



# **KENTUCKY DERBY**

## **BETTING PRIMER**



# **AND THEY'RE OFF**

BETTING TIPS FOR THE START OF THE TRIPLE CROWN

**THIS FREE GUIDE INCLUDES**

- HOW TO BET ON HORSE RACING
- PREVIEWS OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY AND KENTUCKY OAKS
- BEST BETS FROM TOP HORSE EXPERTS

Greetings, all.

The first week of May brings us the first leg of the Triple Crown, with the Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs. Before the “Run for the Roses”, we’ve got the “Lillies for the Fillies” with the Kentucky Oaks on Friday night as well. This is the 150th running of each race, so it is sure to be a special weekend in Louisville.

In our Kentucky Derby Primer, you will find helpful tips for both of those races, along with an overview of How To Bet On Horse Racing. Whether you are new to the sport or know your way around a racing form, we hope that you find some helpful insights from a trio of expert horse racing handicappers and me, the Managing Editor of VSiN.com moonlighting as an analyst for the Kentucky Oaks.

Along with that How To Bet On Horse Racing guide, we’ve got:

- Details on all the Kentucky Derby entries from Mr. Ed Sehon
- Early best bets from Sehon, Dave Tuley, and Mike Somich
- A full preview and predictions for the Kentucky Oaks from Adam Burke

Tuley, Somich, and Sehon are all regular contributors at VSiN.com, including weekly horse racing best bets for the top Saturday cards around the country.

The Kentucky Derby may be the “Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sports”, but VSiN has a 24/7 channel dedicated to helping listeners with all of the sports betting markets. Our website features daily best bets, betting tools, and live streams. Become a [VSiN Pro Subscriber](#) to fully experience everything that we have to offer and get our upcoming NFL Betting Guide and College Football Betting Guide as part of an annual subscription.

Good luck with your bets this weekend and thank you for checking out what VSiN is all about!

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# VSIN EXPERT KENTUCKY DERBY

## BEST BETS

### DAVE TULEY

Kentucky Derby Week is one of the few times nowadays when horse racing reclaims its former spot atop the betting menu (at least for two minutes on the First Saturday in May).

I first cut my gambling teeth at Arlington International Racecourse (which is sadly gone like so much of the sport's history) in the early 1990s and wrote for the horseplayers' Bible, Daily Racing Form, from 2000-2014, so horse racing and the Derby still hold a special place in my heart.

And horse racing has been very good to me, especially with longshots over the years on the biggest days like this and the Breeders' Cup.

What has made these days so profitable overall is that there's so much public/dead money in the pools, making it easier to find overlays in the betting pools. Obviously, there's no guarantee we'll win this year's Derby, but at least we know going in there's a better chance to make money than on a typical racing day.

Since the Derby has a 20-horse field, I also believe it's OK to spread your bets around, even when it comes to Win and Place wagers. I would never suggest that in a typical race, as you're basically betting against yourself, which is tougher to overcome than the track takeout or the vig in sports betting.

For the purposes of this VSIN Betting Guide, I'm going to break down the horses I'm considering into the most likely winner (for those who like to bet the favorites or top contenders and who aren't as averse to chalk, like yours truly), then my top value play as we sit here early in Derby Week, then other long shots to consider. Later in the week, I'll return to VSIN.com with my final "takes" on the Derby with expanded analysis and more exotic tickets as we try to blow up the tote board at Churchill Downs.

#### **MOST LIKELY WINNER**

##### **17 Fierceness (5-2 morning line)**

The defending two-year-old champion is the heavy favorite after his impressive Florida Derby win. Now, even though I'm a self-proclaimed longshot player, I won't mind if Fierceness wins the Run For The Roses, as I bought a piece of him at 19-1 back in March. He could go wire-to-wire like he did in his last race or sit just off the pace like he did in his Breeders' Cup Juvenile victory.

#### **TOP VALUE PLAY**

##### **1 Dornoch (20-1)**

You've probably already heard how no horse has won the Derby from Post Position No. 17, and even novice horseplayers have heard how hard it is to win from Post No. 1. However, I maintain those are statistical anomalies and the right horse can win from anywhere (like Big Brown from No. 20 in 2008). If you throw out his last race, Dornoch's early speed can put him right in contention early – and breaking from the rail, his connections pretty much have to send him to the front. With most people avoiding the No. 1, we should get a fair price for him to steal this.

