



2011 KENTUCKY DERBY

Churchill Downs

Saturday 05/07/2011

Stakes races are listed in post time order (ET)



Forecast High 67 F T-Showers
 Low 61 F Precip: 40%



EVERY EFFORT WAS MADE TO ENSURE ACCURACY OF PROGRAM NUMBERS. PLEASE VERIFY BEFORE WAGERING

Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands Grade 1

RACE 11 Post Time 6:24 1 1/4 Miles | Open | 3 Year Olds | G1 Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands | Purse: \$ 2,000,000



Daily Double / Exacta / Trifecta / Superfecta / Pick 3 (Races 11-12-13) Super Hi-5

Prg. #	PP	Horse	Jockey	Trainer	Wt.	Claim \$	Equip.	Med.	ML
1	1	Archarcharch	Court J	Fires W	126	\$0		L	10-1
2	2	Brilliant Speed	Rosario J	Albertrani T	126	\$0		LA	30-1
3	3	Twice the Appeal	Borel C	Bonde J	126	\$0		LA	20-1
4	4	Stay Thirsty	Dominguez R	Pletcher T	126	\$0	Blk-Off	LA	20-1
5	5	Decisive Moment	Clark K	Arias J	126	\$0		LA	30-1
6	6	Comma to the Top	Valenzuela P	Miller P	126	\$0		LA	30-1
7	7	Pants On Fire	Napravnik R	Breen K	126	\$0		LA	20-1
8	8	Dialed In	Leparoux J	Zito N	126	\$0		LA	4-1
9	9	Derby Kitten	Castellano J	Maker M	126	\$0		LA	30-1
10	10	Twinspired	Smith M	Maker M	126	\$0		LA	30-1
11	11	Master of Hounds	Gomez G	O'Brien A	126	\$0		LA	30-1
12	12	Santiva	Bridgmohan S	Kenneally E	126	\$0		LA	30-1
13	13	Mucho Macho Man	Maragh R	Ritvo K	126	\$0		LA	12-1
14	14	Shackleford	Castanon J	Romans D	126	\$0		LA	12-1
15	15	Midnight Interlude	Espinoza V	Baffert B	126	\$0		LA	10-1
16	16	Animal Kingdom	Albarado R	Motion H	126	\$0		LA	30-1
17	17	Soldat	Garcia A	McLaughlin K	126	\$0		LA	12-1
18	18	Uncle Mo	Velazquez J	Pletcher T	126	\$0		LA	9-2
19	19	Nehro	Nakatani C	Asmussen S	126	\$0		LA	6-1
20	20	Watch Me Go	Bejarano R	O'Connell K	126	\$0		L	50-1

Pace Scenario

Since the Kentucky Derby field was expanded to twenty horses in 1999, there has been one wire to wire winner. In 2002, War Emblem was able to get clear leaving the gate, and set a rather moderate pace en route to a front running score. There is no chance of that happening this year. A minimum of four horses figure to show ample early speed. From the five through seven post positions, Decisive Moment, Comma to the Top, and Pants on Fire, all seemed destined to do battle right from the outset. You can add in Shackelford and Soldat breaking towards the outside, both of whom have done their best running on the lead, and a pace presser like Uncle Mo, which virtually ensures a quick and contested opening half mile.

The second flight will be made up of a number stalk and pounce runners like Twice the Appeal, Twinspired, Santiva, Mucho Macho Man and Watch Me Go. Master of Hounds, shipping in from overseas, is going to see early fractions the likes of which he never has before, putting him further back off the leaders than what he is accustomed to. Archrarch will be behind the second flight, along with Stay Thirsty, Derby Kitten, Midnight Interlude and Animal Kingdom. The deep closers will be Brilliant Speed, Dialed In, and Nehro, all of whom figure to be better than fifteen lengths off the pace. Of the last fifteen running's of the Kentucky Derby, only two have been won by horses that did not have the lead at the eighth pole, (Grindstone in 1996 and Giacomo in 2005) so most jockeys will be looking to get their horses into striking position around the far turn, hoping they have enough horse left for the stretch drive.

	<u>M/L</u>	<u>Jockey</u>	<u>Trainer</u>
1st Selection #16 ANIMAL KINGDOM	30-1	ALBARADO R	MOTION H

Animal Kingdom joins Visionaire as the second horse that owner Team Valor International has started in the Kentucky Derby. Visionaire finished 12th in 2008.

Team Valor has had tremendous success, both in the US and aboard with their acquisitions. They are the most successful stable of partnership owned racehorses. At the helm calling all the shots is Barry Irwin. He has established Team Valor as one of the most accomplished racing stables among all types of owners. Irwin knows where to get horses and where to run them. He selects all of Team Valor's racing stock without the need for consultants.

Animal Kingdom is just one of their many success stories. He has shown steady improvement in all four starts. As a result of his outstanding distance pedigree, Team Valor wasted no time entering him at two turns in his first career start at Arlington last September. In an off the grass race, Animal Kingdom sustained a strong closing rally from dead last to be a clear second despite having traffic problems. It is interesting to note that Animal Kingdom did not race on lasix that day.

He wasted no time breaking his maiden thirty five days later at Keeneland at 1 1/8 miles receiving lasix for the first time. Animal Kingdom showed much more early speed. He stalked the pace in second position, took the lead at the top of the stretch, and drew away from eleven rivals with a 3 ¼ length victory.

Animal Kingdom was given the winter off. He resurfaced on March 3 at Gulfstream Park with a trainer change from Wayne Catalano to Graham Motion. Entered on grass for the first time, Animal Kingdom broke from a tough outside post. He broke awkwardly, but quickly recovered to race in perfect striking position. He continued to have dead aim on the leader through the stretch, but fell short by a neck. It was an excellent return to the races. Animal kingdom was running a mile, which is too short a distance for him to be at his best, but a great starting point to his three year old campaign. Needing Graded stakes earnings to have any chance of starting in the Kentucky Derby, Animal Kingdom was entered in the Grade 3 Spiral at Turfway Park twenty three days later. A change of tactics was employed. Similar to his debut, he was allowed to drop back to last place in a field of eleven. Animal Kingdom made a strong middle move into the fastest part of the pace. New rider Alan Garcia then angled him wide into the stretch to take the lead turning for home, winning by 2 ¾ lengths.

The million dollar question that Team Valor and Motion had to answer was if Animal Kingdom would be able to transfer his steadily improving form to dirt. You had to go back to the spring of 2010, several months before making his first career start, when Animal Kingdom breezed on the dirt at Adena Springs training track near Ocala Florida. This was where he was broken and trained by Randy Bradshaw, one of the very best in the game at developing yearlings. Once Animal Kingdom made his first start, until one week ago, he had not raced or worked on the dirt. A start in the Kentucky Derby or the American Turf one day earlier would be decided right after Animal Kingdom worked six furlongs on dirt at Churchill in company with stable mate Meistersinger, who had run a huge race in very fast time breaking his maiden at Gulfstream first time out. He had proven to be a very good work horse, which was a good test for Animal Kingdom who he spotted his mate three lengths at the start. Both colts raced as a team to the top of the stretch. Robby Albarado who was aboard Animal Kingdom, tapped his right flank a couple of times, and he quickly distanced himself from Meistersinger by eight lengths at the wire. His six furlong time of 1:13 breezing was just what the doctor ordered. He galloped out 1:26 2/5 for seven furlongs and then finished up his work at a mile, running his last 1/8th of a mile in: 24 flat. This workout was far better than the disappointing one he had a week earlier which was also in company. Robby Albarado who was aboard for the work, had only ridden Animal Kingdom once before in his maiden score. Albarado told Barry Irwin that he was very impressed by the way he handled the track. Now that Animal Kingdom passed a big test, the question is if you can equate an impressive workout in the morning to a strong performance against nineteen rivals in the Derby.

Animal Kingdom has an outstanding distance pedigree. Even though his father Leroidesanimaux was an Eclipse Award champion on the grass, he has sired Always A Princess and Gabby's Golden Gal, who were both multiple stakes winners on the dirt over a distance of ground. Leroidesanimaux family includes names like Candy Stripes, Invasor, who won the 2006 Breeders' Cup Classic, and Candy Ride, all who excelled on dirt at the highest level. Going back several generations on Animal Kingdom's mother's side, there is an abundance of stakes winners on grass who could run all day. But buried deep into her pedigree was one horse, who was a champion on dirt. His name was High Gun, winner of the 1954 Belmont stakes.

The accomplishments of Graham Motion are well noted and it is unfair to brand him as a "turf only" trainer. He conditioned Bullsbay, who was a Grade 1 winner of nearly a million dollars, multiple stake winner Icabad Crane, and recent Wood Memorial winner Toby's Corner, all dirt horses who relish a distance of ground. In Bullsbay's Whitney Handicap victory, he was switching from a synthetic surface to a conventional dirt track, the same move being made by Animal Kingdom.

