



THE DERBY DISPATCH

Contacts: Darren Rogers (502) 636-4461 (o), (502) 345-1030 (m) or Darren.Rogers@KyDerby.com @DerbyMedia
Kevin Kerstein (502) 635-4712 (o), (610) 420-6971 (m) or Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com @HorseRacingKK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kevin Kerstein
Publicity Manager
Churchill Downs Racetrack
(610) 420-6971 (mobile)
(502) 635-4712 (office)
Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com

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

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022) – The Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series is set to kickoff Saturday in New Orleans with a competitive field of 10 horses that were entered in the \$400,000 Risen Star presented by Lamarque Ford (Grade II) at Fair Grounds.

Horses with promise have emerged each week in point-bearing prep races since this year's Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve commenced on Sept. 18. 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 the point values get larger.

Saturday's Risen Star – which has 85 points up for grabs: 50 for first, 20 for second, 10 for third and 5 for fourth – launches the 16-race Championship Series as 3-year-old Thoroughbreds continue their quest to secure a berth in the starting gate for the 148th running of the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on Saturday, May 7 at Churchill Downs.

In the 20 Prep Season races run since last September, 17 different horses have won. The three dual winners – champion 2-year-old **Corniche**, **Messier** and **Newgrange** – have not been able to accrue points because their trainer **Bob Baffert** is suspended by **Churchill Downs Incorporated** from competing in the 2022 Kentucky Derby.

Here are the Kentucky Derby Top 20 point earners heading into the Championship Series:

1. **Classic Causeway** (16 points, winner of Sam F. Davis, runner-up in Kentucky Jockey Club and third in Breeders' Futurity);
2. **Pappacap** (14, runner-up in Breeders' Cup Juvenile and American Pharoah, third in Lecomte);
3. **Epicenter** (14, winner of Gun Runner, runner-up in Lecomte);
4. **White Abarrio** (12, winner of Holy Bull, third in Kentucky Jockey Club);
5. **Mo Donegal** (12, winner of Remsen, third in Holy Bull);
6. **Rattle N Roll** (10, winner of Breeders' Futurity);
7. **Jack Christopher** (10, winner of Champagne);
8. **Make It Big** (10, winner of Springboard Mile);
9. **Smile Happy** (10, winner of Kentucky Jockey Club);
10. **Slow Down Andy** (10, winner of Los Alamitos Futurity);
11. **Major General** (10, winner of Iroquois);
12. **Dash Attack** (10, winner of Smarty Jones);
13. **Early Voting** (10, winner of Withers);
14. **Call Me Midnight** (10, winner of Lecomte);
15. **Courvoisier** (10, winner of Jerome);
16. **Barber Road** (8, runner-up in Smarty Jones and Southwest);
17. **Commandperformance** (6, runner-up in Champagne, third in Breeders' Cup Juvenile);
18. **Mackinnon** (5, runner-up in El Camino Real Derby, fourth in Sham);
19. **Giant Game** (4, third in Breeders' Cup Juvenile); and
20. **Simplification** (4, third in Holy Bull). Non-restricted stakes earnings and career earnings serve as tie-breakers.

Since the point series was adopted in 2013, it has taken an average of 21 points to make the field of 20 for the Kentucky Derby.

RISEN STAR PREVIEW – Saturday's \$400,000 Risen Star (Grade II) at Fair Grounds features the 3-year-old debut of three-time Kentucky Derby Future Wager individual favorite **Smile Happy** against well-meant prospects **Zandon**, **Slow Down Andy**, **Epicenter** and **Pappacap**.

Smile Happy, who closed as the 8-1 individual choice in the KDFW Pools 1-3, is the 7-2 favorite in the 10-horse Risen Star that will contest 1 1/8 miles and offer Kentucky Derby qualifying points of 50-20-10-5 to the top four finishers. Ridden by **Corey Lanerie** and trained by **Kenny McPeek**, the son of Runhappy easily won the \$400,000 Kentucky Jockey Club (GII) by 3 1/4 lengths in November.

"I think this is a good first step for Smile Happy," McPeek said. "He's doing super. He's done everything right. He's a very low maintenance horse who makes our job easy. He eats good. He loves to train."

Zandon, ridden by **Jose Ortiz** and trained by **Chad Brown**, lost the 1 1/8-mile Remsen (GII) in December at Aqueduct by a nose to **Mo Donegal**.

