



THE DERBY DISPATCH

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ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES BEGINS SATURDAY WITH GRADE II, \$400,000 RISEN STAR AT FAIR GROUNDS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Feb. 16, 2023) – The Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series is set to kickoff Saturday in New Orleans with a full field of 14 3-year-olds that were entered in the \$400,000 Risen Star (Grade II) at Fair Grounds.

Promising horses have emerged each week in point-bearing prep races since this year's Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve commenced Sept. 17 at Churchill Downs. The 3-year-old picture should come into a sharper focus over seven of the next eight weekends as the race distances get longer and point values get larger.

Saturday's Risen Star – which has 100 points up for grabs: 50 for first, 20 for second, 15 for third, 10 for fourth and 5 for fifth – launches the 16-race Championship Series as aspiring Derby contenders continue their quest to secure a berth in the starting gate for the 149th running of the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on Saturday, May 6 at Churchill Downs.

In 20 Prep Season races that have been run so far, 18 different horses have won. The only dual winners were champion 2-year-old **Forte** and **Instant Coffee**, who won both the Kentucky Jockey Club (GII) and Lecomte (GIII). Forte is expected to return in the March 4 Fountain of Youth while Instant Coffee is likely to run in the TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII) on March 25.

Since the point series was adopted in 2012-13, it has taken an average of 21 points to make the field of 20 for the Kentucky Derby. However, this is the first year points have been awarded to the fifth-place finisher and an additional 577 points are up for grabs on the Road to the Kentucky Derby series.

SMARTY JONES STAKES WINNER VICTORY FORMATION TOPS GRADE II, \$400,000 RISEN STAR – Saturday's 51st running of the \$400,000 Risen Star (Grade II) at Fair Grounds features a talented cast of 14 3-year-olds where **Spendthrift Farm** and **Frank Fletcher's** \$250,000 Smarty Jones winner **Victory Formation** was tabbed as the slight 3-1 morning line favorite.

The 1 1/8 mile Risen Star will go as finale on the stakes-laden 13-race program at Fair Grounds with a post time of 7:14 p.m. (all times Eastern). First post is 1 p.m.

Victory Formation, campaigned by 2021 Kentucky Derby-winning trainer **Brad Cox**, is unbeaten in three starts. A son of Tapwrit, Victory Formation won his debut in front-running fashion Oct. 21 at Keeneland. One month later, the bay colt defeated seven rivals, including Jerome Stakes winner **Lugan Knight**, in a six-furlong first-level allowance at Churchill Downs. In his first start as a 3-year-old, Victory Formation skittered home to a three-length score in the Smarty Jones under jockey **Flavien Prat**.

This will be the first time Victory Formation will run further than one mile. Victory Formation's sire, Tapwrit, won the 2017 Belmont Stakes at 1 1/2 miles and even though is dam, **Smart N Soft**, never won at a distance greater than six furlongs, she produced multiple graded stakes placed route specialist **Bellamore**.

Prat will be back aboard Victory Formation who will break from post No. 13.

Aside from Victory Formation's 3-1 price, Fair Grounds' morning line oddsmaker **Mike Diliberto** tabbed six other horses at odds of less than 10-1 in the Risen Star: **Robert LaPenta**, a **Five Racing Thoroughbreds** and **Madaket Stables'** recent allowance runner-up **Tapit's Conquest** (6-1); **Albaugh Family Stables'** Smarty Jones Stakes runner-up **Angel of Empire** (8-1); **Michael McLaughlin's** \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII) winner **Curly Jack** (8-1); **John Oxley's** recent allowance winner **Determinedly** (8-1); **Harlo Stables Corp.** and **Rosa Farm's** Santa Anita maiden special weight winner **Harlocap** (8-1); and **Patricia's Hope** and **Phillip Sagan's** \$200,000 Street Sense (GIII) winner **Two Phil's** (8-1).