I feel this is the weakest field that I can recall ever assembled for the Kentucky Derby, with so many short priced horses losing key Derby prep races. A "wild card" like Animal Kingdom, who you know will relish the 1 ¼ mile distance, and could end up the last man standing, must be considered a major player and a danger to win the Kentucky Derby. I have so much respect for Barry Irwin and Graham Motion, that if they both have decided to run, it is a huge vote of confidence. Like many others in the field, it is a guess how he will handle a wet track if confronted with it.

With an abundance of speed breaking from inside posts, and pressers and stalkers to the outside, there is little doubt in my mind that the fractions will be quick, which should set it up nicely for a horse closing from off the pace. My selections figure to be the beneficiary of a potential melt down. After writing up Animal Kingdom, the more I liked his chances. I knew that his morning line would be high, but not nearly as generous as the 30-1 that was posted on him. In a year that has seen many upsets in Derby prep races, I am willing to roll the dice on a horse that I have many reasons to like. Post sixteen is a perfect draw for him. There are not many horses in the field who can adapt to any type of pace scenario. Animal Kingdom is on that short list. I expect him to take back well off the pace, look to tuck in a bit as he works his way around the clubhouse turn, with his rider content to let the speed clear off, and allow a speed duel and a fast pace to develop in front of him. Approaching the stretch, Animal Kingdom should be on the move. If everything falls into place, and he can adapt to the dirt like I think he should, Animal Kingdom can win this year's Kentucky Derby.

2nd Selection # 8 DIALED IN

4-1 LEPAROUX J

ZITO N

Trainer Nick Zito attempts to win his third Kentucky Derby with Dialed In, who I expect to be the post time favorite. Zito scored with Strike The Gold in 1991 and Go For Gin in 1994. He could have matched trainer Bob Baffert's record of three Derby winners last year with Ice Box, who finished with a flourish to run second. Dialed In has all the credentials to give Zito a Derby triple, and the first one for his longtime owner Robert LaPentata. This dynamic duo have won several graded stakes, highlighted by Da' Tara's victory at 38-1 in the 2008 Belmont Stakes. In his wake was the undefeated Big Brown, who was attempting to become the twelve Triple Crown winner, and the first since Affirmed in 1978.

The field for this year's Kentucky Derby is made up of a smorgasbord of horses that have done their best running over synthetic surfaces and on the grass. Sprinkled in are several horses such as Dialed In, who have done all their racing on conventional dirt, which could prove to be a big edge.

Dialed In has won three times in four career outings. His lone defeat was a strong second place finish March 6 at Gulfstream. Zito had decided to enter Dialed In against older rivals at 1 1/8 miles in his first start around two turns. This race would serve as a springboard to his main objective four weeks later in the Florida Derby. His plan worked to perfection. Dialed In was beaten a half length to Equestrio, who was also trained by Zito.

In the Florida Derby, Dialed In was sent off the second choice behind Soldat. Both colts had the benefit of making their third straight start at 1 1/8 miles. Soldat, who was coming off two front running victories, never got the lead, finishing a well beaten fifth. Dialed In took up his customary spot at the back of the pack. Jockey Julian Leparoux, who has ridden him in all 5 starts, stepped on the gas on the far turn. Dialed In responded with a strong wide rally moving up to third place turning for home. In deep stretch, he hooked the 68-1 pacesetter Shackleford. Nearing the wire, Dialed In edged clear to win by a hard fought head.

There are two ways to evaluate Dialed In's performance. The first is that he won the Florida Derby on the square. Shackleford had run the race of his life. Dialed In had proven in his first two starts that he has the heart to hook you late and prevail. I give him a pass when suffering his first defeat against his elders. If not hurt by a slow pace and a bit more distance, Dialed In would have won. He would have entered the starting gate for Kentucky Derby undefeated.

On the other hand, what concerns me about Dialed In is that he got the perfect set up to run his race in the Florida Derby. The pace was fast enough to flatter his late running style. For a brief moment in deep stretch, I thought Dialed In was going to blow on by Shackleford, but instead he had to work very hard to prevail. The final 1/8th of a mile was run in a very slow 13 4/5 seconds.

When I put all the pieces of this puzzle together, I am concerned that in the Derby, Dialed In will be unable to sustain his closing rally from far off the pace stretching out in distance. He is not an agile horse, but more like a grinder, who prefers rallying outside of horses. Dialed In must receive a perfectly timed ride from Leparoux and a trouble free trip. If Dialed In's momentum is stopped at any point in the race, it will be a very difficult task for him to recover and win. Dialed In gets an infusion of stamina from his father Mineshaft who won nine races over a distance of ground. Four of those victories came in prestigious Grade 1 races. Dialed In's mother Miss Doolittle won twice, both races sprinting. His close relatives, Eliza and Dinard, were both multiple graded stakes winners who could handle a distance of ground.

Recent history has shown that you no longer have to have a longwinded pedigree to win the Kentucky Derby. Funny Cide is the perfect example. Zito has done a masterful job preparing Dialed In to be in peak form in the Derby. He wisely kept him in Florida, far away from the awful weather in Kentucky that has disrupted workouts of several Derby starters that have had to train over a sea of slop. Not the case for Dialed In, who has not missed a beat in his morning gallops and workouts under sunny skies and warm weather at Zito's home base at Palm Meadows.

Dialed In is expected to be the post time favorite in the Kentucky Derby. I am confident that he will bring his A game to the proceedings, but everything must fall into place perfectly for him to win. In a year in which there have been upsets galore in many Derby prep races, it could end up being a smart move to take a shot against him with a horse under the radar that will go off much bigger odds than what he should be, especially if the track comes up wet. Dialed In has never raced over the slop, but the same can be said about many of the other participants. Nevertheless, I respect Dialed In and his connections so much, that he will not be left off any of my tickets.

Dialed In drew as a good a post for his running style that you would want in a twenty horse field. If you want to follow his progress, you only need to look for him towards the back of the pack and possibly in last place turning into the backstretch. With an expected fast pace and the speed beginning to back up one by one on the far turn, Dialed In will make his patented late rally through the stretch, which may be good enough to give trainer Nick Zito his third Kentucky Derby victory.

3rd Selection #19 NEHRO

6-1 NAKATANI C

ASMUSSEN S

Trainer Steve Asmussen has had nine starters in the Kentucky Derby throughout his illustrious career. The closest he came was in 2007, when Curlin ran third despite a very tough trip in his fourth career start. Curlin had won his first three races by a combined margin of twenty eight lengths. He broke his maiden at Gulfstream and then demolished the field at Oaklawn in both the Grade 3 Rebel and the Grade 1 Arkansas Derby prior to being sent off at 5-1 in the Run for the Roses.

This February, Asmussen had a Derby candidate in Tapizar, who is sidelined as a result of an injury he suffered in the Grade 2 Robert B. Lewis at Santa Anita. At the time, a little known colt named Nehro had raced once, and the result was a fourth place finish in his debut on December 12 at the Fair Grounds. He returned thirty days later, where he would make his three year old debut at Oaklawn. You needed a telescope to find him, finishing tenth, beaten twenty two lengths. It would have been no surprise if Nehro's connections decided to drop him into a claimer in his next start. They opted instead to give him one more try at the same level. In a dramatic turn of events February 21 at Oaklawn, Nehro rallied from far off the pace, with an explosive wide sweeping move to the lead on the far turn. He continued to extend his margin in the stretch, on his way to a 4 ½ length victory. Even after Nehro's impressive win, there was not a whisper that there could be a potential Derby candidate in Arkansas.

This all changed thirty three days later, when Asmussen entered Nehro in the Grade 2 Louisiana Derby. A recent maiden winner being thrown to the wolves into stakes company against more accomplished rivals, is rarely done. There is very little chance of success. Nehro proved everyone wrong, when he ran second, beaten a neck to Pants On Fire at odds of 36-1, despite having some trouble on the turn and racing in tight quarters in the stretch. Despite the purse of the Louisiana Derby being \$1 million dollars, the money his owners received for his second place finish, fell short of what Nehro needed to earn a start in the Kentucky Derby.

He would stay at Oaklawn to run in the Grade 1 Arkansas Derby. Nehro proved he was for real, with a strong closing run in the middle of the track. What impressed me most was his versatility. Nehro had showed he could run well closing from far off the pace or stalking the front runners. Jockey Corey Nakatani, was aboard Nehro for the first time in the Arkansas Derby. He allowed him to drop back towards the rear of the pack, and into a nice comfortable stride. Nehro raced along the inside, and with a subtle but impressive turn of foot, Nakatani asked him for run on the far turn and into striking position. He made up five lengths cutting the corner before tipping out at the top of the lane. Nakatani took a light hold of him to give Nehro a breather, before steering him even wider for the stretch run. The winner Archarcharch had gotten the jump on Nehro, who was slowly cutting into his margin with every stride. Unfortunately, Archarcharch had just enough to hold him off in the shadow of the wire. If you observed the head on after the finish, you will notice that Nakatani continued to urge him on. Nehro galloping out well clear of the field before being eased up. This suggested that he had plenty left in the tank. With enough earnings now to run in the Kentucky Derby, Nehro will be asked to travel an additional 1/8th of a mile. When many of the other horses are gasping for air in mid stretch, he should have no problem sustaining his run to the wire.

