 1:39.60 at Keeneland Apr. 30. Trainer Doug O'Neill has already had success with that formula. The O'Neill-trained Nyquist went a mile in 1:41 at Keeneland the week before winning the 2016 Derby.

CONS:

Happy Jack was third in those key Derby prep races, but he was beaten double-digit lengths in both. A distant fifth in his only other stakes appearance, the Feb. 6 GIII Robert B. Lewis S., he comes into the Derby with only a six-furlong maiden score in his win column.

PEDIGREE:

Happy Jack's sire Oxbow won the 2013 GI Preakness S. and was second in that year's GI Belmont S. His son Hot Rod Charlie, also trained by O'Neill, was third in last year's Derby and matched his sire's runner-up finish in the Belmont.

Tapitstry was on the board in six of seven starts without ever winning, but she is a daughter of the great Tapit and her broodmare sire is 1987 Kentucky Derby winner Alysheba.

VERDICT:

Happy Jack will be a deserved longshot Saturday.

Calumet Farm Derby Winners:

Forward Pass (1968), Tim Tam (1958), Iron Liege (1957), Hill Gail (1952), Ponder (1949), **Citation** (1948), Pensive (1944), **Whirlaway** (1941)

BOLD: Triple Crown winner



Happy Jack gallops past spectators on the Churchill backstretch Thursday morning | Coady Photography



#3 Epicenter 7-2

(c, Not This Time--**Silent Candy**, by Candy Ride {Arg}) (\$260,000 yrl '20 KEESEP)
 O-Winchell Thoroughbreds LLC | B-Westwind Farms (KY) | T-Steve Asmussen | J-Joel Rosario
 Lifetime Record: MGSW, 6-4-1-0, \$1,010,639.

PROS: Very good out of the gate and is fast enough to lead this field, but can also stalk and pounce, as evidenced by his impressive victory in the GII Twinpires.com Louisiana Derby. As the distances have increased--Epicenter debuted going seven furlongs last September--so have all of his speed figures. Awarded a 102 Beyer Speed Figure in his final prep at Fair Grounds going the near Derby distance of 1 3/16 miles, he is one of only three Derby runners--the other two are Messier (Empire Maker) and Taiba (Gun Runner)--to register a triple digit Beyer.



Epicenter | Coady

His wire-to-wire GII Risen Star S. victory two back looks even better now, subsequently producing GI Blue Grass S. first and second Zandon (Upstart) (third) and Smile Happy (Runhappy) (second); GIII Stonestreet Lexington S. winner Tawny Port (Pioneerof the Nile) (fifth); and GIII Sunland Derby winner Slow Down Andy (Nyquist) (sixth).

Has a nice foundation at two, including a maiden victory going a mile over the Churchill Downs main track. Despite Steve Asmussen's well-documented 0-for-23 record in the Derby, he still hails from one of the top barns in the country.

CONS: This is an awfully difficult horse to knock, even at an expected low price. If you want to nitpick though, sure, you'd much rather prefer drawing on the outside than in post three.

PEDIGREE: Red-hot young sire and narrow GI Breeders' Cup Juvenile runner-up Not This Time will be well-represented in the Derby by a pair of colts from his second crop--Epicenter and Simplification. And both, coincidentally, are out of mares by Candy Ride (Arg). Not This Time is already the sire of six graded winners. Candy Ride is the broodmare sire of five Grade I winners, including last year's narrow GI Kentucky Oaks runner-up Search Results (Flatter). Epicenter's dam Silent Candy was a stakes winner over the Arlington turf and was also third in the grassy GIII Pucker Up S. going 1 1/8 miles.

VERDICT: Sorry Mike Battaglia, *this* is the horse to beat. --Steve Sherack



Epicenter looks over the blanket of flowers from his Louisiana Derby | Horsephotos



#4 Summer Is Tomorrow 30-1

(c, Summer Front--*Always Tomorrow*, by Badge of Silver) (\$25,000 wnl '19 KEENOV; \$14,000 RNA yrl '20 KEESEP; €139,200 2yo '21 ARQDEA)

O-Michael Hilary & Negar Burke | B-Brereton C. Jones (KY) | T-Bhupat Seemar | J-Mickael Barzalona
 Lifetime Record: GSP, 7-2-3-0, \$267,606

PROS: Summer Is Tomorrow has won two of seven starts, including an 8 1/4-length triumph in a Meydan allowance in February. He finished second to Japanese Derby contender Crown Pride (Jpn) (Reach the Crown {Jpn}) when trying two turns for the first time in the G2 UAE Derby there Mar. 26, giving him the points necessary to earn a spot in the Derby starting gate. He has good gate speed, which should help him get away from any early trouble at the break and into the clear.



Summer Is Tomorrow | Coady

CONS: With plenty of speed signed on, it is likely Summer Is Tomorrow will be heard from early and missing from action at the finish. While he performed well in his first two-turn test, he was a surprising second and no match for the winner that day, who returns here. It was also his first attempt beyond seven furlongs over a speed-favoring surface. The bay is the first American starter for his trainer Bhupat Seemar, but he worked for Bob Baffert for five years during the early 2000s when that Hall of Famer trained Classic winners Point Given and War Emblem. Summer is Tomorrow is also the first Derby starter for his French jockey Mickael Barzalona.

PEDIGREE: Summer Is Tomorrow's sire Summer Front made his career on turf with several black-type wins, albeit at a mile or 1 1/16 miles. His progeny have been successful on both turf and dirt, including GII Fountain of Youth S. winner Ete Indien, who ran third in the GI Curlin Florida Derby and bypassed the First

Saturday in May. His dam Always Tomorrow did not do much running, making just over \$24,000 with one win sprinting in a maiden claimer at Indiana. She is a full-sister to Grade I winner Bigger Picture, who won several graded stakes going long on turf.

VERDICT: While it's nice to see some international flavor in America's greatest race, Summer Is Tomorrow is 30-1 for a reason. I'd put my money on the home team. --

@CDeBernardisTDN



Summer Is Tomorrow schooling in Churchill's paddock | Coady

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#5 Smile Happy 20-1

(c, Runhappy--**Pleasant Smile**, by Pleasant Tap) (\$175,000 wnlg '19 KEENOV; \$185,000 yrl '20 FTKSEL)
 O-Lucky Seven Stable (Machkin) | B-Moreau Bloodstock Int'l & White Bloodstock (KY) | T-Ken McPeck | J-C Lanerie
 Lifetime Record: GSW & GISP, 4-2-2-0, \$549,810.

