



THE DERBY DISPATCH

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MASSIVE WEEKEND ON ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY FEATURES FOUR CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES EVENTS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, March 23, 2023) – Following one week off, the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series is set to return in a big way with four major Kentucky Derby qualifying races led by Saturday's \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (Grade II) and \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII).

Along with the TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby and Jeff Ruby Steaks, the action on the Road to the Kentucky Derby will begin early Saturday morning with the \$1 million UAE Derby (GII) at Meydan Racecourse in Dubai. The weekend's Championship Series action will close Sunday with the \$600,000 Sunland Derby (GIII).

Not only is the action lively on the traditional Road to the Kentucky Derby, the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby is set to conclude early Saturday morning with the \$282,000 Fukuryu Stakes at Nakayama.

With only six weeks remaining until the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI), the field for this year's "Run for the Roses" will begin to take shape as the 3-year-old picture comes into sharper focus.

COX ENTERS TRIO IN SATURDAY'S TWINSPIRES.COM LOUISIANA DERBY – **Gold Square's** Lecomte (GIII) winner **Instant Coffee**, currently ninth on the Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve leaderboard with 32 points, headlines a full field of 12 3-year-olds for the 110th running of the \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII).

Saturday's program at Fair Grounds Race Course & Slots also features the \$400,000 Fair Grounds Oaks (GII) presented by Fasig-Tipton. Both races for 3-year-olds are the first preps in the Championship Series, offering 100-40-30-20-10 qualifying points on the Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve and the Longines Kentucky Oaks, respectively.

The Louisiana Derby was extended from 1 1/8 miles to 1 3/16 miles in 2020 and it is the only Kentucky Derby prep race run in North America at that distance. Six other Louisiana Derby runners besides Instant Coffee have already banked Kentucky Derby points: Sun Thunder (24), Curly Jack (17), Jace's Road (15), Tapit's Conquest (10), Denington (8) and Single Ruler (5).

Along with the duo of 3-year-old stakes events, Saturday's program also includes the \$500,000 New Orleans Classic presented by Relyne GI by Hagyard (GII); \$300,000 Muniz Memorial presented by Horse Racing Nation (GII); \$100,000 Tom Benson Stakes; and a trio of Louisiana-bred events, the \$100,000 Costa Rising, \$100,000 Crescent City Derby and \$100,000 Crescent City Oaks.

Trainer **Brad Cox** has swept the trio of local preps leading up to the 2023 Louisiana Derby, winning the Gun Runner with **Jace's Road**, the Lecomte (GIII) with Instant Coffee and the Risen Star (GII) with **Angel of Empire**. Both Jace's Road and Instant Coffee are back for the Louisiana Derby, along with **Tapit's Conquest**, who was recently a very competitive fourth in the Risen Star. Cox sent out **Wells Bayou** to win the Louisiana Derby in 2020.

Riding a two-race win streak into the Louisiana Derby that includes a pair of graded stakes, Instant Coffee will make his second start as a 3-year-old. In both the Kentucky Jockey Club (GII) and most recently in the Lecomte, Instant Coffee proved his ability to rally from first to last, sustaining his late kick through the 1 1/16 miles finish line. Both races have come back strong as **Confidence Game** (GII Rebel) and **Denington** (undercard allowance) came back to win their next start and Lecomte runner-up **Two Phil's** returned to finish third in the Risen Star. In the Kentucky Jockey Club, Instant Coffee bested **Red Route One** who is currently in eighth on the Derby Leaderboard, **Cyclone Mischief** (25th), Denington, Curly Jack, and recent stakes winner **Hayes Strike**.

Getting the 1 3/16-mile distance is the foremost question for each of the 12 entrants, but pace is a big factor as well. Brisnet defines seven of the 12 as having late speed and five with moderate early speed. It could be argued that none have proven themselves as true front-runners, but Cox's entry **West Point Thoroughbreds** and **Albaugh Family Stables'** Jace's Road did win the Gun Runner on the lead. He drew post No. 11 and will be piloted by **Florent Geroux**.

After ranging up outside of the top three finishers in the Risen Star, **Robert LaPenta, c Five Racing Thoroughbreds** and **Madaket Stables'** Tapit's Conquest failed to produce a bid but held on for fourth. He hasn't won since breaking his maiden in October at Churchill, but the Tapit colt has been training forwardly and has a new pilot in **Manny Franco** for the Louisiana Derby.