For many years, a strong distance pedigree was emphasized in pin pointing the legitimate Kentucky Derby contenders. Leon Rasmussen was the authority on calculating dosage and a horse's pedigree going back several generations, to determine if the breeding was there to stay the Derby distance successfully. There was not a student of the game who would not read Rasmussen's column leading up to the Derby. The results in recent years, have shown that pedigree is not nearly as important as performance on the race track and how Derby bound horses are training over the quirky Churchill Downs course. Look how popular Daily Racing Forms columnist Mike Welsh's daily workout reports have become.

In the case of Nehro, I feel his pedigree is a welcome addition to the attributes he has shown on the racetrack. His sire Mineshaft was a multiple Grade 1 winner over a distance of ground. He won at the Jockey Club Gold Cup and the Woodward stakes, both run at 1 ¼ miles. Mineshaft has had several stakes winners who improved the further they traveled. Nehro's mother The Administrator, produced Saint Marden, winner of all four races in route events, as well as the classy Sweet Lips, who won 5 of 6 races going long, with earnings of \$565,000, several in stakes races. The Administrator herself is a half to Zalipour, who won six of seven races, over a distance of ground against quality opposition.

In a very unique year, in which many of the Kentucky Derby prep races have produced results that are very uninspiring, there are many more throw outs than legitimate contenders. Nehro has shown me enough in a variety of ways to consider him a worthy recipient of winning the first leg of the Triple Crown. He is peaking at the right time for a trainer and jockey, who have proven time and again that there is not a coveted prize they cannot win with the right horse at the right time. Ahmed Zayat owner of Nehro, also had the very talented 3 year old Pioneer of the Nile, who ran second in the 2009 Kentucky Derby. I have great respect for him and his family. Mr. Zayat has contributed a lot to the game and it would be only fitting if he were to win the Kentucky Derby.

I have two concerns about Nehro. He made his debut in mid December, and will be making his fifth start in less than four months, which is a lot of racing in a short period of time. There is an expression that you can't squeeze the lemon dry. I am hoping there is enough juice left for another strong effort. Then there is the question whether or not he will handle the possibility of a wet track on Saturday. Nehro did not handle it all that well earlier in the week.

Nehro will be breaking from post nineteen. At first glance it might appear that he will lose too much ground being hung out very wide all the way. A wide trip early on is likely, but I expect his rider to find enough room to angle in on the backstretch and settle Nehro into a nice fluid stride. He will be taken back far off the pace which is where he wants to be. When Nehro is let loose into the stretch, his outside post will become irrelevant. It will be just a matter if he is good enough to get to the wire first.

4th Selection # 1 ARCHARCHARCH 10-1 COURT J FIRES W

The path from Arkansas to Kentucky is paved with success in the run up to the first Saturday in May. Going back to 2004, a runner from the Arkansas Derby has finished in the Derby superfecta every year except 2008 (when Eight Belles finished second and was exiting the Fantasy at Oaklawn). This son of Arch was purchased for \$60,000 at the Keeneland September sale in 2009. It took him a while to get to the races. In his debut over this Churchill Downs oval, he finished a game second, and immediately stamped himself a horse with a bright future. His trainer, William "Jinks" Fires, was willing to try him in a stakes race. He was rewarded with a victory in the Sugar Bowl at the Fair Grounds.

From there, Fires settled Archarcharch in at his home base of Oaklawn Park and pointed him towards the big 3 Derby preps in Hot Springs plus an appetizer in the Smarty Jones. After a distant fourth place finish in the Smarty Jones, everyone wrote off this colt for the first time. In fact, the reason for his poor finish in the Smarty Jones was that he was aggressively ridden by Jon Court, and tired on a track that played very kindly to off the pace types (There was only one wire to wire winner in 9 races). He was dismissed at 14-1 in the Southwest, but rebounded in a big way. Archarcharch rated comfortably off a solid pace, took over approaching the top of the stretch and held well late. From there, he was back in the Derby conversation, and as a result was bet down to 7-1 against The Factor in the Rebel. Another pace stalking trip was his undoing, mainly because this was a pace set by the exceptionally fast Bob Baffert trainee, The Factor. This colt attempted to rally into a 1:10 and 4/5 pace on a track that was playing kind to speed, which is a recipe for disaster. However, this modest effort resulted in the public writing him off as a Kentucky Derby prospect.

How did Archarcharch reply to being let go at 25-1 in the Arkansas Derby when two colts who had a collective 0 wins around two turns both went off at less than 10-1? He posted the best effort in a prep race by any horse during the lead up to the Kentucky Derby. His victory came via a very patient ride by Court as he sat well back of a very hot pace that completely melted down late. Archarcharch was very game once he reached the front. Hard charging Nehro narrowed the gap to a neck at the wire. He has developed into a true router who can make his own luck. One of the things that I like most about Archarcharch, is that he reacted positively in a race where the pace was very hot, allowing his rider to settle him towards the back of the field. The pace is going to be hot again in the Derby, and we have all seen a snapshot of how this colt will handle it.

Just about six months ago a colt by Arch was victorious in a major race at Churchill Downs going 10 furlongs. That, of course, was Blame, winner of last year's Breeders' Cup Classic. His victory plus numerous strong performances by other progeny of Arch, lead you to believe that 10 furlongs will be no issue for this colt. His dam was a graded stakes placed sprinter and her best prior foal to race, was the stakes placed sprinter Run Sully Run, who was trained by Cam Gambolati. Archarcharch's second

dam, Pattern Step, was by Nureyev who was a multiple graded stakes winner, having taken the Hollywood Oaks on dirt and the Providencia on turf. Archrarch has two three quarter siblings who were victorious going long in Europe, including 1000 Guineas runner up Arch Swing. When you dig a bit deeper into his pedigree, it becomes clear that distance is not an issue. Of course his on track performances further dispel any concerns about him negotiating the demanding Derby distance.

In a year where the Derby prep races have been entirely underwhelming, Archrarch was victorious in the Arkansas Derby, which I felt was the strongest of them all. A number of good horses went through the Oaklawn Derby preps this spring, and this guy left Arkansas as the top dog. The fact that he has handled the Churchill Downs oval in the past is an added plus. The fact that his jockey clearly has developed an understanding of how Archrarch needs to be ridden in order to have optimal success is a huge plus. He has continued to develop, and will be one of a select few who can peak on May 7. I consider him among the main contenders in this field and I am expecting a strong effort at generous odds.

I have two concerns for Archrarch. How will he handle the possibility of a wet surface on Saturday. He has raced over it once at Oaklawn, resulting in a 13 length defeat. I am willing to excuse his performance, because he dueled for the lead from the start rather than take back and make one run, which is clearly his preferred running style. More importantly is his post draw. Archrarch is breaking from post one, which is usually the "kiss of death". In his case I am concerned because of how much time he will have to stand in the gate as the other nineteen horses are loaded in. Another major obstacle that will confront Archrarch, is that his drop back running style and the intense pressure he will take at the start and into the run to the first turn, could result in John Court having to tap on the breaks while having trouble getting him to settle into a nice fluid stride. Court knows this horse like the back of his hand. The strategy is to take him back well off the pace anyway, so if he can avoid some trouble, he will not be compromised as much as people might think. Breaking from the rail will just get us a bigger price on him.

5th Selection #15 MIDNIGHT INTERLUDE 10-1 ESPINOZA V BAFFERT B

Right off the bat, let's make one thing clear. If trainer Bob Baffert enters a horse in the Kentucky Derby, he cannot be eliminated. Baffert will be attempting to win his fourth Derby. He scored with Silver Charm in 1997 at 3-1. Baffert came right back the following year winning with Real Quiet at 8-1. Three years later, War Emblem wired the field at 20-1.

Baffert never considered Midnight Interlude a Derby prospect. His Derby hopeful was always The Factor. All bets were off when Midnight Interlude upset the field in the Santa Anita Derby at 13-1 on April 9. One week later, The Factor finished a very disappointing seventh as the odds on choice in the Arkansas Derby.

It is rare to see a recent maiden winner stepping up into a prestigious Grade 1 Stake like the Santa Anita Derby and win. The results of several Kentucky Derby prep races this spring were head scratchers, with several winning at huge prices.