Here's the complete field for the Risen Star (from the rail out with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Quiet as Midnight** (Emanuel Nieves, Benard Chatters, 50-1); **Single Ruler** (Jose Riquelme, Keith Desormeaux, 30-1); **Shaq Diesel** (Adam Beschizza, Renaldo Richards, 30-1); **Determinedly** (Rey Gutierrez, Mark Casse, 8-1); **Harlocap** (John Velazquez, Steve Asmussen, 8-1); **Angel of Empire** (Luis Saez, Brad Cox, 8-1); **Sun Thunder** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 15-1); **Tapit's Conquest** (Florent Geroux, Cox, 6-1); **Curly Jack** (Edgar Morales, Tom Amoss, 8-1); **Two Phil's** (Jareth Loveberry, Larry Rivelli, 8-1); **Silver Heist** (Corey Lanerie, Asmussen, 12-1); **Crupi** (James Graham, Todd Pletcher, 15-1); **Victory Formation** (Prat, Cox, 3-1); and **Private Creed** (Tyler Gaffalione, Steve Asmussen, 12-1).

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Quiet as Midnight is the lone horse in the Risen Star that was not nominated to the Triple Crown. He can become eligible by paying a \$6,000 late nomination fee due March 27.

Fans can wager on the Risen Star at www.TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated and the Kentucky Derby.

RISEN STAR, RACHEL ALEXANDRA QUOTES

Risen Star:

- **Tom Amoss**, trainer, **Curly Jack**: “He’s prepared very well and I’m excited about running him this weekend. It’s his 3-year-old debut and big fields usually translate into traffic issues for horses off the pace and he’s one of those. I don’t want to make it sound like we would not love to win this race because we would. A big effort and taking into account what may or may not occur in the race is what we’re looking for from Curly Jack.”
- **Steve Asmussen**, trainer, **Harlo Cap**: “He got to Fair Grounds Monday night. He had a huge work (Saturday at Santa Anita, six furlongs in 1:11.80). Somebody will point out what number he is and I hope I put the saddle on the right one.”
- **Steve Asmussen**, trainer, **Private Creed**: “I didn’t want to try the 14-hole but I wanted to try him routing on dirt. Last year when he won the race at Kentucky Downs it was a coin flip on whether I’d run him back in the Bourbon (GII) or the Indian Summer as a prep for the Breeders’ Cup. It’s ironic that (trainer) Wayne Catalano’s horse (Andthelwinneris) who just beat him at Lone Star is also the horse that won the Bourbon. I backed him up to 5 ½ furlongs in the Indian Summer. He won that and ran solidly in the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint (GI). That was always too short for him but it was a great financial opportunity and it was fun. ... I didn’t think there would be much speed in the Risen Star but when there are 14 of them, someone will go. At 1 1/8 miles, with considerably more run into the first turn, you get a fairer shot than if it was 1 1/16 miles. Another concern with the far outside post, horses miss the break at the highest percentage there. A quarter of a step in the wrong direction is not what you want. He’s such a cool horse. He deserves a chance.”
- **Brad Cox**, trainer, **Tapit’s Conquest**: “I think he got out of the Lecomte and he hadn’t run since October. He needed the last race; he’s still learning. He didn’t really get involved as much as we’d like last time but ultimately came running and I think he got a lot out of it from an educational standpoint. He should love the extended distance even more.”
- **Brad Cox**, trainer, **Victory Formation**: “I think he should be able to break well and get good position. I’m not too worried about the outside post. He’s very quick from the gate and broke really sharp in all three of his starts. Obviously Flavien (Prat) is a great rider and we’re not going to give him too many instructions. He rode him last time so he does know the horse. Ultimately, it will be up to him where he wants him placed. I think he’ll like the distance based on his pedigree.”

Rachel Alexandra:

- **Tom Amoss**, trainer, **Hoosier Philly**: “We have a lot of expectations for her based on what she’s done so far, so there’s a lot of anticipation about how she’s going to come back as a 3-year-old. Her morning preparation has been just as it was when she was a 2-year-old, so that gives us some feeling of confidence going into the race. But still, it’s just her first race at three.”
- **Brad Cox**, trainer, **Chop Chop**: “The Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI) is a throw out race with the trip she got. Last time here in the Silverbulletday, you could say maybe she needed the race a little but from a fitness standpoint I thought she looked really good. The works were great but she really didn’t go by (The Alys Look). I’m hoping blinkers can help her get over the top if she ends up eye-balling another horse late in the race. Even when she won it was by a narrow margin. So, I’m hopeful this is something that can get her over the top and get her in the winner’s circle.”
- **Brendan Walsh**, trainer, **Pretty Mischievous**: “We just backed off her there after the Silverbulletday because she had run continuously since her first start and we figured we needed to give her some down time at some point. She’s come back well and her works have been good. She’s a pretty easy filly to ride. If she ends up prominent she’s prominent. If she ends up behind, it won’t take her out of her realm. We’ll leave it to Tyler (Gaffalione) and wherever she finds herself.”

RISEN STAR PRODUCED THREE KENTUCKY DERBY WINNERS – Three horses have run in the Risen Star and gone on to win the Kentucky Derby: **Mandaloun** (2021), **Country House** (2019) and **War Emblem** (2002).

Mandaloun was the only winner of both the Risen Star and Kentucky Derby. Country House finished second to eventual Preakness Stakes (GI) winner **War of Will** while War Emblem finished sixth to **Repent**.

The overall record of Kentucky Derby contenders from the Risen Star is 68-3-4-5.

RISEN STAR TIED FOR MOST DERBY STARTERS SINCE ROAD TO DERBY SERIES BEGAN IN 2013 – Since the inception of the Road to the Kentucky Derby in 2012-13, the Risen Star is tied with the Louisiana Derby for producing the most Derby starters of any Championship Series race: 33.

Here are the races on the Championship Series that have produced the most Kentucky Derby starters (since 2013): Risen Star (33); Louisiana Derby (33); Blue Grass (32); Arkansas Derby (28); Florida Derby (27); Santa Anita Derby (22); Wood Memorial (21); Rebel (20); Tampa Bay Derby (19); Fountain of Youth (18); San Felipe (15); Gotham (13); Jeff Ruby Steaks (10); UAE Derby (9); Sunland Derby (9) and Lexington (2).

HOW TO WATCH THE RISEN STAR – The Risen Star goes as Race 13 on Saturday's 13-race program at Fair Grounds, and has an approximately post time of 7:14 p.m. ET. It will air live on FanDuel TV and can also be watched on the Smart TV app Churchill Downs LIVE and www.TwinSpires.com.

KEY RACES TO WATCH TO WATCH – This weekend there are several races around the world that could have implications on the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks. Here are some of the key races:

Friday

- 10:10 a.m. ET, MEY 3, \$150,000 UAE Oaks (GIII), 3yo f, 1 1/8 M
- 3:22 p.m. ET, AQU 5, MSW, 3yo f, 6 F
- 5:15 p.m. ET, FG 7, OC 80k n1x, 3yo f, 1 1/16 M

Saturday

- 1:30 p.m. ET, FG 2, MSW, 3yo f, 1 1/16 M
- 2:30 p.m. ET, FG 4, MSW, 3yo f, 6 F
- 3 p.m. ET, FG 5, MSW, 3yo, 6 F
- 3:35 p.m. ET, OP 5, MSW, 3yo, 1 M
- 3:38 p.m. ET, GP 8, MSW, 3yo, 1 1/8 M (turf)
- 4:02 p.m. ET, FG 7, MSW, 3yo, 1 1/16 M
- 4:07 p.m. ET, OP 6, OC 100k n1x, 3yo, 1 1/16 M
- 4:33 p.m. ET, FG 8, OC 80k n1x, 3yo, 1 1/16 M
- 4:38 p.m. ET, OP 7, MSW, 3yo, 6 F
- 5:55 p.m. ET, TP 1, MSW, 3yo, 6 1/2 F (Tapeta)
- 6:41 p.m. ET, FG 12, \$300,000 Rachel Alexandra (GII), 3yo f, 1 1/16 M
- 7:14 p.m. ET, FG 13, \$400,000 Risen Star (GII), 3yo, 1 1/8 M

Sunday

- 12:25 a.m. ET, Tokyo 9, Hyacinth Stakes, 3yo, 1 M
- 5:10 p.m. ET, OP 8, OC 100k n2L, 3yo, 1 M

CHAMPION FORTE LEADS ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD – Through 20 races on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Prep Season, **Repole Stable** and **St. Elias Stable**'s Forte tops the leaderboard with 40 points. The talented son of Violence is expected to make his return to the races in the March 4 Fountain of Youth (GII) at Gulfstream Park.