Steve Asmussen has won the Louisiana Derby four times, including last year with **Epicenter**. He's represented by a pair of upstarts in Saturday's race in **Shopper's Revenge** and **Disarm**.

Drawing the rail, **Whisper Hill Farm** and **Three Chimneys Farm's** homebred Shopper's Revenge could be a pace presence in a field light on front-runners. That is, if he can break with alacrity. Winning his maiden at Oaklawn in January, he hesitated slightly before gamely splitting foes and putting himself on the lead. In his next start, he hesitated even longer and was forced to attack the field from the back of the pack, but still ran well for second.

"We worked him out of the gates (Monday)," Asmussen said. "He's gotten a little caught up away from the gates a couple of times. His one victory was when he was away recently and led wire to wire. With drawing the rail, I want him to get away cleanly and we worked him from the gates trying to assure a better start for him. He's a beautiful athlete and will stay on really well."

Having won the last two Louisiana Derbies, piloting Epicenter last year and **Hot Rod Charlie** in 2021, jockey **Joel Rosario** will again be donning the maroon silks of Winchell Thoroughbreds aboard Disarm, as the owners vie for their fourth victory in this race. The Gun Runner colt broke his maiden in September going seven furlongs at Saratoga, but didn't race again until finishing second going one mile in February at Oaklawn Park.

"He needed that race and he needs this," Asmussen said. "He's a talented horse playing catch up. From where we were at, I only felt we could get two runs in him (before a possible start in the Kentucky Derby), and the mile-and-three-sixteenths distance will move him forward. He's a horse who will stay on nicely but he needs some racing. He has a high talent level and deserves this chance."

Todd Pletcher has won the Louisiana Derby four times, most recently with **Noble Indy** in 2015. On Saturday he will be represented by **Kingsbarns**, who is undefeated in two starts.

The only other trainer participating in this year's race who has won a Louisiana Derby is **Kenny McPeek**, who did it in 2001 with **Repent**. He entered the Risen Star place-finisher in **R.T Racing Stable** and **Cypress Creek Equine's Sun Thunder** along with **Fern Circle Stables** and **Magdalena Racing's Denington**, who followed up his fourth-place finish in the Lecomte with an impressive allowance win. Sun Thunder will once again receive the services of jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.**, but Denington will have a new pilot in **Junior Alvarado**, as **Corey Lanerie** opts to ride **Lothenbach Stable's Baseline Beater**.

Here is the complete field for the Louisiana Derby from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds):

1. Shopper's Revenge (Ricardo Santana, Steve Asmussen, 12-1);
2. Instant Coffee (Luis Saez, Brad Cox, 2-1)
3. Curly Jack (Edgar Morales, Tom Amoss, 12-1)
4. Sun Thunder (Brian Hernandez Jr., Ken McPeek, 5-1)
5. Disarm (Joel Rosario, Steve Asmussen, 10-1)
6. Kingsbarns (Flavien Prat, Todd Pletcher, 6-1)
7. Cagliostro (Christian Torres, Cherie DeVaux, 12-1)
8. Single Ruler (David Cohen, Keith Desormeaux, 15-1)
9. Tapit's Conquest (Manny Franco, Brad Cox, 10-1)
10. Denington (Junior Alvarado, Ken McPeek, 12-1)
11. Jace's Road (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 12-1)
12. Baseline Beater (Corey Lanerie, Neil Pessin, 20-1)

MULTIPLE GRADED STAKES WINNER MAJOR DUDE HEADLINES FULL FIELD OF 12 IN GRADE III, \$700,000

JEFF RUBY STEAKS – **Spendthrift Farm's** multiple graded stakes winning 3-year-old **Major Dude** headlines a talented field of 12 colts and geldings that were entered in Saturday's 52nd running of the \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (Grade III) at Turfway Park Racing & Gaming.

