



# THE DERBY DISPATCH

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## ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES WINDS DOWN WITH BLUE GRASS, SANTA ANITA DERBY, WOOD MEMORIAL

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, April 6, 2023)** – One month remains until Kentucky Derby Week at Churchill Downs and there are only four remaining opportunities for horses to qualify for the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I).

Three of those races will be run Saturday: the \$1 million Blue Grass (GI), the \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI); and the \$750,000 Wood Memorial (GII).

All three races will award 100 points to the winning horse and a qualifying spot in the starting gate for the “Run for the Roses.”

While many possibilities remain to determine this year’s field of 20 3-year-olds for the Kentucky Derby, there are already six horses within the Top 20 point earners that arrived at Churchill Downs: **Angel of Empire, Confidence Game, Cyclone Mischief, Disarm, Jace’s Road** and **Rocket Can**.

**TAPIT TRICE MADE 5-2 FAVORITE IN BLUE GRASS** – **Whisper Hill Farm** and **Gainesway Stable’s Tapit Trice** is the 5-2 morning line choice in a field of 11 3-year-olds entered Wednesday for Saturday’s 99<sup>th</sup> running of the \$1 million Blue Grass (GI) at 1 1/8 miles on Keeneland’s main track.

A major test for 3-year-olds and a steppingstone to the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) to be run May 6 at Churchill Downs, the Blue Grass offers 200 points toward qualification to this year’s Derby on a 100-40-30-20-10 scale to the first- through fifth-place finishers. The Derby is limited to the top 20 point earners and invitees that pass the entry box.

The Blue Grass will go as the ninth race on Saturday’s 11-race program with a 5:15 p.m. post time (all times Eastern). First post time for the card that features five graded stakes is 12:30 p.m.

Trained by three-time Blue Grass winner **Todd Pletcher**, Tapit Trice brings a three-race win streak into Saturday’s race highlighted by a two-length victory as the 1-2 favorite in the Tampa Bay Derby (GIII) on March 11. **Luis Saez**, a Blue Grass winner with **Brody’s Cause** in 2016 and **Essential Quality** in 2021, has the mount on Tapit Trice and will break from the rail.

Pletcher’s Blue Grass winners are **Bandini** (2005), **Monba** (2008) and **Carpe Diem** (2015).

The second choice on the morning line set by **Nick Tammaro** at 3-1 is **Westerberg Limited, Mrs. John Magnier, Jonathan Poulin, Derrick Smith** and **Michael Tabor’s Verifying**. Trained by **Brad Cox**, who won this race in 2021 with **Essential Quality**, Verifying is a winner of two of five starts and finished second to **Blazing Sevens** in the Champagne (GI). In his most recent start, Verifying was fourth in the Rebel (GII) that was run over a sloppy track at Oaklawn Park on Feb. 25.

**Tyler Gaffalione** has the mount on Verifying and will break from post position three.

**Andrew** and **Rania Warren’s Gotham** (GIII) winner **Raise Cain** is the third choice on the morning line at 9-2. Trained by **Ben Colebrook**, Raise Cain won the Gotham by 7 ½ lengths in what was his graded stakes debut. Raise Cain, a maiden winner at Keeneland last fall, was third in the Bowman Mill and then runner-up in the Gun Runner at Fair Grounds to close his 2022 campaign.

**Joel Rosario**, who won the Blue Grass in 2011 on **Brilliant Speed**, has the mount on Raise Cain and will break from post 10.

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Colebrook will send out a second runner for the Warrens in **Scoobie Quando** (15-1). Scoobie Quando was runner-up in the John Battaglia Memorial at Turfway Park on March 4 in his most recent start.

**Luan Machado** has the mount on Scoobie Quando and will exit post position six.

The fourth choice at 6-1 on the morning line is **Rodeo Creek Racing's** Blazing Sevens. Trained by **Chad Brown**, who won the Blue Grass last year with **Zandon**, Blazing Sevens won the Champagne last fall and completed his 2022 campaign with a fourth-place finish in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI). Blazing Sevens finished eighth in the Fountain of Youth (GII) in his lone 2022 start. **Irad Ortiz Jr.** has the mount Saturday and will break from post position eight.

Brown, who also won the Blue Grass in 2018 with **Good Magic**, is seeking to become the fourth trainer to win the race in consecutive years and the first since **LeRoy Jolley** in 1976-1977.

In addition to Pletcher, Brown and Cox, two other trainers will be seeking to add to their Blue Grass victory totals.