PROS:

Smile Happy put himself in the early Kentucky Derby picture late last year with a win over fellow Derby contenders Classic Causeway and White Abarrio in the GII Kentucky Jockey Club S. That victory under the Twin Spires came about a month after the colt was tabbed a 'TDN Rising Star' with his snappy debut score at Keeneland. After his two-race juvenile campaign, Smile Happy has made just two starts heading into Louisville and could be fresh and ready to deliver in his third start of the layoff.



Smile Happy winning Kentucky Jockey Club Stakes | Coady

CONS:

After two eye-catching victories last season, Smile Happy had plenty of Derby buzz about him over the winter, but he is winless in his two starts so far this term. He couldn't catch the front-running Epicenter when second in the Feb. 19 GII Risen Star S. and had no answer when overtaken by the late-charging

Zandon in the Apr. 9 GI Toyota Blue Grass S., causing his Derby stock to tumble.

PEDIGREE:

Smile Happy is a son of sprint champion Runhappy, whose own sire is GI Kentucky Derby winner Super Saver. His half-brother Wilko Rum (Wilko) was third in the Derby--the Manitoba Derby. His damsire Pleasant Tap was third in the 1990 Kentucky Derby and he is a son of 1981 Kentucky Derby winner Pleasant Colony. Twice second in the GI Breeders' Cup Classic, Pleasant Tap won the 1992 GI Jockey Club Gold Cup and GI Suburban H.

VERDICT:

The Derby is a tall order for lightly-raced colt still looking to find his best 3-year-old form.



Smile Happy galloping at Churchill Downs | Coady

Best of Luck to

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 and his connections in the
 148th Run for the Roses!



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#6 Messier 8-1

(c, Empire Maker--**Checked Past**, by Smart Strike) (\$470,000 yrl '20 FTKSEL)
 O-SF Racing LLC, Starlight Racing, Madaket Stables LLC, Robert Masterson, Jay Schoenfarber, Waves Edge Capital LL,
 Catherin Donovan, Golconda Stable and Siend Farm | B-Sam-Son Farm (ON) | T-Tim Yakteen | J-John Velazquez
 Lifetime Record: MGSW & GISP, 6-3-3-0, \$435,600

PROS: Tabled a '**TDN Rising Star**' off an impressive second-out graduation at Santa Anita in late October, Messier followed suit with a good-looking score over Forbidden Kingdom (American Pharoah) in the GIII Bob Hope S. a month later. Runner-up in the GII Los Alamitos Futurity in December, he rolled home to a 15-length victory in the GIII Robert B. Lewis S. in February for trainer Bob Baffert, earning a 103 Beyer Speed Figure. Switched to Tim Yakteen with that Hall of Famer sidelined by a suspension, Messier was run down late by his stablemate Taiba (Gun Runner) in the GI Runhappy Santa Anita Derby Apr. 9. While his barnmate got the better of him that day, Messier is far more experienced than that twice-raced contender. The \$470,000 FTKSEL buy runs under Yakteen's name here, but let's not forget, he received the majority of his education from a six-time Derby-winning trainer. Messier's Hall of Fame pilot John Velazquez has won three renewals of the Run for the Roses and crossed the finish line first aboard the Baffert-trained Medina Spirit (Protonico) last year. The bay prefers to run on or near the lead, a running style which bodes well in the Derby's large field. He is one of three colts in the field who has run a triple-digit Beyer, the others being Taiba and Epicenter (Not This Time).

CONS: Messier was taken by surprise and unable to fend off Taiba's late surge last out. He will need to be tougher to turn the tables on him and 18 others Saturday. Messier has never traveled outside of California and does so for the first time without the watchful eye of Baffert's traveling assistant Jimmy Barnes. The other downside to his lack of travel is he has not faced the likes of some of this race's toughest competitors, aside from Taiba. Messier has never had to navigate a field bigger than six, so the 20-horse Derby field will be quite a change and will test both his guts and agility.

PEDIGREE: Messier hails from the penultimate crop of leading sire Empire Maker, who had no issue with running a route of ground, having won the 12-panel GI Belmont S. His offspring have also done well running long, like three-time champion Royal Delta and MGSW and Kentucky Derby runner-up Pioneerof the Nile, who sired Triple Crown hero American Pharoah. His dam Checked Past is a stakes winner going 1 1/16 miles on the Woodbine synthetic and her sire Smart Strike, a Grade I winner going two turns, has produced many talented routers on both turf and dirt.

VERDICT: Messier has been one of the hype horses for the Kentucky Derby since he was a 2-year-old and there is no reason to give up on him now. --@CDeBernardisTDN



Messier | Horsephotos

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 September 13
BREEDERS' STAKES
 October 2

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#7 Crown Pride (Jpn) 20-1

(c, Reach the Crown {Jpn}--Emmy's Pride {Jpn}, by King Kamehameha {Jpn})
 O-Teruya Yoshida | B-Shadai Farm | T-Koichi Shintani | J-Christophe Lemaire
 Lifetime Record: GSW-UAE, 4-3-0-0, \$734,569

PROS: Barring a sixth-place effort in the Listed Hyacinth S. in February where he spotted his rivals a significant start with a poor break, Crown Pride has done nothing wrong to date. In two wins as a juvenile, he faced a decent amount of adversity, sitting in the kickback before stretching clear to score on his nine-furlong debut in October, then enduring a three-wide, no-cover trip in annexing his next start by three comfortable lengths. It all went wrong from the start in the Hyacinth S. ([video](#), SC 9) and the homebred did exceptionally well to finish where he did, beaten just 3 1/2 lengths over a mile trip that was perhaps too short for him to begin with. Under the radar for the G2 UAE Derby Mar. 26, Crown Pride turned in an anti-bias effort from off the pace, running down Summer Is Tomorrow to score comfortably. He is used to racing in large fields, as his three starts at home drew 10, 13 and 14 entrants, respectively. He has trained as well--or better--than any of his rivals over the Churchill main track and continues to thrive on his work, despite having much asked of him over the past six weeks. For Christophe Lemaire, who won no fewer than four races on the Saudi Cup program--including one on dirt--Saturday's moment will not be too big.