Midnight Interlude never started as a two year old. He made his debut at Santa Anita on January 29, finishing a well beaten third at six furlongs. Four weeks later, he showed big improvement, running second stretching out to a mile around two turns. It would have been impossible to predict that this son of War Chant could make the starting gate for the Run for the Roses a bit more than two months later. Midnight Interlude broke his maiden impressively in his third start on March 20. Baffert was delighted with his performance, but a start in the Kentucky Derby was still not in the cards. There was only one chance left to make the twenty horse cut based on Graded stakes earning. Simply put, Midnight Interlude had to win the Santa Anita Derby just twenty days after his maiden win. Five days before the race, he worked a bullet six furlongs in 1:10 3/5, the fastest of twenty horses who worked that distance. Baffert made it clear to anyone listening, that he was blown away by how well Midnight Interlude ran that morning. The difficult task ahead was could he compete against more seasoned rivals stretching out an additional furlong. He was also making his fourth start in a bit more than two months, which is a lot to ask of a young developing three year old. In an "eye opening" performance, Midnight Interlude not only won chasing quick fractions from the start, steadying at the eighth pole and racing wide throughout, but he also displayed tremendous heart to prevail under intense pressure through the stretch. True this was the weakest Santa Anita Derby I have ever seen, but so were many of the other Derby preps before this race and afterwards. What was most important was that Midnight Interlude got the job done when he had to.

What makes him a legitimate Derby contender, in addition to Baffert calling the shots, is his excellent tactical speed. Unlike several horses entered who have raced on synthetic surfaces and grass, all four of Midnight Interlude's races have been run over conventional dirt at Santa Anita. He is agile and gritty, which are attributes that are very important to have, especially facing nineteen other rivals. In analyzing Midnight Interlude's pedigree, he has a nice mixture of speed on his sire line and stamina on the dam side. What is interesting, is that Midnight Interlude is bred both sides to excel on grass, which gives Baffert options no matter the outcome.

There has not been a Kentucky Derby winner since Apollo won in 1892 who did not start as a two year old. Another piece of history Midnight Interlude will have to overcome is that the only horse to win the Derby with four or less races under their belt was the filly Regret in 1915. As we have seen in recent years, there have been Kentucky Derby winners lacking the necessary distance pedigree to be effective at 1 ¼ miles. When you factor in how inferior this year's Derby field has proven to be, a horse like Midnight Interlude must not be dismissed solely based on historical data. He has worked twice at Churchill Downs alongside

another Baffert trainee. The first one was disappointing. This was not the case on May 3, when Midnight Interlude worked five furlongs in the slop with the same workmate. He showed more focus, a stronger stride and a better gallop out past the wire.

I expect a strong performance from Midnight Interlude, which could be good enough to land him in the winner's circle at generous odds. He will be included in some of my wagers, but more as an underneath horse in exactas and trifectas.

Midnight Interlude breaks from fifeteen which I don't mind at all. His success will be predicated on his ability to take back further off the leaders than he has ever been. His rider must make a perfectly timed wide move to reach striking position without being too hard used. The question that Midnight Interlude must answer, is if he can continue on through the stretch and have enough left to face the intense pressure he is likely to encounter in the final stages of the race. If he can, then Bob Baffert has a chance to pick up his fourth Kentucky Victory.

6th Selection #13 MUCHO MACHO MAN 12-1 MARAGH R RITVO K

Consistency is a commodity that is not common among the Derby contenders in this crop. This son of Macho Uno has not missed hitting the board in eight career starts. He has run two improved races since blinkers were removed by trainer Kathy Ritvo. In his final prep race in the Louisiana Derby, he was ran an excellent third, despite losing a shoe and part of his hoof, which was torn off leaving the gate. Ritvo has used a number of "old school" methods training Mucho Macho Man up to the Kentucky Derby, with a lengthy series of elongated workouts for this late June foal.

The story surrounding Mucho Macho Man is one that can best be described as tragedy turned to hope. His current trainer underwent a heart transplant almost three years ago in a brush with death from which she emerged stronger than ever. His jockey, Eibar Coa, went down in a spill in February, but has miraculously recovered, and is now able to walk after showing signs of being a quadriplegic. Mucho Macho Man himself was moments from death lying in a field as a juvenile and has recovered completely. Those are the types of stories that NBC will likely latch onto during their Kentucky Derby telecast, but they hardly give you enough reason to expect him to win, though it is possible Mucho Macho Man can hit the board at generous odds. He has ratable speed which can place him in good striking position from the start. His jockey, Rajiv Maragh, described him in one word, "handy." While his two victories have come when he has stalked a slow pace, he does have experience running very well chasing quick fractions.

Mucho Macho Man's sire, Macho Uno, was the champion two year old in 2000, and went on to win the Pennsylvania Derby and Massachusetts Handicap later in his career. His best progeny to race are Macho Again, who won the Stephen Foster Handicap at nine furlongs and Harlem Rocker, who won the Prince of Wales at nine and half furlongs. His dam, Ponche de Leona, was victorious at distances ranging from four and half furlongs on dirt to nine furlongs on grass. Mucho Macho Man is her first foal to race. Issues with pedigree are not enough to discount Mucho Macho Man in any way.

Concerns about how his running style fits into the context of this race, however, are legitimate. Both the Risen Star and Louisiana Derby, his two best performances going a route of ground as a three year old, were run at a very deliberate early clip. That certainly worked to the advantage of a pace stalking type and led to the "merry go round" finishes that we saw in each of those events. It is important when dealing with races where the pace held together, to find a horse who worked against the race flow. Looking at the Louisiana Derby specifically, you are drawn more to the runner up Nehro, who gained ground in the final furlong, whereas Mucho Macho Man yielded a bit late.

Upon arriving at Churchill Downs Mucho Macho Man has worked seven furlongs under the Twin Spires. It was his second workout on April 30 that raised some red flags. As an immature late foal he has run into issues with being unprofessional in the morning. During his five furlong drill on April 30, he became distracted by a marathon going on in the infield and jockey Rajiv Maragh had to hit him with the stick repeatedly to help him regain his focus. That is a major concern for me given that what was going on in the infield at 8:30 AM in the morning a week before the Derby, will pale in comparison to the scene he will be confronted with at approximately 6:15 PM on May 7.

It's difficult to say whether Mucho Macho Man will be helped or hindered by a wet track. With a chance of rain in the forecast, you have to keep that in mind. He is not a horse I believe will move up over a wet surface, even though he trained well over it two weeks ago.

I consider Mucho Macho Man to be a horse that still has room to improve, but am not high on his win chances at all. He does have the potential to fill in the exotics in the Derby, but he will have to elevate his game considerably to make noise for the top prize.

7th Selection #18 UNCLE MO 9-2 VELAZQUEZ J PLETCHER T

In William Shakespeare's Henry IV, the king includes in a soliloquy to his subjects, "Weary grows the head that wears the crown." That quote is quite applicable to the somewhat tumultuous spring endured by Uncle Mo. He entered 2011 as the heaviest

Kentucky Derby future book favorite in decades. As recently as February, he was being offered at Race and Sports Books in Las Vegas at 8/5. His two year old campaign can be summed up in one word: flawless. The potential that he showed was phenomenal. Many felt we were destined for a summer of "Mo Mania" with this truly special colt rolling through the Classics. He had it all, A great trainer at the helm in Todd Pletcher, speed, and enough pedigree to handle the demanding ten furlongs of the Kentucky Derby. Everything changed in the late afternoon shade at Aqueduct. Uncle Mo suffered an absolutely stunning defeat in the Wood Memorial as a "cannot miss" 1-10 favorite.

Since his defeat in the Wood Memorial, the racing public has been led to believe that Uncle Mo was ill when he entered the gate in Ozone Park, NY. He was suffering from what trainer Todd Pletcher has described as a "GI Tract Inflammatory Disease." I am well versed in many aspects of racing but veterinary knowledge is not one of them. Whether he was ill or not, Uncle Mo's Wood Memorial was a colossal disappointment. The bigger concern is that it followed up an authoritative yet underwhelming victory in the Timely Writer. That was a manufactured stake race that amounted to nothing more than an exhibition. Uncle Mo was able to get away with murder on the front end, before handily dispatching his four overmatched rivals.

Pletcher was noted for saying on numerous occasions throughout the winter that he did not believe Uncle Mo needed to improve as a three year old to stay at the top of his generation. He merely had to be just as good as he was as a two year old, according to the five time Eclipse Award winning trainer. After two starts thus far in this year, I believe Uncle Mo has regressed. Many times we see very precocious two year olds that simply cannot carry their brilliance into a sophomore season. Favorite Trick is the most recent example that comes to mind, as he was just as strong in his juvenile season as Uncle Mo was in 2010.

The Wood Memorial field was a rag tag bunch to be kind. The two horses who finished ahead of Uncle Mo, were horses who were largely under the radar before pulling their surprising efforts on April 9. The winner, Toby's Corner, was exiting a very dull third place finish in the Gotham and his trainer was hoping the addition of blinkers would help his cause, which it ended up doing. The runner up, Arthur's Tale, was twice beaten in stakes company and had most recently won an allowance race on a sloppy surface. These are horses that Uncle Mo should have handled with great ease.

In analyzing Uncle Mo's Wood Memorial effort it is important to take note of two substantial areas of concern. First, he was able to make a clear and unpressured lead while setting a pace that was hardly rapid. When asked for his best inside the eighth pole by jockey John Velazquez, he immediately shortened stride and seemed to be lugging in towards the rail in deep stretch. More importantly, Uncle Mo had no response when put to pressure the first time in his career. Many racing fans with an educated opinion, wondered how Uncle Mo would react when he met the first serious challenge of his career. He was tested in the Wood Memorial and he failed.