"We just felt like that surface and the longer stretch would suit his style better than the short stretch at Gulfstream that is usually speed favoring," Brown said. "He's got to get over the shipping, but the horse couldn't be training any better. This guy has only run twice, so a little different situation than some of the others I had on the (Kentucky Derby) trail that had more races under their belt. He's a very exciting prospect and I don't see any reason why he won't get up to a mile and a quarter."

California-invader **Slow Down Andy**, in the hands of two-time Kentucky Derby winners trainer **Doug O'Neill** and jockey **Mario Gutierrez**, beat **Messier** in December's Los Alamitos Futurity (GII).

"With a clean break, he'll show good tactical speed and he's got tremendous stamina," O'Neill said.

Epicenter, piloted by Eclipse Award-winning jockey **Joel Rosario** and trained by Hall of Famer **Steve Asmussen**, easily won the Gun Runner at Fair Grounds in December and returned to finish an unlucky head back of closing 28-1 winner **Call Me Midnight** in the Jan. 22 Lecomte (GIII) after dictating a swift pace throughout. His past performances suggest he could be on the lead again Saturday.

Pappacap, trained by **Mark Casse** who tabbed **Tyler Gaffalione** to ride for the time, was runner-up to champion juvenile **Corniche** in the American Pharoah (GI) and Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI) last fall and finished third beaten three-quarters of a length in the Lecomte while racing along the inside rail most of the way.

The Risen Star field from the rail out (with jockeys, trainers and morning line odds): Pappacap (Gaffalione, Casse, 4-1); **Russian Tank** (Jose Vega, Gennadi Dorochenko, 50-1); **Trafalgar** (Colby Hernandez, Al Stall Jr., 10-1); **Tawny Port** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 12-1); Epicenter (Rosario, Asmussen, 4-1); **Pioneer of Medina** (Luis Saez, Todd Pletcher, 10-1); Zandon (Ortiz, Brown, 9-2); Smile Happy (Lanerie, McPeek, 7-2); **Bodock** (Marcelino Pedroza Jr., Brad Cox, 10-0); and Slow Down Andy (Gutierrez, O'Neill, 9-2).

All but Russian Tank are nominated to the Triple Crown. Trafalgar will race with blinkers for the first time.

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 6:58 p.m. ET. It will air live on TVG and can also be watched on the Smart TV app Churchill Downs LIVE and www.TwinSpires.com.

KENTUCKY JOCKEY CLUB KEY RACE? – Three horses that finished behind **Smile Happy** in last November's Kentucky Jockey Club (GII) at Churchill Downs won a Road to the Kentucky Derby stakes race in their subsequent start. Runner-up **Classic Causeway** was a 3 3/4-length winner of last weekend's Sam F. Davis (GIII) at Tampa Bay Downs. Third-place finisher **White Abarrio** was a 4 1/2-length winner of the Feb. 5 Holy Bull (GIII). Seventh-place finisher **Call Me Midnight** was the upset 28-1 winner of the Jan. 22 Lecomte (GIII) at Fair Grounds.

Four other KJC starters, meanwhile, haven't fared as well. Fourth-place finisher **Ben Diesel** was seventh in the Jan. 1 Smarty Jones and rebounded to finish third in that track's Jan. 29 Southwest (GIII). Fifth-place finisher **Vivar** was 10th of 12 in the Southwest. Eighth-place finisher **Red Knobs** returned to turf and finished eighth in the Feb. 5 Kitten's Joy (GIII) at Gulfstream Park. Last of 11 in the KJC, **Ready Pursuit** finished seventh in a first-level allowance over the Tapeta at Turfway Park on Jan. 7.

Smile Happy, **Howling Time** (fifth), **Guntown** (ninth) and **Texas Red Hot** (10th) are training toward their 3-year-old debuts.

RECENT RISEN STAR WINNERS SHINE – Recent winners of the Risen Star have proven their victories were not a fluke.

Gun Runner, the 2016 Risen Star winner, would go on to win that year's Louisiana Derby (GII), Matt Winn (GIII) and Clark (GI) before earning Horse of the Year honors at age 4 with victories in the Razorback (GIII), Stephen Foster (GI), Whitney (GI), Woodward (GI) and Breeders' Cup Classic (GI) in 2017. He concluded his career in January 2018 with a 2 1/2-length score in the Pegasus World Cup (GI) to finish with a career record of 12-3-2 and \$15,988,500 in 19 starts.

Girvin, the 2017 winner, would later defeat **McCracken** and **Practical Joke** in that summer's Haskell (GI) at Monmouth Park.