Crown Pride | Coady

CONS: When Pinehurst (Twirling Candy) failed to run any sort of race at Meydan, an opportunity was lost to assess just what Crown Pride was beating on that occasion. The same could be said of his Japanese starts, though Hyacinth S. hero Combustion (Jpn), a Godolphin-owned son of Discreet Cat, is cut out to be a

good horse. He was no better than 11th in the UAE Derby. It can also be argued that the UAE Derby is a negative prep for the 'Run for the Roses', as nothing to emerge from the race has been a serious factor at Churchill. A 20-1 chance on Mike Battaglia's morning line, Crown Pride is liable to take a disproportionate amount of action at the window and could start at an underlaid price.

PEDIGREE: Crown Pride is one of two winners at group level for his sire, a son of Special Week (Jpn), and a himself a winner at Group 2 and Group 3 level. Crown Pride has all sorts of American influences in his pedigree, particularly on top. The aforementioned Special Week is a son of 1989 Kentucky Derby winner Sunday Silence, while the dam of Reach the Crown, Crownpiece (Jpn), is a daughter of 1977 Triple Crown hero Seattle Slew and champion Chief's Crown (Danzig)'s half-sister Classic Crown (Mr. Prospector), who was bought back on a bid of \$775,000 when carrying the filly that would become Crownpiece at Keeneland November in 1996. Dam sire King Kamehameha was a son of Kingmambo, but has sired dirt Group 1 winners Hokko Tarumae (Jpn), Belshazzar (Jpn)--from a Sunday Silence dam--and Chuwa Wizard (Jpn), also two-times placed in the Dubai World Cup. Crown Pride is inbred 3x4 to Sunday Silence.

VERDICT: On bare form and on visual evidence, it is hard to argue that Crown Pride does not fit with these and if he runs to his works, he could be there in the finish. He's an appealing horse for the exotics, albeit at an unappetizing mutuel--

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JAPANESE HORSES IN THE DERBY

Year	Horse	Finish
2022	Crown Pride	???
2019	Master Fencer	6th
2016	Lani	9th
1995	Ski Captain	14th



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#8 Charge It 20-1

(c, Tapit--I'll Take Charge, by Indian Charlie)
 O/B-Whisper Hill Farm (Ky) | T-Todd Pletcher | J-Luis Saez
 Lifetime Record: GISP, 3-1-2-0

PROS:

The regally bred, but lightly raced, Charge It earned his spot in the GI Kentucky Derby with a runner-up effort in the GI Curlin Florida Derby. He was green that day, but forgivably so since he was making just his third lifetime start, first try at two turns and first against winners.

Charge It opened his career with a hard-fought runner-up effort in a one-mile affair at Gulfstream Jan. 8. Entering his second start, over the same track and trip after a pair of Palm Beach Downs bullets, he duly romped to an 8 1/2-length victory to become Tapit's 49th 'TDN Rising Star'. Sent off at 3-1 against a seasoned field in the Florida Derby, Charge It weaved in and out down the lane and raced in fits and spurts before finishing 1 1/4 lengths short of White Abarrio (Race Day).

CONS:

After his third-place effort in the Sam F. Davis, Volcanic returned to be a well-beaten 10th in the GI Toyota Blue Grass S.

and Charge It's first two maiden races have yet to produce any other runners of note. While his Florida Derby second proved he is a horse with plenty of talent, another jump up to Kentucky Derby level seems a lot to ask.

PEDIGREE:

Charge It's dam I'll Take Charge is out of multiple Grade I winner Take Charge Lady (Dehere), who also produced champion 3-year-old colt and GI Travers S. winner Will Take Charge (Unbridled's Song), as well as Florida Derby winner Take Charge Indy (A.P. Indy) and Grade I winner As Time Goes By (American Pharoah). The blue hen mare's daughter Charming produced champion 2-year-old filly Take Charge Brandi (Giant's Causeway) and MGISW Omaha Beach (War Front).

VERDICT:

Charge It looks to be a horse with a bright future. That future just might not be on the First Saturday in May.



Charge It gallops at Churchill | Coady Photography



#9 Tiz the Bomb 30-1

(c, Hit It a Bomb--**Tiz the Key**, by Tiznow) (\$330,000 Ylg '20 FTKSEL)
 O-Magdalena Racing, Lessee | B-Spendthrift Farm LLC (KY) | T-Kenneth G. McPeek | J-Brian Hernandez, Jr.
 Lifetime Record: MGSW & GISP, 8-5-1-0, \$1,044,401.

PROS:

Evocative of triple-surface luminary Animal Kingdom, who was the last colt (in 2011) to successfully parlay Turfway Park's signature race into a Derby win, Tiz the Bomb has versatility in spades. He broke his maiden by open daylight on the dirt, is a graded winner on both turf and synthetic, and, as a Breeders' Cup runner-up, has proved he can handle top company. He's shown he can lead, stalk, or close, as well as negotiate traffic in large fields. Trainer Kenny McPeek had been pointing him to Classics across the pond--no easy task either--but Tiz the Bomb has been doing so well McPeek did an about-face after the GIII Jeff Ruby Steaks S. With the co-highest number of starts in the field, this colt is 2022's definition of seasoned and has made more trips to the winner's circle than any other horse in the 148th Derby.

CONS:

In spite of that 14 1/4-length maiden win on dirt, Tiz the Bomb's worst career performances have been on the main

track. His Churchill debut can be forgiven--at first asking, a five-furlong sprint at two very early in the season--but his performance in the GIII Holy Bull S. in February is harder to overlook. Was it the three-month layoff or the dirt?

PEDIGREE:

Tiz the Bomb is far and away the best U.S. runner by Spendthrift's third-crop sire and Argentinean shuttler Hit It a Bomb, whose stellar sire, War Front, has had a number of sire sons make an impact lately. Dam Tiz the Key won at the Derby distance and is a product of one of the best female families in the stud book as she's from the Gay Missile branch of foundation mare Missy Baba.