*(continued on next page)*

## OTHER LONGSHOTS TO CONSIDER

### 18 Stronghold (20-1)

Most years, the Santa Anita Derby winner would be given more respect. That's OK, as we'll be using him as a colt which should be right next to Fierceness from the start and can draft right behind him turning for home.

### 5 Catalytic (30-1)

Most people will ignore the other runners in the Florida Derby after Fierceness obliterated second-place finisher Catalytic by 13 lengths (and the others by more), but I'm a forgiving handicapper and have no trouble including the Florida Derby runner-up as he was just the second-best racehorse on the track that day.

### 16 Grand Mo the First (50-1)

Ditto everything I said about Catalytic. He ran third in the Florida Derby. This is what we in the industry call a "key race." We wouldn't be surprised if the same three from Florida also hit the board in Kentucky.

See you at VSiN.com with our updated takes later in the week. Happy Handicapping!

## MR. ED SEHON

Each year at this time, it seems Mr. Ed hears from more friends, old, new and fair-weather, than he does over the Christmas holidays. I'm sure many of them think of me as an aging, degenerate, low-life gambler 364 days a year. But come the first Saturday in May my phone and social media sites ring and ding — all posing the same question, "Who do you like in the Derby?" ... If only it were that simple.

After burning a gallon of midnight oil researching this year's race, I've boiled it down to four horses: Sierra Leone, Dornoch, Just a Touch, and my upset Win pick: HONOR MARIE at juicy 29-1 odds. I trust the colt's no-nonsense, confident trainer Whit Beckman and also the modest, Irish-imported jockey Ben Curtis. I also favor the horse's come-from-behind running style. It reminds me of the Seabiscuit saga.

The bottom line: I'll bet him across the board while using the other three in Exactas and multi-race tickets.

1. HONOR MARIE
2. Sierra Leone
3. Dornoch
4. Just a Touch

## MIKE SOMICH

Here's my early top 4 for each race:

### OAKS

Tarifa  
Thorpedo Anna  
Leslie's Rose  
Just FYI

### DERBY

Fierceness  
Honor Marie  
Just A Touch  
Encino

## Honor Marie



# HOW TO BET

# HORSE RACING

by Adam Burke

Betting on horse racing can be intimidating for those without a background in the sport, but we're here to help with a comprehensive guide on how to bet on horse racing.

In this general overview, we will discuss popular horse racing bets and terms, as well as some of the statistics, characteristics, and attributes of the horses, trainers, and jockeys that you will want to analyze before placing your wagers.

## UNDERSTANDING PARI-MUTUEL BETTING

Before diving into the types of bets you can place, it's crucial to grasp the concept of pari-mutuel betting, which is the foundation of most horse racing betting in the United States. In pari-mutuel betting, you're wagering against other bettors instead of against the track or casino. The odds in horse racing are only finalized once all bets are placed. The track takes out its hold percentage, and the remaining payoffs are returned to the winners. Futures, such as those for the Kentucky Derby or Breeders' Cup, are handled similarly to sports futures.

## POPULAR HORSE RACING BETS EXPLAINED

When it comes to horse racing, there are several types of bets you can place. Let's break down the most common wagers into two categories: single-race wagers and multiple-race wagers.

### SINGLE-RACE WAGERS

#### Win

Your horse must win the race.

#### Place

Your horse must finish first or second.

#### Show

Your horse must finish first, second, or third.

#### Across the board

You make three separate bets to win, place, or show. These are more commonly referred to as "Win, Place, and Show" bets or "WPS" bets.

#### Exacta

Pick two horses that finish first and second in the exact order (unless "boxed" or "keyed" – see below).

#### Trifecta

Pick three horses that finish first, second, and third in the exact order (can be boxed or keyed).

#### Superfecta

Pick the top four finishers in order (can be boxed or keyed).

#### Hi 5 (or Super 5)

Pick the top five finishers in order (can be boxed or keyed).

Boxed and keyed are terms used in horse racing betting to describe specific ways to place exotic wagers. These terms refer to the flexibility bettors have when making exacta, trifecta, superfecta, and other multi-horse bets. Let's take a closer look at what "boxed" and "keyed" mean.