The Jeff Ruby Steaks, a Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series qualifier, will go as Race 12 with a post time of 6:25 p.m. (all times Eastern). First post for the stellar 13-race program will be 12:45 p.m. Along with the Jeff Ruby Steaks, the stakes-laden card will also feature the 41st running of the \$300,000 Bourbonette Oaks; the 23rd running of the \$300,000 TwinSpires Kentucky Cup Classic (Listed); the 37th running of the \$250,000 Animal Kingdom Stakes; the 41st running of the \$250,000 Latonia Stakes; and the 36th running of the \$250,000 Rushaway.

The Jeff Ruby Steaks, run over the synthetic Tapeta surface, will offer points to the top five finishers on a 100-40-30-20-10 scale towards a spot in the starting gate for the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI).

Two-time graded stakes winner Major Dude will invade Turfway Park from his South Florida base for Hall of Fame trainer **Todd Pletcher**. The son of Bolt d'Oro tabbed his first stakes victory on Oct. 2 in the \$200,000 Pilgrim (GII) at the Belmont at Aqueduct meet. Following a disappointing ninth-place effort in the \$1 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (GI), Major Dude made his 3-year-old debut in the \$100,000 Dania Beach at Gulfstream Park where he rallied for second at odds of even-money. In his last start, Major Dude contested the \$175,000 Kitten's Joy (GIII) and defeated seven rivals by 1 ½ lengths under **Irad Ortiz Jr.**

Ortiz will once again have the mount on Major Dude in the Jeff Ruby Steaks. Ortiz last rode at Turfway in 2020 when he won the Jeff Ruby Steaks aboard **Field Pass**. Ortiz and Major Dude will break from the rail as the morning line favorite at odds of 2-1.

Another talented 3-year-old that entered the Jeff Ruby Steaks is **Patricia's Hope** and **Phillip Sagan's** two-time stakes winner **Two Phil's**. Trained by **Larry Rivelli**, Two Phil's seven-race campaign has solely been over dirt and the Jeff Ruby will be his first test on Tapeta. The chestnut son of Hard Spun began his march to the Kentucky Derby after his dominant 5 ¼-length victory in the \$200,000 Street Sense (GIII) at Churchill Downs. Following that effort, Two Phil's was the runner-up to **Instant Coffee** in the \$200,000 Lecomte (GIII) and third-place finisher to **Angel of Empire** and **Sun Thunder** in the \$400,000 Risen Star (GII). Four weeks ago, Rivelli opted to ship to the colt back from Fair Grounds to his base at Hawthorne to begin his preparation for the Jeff Ruby Steaks. Two Phil's arrived at Turfway on March 13 and has been training daily over the Florence oval.

Jockey **Jareth Loveberry**, who's ridden Two Phil's in his last six starts, will have the call in the Jeff Ruby Steaks from post 10 as the 7-2 second choice on **Mike Battaglia's** morning line odds.

Among the other top competitors in the Jeff Ruby is **Tami Bobo** and **Lugamo Racing Stable's** \$150,000 John Battaglia Memorial winner **Congruent**. Ridden by Kentucky Derby 148 winning jockey **Sonny Leon**, Congruent invaded Turfway from Gulfstream Park and scored an impressive 3 ½-length victory in the John Battaglia Memorial. The gray son of Tapit will attempt to duplicate that same effort from three weeks ago from post 8 and Leon in the irons. Congruent was tabbed at odds of 5-1 on the morning line.

One of the top local contenders entered in the Jeff Ruby Steaks is **Three Chimneys Farm's Funtastic Again**. Trained by 2021 Jeff Ruby Steaks winning conditioner **Wesley Ward**, Funtastic Again has not returned to the races since his stout 3 ¾-length win in the \$125,000 Leonatus Stakes on Jan. 21 at Turfway. Prior to the Leonatus Stakes, Funtastic Again dazzled in a first-level allowance contest by 5 ½ lengths at Turfway.

Jockey **Gerardo Corrales** will ride the son of Funtastic from post 4 at odds of 6-1.