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 st Breeders' Cup Juvenile 1 st Breeders' Futurity	March 4: Fountain of Youth	40
2	Instant Coffee	Brad Cox	1 st Lecomte 1 st Kentucky Jockey Club 4 th Breeders' Futurity	March 25: Louisiana Derby	32
3	Rocket Can	Bill Mott	1 st Holy Bull	TBA	20
4	Hit Show	Brad Cox	1 st Withers	April 8: Wood Memorial	20
5	Litigate	Todd Pletcher	1 st Sam F. Davis	TBA	20
6	Curly Jack	Tom Amoss	1 st Iroquois 2 nd Kentucky Jockey Club 5 th Breeders' Cup Juvenile	Feb. 18: Risen Star	17
7	Blazing Sevens	Chad Brown	1 st Champagne 4 th Breeders' Cup Juvenile	March 4: Fountain of Youth	16
8	Arctic Arrogance	Linda Rice	2 nd Withers 2 nd Jerome 2 nd Remsen	March 4: Gotham	16
9	Jace's Road	Brad Cox	1 st Gun Runner 3 rd Iroquois 5 th Southwest	TBA	15
10	Red Route One	Steve Asmussen	2 nd Southwest 3 rd Breeders' Futurity 4 th Kentucky Jockey Club	Feb. 25: Rebel	13
11	Victory Formation	Brad Cox	1 st Smarty Jones	Feb. 18: Risen Star	10
12	Dubychnell	Danny Gargan	1 st Remsen	TBA	10
13	Practical Move	Tim Yakteen	1 st Los Alamitos Futurity	March 4: San Felipe	10
14	Lugan Knight	Michael McCarthy	1 st Jerome	March 4: Gotham	10
15	General Banker	James Ferraro	3 rd Withers 3 rd Jerome	TBA	9
16	Two Phil's	Larry Rivelli	2 nd Lecomte	Feb. 18: Risen Star	8
17	Shadow Dragon	Bill Mott	2 nd Holy Bull	TBA	8
18	Denington	Kenny McPeck	3 rd Smarty Jones 4 th Lecomte 5 th Kentucky Jockey Club	Feb. 18: Allowance	8
19	Hayes Strike	Kenny McPeck	3 rd Kentucky Jockey Club 4 th Gun Runner 4 th Iroquois	TBA	7
20	Andiamo a Firenze	Kelly Breen	4 th Withers 4 th Champagne 5 th Jerome	TBA	7

DOWN THE STRETCH – Prior to the Risen Star at Fair Grounds, six Triple Crown nominees will test first level allowance company in Saturday's Race 8 at 4:33 p.m. ET. The 1 1/16-mile event is headlined by flashy 8 1/2-length maiden special weight winner **Banishing**, who was scratched from last month's Lecomte (GIII) when he was cast in his stall. This same race on last year's Risen Star program produced eventual Arkansas Derby (GI) winner **Cyberknife**. Ironically, his half-brother, **Tapit Shoes** is entered in this year's first-level allowance along with fellow Triple Crown nominees **Cagliostro**, **Denington**, **First Defender** and **Willakenzie**. ...

The Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby will resume Sunday at Tokyo Racecourse for the Hyacinth Stakes (Listed). The one-mile event will award the top 5 finishers points on a 30-12-9-6-3 scale. The early probables for the race include Triple Crown nominees **Eclogite** (JPN), **Goraiko** (JPN), **Meta Max** (JPN), **Omega Tuxedo** (JPN), **Perriere** (JPN) and **Sunday Funday** (JPN). The full list of entries will be found here: https://umaniy.jp/en/racedata/race_7.php?t=1&code=2023021905010809. ...

Winchell Thoroughbreds' impressive Saratoga maiden special weight winner **Disarm** will make his first start as a 3-year-old in Sunday's eighth race at Oaklawn, a one-mile first-level allowance contest. Post time is 5:10 p.m. ET. ...