**Kenny McPeck**, who won the race in 2002 with **Harlan's Holiday** and in 2013 with **Java's War**, will send out three runners.

Leading the McPeck contingent is **R.T. Racing Stable** and **Cypress Creek Equine's** **Sun Thunder** (10-1) enters Saturday's race off a fifth-place finish in the March 25 TwinSpires Louisiana Derby (GII). Prior to that effort, Sun Thunder finished second in the Risen Star presented by Lamarque Lincoln and Lamarque Crescent City Ford (GII).

**Florent Geroux** has the mount on Sun Thunder and will break from post position seven.

McPeck also will send out **Dixiana Farms'** homebred **Hayes Strike** (15-1). Two-time graded-stakes placed, Hayes Strike enters Saturday's race off a victory in the Private Terms at Laurel on March 18. **James Graham** has the mount and will break from post position five.

McPeck's third entrant is **Harold Lerner, AWC Stables, Nehoc Stables** and **Team Stallion's** **Mendelssohns March** (20-1), who will be making his stakes debut. Undefeated in two starts, Mendelssohns March will break from post position 11 and be ridden by **Brian Hernandez Jr.**, who won this race in 2020 with **Art Collector**.

Two-time Blue Grass winner **D. Wayne Lukas** will saddle **Major Blue** (30-1) for his wife **Laurie** and **Bob and Ann Ghent**. A two-time winner last month at Oaklawn, Major Blue will be ridden by **David Cabrera** and break from post position nine.

One other rider will be seeking to add to his win total in the race: **Javier Castellano**, who won the 2019 edition of the Blue Grass on **Vekoma**. He has the call Saturday on **Gary Barber's** **Classic Car Wash** (12-1).

Trained by **Mark Casse**, Classic Car Wash was runner-up to Tapit Trice in the Tampa Bay Derby and prior to that third in the Sam F. Davis (GIII) at Tampa Bay Downs. Classic Car Wash will break from post four.

Here's the field for the Blue Grass from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

1. Tapit Trice (Saez, Pletcher),
2. **Clear the Air** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Will Walden)
3. Verifying (Gaffalione, Cox)
4. Classic Car Wash (Castellano, Casse)
5. Hayes Strike (Graham, McPeck)
6. Scoobie Quando (Machado, Colebrook)
7. Sun Thunder (Geroux, McPeck)
8. Blazing Sevens (Ortiz Jr., Brown)
9. Major Blue (Cabrera, Lukas)
10. Raise Cain (Rosario, Colebrook)
11. Mendelssohns March (Hernandez Jr., McPeck)

**SAN FELIPE WINNER PRACTICAL MOVE TOPS SANTA ANITA DERBY** – **Leslie** and **Pierre Amestoy** and **Roger Beasley's** multiple Grade II winner **Practical Move** headlines a field of nine of California's top 3-year-olds in Saturday's \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI).

The Santa Anita Derby will go as Race 6 on Saturday's program at Santa Anita. Post time for the Santa Anita Derby is 5:30 p.m. ET.

Practical Move has been one of the top 3-year-olds in Southern California since December when he won the \$200,000 Los Alamitos Futurity (GII). Trained by **Tim Yakteen**, Practical Move made his seasonal debut in the \$400,000 San Felipe (GII) where he finished 2 ½ lengths better than fellow Santa Anita Derby entrant **Geaux Rocket Ride**. Jockey **Ramon Vazquez** rides from post No. 5.

**Pin Oak Stud's** aforementioned **Geaux Rocket Ride** will attempt to avenge his last race defeat from Practical Move in the Santa Anita Derby. Trained by **Richard Mandella**, Geaux Rocket Ride was an impressive 5 ¾-length winner on debut at Santa Anita and made his first start around two-turns in the San Felipe. **Flavien Prat** will have the mount from post 3.

Here is the complete field for the Santa Anita Derby from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

1. **I Don't Get It** (Mario Gutierrez, Doug O'Neill)
2. **DazzlemeSilver** (Kent Desormeaux, Keith Desormeaux)
3. **Geaux Rocket Ride** (Prat, Mandella)
4. **One in Vermillion** (Hector Berrios, Eric Kruljac)
5. **Practical Move** (Vazquez, Yakteen)
6. **National Treasure** (John Velazquez, Yakteen)
7. **Skinner** (Victor Espinoza, John Shirreffs)
8. **Mandarin Hero** (Kazushi Kimura, Terunobu Fujita)
9. **Low Expectations** (Umberto Rispoli, Antonio Garcia)

**WITHERS STAKES WINNER HIT SHOW RETURNS IN WOOD MEMORIAL** – **Gary and Mary West's Hit Show**, the winner of the Feb. 11 Withers Stakes (Grade III), will return to Aqueduct and headline Saturday's \$750,000 Wood Memorial (GII).