VERDICT:

Does versatility and experience trump recent dirt form? The public likely won't think so, making Tiz the Bomb a sound choice for those looking for what should be a substantial overlay.

--Jill Williams

BOMB THREAT.

Kentucky Derby contender

TIZ THE BOMB

Best wishes to Ken McPeek
& Magdalena Racing, Lessee.

\$5,000 S&N

HIT IT A BOMB

 SPENDTHRIFT





#10 Zandon 3-1

(c, Upstart--Memories Prevail, by Creative Cause) (\$170,000 Ylg '20 KESEEP)
 O-Jeff Drown | B-Brereton C Jones (KY) | T-Chad Brown | J-Flavien Prat
 Lifetime Record: GISW, 4-2-1-1, \$713,000.

PROS: Has been on an upward trajectory--from a speed figure perspective--since overcoming a distance-oriented pedigree to win his debut over six furlongs last October. He stepped up to nine furlongs and got involved in a street fight in the GII Remsen S. in early December, only to prove the unluckiest of losers. Off to a poor start in the GII Risen Star S. facing a race-fit Epicenter, Zandon nevertheless ran on smartly to just miss second and though he'll potentially have more traffic to deal with Saturday, was agile enough to overcome a disadvantageous and adverse--if not necessarily 'bad'--trip in the GI Toyota Blue Grass S. Apr. 9 to earn the nod as favorite, at least ante-post. And, if anything, he seems to have come on for the effort, as his last two works have been extraordinary in a pool of very strong breezes. In Flavien Prat, not only does Zandon have arguably the hottest rider in the country, but also one who knows how to work out a trip in a race like the Derby (he was aboard Country House from gate 19 back in 2019).



Zandon breezing Apr. 29 | Coady

CONS: Like the vast majority of the Derby entrants, he'll want to leave there running and try to slot in somewhere around midfield. He will be among the last two horses to take his place in line given the double-loading process and that could potentially leave him slightly unprepared for the start. Any misstep with a small margin of error to begin with could prove costly. Zandon is arguably at an experience disadvantage when compared to chief market rival Epicenter and the likes of Messier and Simplification. Though clearly capable of winning a race like this, Chad Brown has a record of 0-1-0 from six starters,

with Good Magic (Curlin) his best finish (second in 2018).

PEDIGREE: Zandon hails from the second crop of his Airdrie Stud-based sire, himself winner of the 2015 GII Holy Bull S. and controversially disqualified from the win in the GII Fountain of Youth S., but well beaten behind American Pharoah in that year's Derby. Dam Memories Prevail, the first foal sired by Airdrie's Creative Cause, is a half-sister to '**TDN Rising Star**' Cairo Memories (Cairo Prince), who recently won the GIII Providencia S. going nine furlongs on turf. This is also the female family of the Brown-trained Significant Form (Creative Cause), a dual graded winner long on the grass, and two-turn GSW Hay Dakota (Haynesfield). Zandon should be staying on through the wire.

VERDICT: Outside of his starting price, there is much to recommend about this leggy, good-feeling colt and he should take plenty of beating. --@EquinealTDN



Zandon enters the Churchill paddock Wednesday | Coady



TD

TRAVIS DURR TRAINING CENTER GRADUATE

ZANDON

BEST OF
LUCK
IN THE
KENTUCKY
DERBY

MORNING LINE FAVORITE
AND GRADE 1 TOYOTA
BLUE GRASS WINNER

OWNER: JEFF DROWN
TRAINER: CHAD BROWN
AGENT: MIKE RYAN

A job well done, a name you can rely on



#11 Pioneer of Medina 30-1

(c, Pioneerof the Nile--**Lights of Medina**, by Eskendereya) (\$485,000 RNA yrl '20 KEESEP)
 O-Sumaya U.S. Stable | B-International Equities Holding, Inc (KY) | T-Todd Pletcher | J-Joe Bravo
 Lifetime Record: GSP, 6-2-1-2, \$181,350

PROS:

The consistent Pioneer of Medina has hit the board in all but one of his six lifetime starts, with his lone off-the-board finish a troubled fourth in the Feb. 19 GII Risen Star S.



Pioneer of Medina | Coady Photography

CONS:

Pioneer of Medina made his way into the Derby by dint of his third-place finish in the GII Louisiana Derby and some fortuitous defections. With just a maiden win at Tampa Bay Downs and a Fair Grounds allowance tally to his credit, the bay colt has yet to earn a stakes victory and he was never any sort of threat to Epicenter in the Louisiana Derby.

PEDIGREE:

The late Pioneerof the Nile was second in the 2009 GI Kentucky Derby and is the sire of Triple Crown winner American

Pharoah. Pioneer of Medina is the first foal out of Lights of Medina, who was second in the 2017 GII Black-Eyed Susan S. That mare, as well as Pioneer of Medina's second dam, Medina Thunder (Thunder Gulch), were bred and raced by Oussama Aoughazale. Aoughazale campaigned third dam, Medina Sidonia (Chi) (Winning), to wins in the 1997 G1 Chilean 1000 Guineas and G1 Tanteo de Potrancas.

Lights of Medina is a daughter of Eskendereya, who was expected to be heavily favored in the 2010 Kentucky Derby, but had to be withdrawn due to injury the week of the race, while Medina Thunder's sire Thunder Gulch won the 1995 Derby and GI Belmont S.

VERDICT:

Would need to take a huge step forward to be a factor Saturday.