Pletcher broke through for his first victory in the Run for the Roses a year ago. He used the "two prep" method that is becoming increasingly popular in thoroughbred racing. The winner Super Saver started twice prior to the Kentucky Derby. There is no doubt that Super Saver's final prep for the Kentucky Derby was better than that of Uncle Mo. In 2010 Pletcher had tremendous success with horses making their second start of the year in graded stakes races. Drastically improved performances were put forth by Devil May Care, Eskendereya, Quality Road, Discreetly Mine, Battle Plan, and Blues Street among others. That is part of the reason why I thought both Uncle Mo and Stay Thirsty would move forward in their second starts of 2011. In the end both failed miserably. Another Pletcher Derby bound runner Brethren, suffered a similar fate. He followed up his debacle at odds on in the Tampa Bay Derby, with another horrible effort in the Arkansas Derby.

When you are making a decision regarding how to approach a horse like Uncle Mo, you have to weigh the pros and cons. There are a great deal of negatives in play with Uncle Mo, and that is never a good thing when you are talking about a horse who will be one of the favorites in a huge, contentious field. I have never wavered in the opinion that the 2010 version of Uncle Mo would make mincemeat of this soft field. However, the Wood Memorial effort, his supposed illness, his delayed workout upon arriving to Churchill Downs, and the notion that he is a horse who has not progressed much from two to three, makes me utterly skeptical. Uncle Mo could rebound and win the Kentucky Derby in a field full of question marks. Considering how well backed he will be at the windows, I view him as a horse who is very vulnerable. I will take several shots against him with much longer priced horses, who I feel are more than capable of out finishing last year's two year old Eclipse Award winner.

8th Selection # 3 TWICE THE APPEAL

20-1 BOREL C

BONDE J

In a year which many of the Kentucky Derby entrants have shown plenty of holes in their armor, there are reasons to consider Twice the Appeal as one of the horses who could hit the board at a generous price. Trainer Jeff Bonde, has had a terrific spring, winning stakes races in California and elsewhere. Bonde has recently moved much of his stock to Santa Anita after many of years of vying for leading trainer in Northern Cal. Bonde could not find Twice the Appeal's hole card as a two year old. He was tried going short, long, on grass and over a synthetic surface at Golden Gate. In his final start as a juvenile, Bonde had enough frustration with a colt he felt had talent, that he dropped Twice the Appeal into a maiden claimer for the first time December 29 at Santa Anita. The result was an easy four length win. It was only the second time in eight previous starts that he had raced on dirt. Twice the Appeal had shown he could handle it, when he ran third, beaten a neck at Fairplex in late September. Even with a win under his belt in his final start at two, his performance was a far cry from him being even remotely competitive in a weak stakes race. Any thought of starting in the Kentucky Derby, was a fantasy that is hidden deep into your subconscious, which can

only surface when you are in a deep sleep. In the case of Twice the Appeal, God had answered the prayers of all involved with this son of Successful Appeal, who was purchased as a two year old for \$35,000.

Twice the Appeal wasted no time for a repeat victory, when he blitzed four rivals in a Starter handicap sixteen days later. Bonde now knew that dirt was his game as well as travelling a distance of ground. He found the perfect spot on February 26 to test Twice the Appeal for class at Turf Paradise in Arizona in the Turf Paradise Derby with a purse of \$50,000. He had to settle for second in a "better than it looked" performance. After a sluggish start, and quickly falling thirteen lengths off the leaders, Twice the Appeal sustained a strong closing rally. He ducked in at the 1/16th pole impeding a rival, which resulted in him being disqualified and placed fourth.

The connections of Twice the Appeal had nothing to lose by taking a shot in the dark in the Sunland Derby for a large purse on March 27 at 1 1/8 miles. The race was upgraded to a Grade 3 Stake after Mine That Bird splashed his way to an improbable Kentucky Derby victory in the slop at Churchill Downs in 2009. In a stunning upset at Sunland Park at 25-1, Twice the Appeal rallied from mid pack to challenge for command at the top of the stretch, then edged clear in the final 1/16th of a mile to a 1 1/2 victory over ten rivals. He defeated a legitimate Kentucky Derby contender in Astrology, who came back to run a good second in the Jerome at Aqueduct. Twice the Appeal's final time was not very fast, but time only matters when you are in jail. If you recall, Mine That Bird ended up running fourth in this same race in his final Derby prep.

Twice the Appeal gets his tactical speed, from his sire Successful Appeal. If you go back a few generations on his mother's side, you will notice several runners who did their best running going a distance of ground. Twice the Appeal is a half brother to Board Eligible, a stake winning New York bred. All eight of Board Eligible's victories came in route races, including a second place finish in the Grade 3 Ladies Handicap. His dam is a full sister to Keep It S. S., who won the Spend a Buck Stakes at one mile on turf. He is also a half brother to Selective, who won the Escaped Handicap at 1 mile and 70 yards on the dirt as well as the Bernie Dowd Handicap at a mile on grass.

Twice the Appeal has continued to improve with every start as a 3 year old. He has shown the ability to consistently make his patented middle move into striking position when the pace is quick enough, and still have enough left in the tank to continue on well to the wire As I have mentioned several times, there has been so many bizarre results in this year's three year old Kentucky Derby preps, that another shocking result, would just continue the merry go round of improbable horses finding their way into the winners circle.

Twice the Appeal has shown he can handle a track with moisture. The wet surface that he broke his maiden on in Santa Anita, is a far cry from the possible wet track he would have to run over in the Derby. Calvin Borel, who has won the Kentucky Derby in 2007, 2009 and 2010, will be aboard Twice the Appeal. If you expected 30-1 or more on Saturday, you can deduct at least ten points because of all the support the "King of Churchill Downs" will receive from his loyal constituency.

9th Selection #14 SHACKLEFORD

12-1 CASTANON J

ROMANS D

A scant head separated Shackleford from pulling off an improbable upset in the Florida Derby that would have sent shockwaves rippling through thoroughbred racing. Dismissed at 68-1, he found himself setting a contested pace down the Gulfstream Park backstretch, before being confronted in deep stretch by the second choice Dialed In. Shackleford dug in tenaciously but ended up yielding a few yards from the wire.

Trainer Dale Romans is no stranger to the Kentucky Derby having conditioned Sharp Humor in 2006 and Paddy O' Prado a year ago. Shackleford had made a positive impression from the start, working steadily under the Twin Spires and appearing to be moving in the right direction. In his 2011 debut, he stalked a moderate pace going nine furlongs at Gulfstream Park and pulled clear late to score by over two lengths. That win was good enough for Romans to try him in the Fasig Tipton Fountain of Youth three weeks later. Marooned in an outside post, Shackleford was never able to get involved in the proceedings and wound up a distant fifth. Romans perseverance with this colt showed that he believed he was a grade one caliber animal. After his Florida Derby performance, few would bother trying to refute that notion.

Shackleford possesses a win over the Churchill Downs oval. He broke his maiden under Freddie Lenclud on Stars of Tomorrow II day last November. If you wisely draw a line through his Fountain of Youth effort, then what is left is certainly likeable. His sire Forestry has previously produced the brilliant but fragile Discreet Cat and multiple graded stakes winner Etched, who was victorious at distances up to nine furlongs. Among the most accomplished foals of Oatsee, Shackleford's dam, include Lady Joanne, the 2007 Alabama winner and Baghdaria, who was a multiple graded stakes winning router during her career. Shackleford's pedigree is truly among one of the best in the Derby field to enjoy the 1 1/4 mile distance.

What is of concern with Shackleford is how his own running style fits into the context of this race. With a minimum of four other potential speed horses, there has to be a great level of concern about what will happen in the opening quarter mile. This colt laid down serious fractions in the Florida Derby and buried his other pace stalking rivals along the way. The problem I have with

Shackleford's performance was that the final three furlongs was run in a glacial: 39 and 2/5. He won the battle but lost the war in the Florida Derby. Not only will Shackleford have to move at a more rapid clip early on in the Derby, but will also be asked to travel an additional furlong under intense pressure.

Slowly developing three year olds often come to hand a bit later on in their sophomore campaign and Shackleford strikes me as that type. There is no doubt that he ran the best race of all in the Florida Derby. Much has been made of a speed bias that he benefitted from, when in truth it was simply business as usual that afternoon in Hallandale Beach. He was confronted around the turn by a quality animal in To Honor and Serve and he completely rebuked his challenge. Only Dialed In, who benefitted from the rapid early tempo, passed him late in what was by far and away his best race to date.

The Kentucky Derby annually brings together a great deal of horses that have credentials to win the Run for the Roses. However, you must pay particular attention to those that have the right kind of running style based on the given race flow. In that vein, I have to discredit Shackleford, because I do not see him getting a "free pass" on the lead. I will relegate him to a fringe player, who could get a piece of the exotics.