Bravazo, who scored a 21-1 upset in the 2018 Risen Star, came within a half-length of eventual Triple Crown winner **Justify** in the slop at that year's Preakness (GI) at Pimlico and also finished a neck back of **Leofric** in the 2018 Clark (GI) at Churchill Downs.

War of Will, the 2019 winner, prevailed in the Preakness (GI) after an adventurous trip in the Kentucky Derby, and would later win the Maker's Mark Mile (GI) at Keeneland by a nose in 2020.

The 2020 renewal was run in split divisions. **Mr. Monomoy**, the half-brother to champion **Monomoy Girl**, never raced again after his Risen Star first division victory. **Modernist**, the second division winner, won the Excelsior (GIII) at Aqueduct at age 4.

Last year's Risen Star winner was **Mandaloun**, who crossed the wire second in the Kentucky Derby. He's won his last three races: the Pegasus and Haskell (GI) – via disqualification – at Monmouth and this year's Louisiana (GIII) at Fair Grounds.

OTHER 3-YEAR-OLD RACES TO WATCH – **Cyberknife**, **Gunfighter**, **Guntown**, **Kapuna**, **Peaceful Waters**, **Shinnecock Hills** and **Strava** are Triple Crown nominees entered in a first-level optional-claimer over 1 1/16 miles on Saturday at Fair Grounds (Race 8 at 4:25 p.m.). **Gold Square's** Cyberknife, who finished sixth last out in the Lecomte (GIII) is the 7-2 morning line choice. Strava, who is the co-second choice at 9-2, is co-owned by former University of Louisville legendary basketball coach **Denny Crum**. ... Triple Crown nominees **King Ottoman**, **Maasai Warrior**, **Strong Quality** and **Vinco** are among nine maidens entered in a 1 1/16-mile race Saturday at Fair Grounds (Race 6 at 3:27 p.m.). **Barry and Joni Butzow's** Maasai Warrior was made the 7-2 morning line favorite. ... **Conclusive**, who won a first-level allowance at Laurel by 5 3/4-lengths in January, is the lone Triple Crown nominee in Saturday's nine-horse \$100,000 Miracle Wood over one mile at Laurel (Race 5 at 2:21 p.m. ET).

DOWN THE STRETCH – The Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby continues early Sunday at 12:25 a.m. ET with the Hyacinth from Tokyo Racecourse. The top four finishers in the one mile race will accrue points on a scale of 30-12-6-3 in stand-alone series of races from Japan. Here's the field from the rail out (with jockey and trainer): **Welcome News** (Takeshi Yokoyama, Yasutoshi Ikee); **El Paso** (Kosei Miura, Ryo Takei); **Osteria** (Hiroyuki Uchida, Hiroshi Miyamoto); **Crown Pride** (Mirco Demuro, Koichi Shintani); **Good Deal** (Christophe Lemaire, Naosuke Sugai); **Combustion** (Yuga Kawada, Keizo Ito); **Sea Vixen** (Hiroshi Kitamura, Kazuo Fujisawa); **Jasper Jet** (Yutaka Take, Hideyuki Mori); **Taisei Drefong** (Keita Tosaki, Masayuki Nishimura); **Blitz Fang** (Yuichi Fukunaga, Ryuji Okubo); **Geraldo Barows** (Shu Ishibashi, Ryo Terashima); **Mesmeriser** (Takuya Ono, Teruhiko Chida); **Line of Soul** (Akira Sugawara, Hidetaka Otonashi); and **Rayas** (Yasunari Iwata, Hideyuki Mori). El Paso, Osteria, Crown Pride, Blitz Fang, Geraldo Barows and Line of Soul are nominated to the Triple Crown. ... Early \$200 nominations to the \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) – the Derby's sister race for 3-year-old fillies at 1 1/8 miles on Friday, May 6 – close Saturday. ... Undefeated filly **Shahama** is expected to be the heavy favorite in Friday's UAE Oaks (GIII) at Meydan Racecourse. The 1 1/8-mile race goes as Race 3 at 10:10 a.m. ET and the winner will receive 50 points on the Road to the Kentucky Oaks. ... The Road to the Kentucky Oaks continues Saturday with the \$300,000 Rachel Alexandra (GII) over 1 1/16 miles at Fair Grounds. Eighty-five points are up for grabs: 50 for first, 20 for second, 10 for third and 5 for fourth. The field from the rail out (with jockeys, trainers and morning line odds): **La Crete** (Joel Rosario, Steve Asmussen, 8-1); **North County** (Adam Beschizza, Brendan Walsh, 8-1); **Miss Mattie B** (Mike Smith, Bob Hess Jr., 15-1); **Dream Lith** (Ramon Vazquez, Robertino Diodoro, 6-1); **Divine Huntress** (Jose Ortiz, Graham Motion, 6-1); **Candy Raid** (Jose Riquelme, Keith Desormeaux, 30-1); **Turnerloose** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 12-1); **Goddess of Fire** (Luis Saez, Todd Pletcher, 8-1); **Awake At Midnyte** (Mario Gutierrez, Doug O'Neill, 7-2); **California Angel** (Deshawn Parker, George Leonard III, 30-1); and **Hidden Connection** (Reylu Gutierrez, Bret Calhoun, 3-1). The Rachel Alexandra goes as Race 12 at approximately 6:27 p.m. ET. ... The Risen Star and Rachel Alexandra are two of six stakes races on a stellar 13-race card Saturday at Fair Grounds. The others: the \$100,000 Colonel Power for 4-year-olds and up at 5 1/2 furlongs on turf featuring multiple stakes winner **Just Might**; \$100,000 Albert M. Stall Memorial for fillies and mares at 1 1/16 miles on turf; \$250,000 Mineshaft (GIII) for 4-year-olds and up at 1 1/16 miles featuring recent 7 1/4-length allowance winner **Olympiad**; \$150,000 Fair Grounds (GIII) for 4-year-olds and up at 1 1/8 miles on turf. ... The barn area at Churchill Downs is scheduled to open Tuesday, March 22. ... Trainer **D. Wayne Lukas** reported top 3-year-old filly **Secret Oath** is likely to be nominated to the \$1 million Arkansas Derby (GI) on April 2. The winner of last month's Martha Washington was nominated to the Triple Crown. ... Next week's Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series continues with the Rebel at Oaklawn.

UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES RACES

Feb. 26 (10 weeks out) – \$1 million Rebel (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Oaklawn Park (Top 4 points: 50-20-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Barber Road (John Ortiz); Ben Diesel (Dallas Stewart); Chasing Time (Steve Asmussen); Dash Attack (Kenny McPeck); Ethereal Road (Wayne Lukas); and Newgrange (Bob Baffert).

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

Known possible starters (with trainer): A. P.'s Secret (Saffie Joseph Jr.); Emmanuel (Todd Pletcher); In Due Time (Kelly Breen); *Mo Donegal* (Pletcher); Rattle N Roll (Kenny McPeck); and Simplification (Antonio Sano).

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

Known possible starters (with trainer): Forbidden Kingdom (Richard Mandella) and Messier (Bob Baffert).

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

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Early Voting* (Chad Brown); Fromanothamutha (Ray Handal); Golden Code (Todd Pletcher); *Major General* (Todd Pletcher); and Morello (Steve Asmussen).

March 5 (nine weeks out) – \$125,000 John Battaglia Memorial, 1 1/16 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 4 points: 10-4-2-1)

March 12 (eight weeks out) – \$400,000 Tampa Bay Derby (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Tampa Bay Downs (Top 4 points: 50-20-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Classic Causeway (Brian Lynch); *Major General* (Todd Pletcher); *Rattle N Roll* (Kenny McPeck); and Shipsational (Ed Barker).

March 26 (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): Call Me Midnight (Keith Desormeaux) and *Zozos* (Brad Cox)

March 26 (six weeks out) – \$1 million UAE Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Meydan Racecourse (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

March 27 (six weeks out) – \$500,000 Sunland Derby (GIII), 1 1/8 miles, Sunland Park (Top 4 points: 50-20-10-5)

April 2 (five weeks out) – \$1.25 million Arkansas Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Oaklawn Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Secret Oath (Wayne Lukas) and *Zozos* (Brad Cox).

April 2 (five weeks out) – \$1 million Florida Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Gulfstream Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): White Abarrio (Saffie Joseph Jr.).

April 2 (five weeks out) – \$600,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), 1 1/8 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Tiz the Bomb (Kenny McPeck).

April 9 (four weeks out) – \$1 million Blue Grass (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Keeneland (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Zozos* (Brad Cox)

April 9 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Santa Anita (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

April 9 (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): *Early Voting* (Chad Brown) and *Mo Donegal* (Todd Pletcher),

April 16 (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

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 saddling paddock and 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.

-END-