Pioneer of Medina | Coady Photography

BEST OF LUCK
Pioneer of Medina
IN THE KENTUCKY DERBY (G1)

Owner: Sumaya U.S. Stable | Breeder: International Equities Holding, Inc. | Trainer: Todd Pletcher

Broken and Trained at Lucan Bloodstock

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#12 Taiba 12-1

(c, Gun Runner--**Needmore Flattery**, by Flatter) (\$140,000 yrl '20 FTKOCT; \$1,700,000 2yo '21 FTFMAR)
 O-Zedan Racing Stables, Inc. | B-Bruce C. Ryan (KY) | T-Tim Yakteen | J-Mike Smith
 Lifetime Record: GISW, 2-2-0-0, \$490,200



Taiba | Coady

Mar. 5, earning a gaudy 103 Beyer Speed Figure for trainer Bob Baffert. Thrown into the deep end next out when switched to the Tim Yakteen barn, he rallied to an impressive victory over stablemate Messier (Empire Maker) when extended to two turns in the GI Ruhappy Santa Anita Derby, good for a 102 Beyer. Not many horses could go from a six-furlong maiden race to a nine-furlong Grade I, especially in such a strong fashion, which bodes well for him heading into the biggest test of his life. The stalk-and-pounce running style the chestnut displayed in his prior starts is often successful on the First Saturday in May. While Taiba enters this race under Yakteen's name, he received most of his education from Baffert, who certainly knows how to prep a horse for the Run for Roses as he boasts six victories in the event. He also saddled the ill-fated Zedan colorbearer Medina Spirit (Protonico), who was first across the line in last year's renewal. Taiba will be piloted by another Hall of Famer who is no stranger to the Derby winner's circle in Mike Smith, who looks to take home the roses for the third time.

PROS: Taiba was a no-brainer '**TDN Rising Star**' after breaking his maiden by 7 1/2 lengths in his six-panel debut at Santa Anita

Cont. p16

GO MAKE HISTORY

TAIBA

OWNER: ZEDAN RACING STABLES, INC.
 BREEDER: BRUCE C. RYAN
 TRAINER: TIM YAKTEEN
 JOCKEY: MIKE SMITH



YEARLING CONSIGNOR:

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Santa Anita Derby G1 Winner
 Co-highest Beyer-103 of the Derby field

CONS: While Taiba has been impressive in his two races, he has still only had two races and faces much more seasoned rivals in Louisville. While Justify became the first Derby winner in decades not to race at age two, he fit in one more race than Taiba prior to the First Saturday in May. If Taiba is successful Saturday, he would be the first horse since 1883 Derby winner Leonatus to take home the roses in just his third start. This is Taiba's first time traveling outside of California and he makes the journey within just a week of race day. Like the rest of the field, it will be his initial try at 10 furlongs, but his last race makes you think that won't be an issue. Facing just six rivals on debut and five in the Santa Anita Derby, it will be the colt's first time facing the kind of traffic trouble that is often encountered in the 20-horse Derby.

PEDIGREE: Taiba hails from the first crop of Horse of the Year Gun Runner, who topped the freshman sire standings last year and looks likely to repeat in the sophomore stallion rankings. It would be no surprise to see that dual champion follow in the footsteps of Uncle Mo and Bodemeister, who each sired Kentucky Derby winners in their first crop. A son of Candy Ride (Arg), Gun Runner had no issue with 10 furlongs, winning the GI Breeders' Cup Classic and placing in both the Kentucky Derby and G1 Dubai World Cup. He won five additional Grade Is at nine furlongs. Taiba's dam, hard-knocking Ohio-bred Needmore Flattery, won 14 stakes in her home state on both turf and dirt and at distances ranging from six to nine furlongs. She is a daughter of the A.P. Indy stallion Flatter, so Taiba is bred to run all day from top to bottom.

VERDICT: While it is a tall task to win the Kentucky Derby in his third start, if Taiba continues his upward trajectory, he may just be the horse who can get it done. --@CDeBernardisTDN

KENTUCKY DERBY DAY POST TIMES

- GII Churchill Distaff Turf Mile S. - 12:36 p.m.
- GII Pat Day Mile S. - 1:56 p.m.
- GI Derby City Distaff S. - 2:48 p.m.
- GII American Turf S. - 3:40 p.m.
- GI Churchill Downs S. - 4:31 p.m.
- GI Old Forester Bourbon Turf Classic S. - 5:27 p.m.
- GI Kentucky Derby - 6:57 p.m.

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for publication in the

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#13 Simplification 20-1

(c, Not This Time--Simply Confection, by Candy Ride {Arg}) (\$50,000 RNA Wlg '19 KEENOV)
 O-Tami Bobo & Tristan de Meric | B-France & Irwin Weiner (FL) | T-Antonio Sano | J-Jose Ortiz
 Lifetime Record: GSW & GISP, 7-3-1-2, \$515,350

PROS: A forgivable fifth when making his career debut over the Gulfstream synthetic track, Simplification has been a model of consistency, particularly in his four runs this season. The bay set a cracking pace and proved too strong in the Mucho Macho Man S. on New Year's Day and showed a bit of a new dimension--albeit out of necessity--when rallying from off the speed following a poor break to be second to White Abarrio in the GIII Holy Bull S. Having learned their lessons, connections opted to ride Simplification quietly in the GII Fasig-Tipton Fountain of Youth S. and he duly obliged, leading home a 1-2 finish for his red-hot sire with a 3 1/2-length defeat of In Due Time. Somewhat surprisingly asked to keep pace with Classic Causeway in the GI Curlin Florida Derby Apr. 2, Simplification was sent into the lead with better than a half-mile to race and stayed on doggedly to be third to White Abarrio and Charge It. Look for him to settle and come with a finish Saturday and he should be a square price relative to his chances.



Simplification | Lauren King

CONS: Though it appears he does have excuses, Simplification has been beaten by a combined 6 3/4 lengths in the two head-to-head meetings with White Abarrio and will need to bridge that gap--and then some--to be a Derby factor. While he earned a career-best 96 Beyer in winning the Fountain of Youth, he will have to find three or four lengths' improvement if he is to have his picture taken on the Churchill infield.

PEDIGREE: By the all-conquering Not This Time, who is also to be represented in the Derby by morning-line second choice Epicenter (*see above*), Simplification is the first foal out of his dam, who significantly outran odds of 74-1 to finish second in the one-mile Rags to Riches S. at Churchill back in 2014. Ironically, the filly just behind her that day in third was Not This Time's 'TDN Rising Star' half-sister Taylor S (Medaglia d'Oro), who was also campaigned by Albaugh Family Stable. Simplification's second dam was Ballado's Halo (Saint Ballado), twice placed in sprint stakes at Turfway Park (pre-synth), who also produced the dam of Inflexibility (Scat Daddy), winner of the 10-furlong Wonder Where S. in course-record time, and of Coronation Futurity winner Halo Again (Speightstown), who was placed in graded stakes going long on turf and synthetic. Ballado's Halo was a full-sister to two-time champion and GI Kentucky Oaks heroine Ashado, who stayed a mile and a quarter well enough to record an open-lengths success in the 2004 GI CCA Oaks in addition to six other top-level scores. Her full-brother Sunriver took the GI Hollywood Turf Cup over 12 grassy panels.