### BOXED

A boxed bet allows you to cover multiple possible finishing orders for the selected horses. When you "box" your wager, you're betting that your chosen horses will finish in the top positions, but the exact order doesn't matter. This increases your chances of winning but also increases the cost of the bet, as you're essentially placing multiple bets.

For example, if you want to place a boxed exacta bet on horses 3 and 5, you're betting that both horse 3 and horse 5 will finish in the top two positions, regardless of the order. So, you win the bet if horse 3 wins and horse 5 places or if horse 5 wins and horse 3 places. In this case, you're placing two bets: one for the 3-5 order and one for the 5-3 order.

### KEYED

A keyed bet is a variation of an exotic wager that involves selecting one "key" horse to finish in a specific position, while other selected horses can finish in any order behind the key horse. This type of bet allows you to focus on one strong contender while still having the flexibility of including multiple horses for the remaining positions.

For example, if you want to place a keyed trifecta bet with horse 4 as your key horse to win, and horses 2 and 6 to place and show, you're betting that horse 4 will win, while horses 2 and 6 can finish in either second or third place. In this case, you're placing two bets: one for the 4-2-6 order and one for the 4-6-2 order.

In summary, boxed and keyed bets offer bettors more flexibility and options when placing exotic wagers. A boxed bet allows you to cover multiple finishing orders for your selected horses, while a keyed bet involves choosing one key horse to finish in a specific position, with other selected horses finishing in any order behind the key horse. Both boxed and keyed bets increase the cost of the wager but also improve your chances of winning by covering multiple possible outcomes.

## MULTIPLE-RACE WAGERS

### Daily Double

Pick winners in two consecutive races.

### Pick 3 (or triple)

Pick the winners of three consecutive races.

### Pick 4

Pick the winners of four consecutive races.

### Pick 6

Pick the winners of six consecutive races. This is a challenging bet to win, and if no tickets have all six winners, the jackpot carries over to the next day.

The racetrack will determine which races are part of these multiple-race wagers.

## BETTING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

If you're new to horse racing, start by betting to win or placing show bets, as the payoffs are typically lower, but so is the cost. Exotic wagers can have higher takeouts, making them more challenging for beginners. Focus on mastering the art of picking a single winner before trying to string together multiple winners in various races.

## HOW TO HANDICAP HORSE RACES

Handicapping is the process of analyzing the past performances of horses to predict their chances of winning a race. It can be a complex and time-consuming task, but here are a few tips to help you get started:

### Consider Post Positions

The post position is where the horse is slotted in the starting gate. Some racetracks may have a bias towards running on the inside at the rail or in the middle of the track depending on the conditions and the distance.

Horses starting from outside post positions may have to run a little bit longer of a race if they can't get to the inside because of traffic or a slow start, while horses at the rail can run the shortest distance possible.

### Identify the Top Closers and Pace Setters

Horses have different profiles and skill sets. Some are going to run out early and set the pace. Others are "closers", meaning they will often stalk the horses at the front of the race and wait patiently for the chance to finish strong. Based on the length of the race, you may want to side with pace setters in shorter races and closers in others.

### Consider Bloodlines and Connections

A horse's parents (sire - male; mare/dam - female) and the others in the bloodline may shed some light on how a horse will perform. Genetics are very important when it comes to horse racing. Some horses may be the offspring of parents that had success on dirt or turf, or had success in long-distance races or short sprints. That can be a factor in how a horse performs in a given race.

"Connections" include the jockey, trainer, owner(s), and others involved in the evolution of a race horse. Some jockeys and trainers will have success at certain tracks or in certain types of races and those are important handicapping angles.

### Study the Past Performances

Familiarize yourself with the horses' racing history, including their recent races, workouts, and trainer and jockey statistics. Look for patterns or trends that could impact the outcome of the race.

### Utilize Expert Opinions

Follow expert handicappers, read race analysis, and watch pre-race shows to gain insights into the race and potential contenders.

### Monitor Track Conditions

The condition of the track can greatly affect a horse's performance. Keep an eye on the weather and any changes to the track surface, as certain horses may perform better under specific conditions.

### Manage Your Bankroll

Set a budget for your bets and stick to it. Avoid chasing losses or increasing your bets after a win, as this could lead to larger losses in the long run.

As you gain experience in handicapping and betting on horse races, you'll develop your strategies and preferences. Remember that no system is foolproof, and even the most seasoned handicappers can experience losing streaks. Stay disciplined, continue learning, and most importantly, have fun while betting on the races.