The Championship Series on the Road to the Kentucky Oaks will begin Friday at Meydan for the \$150,000 UAE Oaks (GIII). The 1 1/8-mile race features UAE 1,000 Guineas heroine **Mimi Kakushi** (3-2). The Top 5 finishers in the race will be awarded points on a 50-20-15-10-5 scale. Post time is 10:10 a.m. ET....

The Road to the Kentucky Oaks will continue Saturday with the \$300,000 Rachel Alexandra (GII). The 1 1/16-mile race is headlined by undefeated **Hoosier Philly** (6-5). She's set to face five rivals including Grade I placed **Chop Chop**. The Rachel Alexandra, which will award the top 5 finishers points on a 50-20-15-10-5 scale, will go as Race 12 of 13 with a post time of 6:41 p.m. ET. ...

Early nominations to the 149th running of the \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) close Saturday. To nominate, call (502) 636-3806. ...

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. ...

Horses under the care of any suspended trainer or affiliates may be transferred to a non-suspended trainer and become eligible for earning Road to the Kentucky Derby points on a forward-looking basis so long as the transfer is complete by Feb. 28. ...

Spring Meet stall applications are due Friday, March 3. Following its annual closure for wintertime renovations, the Churchill Downs stable area will reopen Tuesday, March 21. The first day of training on the main dirt track will be Friday, March 24.

UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

Feb. 25 (10 weeks out) – \$1 million Rebel (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Oaklawn (Top 5 points: 50-20-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Bourbon Bash (D. Wayne Lukas); Giant Mischief (Brad Cox); Gun Pilot (Steve Asmussen); Red Route One (Steve Asmussen); and Verifying (Cox).

March 4 (nine weeks out) – \$400,000 Fountain of Youth (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Gulfstream Park (Top 5 points: 50-20-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Blazing Sevens (Chad Brown); Forte (Todd Pletcher); General Jim (Shug McGaughey); and *Tapit Trice* (Todd Pletcher).

March 4 (nine weeks out) – \$400,000 San Felipe (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Santa Anita (Top 5 points: 50-20-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): National Treasure (Bob Baffert); Practical Move (Tim Yakteen); and Reincarnate (Bob Baffert).

March 4 (nine weeks out) – \$300,000 Gotham (GIII), one mile, Aqueduct (Top 5 points: 50-20-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Arctic Arrogance (Linda Rice); Corona Bolt (Brad Cox); Jace's Road (Brad Cox); Lugan Knight (Michael McCarthy); and Slip Mahoney (Cox).

March 4 (nine weeks out) – \$150,000 John Battaglia Memorial, 1 1/16 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 5 points: 20-8-6-4-2)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Funtastic Again (Wesley Ward)

March 11 (eight weeks out) – \$400,000 Tampa Bay Derby (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Tampa Bay Downs

Known possible starters (with trainer): Classic Car Wash (Mark Casse); Groveland (Eoin Harty); and *Tapit Trice* (Todd Pletcher).

March 25 (six weeks out) – \$1 million Louisiana Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Fair Grounds (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Instant Coffee (Brad Cox).

March 25 (six weeks out) – \$1 million UAE Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Meydan Racecourse (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Tall Boy (Doug O'Neill)

March 25 (six weeks out) – \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), 1 1/8 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Chase the Chaos* (Ed Moger Jr.); Scoobie Quando (Ben Colebrook); and Wadsworth (Brad Cox).

March 26 (six weeks out) – \$600,000 Sunland Derby (GIII), 1 1/8 miles, Sunland Park (Top 4 points: 50-20-10-5)

April 1 (five weeks out) – \$1 million Florida Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Gulfstream Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

April 1 (five weeks out) – \$1.25 million Arkansas Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Oaklawn Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

April 8 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Wood Memorial (GII), 1 1/8 miles, Aqueduct (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Hit Show (Brad Cox)

April 8 (four weeks out) – \$1 million Blue Grass (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Keeneland (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

April 8 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Santa Anita (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Chase the Chaos* (Ed Moger Jr.)

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

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

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