VERDICT: Pound for pound, Simplification shapes as one of the true value plays in the Derby and should jump at a juicy price. Toss at your own peril. --@EquinealTDN



Simplification | Coady



#14 Barber Road 30-1

(c, Race Day–**Encounter**, by Southern Image) (\$15,000 wnlg '19 KEENOV)
 O-WSS Racing LLC | B-Susan Forrester & Judy Curry (KY) | T-John Ortiz | J-Reylu Gutierrez
 Lifetime Record: MGSP, 8-2-4-1, \$650,720.

PROS:

Barber Road has no quit in him. He's consistently shown up every race, and earned his way to the Derby by picking up the points via runner-up or third-place finishes in the Arkansas circuit Derby preps including in the Smarty Jones S., the GIII Southwest S., the GII Rebel S., and the GI Arkansas Derby. Despite humble beginnings as a \$15,000 weanling to racing in the maiden claiming ranks at Keeneland (where he earned his graduation), the Race Day colt has kept putting himself in the conversation. Like all of them, this will likely be the first and last time he's ever faced a field this large, but he runs through traffic well, and there's plenty of that every year.



Barber Road | *Coady Photo*

CONS:

His closing style, combined with the soft competition in some of the Arkansas preps this year, means the gutsy grey will likely be up against it.

His top Beyer of 88 for his runner-up performance in the GI Arkansas Derby is well below most of his competitors.

PEDIGREE:

By a son of Tapit, and sharing sire Race Day with the winner of the GI Curlin Florida Derby, he's not lacking paternally. Though the stallion was exported to Korea, it may yet prove that this crop was one of his best. Barber Road's half-siblings have all done their best running well short of the Kentucky Derby distance, but he's far and away proved to be the mare's best runner. Dam Encounter's half-sister was a Grade III stakes winner at Turfway Park, and was graded stakes placed beneath the Twins Spires.

VERDICT:

It might be asking a lot of the colt to win, but it would be no surprise to see him run by half the field late or even secure minor honors. --*Patrycja Szpyra*



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HUGHES BLOODSTOCK

wishes
Barber Road
 and

Cocktail Moments
 and their connections Best of Luck in the
 Kentucky Derby and Oaks

Barber Road

Owner: WSS Racing, LLC
Breeder: Susan Forrester
 & Judy Curry
Trainer: John Ortiz

Cocktail Moments

Owner: Dixiana Farms LLC
Breeder: Mark Stansell
Trainer: Kenneth
 McPeck

Hughes Bloodstock
 Weanling Purchase

Hughes Bloodstock
 Mating Recommendation

Jared Hughes | Phone: 859 806 3896 | Email: jaredhughes100@yahoo.com



#15 White Abarrio 10-1

(c, Race Day--**Catching Diamonds**, by Into Mischief) (\$7,500 Ylg '20 OBSWIN; \$40,000 2yo '21 OBSMAR)
 O-C2 Racing Stable & La Milagrosa Stable (KY) | T-Saffie Joseph, Jr. | T-Tyler Gaffalione
 Lifetime Record: GISW, 5-4-0-1, \$823,650

PROS: All White Abarrio has done is run, with four wins and a third in a Grade II in five starts. Originally bought for just \$7,500 as an OBS Winter Mixed yearling before selling for a slightly less modest \$40,000 at OBS March, the aptly-named light gray kicked off his career with a dominant, 6 3/4-length romp at Gulfstream and followed that up with an easy and fast-finishing allowance score before suffering his only defeat to date in the Kentucky Jockey Club S. over this track. In two starts as a 3-year-old, he's dominated the GIII Holy Bull S. by 4 1/2 lengths and proved he could get at least nine furlongs with a 1 1/4-length victory in the GI Curlin Florida Derby. The Saffie Joseph trainee crucially has the tactical speed to lay closer to the pace than some of his main challengers, and he has come back with three sharp breezes since his Florida Derby triumph.

PEDIGREE: Race Day, a six-time winner in 12 starts, is represented by two horses in this field (Barber Road) after being exported to Korea last year. He never traveled beyond nine furlongs but did win the GII Fayette S. going that trip. His dam and second dam's worst career races came in their only two-turn starts. Though there is some South American stamina deeper in his pedigree, most of the stakes performers under Race Day's first three dams came sprinting.

VERDICT: White Abarrio is certainly a contender on paper and should be able to work out a good trip. But his Florida Derby win came more from attrition than any kind of convincing closing punch, and he's unlikely to get better with an additional furlong. Not impossible but there will be better value if he's 10-1.

--Joe Bianca



White Abarrio | Coady Photography

CONS: While his figures aren't uncompetitive, White Abarrio's 97 Beyer top is slower than almost every one of his major rivals, and his Florida Derby win is a little less impressive when factoring in the glacial final-furlong time of :14.09. In fact, his final three-eighths that day were clocked in :39.69. If he repeats that finish in the Derby he's likely to be losing ground to at least half of the field. Also, runner-up Charge It may have cost himself the race by racing greenly in the closing stages, helping a tiring White Abarrio hold on. His pedigree also mostly lines up with a horse who will be probable to slow even further in a 10th furlong.



White Abarrio | Coady Photography

Good Luck to
SUMMERFIELD
Sales Graduates



© Coglianese

WHITE ABARRIO



KENTUCKY DERBY

Breeder: Spendthrift Farm, LLC

Trainer: Saffie A. Joseph, Jr.

Owners: C2 Racing Stable LLC and
La Milagrosa Stable, LLC

DESERT DAWN



KENTUCKY OAKS

Owner/Breeder: H & E Ranch

Trainer: Philip D'Amato



© Benoit



Francis & Barbara Vanlangendonck

Francis@summerfieldsales.com

Barbara@summerfieldsales.com

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#16 Cyberknife 20-1

(c, Gun Runner--**Awesome Flower**, by Flower Alley) (\$400,000 yrlg '20 FTKSEL)
 O-Gold Square LLC | B-Kenneth L. & Sarah K. Ramsey (KY) | T-Brad H Cox | J-Florent Geroux
 Lifetime Record: GISW, 6-3-2-0, \$860,000.