## ADDITIONAL HORSE RACING TERMS TO KNOW

As you become more familiar with horse racing betting, it's helpful to understand some key terms that are commonly used in the sport. Here's a brief glossary to help you navigate the world of horse racing:

### Blinkers

A type of headgear worn by horses to limit their peripheral vision, helping them to focus and avoid distractions.

### Claiming Race

A race in which all horses entered are available for purchase at a predetermined price. Claiming races are a way to categorize horses based on their abilities, so they compete against similarly skilled opponents.

### Furlong

A unit of distance used in horse racing, equivalent to one-eighth of a mile or 220 yards.

### Gate

The starting mechanism used in horse racing, also known as the starting gate, where horses are loaded into individual stalls before the race begins.

### Handicap Race

A race in which horses carry different weights based on their ability, as determined by a racing official, in an effort to equalize their chances of winning.

### In the money

A horse that finishes in the top three positions (win, place, or show) in a race.

### Jockey

The professional rider who steers the horse during a race.

### Maiden

A horse that has never won a race.

### Post Position

The numbered position from which a horse starts the race, assigned randomly or through a draw.

### Purse

The total prize money awarded in a race, distributed to the owners of the winning, placing, and showing horses.

### Stakes Race

A high-level race, often featuring large purses and top-quality horses, in which owners pay entry fees to participate.

### Turf Course

A grass racing surface, as opposed to dirt or synthetic tracks.

### Workout

A practice run by a horse, usually at a specific distance and under timed conditions, to prepare for an upcoming race.

Remember, the key to success in horse racing betting is to keep learning, stay disciplined, and have fun. As you gain experience, you'll develop your skills and preferences, becoming more adept at handicapping and wagering. With patience, practice, and a little bit of luck, you'll soon find yourself savoring the thrill of the races and celebrating your victories. Good luck, and happy betting!

# HOW TO BET ON THE 2024 KENTUCKY OAKS

POST DRAW, PREVIEW, AND PREDICTIONS

by Adam Burke

Prior to the Run for the Roses, the Fillies will run for the Lillies at Churchill Downs in the 2024 Kentucky Oaks. This is such a special year in Louisville, as it will be the 150th running of both the Kentucky Derby and the Oaks.

This is a loaded field for the Oaks, both in terms of the number of runners and the depth of competition. Fourteen fillies are set to hit the starting gate for the 5:51 p.m. ET post time on Friday, May 3.

8 Tarifa was the morning line favorite after the draw, narrowly edging out 14 Leslie's Rose and 13 Just F Y I. With almost a week's worth of betting action thanks to the earlier draw this year, we'll see how the odds shift with a strong field ready to run on Friday night. A couple of big-name trainers in Steve Asmussen and Todd Pletcher are also on the outside looking in with a couple of potential contenders in the event of scratches.

Here are some thoughts on the horses and we'll put together a \$100 bet ticket at the end for the 2024 Kentucky Oaks.

## ENTRIES

### 1. TAPIT JENALLIE (30-1)

The daughter of Tapit and Take Charge had a huge speed figure in her maiden back in September at Remington Park, but hasn't been able to replicate it since. She was second in the Grade 3 Honeybee to Lemon Muffin, a fellow 30-1 shot on the morning line and ran a game third at the G3 Fantasy at Oaklawn in her final Oaks tune-up. She's billed as a closer, so maybe the rail post isn't a bad thing, but her lack of performance and low speed figures certainly are.

### 2. GIN GIN (30-1)

A powerhouse team of trainer Brad Cox and rider Florent Geroux could get Gin Gin to the board on Friday. Cox and Geroux teamed up for the winner in 2018 with Monomoy Girl and 2020 with Shedaresthedevil. A chance of rain in the early forecast for Monday could be helpful for this filly, as her only stakes win came in the mud at Aqueduct in the Busanda. She's finished third in the Busher and G3 Gazelle since, but she was a distant third to Where's My Ring and Regulatory Risk in that April 6 race. On the plus side, she has run at 1 1/8 miles twice in her career. There are a lot of factors that go into rider selection, but it is interesting to see Geroux on Cox's Gin Gin as opposed to Cox's favorite in Tarifa, where Flavien Prat draws the mount.