Run at 1 1/8 miles, the Wood Memorial is the finale on Aqueduct's 11-race program. The race will have a post time of 6:16 p.m. and be shown nationally on Fox.

Hit Show, trained by **Brad Cox**, jumped onto the Road to the Kentucky Derby scene with his 5 1/2-length score in the Withers. Following that race, Cox opted to keep Hit Show based at Fair Grounds and train towards the Wood Memorial. At the end of March, Cox shipped Hit Show to Keeneland where he worked on March 31 in company with Blue Grass Stakes (GI) entrant **Verifying** and cruised five furlongs in :59.40. Jockey **Manny Franco** will have the return mount from post No. 13.

Drawn at the opposite side of the starting gate is **Repole Stable** and **St. Elias Stable's Dreamlike**. Trained by **Todd Pletcher**, Dreamlike is still a maiden but is expected to garner serious attention in the Wood as the 3-1 second choice on the morning line odds. Dreamlike finished second to **Arthur's Ride** on debut at Gulfstream Park and recently finished a close second to **Empirestrikesfast**. The well-bred son of Gun Runner will be ridden by **Jose Ortiz**.

Pletcher entered three horses in the Wood Memorial. His other two are Repole Stable and St. Elias Stable's maiden **Crupi** and **Whisper Hill Farm's** recent allowance winner **Classic Catch**.

The ultra-consistent **Arctic Arrogance** is scheduled to return in the Wood Memorial and his trainer **Linda Rice** has opted to remove blinkers for this start. Owned by **Chester** and **Mary Broman**, Arctic Arrogance has finished second in his last three starts in the Remsen (GII), Jerome and Withers. The son of Frosted was originally planning a start in the Gotham but a minor illness forced him to miss the race. Arctic Arrogance will exit post 7 with jockey **Jose Lezcano**.

The Wood Memorial will offer 200 qualifying points to the top five finishers on a 100-40-30-20-10 scale for the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series.

Here is the complete field from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

1. Dreamlike (Ortiz, Pletcher)
2. **Shadow Dragon** (Eric Cancel, Bill Mott)
3. **Knox** (Jose Gomez, Saffie Joseph Jr.)
4. **General Banker** (Frankie Pennington, James Ferraro)
5. **Slip Mahoney** (Dylan Davis, Cox)
6. **Clear the Air** (Herman Harkie, Will Walden)
7. Arctic Arrogance (Lezcano, Rice)
8. **Lord Miles** (Paco Lopez, Joseph)
9. **Crupi** (Kendrick Carmouche, Pletcher)
10. **Uncle Jake** (Jevian Toledo, Brittany Russell)
11. **Classic Catch** (Trevor McCarthy, Pletcher)
12. **Mr. Swagger** (Carlos Olivero, Juan Avila)
13. Hit Show (Franco, Cox)

Note: Clear the Air is expected to scratch from the Wood Memorial and run in the Blue Grass at Keeneland.

## BLUE GRASS QUOTES –

**Brad Cox, trainer, Verifying:** "He ran decent last time in the Rebel. We've had him based down at Fair Grounds and shipped him over to Keeneland last week for one work. He breezed very well in company with Hit Show who goes in the Wood Memorial. He was in a great position in the Rebel and just sort of lost it around the turn. He went from being third or fourth to eighth or ninth in a few strides. Then he re-rallied and came on again. He's still a little bit green but he's getting better. He's getting better with experience but he still needs to step up on Saturday. He probably won't be the favorite but I do think he's a horse that is very talented and can step up to compete in Grade I races."

**Kenny McPeck, trainer, Hayes Strike, Mendelssohns March, Sun Thunder:** “Hayes Strike got back in form in his last start. It’s a tough spot for him but he’s doing well and deserves a chance. He is a 1 1/8-mile type of horse and I felt the Blue Grass is a better spot for him than the Lexington that I won with his half-brother Senior Investment in 2017.

“Mendelssohns March drew the outside but it’s a long way around there so he ought to be fine. I know we are throwing him into the deep end but he is very talented and seems to be a horse that can handle it. ... I tried to run him in the John Battaglia (at Turfway) but the race overfilled and we couldn’t get in. So, I was forced to run him in an allowance at Oaklawn.

“Sun Thunder’s last race was a paceless race and he really didn’t get to run until the last part. He seems none worse for the wear and the partnership is keen to try him again.”