PROS:

Cyberknife has come into Churchill as the buzz horse for several on the strength of his last couple of wins and two bullet works including his penultimate six-furlong prep in a bullet 1:11.20, faster than two rivals in the Derby gate. Something clicked in the Feb. 19 allowance, the colt speeding through a Fair Grounds 1 1/16 miles in 1:42.53, and he carried it through his victory in the GI Arkansas Derby. The race has produced its fair share of Kentucky Derby winners (including Triple Crown winner American Pharoah), so he's riding in on the right kind of wave.



Cyberknife | Coady Photo

CONS:

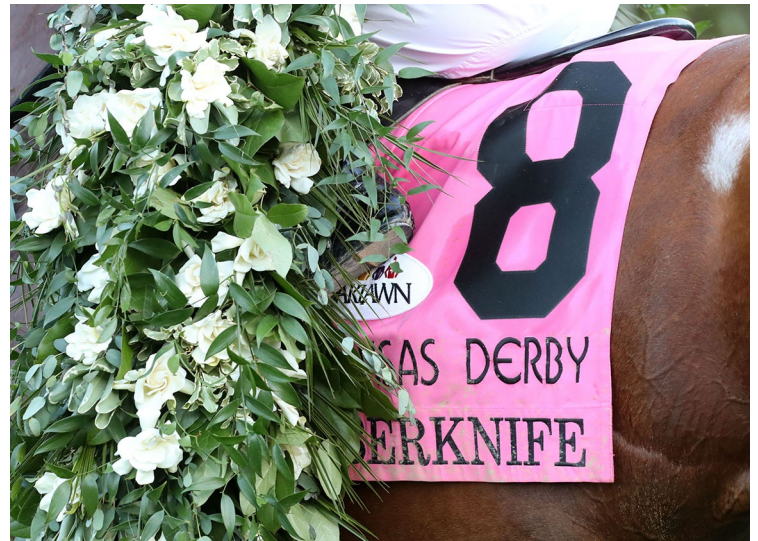
Cyberknife might well end up his own worst enemy. He was a project early on in his career, and while he took significant steps forward mentally in the aforementioned win against AOCs and the Derby Prep, he still unseated the jockey in the post parade before the latter. And as we all know, there really isn't a way to 'train' for the Kentucky Derby environment.

PEDIGREE:

Gun Runner stole all the attention last year for having one of the best starts to a freshman sire season in recent memory. His remarkable first crop featured nine stakes winners and five graded stakes winners. Cyberknife's female family is no slouch either, with third dam Well Dressed (Notebook) responsible for a family of accomplished runners, G1 Dubai World Cup winner Well Armed among them. His dam was an 11-time winner by Flower Alley, who himself sired a Kentucky Derby winner.

VERDICT:

If you're hoping for more value than what the public's favorites will offer, this might be your horse if he can keep himself together amid the chaos. He's definitely a contender.
 -- Patrycja Szpyra



Coady Photography

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Best of Luck to
S.B.M. Graduate
CYBERKNIFE
 in the Kentucky Derby

Trainer: Brad H. Cox
 Owners: Gold Square LLC
 Breeder: Kenneth L. Ramsey & Sarah K. Ramsey

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#17 Classic Causeway 30-1

(c, Giant's Causeway--**Private World**, by Thunder Gulch)

O/B-Kentucky West Racing LLC & Clarke M. Cooper (KY) | T-Brian Lynch | J-Julien Leparoux

Lifetime Record: MGSW & GISP, 6-3-1-1, \$521,100.

PROS: Speed is always dangerous and the blaze-faced chestnut should sit a good trip on or near the lead from his favorable outside draw. Was previously leading the way in T. D. Thornton's **TDN Kentucky Derby Top 12** through the Mar. 29 rankings off the strength of wins in the Gill Sam F. Davis S. and Gill Lambholm South Tampa Bay Derby. He also ran well in defeat beneath the Twin Spires as a 2-year-old, finishing second in the Gill Kentucky Jockey Club S.

CONS: Heads to the Kentucky Derby off the worst effort of his career, fading to a distant 11th in the GI Curlin Florida Derby. Was taken out of Derby consideration by trainer Brian Lynch afterwards, but in a surprising move, rejoined the field in late April. Even if you can find an excuse for his first attempt going beyond 1 1/16 miles versus much tougher company in the Florida Derby--I certainly can't--his two aforementioned wins at Tampa this season produced Beyer Speed Figures of only 88 and 86. Can't exactly see more distance helping him, either.

PEDIGREE: Classic Causeway is one of three foals--all winners--from the **final crop of the legendary late leading sire Giant's Causeway**. The homebred's dam Private World was a two-time stakes winner sprinting in Southern California and she was also second in the California Breeders' Cup Oaks going 1 1/16 miles at Golden Gate. Broodmare sire Thunder Gulch, of course, brought home the roses at 24-1 back in 1995.

VERDICT: A 'Classic' speed and fade. --*Steve Sherack*

LAST FIVE DERBY PACES

Year	1/4	1/2	3/4	Final Time	Final 1/4
2021	:23.09	:46.70	1:11.21	2:01.02	:25.04
2020	:22.92	:46.41	1:10.23	2:00.61	:25.59
2019	:22.31	:46.62	1:12.50	2:03.93	:25.30
2018	:22.24	:45.77	1:11.01	2:04.20	:26.85
2017	:22.70	:46.53	1:11.12	2:03.59	:26.32



Classic Causeway gallops Wednesday at Churchill | *Coady Photography*



#18 Tawny Port 30-1

(c, Pioneerof the Nile--**Livi Makenzie**, by Macho Uno) (\$430,000 Ylg '20 KEESep)
O-Peachtree Stable | B-WinStar Farm LLC (KY) | T-Brad Cox | J-Ricardo Santana, Jr.
Lifetime Record: GSW, 5-3-1-0, \$427,000.