### 3. WHERE'S MY RING (15-1)

The Gazelle Stakes winner is the most interesting of the long shots. Where's My Ring has a pretty incredible bloodline as the daughter of seven-time winner and five-time stakes winner Twirling Candy and Mapit, a mare by way of Tapit. Val Brinkerhoff's three-year-old filly shined in her first race at 1 1/8 miles with that Gazelle triumph as the 5-2 favorite. After stalking the pace along the rail for the first three-quarters, she went to the outside and simply dusted the field, getting stronger as the finish line approached.

I certainly like her to hit the board for exotics and think she should be under consideration to win.

### 4. REGULATORY RISK (20-1)

It was Regulatory Risk who finished a distant second to Where's My Ring in the Gazelle. The Omaha Beach and Walkwithapurpose filly won a muddy maiden just before the New Year before finishing fifth and second at Aqueduct in the Busher and Gazelle. She actually ran her first race at Churchill and finished sixth back in September. Chad Brown has never won the Oaks. If he's going to this year, it likely won't be with Regulatory Risk, though he does have 2019 winner Jose Ortiz in the mount after his victory on Serengeti Empress.

### 5. THORPEDO ANNA (5-1)

Despite decades of success with all kinds of horses, especially fillies, trainer Kenneth McPeck is looking for his first Oaks win. He's had multiple places, including one with Swiss Skydiver, who went on to beat the boys in the 2020 Preakness Stakes. McPeck has suggested a potential run with Thorpedo Anna against the colts, which gives you an idea of what he thinks of her. She's won three of her four races and sat out a while after finishing second in the G2 Golden Rod, only to burst onto the scene again with a comfortable win in the 1 1/16 mile Fantasy at Oaklawn in March.

Thorpedo Anna's win in the Fantasy was like watching a pitcher casually throw 100 mph with minimal effort. She stalked the pace and then ran away from the field without much of a push from rider Brian Hernandez Jr. It wasn't the strongest field, but nobody was beating her that day.

### 6. LEMON MUFFIN (30-1)

88-year-old D. Wayne Lukas has one shot in this year's field and it is Lemon Muffin, who won the G3 Honeybee at Oaklawn in February at 28-1 and finished a disappointing seventh in the Fantasy a month later. Lukas is a five-time winner of this race, most recently in 2022 with Secret Oath and Luis Saez in the mount. This is a strong field on both sides of Lemon Muffin, which means she's likely to get bumped to the back early in the race and would have to close really strong to be a factor.

## KENTUCKY OAKS FIELD

POST	HORSE	TRAINER	JOCKEY	ODDS
1	Mimi Kakushi	S. bin Ghadayer	M. Barzalona	20-1
2	The Alys Look	B. Cox	J. Castellano	15-1
3	Gambling Girl	T. Pletcher	I. Ortiz Jr.	15-1
4	Southlawn	N. Casse	R. Gutierrez	8-1
5	Wonder Wheel	M. Casse	J. Rosario	12-1
6	Botanical	B. Cox	C. Landeros	4-1
7	Wet Paint	B. Cox	F. Prat	5-2
8	Promiseher America	R. Handal	J. Vargas Jr.	30-1
9	And Tell Me Nolies	Peter Miller	R. Vazquez	15-1
10	Flying Connection	T. Fincher	F. Geroux	15-1
11	Defining Purpose	K. McPeck	B. Hernandez Jr.	12-1
12	Dorth Vader	M. Yates	L. Saez	20-1
13	Affirmative Lady	G. Motion	J. Velazquez	10-1
14	Pretty Mischievous	B. Walsh	T. Gaffalione	10-1
15	Taxed (ae)	R. Morse	R. Bejarano	20-1
16	Julia Shining (ae)	T. Pletcher	L. Saez	15-1
17	Hoosier Philly (ae)	T. Amoss	E. Morales	30-1

*ae = a horse officially entered in a race, but not permitted to start unless the field is reduced by scratches below a specified number.*

# KENTUCKY DERBY HORSE PROFILES

Longtime horse racing handicapper Mr. Ed Sehon has been studying the ponies since 1962. Here are his thoughts and some stats for the 2024 Kentucky Derby entries.





**RECORD:** X-X-X-X represents Starts-Win-Place-Show  
**BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE:** Calculated based on final time and distance of a race, adjusted by the inherent speed of the track. Top horses will have values in the 100s.