10th Selection #17 SOLDAT

12-1 GARCIA A

MCLAUGHLIN K

One of the strongest opinions I had this year, was in the Grade 2 Fountain of Youth at Gulfstream. I was eagerly waiting for the opportunity to select and bet against Soldat as the 7-5 favorite. My reasons were simple. As a two year old, Soldat racked up earnings of \$290,000 in 5 starts. Only once did he win, and that was in the Grade 3 With Anticipation on the grass at Saratoga as a maiden. Most of the money he earned was the result of a second place finish in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf, when he ran a strong second.

Soldat began his three year old campaign Jan 21 at Gulfstream, scoring a very impressive front running in by 10 ¾ lengths in very fast time. Thirty six days later came the race that I was waiting for. I knew that Soldat was going to be a heavy favorite to win the Fountain of Youth. For the first time in his career, he was going to race over a dry track. In all of Soldat's previous six starts, three were run over wet tracks and three on the grass. I felt he would face intense pressure on the lead, and was likely to tire late. I was dead wrong. Soldat was caught up in a duel and a lively pace, but he did not stop, wiring the field by 2 lengths.

Next stop would be the Grade 1 Florida Derby. Once again, I felt he was going to be a vulnerable favorite in a race which was far tougher than he faced five weeks earlier. I was confident that Dialed In was the better horse and would get the right set up and Soldat would not. This time I was correct. Soldat never got the lead from post one, and quickly found himself buried down along the rail. He did have a chance to rally in the stretch, but came up completely empty. This is not the type of performance you want to see in his final Derby prep.

The waters get much deeper Saturday. Soldat has proven that he does his best running on the front end or sitting right off it. The pace figures to be quicker than what he has ever encountered. If Soldat wants to race up close from the start, he will have to be hard used by his rider Alan Garcia leaving the gate, to keep pace with several horses that are quicker in the early stages of the race. If Garcia elects to take back a few lengths off the leaders, he will have to make a move on the far turn. It is unlikely that he can clear to a comfortable lead and then hold off horses letting loose for the stretch run. Soldat does not give me the impression that he can stay the 1 ¼ mile distance. Superb trainer Kiaran McLaughlin has done a great job developing the son of War Front, but the waters get much deeper for him on Saturday. Soldat would benefit from a wet track, but even with favorable conditions, he would be a surprise to me if he were to win.

11th Selection #12 SANTIVA

30-1 BRIDGMOHAN S

KENNEALLY E

Three different trainers, five different jockeys, two three year old preps, and only one win. That is not exactly the recipe for success in the Kentucky Derby. Nonetheless, that basically sums up Santiva, an Allowance N1X eligible colt ,who did earn his lone career victory over this oval in the 2010 Kentucky Jockey Club.

After a promising three year old debut in the Risen Star at the Fair Grounds, Santiva looked to have put himself in the mix as a player on the Derby trail. Current trainer Eddie Kenneally initially planned a return trip to New Orleans for the Louisiana Derby in late March. Citing the connections local roots in Kentucky, and the desire to run in a Grade I race, those plans were scrapped and he was pointed to the Blue Grass at Keeneland. When trainers make changes from their initial plans, especially with a developing three year old, it is never a good sign. Santiva's effort in the Blue Grass was far from encouraging. He encountered trouble along the way, and never made a meaningful move. Santiva had previously run well over the Polytrack at Keeneland and on turf, so his issues could not have included the surface. It was, quite simply, a very poor effort.

By far the best race Santiva has run in his career came in the Risen Star back in February at the Fair Grounds. He stalked the moderate pace and made a good move before being out finished by Mucho Macho Man. He was spotting that rival experience and recency, as it was his first start of 2011. Wherever he landed in his final prep for the Run for the Roses, we needed to see a step forward from Santiva. The Blue Grass was not what the doctor ordered. His body of work is hardly of the quality you would like like to see from a Kentucky Derby contender.

Santiva's pedigree is attractive given that his sire, Giant's Causeway was the leading stallion in terms of money earned in 2010. His career was capped by a riveting second place finish in the 2000 Breeders' Cup Classic at Churchill Downs. Santiva's dam, Slide, was an unraced half sister of Safely Kept, the Eclipse Award winning sprinter from 1989. She has produced route winner Take Arms and the graded stakes placed router Her Majesty. Considering his running style, and his best efforts thus far, it does not seem like distance will de rail Santiva.

There have been horses that were successful in the Kentucky Derby off of lackluster prep races. However, what Santiva had done prior to the Blue Grass, is not enough to consider him a win candidate. Perhaps a return to grass, or a bit more time to mature, will enable Santiva to be at his best. Those of us looking for the Derby winner do not have that kind of patience. He is a throw out for me on Derby day.

12th Selection # 2 BRILLIANT SPEED

30-1 ROSARIO J

ALBERTRANI T

On the surface, the issue that many have with the Blue Grass after 2007 is how to determine the dirt ability of horses that have been successful on the Polytrack and now have to transfer their form to conventional dirt. The four winners of the Blue Grass since the installation of Polytrack have finished 11th, 20th, 10th, and 8th. In fact, since 2008, the Blue Grass has been a total non factor in terms of Derby preps.

This son of Dynaformer began his career like many well bred Eastern based two year olds on dirt at Belmont Park. After two very poor starts on the dirt, Brilliant Speed was moved to turf by trainer Tom Albertrani. He wound up breaking his maiden in his third career outing on the grass. Albertrani showed confidence in him as he went straight to stakes company, picking up consecutive second place finishes (one via disqualification) before trying GI company in the Blue Grass. It is well documented that turf form generally translates well to synthetic surfaces and that is obviously why Albertrani tried this colt at the Keeneland spring meet.

Under an absolutely flawless ride from Joel Rosario, Brilliant Speed roared home from last to win the Blue Grass. He posted a final three furlongs in a sensational :35 seconds and was up just in time to win at odds of 19-1. His victory furthered the notion that turf and synthetic form correlates, as he took a huge step forward that afternoon. He answered questions about whether he can handle a negative pace setup and how quickly he can make up ground from well off the pace. What he did not answer is whether he can handle dirt.

There was nothing to like about either of this colt's first two starts, run on the main tracks at Belmont and Saratoga. That had to have come as a surprise to trainer Tom Albertrani, as his unraced dam is a half sister to the versatile Handpainted, a multiple winner up to one mile and Serenading, a graded stakes winner who won the Falls City at Churchill Downs last fall. Serenading also won at 10 furlongs in her career, so stamina concerns are not in play with this colt. Immediately after Brilliant Speed's Blue Grass victory, Albertrani stated that he had trained well all winter over the conventional dirt surface at Palm Meadows and that gave him confidence regarding his chances in the Kentucky Derby.

Tom Albertrani is no stranger to the Triple Crown scene, as he won the 2006 Preakness with Bernardini. He has had a very difficult spring with multiple narrow misses at Gulfstream and a gut wrenching disqualification in the Hallandale Beach in February. The winner of that race was King Congie, a three year old from Albertrani's barn and the third place finisher was Brilliant Speed. The former wound up being disqualified for interference in deep stretch and Albertrani was left with a second and third place finish in the race. Luckily his fortunes have turned since leaving Florida this spring.

There is no doubt that Brilliant Speed has ability and he is clearly an improving colt. That being said, taking the leap of faith that he will somehow run dramatically better on dirt, in one of the toughest races in this country, is hard to fathom. There are softer spots in stake races that Brilliant Speed would fit better in than the Kentucky Derby.

13th Selection # 4 STAY THIRSTY

20-1 DOMINGUEZ R

PLETCHER T

When popular owner Mike Repole was purchasing horses at auction that would hopefully debut in 2010 he paid \$500,000 for a two year old in training at the Fasig Tipton February sale. It was this son of Bernardini, who worked: 10 and 4/5 over the main track at Calder Race Course. Little did Repole know that a son of Indian Charlie named Uncle Mo, for whom he had shelled out \$200,000 would end up being the stable's star.

One thing that the connections of Stay Thirsty stayed adamant about through his two year old campaign was that they believed his biggest accomplishments would occur the following year. His sire was a late bloomer who developed at the age of three with route to wins in the Preakness, Jim Dandy, Travers, and Jockey Club Gold Cup. His dam produced Andromeda's Hero, who finished third in the Belmont Stakes, so it seemed as if this colt would get better as the distances increased.

Trainer Todd Pletcher chose the Gotham Stakes for this colt's three year old debut and he was an impressive winner. To my surprise, Pletcher chose to add blinkers to his equipment for the Florida Derby and it was an equipment change fraught with peril. He was far too aggressive early and wound up close to a rapid pace, which absolutely ruined his chances. Afterwards the

connections of this colt had no explanation for his poor effort. Many just assumed it was him being exposed as a fringe player who could not compete at the top level.

Pletcher opted to send Stay Thirsty to Churchill Downs early and lengthen his preparation for the Derby in Louisville. He has steadily improved in the days leading up to it. His final workout in company with Uncle Mo was very strong. Pletcher has removed the blinkers from his equipment. He seems to be moving more comfortably, even when working down inside of his more fancied stablemate.