PROS:

Tawny Port is putting it all together at the right time, which is just what you like to see leading into the Derby. The GIII Lexington S. at Keeneland was his first win on dirt and he did it wide on both turns before finishing well. After opening his career with two wins on synthetic, he had jumped into the deep end to try both dirt and stakes company for the first time in the GII Risen Star S. He didn't discredit himself there, with the four that finished in front of him all in the Derby starting gate, including the top two on the morning line. Tawny Port has been on an upward arc since, returning with a good runner-up effort in the GIII Jeff Ruby Steaks S. before the Lexington win.

CONS:

Only two horses have won the Derby coming out of the Lexington: Charismatic in 1999, who won both races, and Swale in 1984, who was second in the Lexington. It's often a last-ditch attempt to make the Derby and was Tawny Port's second start in

two weeks before he'll wheel back in another three for the big race. His best Beyers are a shade below the major contenders.

PEDIGREE:

A win by Tawny Port would be icing on the cake for the late Pioneerof the Nile, who already had his Classic glory with Triple Crown winner American Pharoah. Tawny Port's dam side is more modest. Livi Makenzie was a \$5,500 Keeneland September yearling, a hardy campaigner for four seasons, and a minor stakes winner who was twice graded-placed, but she never won beyond six furlongs.

VERDICT:

If Brad Cox gets a second consecutive Derby win and a first visit to the hallowed winner's circle, it's more likely to be with one of his other two entrants. However, Tawny Port is getting good at the right time and might be an intriguing longshot to fill out the exotics. --*Jill Williams*



Tawny Port punches his Derby ticket in the Lexington at Keeneland | *Coady Photography*



#19 Zozos 20-1

(c, Munnings--**Papa's Forest, by Forestry**)
O/B-Barry & Joni Butzow (KY) | T-Brad Cox | J-Manny Franco
Lifetime Record: GSP, 3-2-1-0, \$291,200

PROS:

Zozos has made the step up in ranks about as easy as it comes. After breaking his maiden on debut over six furlongs at the Fair Grounds Jan. 23, he immediately followed that up with a dominating 10-length score against allowance company at Oaklawn Park Feb. 11 to earn 'TDN Rising Star' status. And though no match for Epicenter's turn of foot in the GII Twinspires.com Louisiana Derby, he held on for a game second in his graded stakes debut while also stepping up in distance to 1 3/16 miles. The 98 Beyer Speed Figure he earned in that race ranks competitively with a majority of the field here and he's shown improvement in that figure in each consecutive start.

CONS:

With only three starts, and all of them coming as 3-year-old, Zozos will need to match Justify as the only other GI Kentucky Derby winner to prevail without a 2-year-old start. He's

extremely light on experience, something that could hinder him when faced with 19 other rivals, many of whom who are much more battle-tested in far deeper waters. Despite his second in the Louisiana Derby, his pedigree lacks the stamina to be competitive over the longer distances.

PEDIGREE:

Munnings, himself a sprinter who never won beyond seven furlongs, is still looking for his first GI Kentucky Derby winner. Zozos is the second winner from as many to race out of the winning Forestry mare Papa's Forest, who also produced Emerald Forest (Gemologist), a track-record setter over seven furlongs at Louisiana Downs.

VERDICT:

Distance and experience an issue--will need the perfect trip.
--Stefanie Grimm



Zozos | Coady Photography



#20 Ethereal Road 30-1

(c, Quality Road–Sustained, by War Front)

O-Julie Gilbert & Aron Sones | B-Paul Pompa Jr. (KY) | T-D. Wayne Lukas | J-Luis Contreras

Lifetime Record: GSP, 7-1-1-1, \$294,545.

PROS:

In the flash of an eye, Ethereal Road appeared to give Hall of fame trainer D. Wayne Lukas a live contender to earn his fifth GI Kentucky Derby picture with a bang-up second behind Un Ojo (Laoban) in the Feb. 26 GII Rebel S. Appearing to take a step backwards behind Derby favorite Zandon (Upstart) in the Apr. 9 GI Toyota Blue Grass S. at Keeneland, the colt came home an even fourth in the GIII Lexington S. Apr. 16. Preferring to come from off the pace in his races, the colt will likely get a solid pace to run at come the first Saturday in May.

Lukas has proven he is more than capable of winning on the big days, even with horses that seemingly don't belong, chief among them the one-time claimer Charismatic, who took the Derby and GI Preakness S. in 1999.

CONS:

While there is almost certain to be plenty of speed to run at in the Derby, the flipside is that there will also be plenty of traffic to weave through in the latter stages of the race. The colt bay is

also not known for his push-button speed, a characteristic that has proven most valuable in the 10-furlong Classic. And while a horse on the upswing in form is usually a safe bet on the big day, the 3-year-old has appeared to stay at a static level in each of his last three starts in graded company.

PEDIGREE:

Quality Road showed he could carry his speed over a route of ground during his racing career, demonstrated by his track record setting time when winning the GI Florida Derby. Already represented by a Classic winner in Kentucky Oaks heroine Abel Tasman, the Lane's End stallion is also responsible by four-time Grade I scorer City of Light. While proving time and again that he can produce a top horse, Quality Road is probably best known for his middle distance performers who can carry their speed over a stretch of ground. Additionally, the bottom side of the page shows an abundance of speed. Ethereal Road's dam Sustained is by leading sire War Front, a bonafide runner that was also able to carry his speed. *Cont. p25*

Good Luck

ETHEREAL ROAD in the Kentucky Derby (G1)

Owner: Julie Gilbert and Aaron Sones | Breeder: Paul Pompa Jr. | Trainer: D. Wayne Lukas

SECRET OATH in the Kentucky Oaks (G1)

Owner/Breeder: Briland Farm, Robert & Stacy Mitchell | Trainer: D. Wayne Lukas





Ethereal Road | Coady Photo

In addition to the Classic contender, the GSP mare is responsible for the speedy Grade III-winning turf horse Turned Aside. On a whole, the pedigree seems to lean a bit more toward speed than stamina, so the 10-furlong distance poses a bit of a question mark.

VERDICT:

Not the most likely Lukas-trained 3-year-old to win Derby week, but never count out The Coach on the big days.

—Christina Bossinakis

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'The Coach' leading Ethereal Road home | Coady Photo

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