**Todd Pletcher, trainer, Tapit Trice:** “It’s not exactly where we wanted to draw but he did win the allowance race at Gulfstream Park from post one.”

#### WOOD MEMORIAL QUOTES –

**Brad Cox, trainer, Hit Show and Slip Mahoney:** “I’m excited to get Slip Mahoney around two-turns. I think he’s bred for it and how he’s run, I think he’ll handle it well. He obviously needs to get better in the Wood than he was in the Gotham. He ran a good race in the Gotham when he was compromised at the start but this should be a tougher race.

“Hit Show has already been up to New York and won a race up there. He proved shipping wasn’t a concern and he’s familiar with the surroundings going on the road. I think he’s a horse that does like a mile-and-an-eighth and beyond. We didn’t want to cut him back to one-mile after the Withers. We think he’s a two-turn horse. We brought him back to Fair Grounds and trained him. We had our options of where to run next after the Withers – the Louisiana Derby, the Arkansas Derby or the Wood Memorial. Since he’s already shown success in New York we decided that would be the best spot for him.”

#### ADDITIONAL DERBY NEWS AND NOTES –

Trainer **Brad Cox** reported **Instant Coffee** is scheduled to work over the weekend at Churchill Downs and will make plans for his next race. Instant Coffee is currently No. 22 on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard with 32 points would need several defections to make the field or garner additional points in next Saturday’s Lexington Stakes (GII). The Lexington will award points on a 20-8-6-4-2 scale to the top five finishers. ...

Louisiana Derby (GII) third-place finisher **Jace’s Road** is scheduled to work Saturday at Churchill Downs. He would have four works prior to running in the Kentucky Derby. ...

Trainer **Todd Pletcher** reported his Kentucky Derby contenders, including **Forte** and **Kingsbarns**, are likely to arrive at Churchill Downs on April 16 and would have two works over the track. ...

Arkansas Derby (GI) winner **Angel of Empire** arrived from Oaklawn Park on Wednesday around 4:15 a.m. to trainer **Brad Cox’s** Churchill Downs Barn 22. He was joined by stablemate **Wet Paint**, one of the favorites for this year’s \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI). Don’t worry, **Mr. Man**, the goat “mascot” of the Cox stable, is slated to arrive in time for this year’s Kentucky Derby. ...

**Frank Fletcher Racing Operation’s** Arkansas Derby (GI) favorite **Rocket Can** arrived at Churchill Downs around 4:30 a.m. Wednesday to Hall of Fame trainer **Bill Mott’s** Barn 19. Rocket Can remains in consideration for the Kentucky Derby. ...

Trainer **Joel Marr** stated Sunland Derby (GIII) winner **Wild On Ice** will van from Sunland Park in Hobbs, N.M. to Southern California to fly to Kentucky on Sunday. He’ll be joined on the flight by Sunland Park Oaks winner **Flying Connection**, who is scheduled to start in the Kentucky Oaks. ...

Japan’s duo of Kentucky Derby contenders – **Derma Sotogake (JPN)** and **Continuar (JPN)** – are slated to arrive at Churchill Downs late Saturday evening. The duo flew Wednesday from Dubai to Chicago and will undergo a minimum 42 hour USDA quarantine period prior to vanning to Churchill Downs. Both horses could train for the first time Saturday. They will be stabled in the Quarantine Barns across from the main stable area entrance. ...

**Winchell Thoroughbreds’ Disarm**, the runner-up in the Louisiana Derby (GII), is scheduled to work Sunday or Monday at Churchill Downs. Currently, Disarm has 40 points on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard and was in position No. 18.

Derby fans can keep up with all the news and notes on the Road to the Kentucky Derby by listening to “**Inside the Kentucky Derby**: - available on iTunes, Spotify and YouTube.

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**FORTE LEADER ON ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD** – Repole Stable and St. Elias Stable’s Florida Derby (GI) winner **Forte** has stamped himself as the early Kentucky Derby favorite and will be the point leader on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard with 190 points.