## 1 DORNOCH 20-1

**Record:** 6-3-2-0  
**Trainer:** Danny Gargan  
**Jockey:** Luis Saez  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 91  
**Earnings:** \$552,275

**Mr. Ed:** I've been touting this guy since before his Fountain of Youth score, but I'm troubled by his lackluster effort in the Bluegrass. Gargan is an excellent trainer, and Saez is a top jock. I'll have him on some tickets, but he's no longer on my short list of possible winners. EXOTICS PLAY.

## 2 SIERRA LEONE 3-1

**Record:** 4-3-1-0  
**Trainer:** Chad Brown  
**Jockey:** Tyler Gaffalione  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 98  
**Earnings:** \$918,000

**Mr. Ed:** Expected to vie with Fierceness for race-day favoritism, he's Improved with every race. His lone loss was in the mud at Aqueduct in the G2 Rensen. He should easily handle the extra furlong and be flying in the lane. Both Brown and Gaffalione are looking for their first Derby score. Son of a Gun (Runner)! LOTS TO LIKE.

## 3 MYSTIK DAN 20-1

**Record:** 6-2-1-1  
**Trainer:** Kenny McPeck  
**Jockey:** Brian Hernandez  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 101  
**Earnings:** \$641,360

**Mr. Ed:** Appears headed in the wrong direction. Sharp regression following triple-digit Beyer does not inspire confidence. Connections attract local Kentucky support. PRAY FOR RAIN.

## 4 CATCHING FREEDOM 8-1

**Record:** 5-3-0-1  
**Trainer:** Brad Cox  
**Jockey:** Flavien Prat  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 97  
**Earnings:** \$877,350

**Mr. Ed:** The Louisiana Derby winner keeps getting better. His closing style suits the expected race pace. He has an excellent trainer and a first-class rider. Hoping to avenge his loss to Sierra Leone in the sloppy Risen Star. Stone-cold closer capable of winning it all. DON'T DISMISS.

## 5 CATALYTIC 30-1

**Record:** 3-1-2-0  
**Trainer:** Saffie Joseph Jr.  
**Jockey:** Jose Ortiz  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 90  
**Earnings:** \$216,825

**Mr. Ed:** This lightly raced colt finished second to Fierceness in the Florida Derby by 13 lengths. There was a positive rider change. The wise trainer knows how to spring an upset. NO WAY TODAY, JOSE.

**RECORD:** X-X-X-X represents Starts-Win-Place-Show  
**BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE:** Calculated based on final time and distance of a race, adjusted by the inherent speed of the track. Top horses will have values in the 100s.

## 6 JUST STEEL 20-1

**Record:** 11-2-4-1  
**Trainer:** D. Wayne Lukas  
**Jockey:** Keith Asmussen  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 95  
**Earnings:** \$724,545

**Mr. Ed:** Popular “Coach” Lukas is excited by his chances. He has been training recently at Oaklawn but has won over the Churchill oval. The pricy son of Justify has been tested but failed in three G1 attempts. This is the first Derby ride for the HOF trainer’s son. OUT OF THE MONEY.

## 7 HONOR MARIE 20-1

**Record:** 5-2-2-0  
**Trainer:** Whit Beckman  
**Jockey:** Ben Curtis  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 96  
**Earnings:** \$526,175

**Mr. Ed:** Colt just missed Catching Freedom in the Louisiana Derby. Has three trips over the Churchill Downs oval, including a win as a juvenile. There’s more talent here than meets the eye. Connections’ first Run for the Roses—sharp trainer and a sneaky good Irish rider. The horse should love the extra distance. CLEVER CLOSER.

## 8 JUST A TOUCH 10-1

**Record:** 3-1-2-0  
**Trainer:** Brad Cox  
**Jockey:** Florent Geroux  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 96  
**Earnings:** \$281,700

**Mr. Ed:** The lightly raced son of Triple Crown winner Justify seeks to avenge his loss to Sierra Leone in the Bluegrass. Some Vegas wiseguys think he can, so don’t underestimate his chances. Pitch this sleeper at your own risk. IN THE MONEY.

## 9 ENCINO 20-1

**Record:** 4-3-1-0  
**Trainer:** Brad Cox  
**Jockey:** TBD  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 94  
**Earnings:** \$378,315

**Mr. Ed:** This lightly-raced, improving son of Nyquist shows promise. The trainer has been sending out winners from Turfway stables. Rested and ready, the speedy colt may exceed expectations. IT WILL OUTFRAN ODDS.