One thing that cannot be overlooked is that no Derby winner (Mine That Bird included) has been victorious in the Run for the Roses off a race that was as bad as this colt's Florida Derby effort. However, in a year where the contenders are as evenly matched as this is, it seems reasonable to simply draw a line through that race altogether. Pletcher has decided to give the mount on Stay Thirsty to Ramon Dominguez, who piloted him to victory in the aforementioned Gotham. Dominguez's best quality as a rider is the ability to get a horse to relax off the pace and make a move at the right time. That is just the type of trip that this colt needs to make an impact in the Derby.

Upon beginning his three year old campaign, there was a great level of concern about whether Stay Thirsty could develop the running style that would make him a factor in major races on the Triple Crown trail. He showed it in the Gotham, rating off a moderate pace. Stay Thirsty showed no ability as a juvenile to lay back and make one run. That begs the question about how you think he will handle a race run at a much quicker early clip like the Kentucky Derby. Stay Thirsty is probably going to be much farther back than he ever has been before, but I am not concerned about that, given his progress in the last few weeks and his positive effort in his three year old debut.

Considering the way this colt has worked at Churchill in the weeks leading up to the Derby, it would seem as if he is going to move up if the track comes up wet. His debut came over an "off" track at Belmont Park. He ran a bang up race to finish second to impressive winner Sovereign Default. I am not hoping for a wet track on Derby day, but I know that I will upgrade this colt's chances should the skies open up. Otherwise I will relegate him to a minor player whose win chances to win are minimal.

14th Selection #20 WATCH ME GO

50-1 BEJARANO R

O'CONNELL K

Trainer Kathleen O'Connell has been a mainstay on the south Florida circuit for many years. She points for the Tampa Bay meeting, shipping in with horses that have run at Calder during the year. Rarely does O'Connell ship outside the state unless she feels her horse can be competitive. Even when she races in the winter at Tampa, it is only on rare occasions that she ships to Gulfstream. O'Connell has done great work developing Watch Me Go, a homebred for long time owner and breeder Gilbert Campbell.

As a 2 year old, Watch Me Go proved a useful horse with a front running win in his debut and an allowance victory 3 starts later. When he shipped to Tampa in December, Watch Me Go had only gone as far as 7 furlongs. At no point in his juvenile campaign, did he show any indication that he would be able to be competitive going a distance of ground against good competition. This all began to change when Watch Me Go ran third in the Grade 3 Sam Davis February 12 in his first start around 2 turns. Rightfully so, he was dismissed at 30-1. When he was entered back 1 month later in the Tampa Bay Derby, Watch Me Go was even a bigger price at 43-1. This time, he pulled off a huge upset, winning a stirring stretch battle. The race proved that Watch Me Go had improved dramatically around 2 turns. Having secured enough graded stakes earnings to possibly earn a spot in the Kentucky Derby, O'Connell could choose the easiest spot for Watch Me Go's final Derby prep. She could not have found a more perfect scenario than at Hawthorne in the Grade 3 Illinois Derby. Despite having to face 11 rivals, Watch Me Go was sent off the 2-1 favorite, a far cry from the \$89.40 mutual he paid in his prior start. At no point in the race did Watch Me Go show any semblance of the sharp and improving form he had shown. He was beaten 17 lengths in a dismal performance. Whatever excuses O'Connell might have come up with to explain why Watch Me Go ran so poorly, nothing she could have said would make me believe he could rebound in the Kentucky Derby. The Illinois Derby was the first start for Watch Me Go outside of Florida. There is no indication whatsoever that 1 ¼ miles will suit him. He has never even raced beyond 1 1/16 miles. His pedigree shouts out that even that distance is stretching him to his limit.

15th Selection # 9 DERBY KITTEN

30-1 CASTELLANO J

MAKER M

Oddly enough, the twentieth horse to get in to the Kentucky Derby has landed in the superfecta in each of the last four runnings. Derby Kitten has gone off at huge odds and was given little chance by the betting public. He certainly fits that description, as he figures once again to be a healthy price, even with his owner plunking down a few dollars on his nose.

The only time between his birth, and the minutes before loading into the starting gate of the Lexington, that this colt's connections were thinking about him making the Kentucky Derby, was when they named him. Derby Kitten is a full brother of William's Kitten, who the Ramsey's and trainer Michael Maker felt last year would develop into a "Roses" candidate. He was a stakes winner on dirt coming into his three year old campaign. William's Kitten had finished second in the Kentucky Jockey Club in November

2009 behind a colt named Super Saver, but not long afterwards, it was felt that grass, and not dirt would be his hole card. Like many of the Kitten's Joy offspring, Derby Kitten began his career going long on the turf. It wound up that it took him six starts to break his maiden. Among those five consecutive failures to begin his career, was a dreadful performance on the main track at Belmont. That is still his only dirt start to date.

Since being given a brief freshening by Maker, Derby Kitten has run two vastly improved races. His runner up finish in the Alligator Alley at Gulfstream on Florida Derby weekend was impressive, as the winner of that affair, Longhunter, seems destined for graded stakes company. In the Lexington at Keeneland, Derby Kitten raced over a track that strongly favored front running types, but that did not hamper him, as he rallied from last to score decisively. If the track comes up wet for the Derby, it could conceivably help him, as turf horses generally fare well on off tracks.

There is no doubt that Derby Kitten is on the improve but he is now being asked to tackle dirt, a furlong and a half more than he has ever gone before, and his third race in thirty five days. Ken Ramsey's Derby dream will live on beyond this year, because the chances that Derby Kitten ends up blanketed in roses are almost nonexistent. Simply landing in the bottom rungs of the superfecta should be considered a major accomplishment.

16th Selection #10 TWINSPIRED

30-1 SMITH M

MAKER M

It was not certain whether or not Twinspired would run in the Kentucky Derby, but as a result of some defections, the son of Harlan's Holiday will start. He has run eight times. Both victories have come over a synthetic surface. In Twinspired's lone start over conventional dirt, he ran eighth, beaten 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ lengths in a stake at Remington Park in his final start as a two year old. As a three year old, Twinspired has continued to improve, despite being victimized by outside posts and very wide trips. In the Grade 3 Spiral at Turfway, Twinspired passed tired horses to run third, six lengths behind Animal Kingdom. In the Grade 1 Bluegrass at Keeneland, he was beaten by a nose by Brilliant Speed at 24-1 in a very gritty performance.

In past years, The Bluegrass has produced several horses that have run well in the Kentucky Derby, in particular Street Sense who won in 2007. No such result will occur Saturday. This year's Bluegrass was one the weakest renewals ever run. Twinspired's trainer Michael Maker is one of the finest horsemen in the country, but even he will not be able to get this colt into the winners circle.

17th Selection #11 MASTER OF HOUNDS

30-1 GOMEZ G

O'BRIEN A

The nature of this year's Derby picture naturally prompts you to take a look for a horse that might be a bit "outside the box." Those in search of such a horse are sure to land here. This European invader enters off a strong second place finish in the UAE Derby on the Dubai World Cup undercard.

There are three major questions that surround Master of Hounds. The first, and most important, is how he will handle dirt. His sire, Kingmambo, is one of the best in the world. He was responsible for Belmont Stakes winner Lemon Drop Kid, along with a slew of other top level performers. The dam side is full of turf influence as expected, and gives you no indication that he will handle the Churchill Downs main track. He has only run on turf and synthetics so far in his career. He responded favorably in his first start on the latter in the UAE in late March. Trainer Aidan O'Brien has not won a dirt race in the United States since Johannesburg's win in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile back in 2001. That hardly bodes well for this colt's ability to handle dirt.

The second major question Master of Hounds must answer is whether he can get 10 furlongs. Ironically, he has run farther than any other horse in the field as his last start, and only start at three, was at 9.5 furlongs. That being said, he lost ground late to a filly. The dam side of his pedigree is geared heavily towards sprinting. Master of Hounds mother, Silk and Scarlet, was a two time winner and both of those victories were at sprint distances. Her biggest accomplishment was a win in the Debutante Stakes over seven furlongs on the grass.

The third major question is whether Master of Hounds can adapt to what is going to be a significantly faster pace than he has ever seen before. In his maiden victory, he was able to stay very close to the early pace before pouncing when ready. In the two biggest races of his juvenile season, he found himself farther back than he was comfortable with and the way he finished was discouraging. In the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf, he loomed boldly before flattening out badly late to finish fifth. The UAE Derby was a significantly better effort than he had ever put forth before, but it did nothing to answer the question about pace. The early tempo in the UAE Derby was deliberate and that greatly contributed to this colt being able to hang in there late. He was also in receipt of seven pounds from race favorite Mahbooba and eleven pounds from the second choice Xin Xu Lin.