Here are the Top 20 horses on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Horse</u>	<u>Trainer</u>	<u>Resume</u>	<u>Possible Next Start</u>	<u>Points</u>
1	Forte	Todd Pletcher	1 <sup>st</sup> Florida Derby 1 <sup>st</sup> Fountain of Youth 1 <sup>st</sup> Breeders’ Cup Juvenile 1 <sup>st</sup> Breeders’ Futurity	May 6: Kentucky Derby	190
2	Angel of Empire	Brad Cox	1 <sup>st</sup> Arkansas Derby 1 <sup>st</sup> Risen Star 2 <sup>nd</sup> Smarty Jones	May 6: Kentucky Derby	154
3	Two Phil’s	Larry Rivelli	1 <sup>st</sup> Jeff Ruby Steaks 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lecomte 3 <sup>rd</sup> Risen Star	May 6: Kentucky Derby	123
4	Derma Sotogake (JPN)	Hidetaka Otonashi	1 <sup>st</sup> UAE Derby	May 6: Kentucky Derby	100
5	Kingsbarns	Todd Pletcher	1 <sup>st</sup> Louisiana Derby	May 6: Kentucky Derby	100
6	Practical Move	Tim Yakteen	1 <sup>st</sup> San Felipe 1 <sup>st</sup> Los Alamitos Futurity	April 8: Santa Anita Derby	60
7	Rocket Can	Bill Mott	1 <sup>st</sup> Holy Bull 2 <sup>nd</sup> Fountain of Youth 4 <sup>th</sup> Arkansas Derby	May 6: Kentucky Derby	60
8	Confidence Game	Keith Desormeaux	1 <sup>st</sup> Rebel 3 <sup>rd</sup> Lecomte 5 <sup>th</sup> Iroquois	May 6: Kentucky Derby	57
9	Raise Cain	Ben Colebrook	1 <sup>st</sup> Gotham 2 <sup>nd</sup> Gun Runner	April 8: Blue Grass	54
10	Wild On Ice	Joel Marr	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunland Park Derby	May 6: Kentucky Derby	50
11	Tapit Trice	Todd Pletcher	1 <sup>st</sup> Tampa Bay Derby	April 8: Blue Grass	50
12	Mage	Gustavo Delgado	2 <sup>nd</sup> Florida Derby 4 <sup>th</sup> Fountain of Youth	May 6: Kentucky Derby	50
13	Reincarnate	Tim Yakteen	1 <sup>st</sup> Sham 3 <sup>rd</sup> Rebel 3 <sup>rd</sup> Arkansas Derby	May 6: Kentucky Derby	45
14	Jace’s Road	Brad Cox	1 <sup>st</sup> Gun Runner 3 <sup>rd</sup> Louisiana Derby 3 <sup>rd</sup> Iroquois	May 6: Kentucky Derby	45
15	Cyclone Mischief	Dale Romans	3 <sup>rd</sup> Florida Derby 3 <sup>rd</sup> Fountain of Youth	May 6: Kentucky Derby	45
16	Major Dude	Todd Pletcher	2 <sup>nd</sup> Jeff Ruby Steaks	TBA	40
17	King Russell	Ron Moquett	2 <sup>nd</sup> Arkansas Derby	May 6: Kentucky Derby	40
18	Disarm	Steve Asmussen	2 <sup>nd</sup> Louisiana Derby	May 6: Kentucky Derby	40
19	Sun Thunder	Kenny McPeck	2 <sup>nd</sup> Risen Star 4 <sup>th</sup> Southwest	April 8: Blue Grass	34
20	Continuar (JPN)	Yoshito Yahagi	1 <sup>st</sup> Cattleya	May 6: Kentucky Derby	Japan RTKD Invite

## UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

### **April 15 (three weeks out) – \$400,000 Lexington (GIII), 1 1/16 miles, Keeneland (Top 4 points: 20-8-4-2)**

Known possible starters (with trainer): Confidence Game (Keith Desormeaux); Curly Larry and Mo (Caio Caramori); Victory Formation (Brad Cox).

Note: The possible fields for upcoming Kentucky Derby Championship Series races are fluid as owners and trainers vie for points. Known possible horses mentioned to be under consideration for each race are based on published news reports and other sources. Horses listed in *italics* are possible for multiple races.

### **ABOUT CHURCHILL DOWNS RACETRACK**

Churchill Downs Racetrack (“CDRT”), the world’s most legendary racetrack, has been the home of The Kentucky Derby, the longest continually held annual sporting event in the United States, since 1875. Located in Louisville, CDRT features a series of themed race days during Derby Week, including the Kentucky Oaks, and conducts Thoroughbred horse racing during three race meets in the Spring, September, and the Fall. CDRT is located on 175 acres and has a one-mile dirt track, a 7/8-mile turf track, a stabling area, and provides seating for approximately 60,000 guests. The stable area has barns sufficient to accommodate 1,400 horses and a 114-room dormitory for backstretch personnel. CDRT also has a year-round simulcast wagering facility. [www.ChurchillDowns.com](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com).

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