## 10 T O PASSWORD 30-1

**Record:** 2-2-0-0  
**Trainer:** Daisuke Takayanagi  
**Jockey:** Katsuma Sameshima  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** N.A.  
**Earnings:** \$163,339

**Mr. Ed:** This Asian runner has an unblemished record in Japan. Don’t know much, don’t expect much. Welcome to the big leagues. EASY TO ELIMINATE.

## 11 FOREVER YOUNG 10-1

**Record:** 5-5-0-0  
**Trainer:** Yoshito Yahagi  
**Jockey:** Ryusei Sakai  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** N.A.  
**Earnings:** \$2,049,451

**Mr. Ed:** This world traveler sports a perfect 5-for-5 record. Hard-worker hopes to become the first Derby winner from Japan. An import that might be overlooked at betting windows. IN THE MIX.

**RECORD:** X-X-X-X represents Starts-Win-Place-Show  
**BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE:** Calculated based on final time and distance of a race, adjusted by the inherent speed of the track. Top horses will have values in the 100s.

## 12 TRACK PHANTOM 20-1

**Record:** 7-3-2-1  
**Trainer:** Steve Asmussen  
**Jockey:** Joel Rosario  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 94  
**Earnings:** \$405,000

**Mr. Ed:** Super HOF trainer Asmussen aims to add his first Derby win to a stellar resume. The Quality Road offspring won his maiden race over the Churchill Downs oval. Classic distance looks to be a furlong too far for this game front-runner. SPEED KILLS.

## 13 WEST SARATOGA 50-1

**Record:** 10-2-5-1  
**Trainer:** Larry Demeritte  
**Jockey:** Jesus Castanon  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 85  
**Earnings:** \$460,140

**Mr. Ed:** This seasoned player appears to be in too deep. Frequent flier returns to a familiar racing surface. Finished out of the money in lone G1 stakes. ALSO RAN.

## 14 ENDLESSLY 30-1

**Record:** 6-5-0-0  
**Trainer:** Michael McCarthy  
**Jockey:** Umberto Rispoli  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 91  
**Earnings:** \$707,200

**Mr. Ed:** A horse that knows how to win takes a big step up in class. He'll need to run much faster if he's going to compete here. DOUBTFUL.

## 15 DOMESTIC PRODUCT 30-1

**Record:** 5-2-1-0  
**Trainer:** Chad Brown  
**Jockey:** Irad Ortiz Jr.  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 87  
**Earnings:** \$314,200

**Mr. Ed:** Sierra Leone's stablemate won the G3 Tampa Bay Derby in early March but has been on the bench since. Low-speed figures just don't measure up, but a tip-top rider may help. OFFERS LITTLE.

## 16 GRAND MO THE FIRST 50-1

**Record:** 6-2-0-4  
**Trainer:** Victor Barboza  
**Jockey:** Emisael Jaramillo  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 87  
**Earnings:** \$214,650

**Mr. Ed:** This slow poke snuck into the field when Deterministic opted not to run. Lacks the speed to compete early and the stamina to finish strong. SAVE YOUR MONEY.

## 17 FIERCENESS 5-2

**Record:** 5-3-0-1  
**Trainer:** Todd Pletcher  
**Jockey:** John Velazquez  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 110  
**Earnings:** \$1,703,850

**Mr. Ed:** Hard not to like. Looks invincible after a 13-length victory in the Florida Derby. He sports the best speed figure in the field. Juvenile champ, even better as a sophomore. HOF trainer-rider combo. Only knock: needs the lead. But if he breaks on top, he may never look back. FASTEST OF ALL.

## 18 STRONGHOLD 20-1

**Record:** 6-3-3-0  
**Trainer:** Phil D'Amato  
**Jockey:** Antonio Fresu  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 89  
**Earnings:** \$827,200

**Mr. Ed:** The best of the west joins the field after a Big Cap victory. Stalker never finished worse than second. Broke maiden at Churchill before heading west. Strong credentials. Might not be good enough to win, but don't leave off exotic tickets. BETTER THAN MOST.