The exploits of Aidan O'Brien all over Europe are well known, as he has basically won every major stake race across the pond multiple times. However, his success has not carried over to the USA, especially in the last five years. His lone Breeders' Cup victory since 2003 was a Marathon win by Man of Iron in 2009 at Santa Anita. There have been numerous others, who have run poorly. It is also of great concern that Master of Hounds is a lightly raced three old with only one start this year. Add to this the long trip he has had to make to Churchill Downs, and very little training over the track. It is an awful lot to ask of a young horse. I will be very surprised if Master of Hounds finishes in the Derby trifecta, and absolutely stunned if he is victorious.

18th Selection # 7 PANTS ON FIRE**20-1 NAPRAVNIK R****BREEN K**

From start to finish, the 2010-2011 Fair Grounds meeting doubled as the "Rosie Napravnik Show." She became the first female to win the riding title at the oldest racetrack in America winning one hundred and ten races. Among those victories was a pace stalking score aboard Pants on Fire in the Louisiana Derby. She is now poised to become the first woman to ride in the Kentucky Derby since Rosemary Homeister, Jr. A victory in the Run for the Roses, would be a milestone, the likes of which have never been seen in racing, even including Julie Krone's Belmont win aboard Colonial Affair in 2003.

When Pants on Fire lined up to contest the Louisiana Derby, he was the less fancied of a coupled entry for owners George and Lori Hall and trainer Kelly Breen. It was his stablemate, Nacho Business, who was exiting a second place finish in a N1X allowance event at Gulfstream that most punters figured was the better of that pairing. Just under 1:50 after the gates opened, it was this son of Jump Start, who was posing for a photograph. Napravnik kept him positioned just off the pacesetting longshot Liondrive, who retreated at the half mile pole and finished a distant last. Once Pants on Fire took over, the favorite Mucho Macho Man confronted this colt. He dug in with resolute determination, holding sway late, despite a furious charge from Nehro.

Even after a narrow miss in the Lecomte earlier at the Fair Grounds meet, this colt was hardly considered a legitimate Derby prospect. Breen and jockey Joe Bravo opted to employ different tactics in the Risen Star, as he was rated well back of a very slow pace that afternoon. He never fired at all, checking in a well beaten sixth at odds of 19-1. His Louisiana Derby victory proved that he needs to be put in a position where he can engage the pace early.

Jump Start never ran beyond his two year old season, a campaign in which he won the Saratoga Special and placed in the Champagne. Based on what his best progeny have done, one can only wonder how good Jump Start could have been if injury had not ended his career too soon. His finest runners to race, are multiple graded stakes winner Rail trip and multiple stakes winner Icabad Crane, both of whom have won at 9 furlongs in their careers. The dam side of Pants on Fire's pedigree includes stakes winner Key Hunter, who was a half sister of his dam, Cabo de Noche. The prospect of a wet track helps Pants on Fire, as he earned his maiden win at Delaware over a sloppy surface. Breen will not be upset if the skies open up on Saturday.

Kelley Breen is an underrated trainer, whose accomplishments with juveniles are well known. Prior to Pants on Fire's victory in the Louisiana Derby, he was winless in graded stakes races at more than a mile over the last five years. Using that statistic as a benchmark, you have to ask yourself this question: Was the Louisiana Derby an aberration or a sign that a gradually improving horse is finally getting things figured out? I am more inclined to believe the former, as his Louisiana Derby victory came out of nowhere. He was eligible for a N1X going into the race after coming off a no excuse loss in the Lecomte, and a non effort in the Risen Star.

The issue with Pants on Fire is that he is completely unproven in route races that are run at a fast pace. He will meet far more pace pressure in the Kentucky Derby than he ever has before, as well as attempting to negotiate a very demanding distance. Those that fancy Pants on Fire, are going to be rewarded with a large price on this colt. His chances of pulling off the upset seem very poor.

19th Selection # 5 DECISIVE MOMENT**30-1 CLARK K****ARIAS J**

It seems like a rite of fall for the malaise to develop about how the Delta Jackpot produces at least one, if not two, Derby starters. This colt finished second in that \$1 million event, and has kept a relatively low profile since, for trainer Juan Arias.

Arias opted to keep this son of With Distinction at Delta Downs, winning the Jean Lafitte in January rather easily. From there he made another trip to tackle top company in the Risen Star which resulted in a very dull performance. He set a very comfortable pace, tiring late to finish fifth, beaten better than five lengths. With enough graded earnings in the bank to ensure a spot in the Derby starting gate, Arias chose a soft spot for his final prep. The race he ran in the Spiral was quite encouraging, as he stalked a very lively pace on the Polytrack at Turfway, then fought hard through the stretch. To put the pace in the Spiral in perspective, the half mile time was: 46 and 3/5, whereas the half mile time in the Rushaway, another three year old race on the same card, was run in :48 and 4/5. You do not often find a dirt horse who can handle synthetics as well as Decisive Moment did in the Spiral.

The differences between the Spiral and the Kentucky Derby are vast. In fact, the only similarity is that they are both run in the state of Kentucky. Decisive Moment figures to meet much more pace pressure in the Run for the Roses. One must be skeptical of what will happen to him if he has to chase a fast pace. That is one of the chief concerns when determining how to play a race like the Derby, as a number of horses are going to be forced into dealing with adversity the likes of which they have never seen. How he will handle the mad stampede in front of the grandstand, with a crush of horses showing speed is unknown.

Decisive Moment is by With Distinction and his from his freshman crop. With Distinction was stakes placed around two turns, but never won over a route of ground. His signature win came around one turn in the El Conejo Handicap at Santa Anita at 5.5 furlongs. The dam side of Decisive Moment's pedigree includes Judge's Appeal, who was stakes placed at nine furlongs. Another sibling was stakes placed going long, so there are some minor route influences on the bottom side of his pedigree.

The final drill that Decisive Moment posted at Churchill Downs was what Daily Racing Form clocker Mike Welsch described as "laborious." When dealing with a horse that needs to improve as much as Decisive Moment does, it makes you feel like everything has to go perfectly for the weeks leading up to the Derby. That leads me to the conclusion that he is a Grade 3 caliber horse who I expect to be no more than a pace player.

20th Selection # 6 COMMA TO THE TOP 30-1 VALENZUELA P MILLER P

The pace scenario for the Kentucky Derby changed with the defections of The Factor and J P's Gusto. Both horses had proven that they were most effective setting the pace rather than rating. That leaves Comma to the Top, Decisive Moment, Shackleford and Pants On Fire as four of the major pace players, with several others in close pursuit. It is likely that Uncle Mo will not get involved in a potential duel and a fast pace, but rather take back a few lengths off the leaders and attack on the far turn. Comma to the Top appears the quickest of the speeds. In 13 starts, he has had the lead after a quarter mile 7 times. Only once has he cleared his closest pursuers by more than 1 length. What this means is that Comma to the Top is always hounded from the outset. Despite the intense pressure, he has been able to put away the other speeds and open up leads entering the stretch, ranging from 1 length to 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ lengths in 3 of his 6 route races. I do not envision this scenario to occur in the Kentucky Derby. I expect Comma to the Top to call it a day on the far turn. He has raced on conventional dirt only twice. In the Grade 2 San Felipe, Comma to the Top ran fourth, beaten 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ lengths. 4 weeks later, Comma to the Top ran a much improved race in the Santa Anita Derby. He set a pressured pace from start to finish, just falling short by a head to Midnight Interlude. Watching the head on of the race several times, I noticed that Comma to the Top never changed leads through the stretch, and drifted in and out like a drunken sailor in the last 70 yards. He pulled up exhausted past the wire.

Comma to the Top will be asked to run an additional eighth of a mile in the Kentucky Derby. His pedigree indicates that even 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ miles is stretching him to his limit. He would be much better suited to races up to a mile, not the Kentucky Derby distance of 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ miles. I am confident that Comma to the Top can be excluded from all wagers.

Wagering Strategy

Play # 16 ANIMAL KINGDOM to WIN, PLACE and SHOW

\$0.50 Trifecta Box 1-8-15-16-19 = \$30

\$1 Exacta Box 1-8-15-16-19 = \$20

\$1 Exacta Box 1-8-16-19 = \$12

\$1 Exacta Box 8-16-19 = \$6

\$1 Exacta Part Wheel 8-16-19 over 1-3-13-15-18 = \$15

Total wagers = \$83 for exactas and trifectas plus the Win-Place-Show

NOTE: With Animal Kingdom listed at 30-1 on the morning line, if he runs first, second or third, the payoffs will be huge in this twenty horse field. I have decided to make a simple Trifecta Box using all five horses that I like and attacking the exactas. With the betting being so spread out, and huge prices across the board, any combination of horses that I am using that run one-two, would result in a large payoff, especially if Animal Kingdom runs first or second. I feel that this year, keeping the wagers simple and cost effective is the way to go.

The dollar amounts that I have suggested should be used as a guideline. Only you can decide how much you may want to increase the amount wagered on each suggested play. Always remember to bet within your comfort level.

Any questions or comments can be sent to: thewizard@selectionsbythewizard.net

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