## 19 RESILIENCE 20-1

**Record:** 6-2-1-1  
**Trainer:** Bill Mott  
**Jockey:** TBD  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 90  
**Earnings:** \$494,630

**Mr. Ed:** The G2 Wood Memorial winner improves with age and the addition of blinkers. This son of super sire Into Mischief needs a perfect stalking trip to score. Fast works indicate Mott will have this big boy ready to rumble. MIGHT SURPRISE.

## 20 SOCIETY MAN 50-1

**Record:** 5-1-1-1  
**Trainer:** Danny Gargan  
**Jockey:** Frankie Dettori  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 87  
**Earnings:** \$196,705

**Mr. Ed:** Second place in the Wood Memorial does not stamp the son of Good Magic as a legitimate contender. Look for him late, if at all. Colt is a second-string Gargan entrant. World-class Dettori lured to ride. BLIND DATE.

## AE EPIC RIDE 50-1

**Record:** 5-2-2-1  
**Trainer:** John Ennis  
**Jockey:** Adam Beschizza  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 93  
**Earnings:** \$253,166

**Mr. Ed:** The third-place finish in the Bluegrass at 51-1 was a real eye-opener. Connections take a giant leap of faith by running here. WOULD BE EPIC.

## AE MUGATU 50-1

**Record:** 12-1-1-3  
**Trainer:** Jeff Engler  
**Jockey:** Joe Talamo  
**Best Beyer Speed Figure:** 96  
**Earnings:** \$80,570

**Mr. Ed:** Connections hoping 14th start will be a charm. Team should enjoy their owner's box on MILLIONAIRES' ROW, because they won't get anywhere closer to the Winner's Circle. NO CHANCE.

**RECORD:** X-X-X-X represents Starts-Win-Place-Show  
**BEST BEYER SPEED FIGURE:** Calculated based on final time and distance of a race, adjusted by the inherent speed of the track. Top horses will have values in the 100s.

# KENTUCKY DERBY

by Mike Somich

## HANDICAPPING FACTORS

### POST POSITION

The most unusual thing about the Kentucky Derby is the field size. It's the only race in the United States that will have 20 horses head postward, which creates a boatload of chaos. Because of the large field size, what post position you break from is a huge determining factor in winning the race and hitting the board. Positioning early in the race can make or break an entrant's opportunity to win, and that is highlighted in the numbers.

Breaking from between the 5 and 16 posts is a massive advantage. If you narrow that to just the 5 to 10 posts, the results are even more extreme. Of the 20 posts, the only three to produce winners at a 10% or higher rate are the 5, 8 and 10 posts. Every post between 5 and 10 has also hit the board at least 14% of the time with five of the six at over 20% (the 6 is the lagger at 14%).

Conversely, gates 17-20 are just 4-127 to win the race (3.1%) and 13-127 finishing in the top 3 (10.2%). The inside posts do have a better win percentage at 6.7%, but those numbers are skewed heavily by early Kentucky Derbies before the field grew to 20 horses. All 15 of the winners in the 1 or 2 post won before 1986 and no horse in post 1 through 4 has won since 2010 before the current points era began.

In the case of the 2024 Kentucky Derby, favorite Fierceness drew the No. 17 post. No horse has ever won from the No. 17 post.

Last year, No. 3 Two Phils ran second in the Derby, which was the first time since 2017 that any horse who drew the 1 through 4 post finished in the top three.

While it's not impossible to win or hit the board from the inside or the outside, there is much more that the horse will have to overcome to get the correct trip.

### PACE AND POSITIONING

It's important to note that the current points era of the Kentucky Derby started in 2013. Before that, entries were earned by stakes earnings in both sprints and longer races. That allowed more sprinters into the field since you did not have to run two turns to qualify for the Kentucky Derby. Now, every major points prep is at least one mile long, making it difficult for a sprinter to get into the field.

In the 11 Kentucky Derbies since the points era began, eight of the 11 horses who crossed the finish line first were in the top 3 at the half-mile mark. The three to pull off wins from the back of the pack — Orb, Rick Strike and Mage — had the luxury of chasing the three quickest opening half-mile times in the points era, all 45.73 seconds or less. For the winner to close, a fast pace is required.

We cannot estimate the pace yet in this year's Kentucky Derby without the final field and post positions, but with the current probabilities, I would be surprised if we saw a sub-46-second half-mile. If that is the case, being forwardly placed will be a huge advantage.

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