Here is the complete field for the Jeff Ruby Steaks in order of post position (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds):

1. Major Dude (Ortiz, Pletcher, 2-1)
2. **Scobie Quando** (Luan Machado, Ben Colebrook, 15-1)
3. **Event Detail** (Walter Rodriguez, Paulo Lobo, 20-1)
4. Funtastic Again (Corrales, Ward, 6-1)
5. **Maker's Candy** (Umberto Rispoli, Mike Maker, 12-1)
6. **Baby Billy** (Joe Talamo, Jack Sisterson, 30-1)
7. **Bluebirds Over** (Edgard Zayas, Saffie Joseph Jr., 12-1)
8. Congruent (Leon, Sano, 5-1)
9. **Escapologist** (Alex Achard, Kenny McPeck, 30-1)
10. Two Phil's (Loveberry, Rivelli, 7-2)
11. **Wadsworth** (Chris Landeros, Brad Cox, 8-1)
12. Point Proven (John Velazquez, Todd Pletcher, 15-1)

Starting at 6 p.m., fans can watch the Jeff Ruby Steaks on a special Road to the Kentucky Derby broadcast on CNBC. Wagering is available for every race from Turfway Park on www.TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated.

IMPRESSIVE EUROPEAN ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY WINNER CAIRO (IRE) HEADLINES \$1 MILLION UAE DERBY – Derrick Smith, Mrs. John Magnier, Michael B. Tabor and Westerberg's impressive Patton Stakes winner **Cairo (IRE)** is set to return on short rest as the likely favorite in Saturday morning's \$2 million UAE Derby (GII) at Meydan Racecourse.

Run at about 1 1/8 miles, the UAE Derby was carded as the fifth race on Dubai World Cup Night at 9:50 a.m. ET. The UAE Derby will offer the top five finishers points on a 100-50-30-20-10 scale towards a spot in the starting gate for the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI).

Trained by **Aidan O'Brien**, Cairo has won three of five lifetime starts in Ireland. The well-bred son of Quality Road will break from post position No. 5 under the No. 3 saddle towel and will be ridden by **Ryan Moore**.

The UAE Derby consists of five challengers from Japan, who are all early Triple Crown nominees: **Continuar (JPN)**, **Derma Sotogake (JPN)**, **Dura Erede (JPN)**, **Goraiko (JPN)** and **Perriere (JPN)**.

Yuji Hasegawa's Perriere currently leads the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby with 36 points. **Hiroyuki Asanuma's** Derma Sotogake is in second with 20 points while **Lion Race Horse Co. Ltd.'s Continuar** is third with 10 points. **Koji Oka's** Goraiko is in fifth with three points following his fifth-place finish in the Hyacinth.

Any horse's points earned in America's Road to the Kentucky Derby will be credited to the horse's point total in the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby.

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

1. **Es-Unico** (Joao Moreira, Antonio Cintra)
2. **Ah Jeez** (Tyler Gaffalione, Doug O'Neill)
3. **Cairo (IRE)** (Moore, O'Brien)
4. **Continuar** (Ryusei Sakai, Yoshito Yahagi)
5. **Derma Sotogake** (Cristophe Lemaire, (Hidetaka Otonashi)
6. **Dura Erede** (Cristian Demuro, Manbu Ikezoe)
7. **Go Soldier Go** (Adrie De Vries, Fawzi Nass)
8. **Goraiko** (Yuga Kawada, Koichi Shintaini)
9. **Lahresh (GB)** (Mickael Barzalona, Musabah Al Muhairi)
10. **Mr Raj** (Ray Dawson, Ahmad bin Harmash)
11. **Perriere** (Osin Murphy, Yoichi Kuroiwa)
12. **Tall Boy** (William Buick, O'Neill)
13. **Worcester** (Frankie Dettori, Bob Baffert)

Fans can watch and wager on the UAE Derby on www.twinspires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated and the Kentucky Derby.

TRIPLE CROWN NOMINATED FORT BRAGG SHIPS TO NEW MEXICO FOR SUNLAND DERBY – Graded stakes-placed 3-year-old **Fort Bragg** will ship from his Southern California base to New Mexico in his attempt to qualify for the first Saturday in May in Sunday's \$600,000 Sunland Park Derby (GIII).

The seven-horse field for the Sunland Park Derby will head to post Sunday at 6:45 p.m. in Race 10.

Six of the seven horses in the field are eligible to garner points that will be awarded on a 50-20-15-10-5 scale towards a spot in the starting gate for the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI). **Hard to Figure**, the 2-1 morning line choice, is ineligible to garner points because he is in the care of **Bob Baffert**, who is suspended by Churchill Downs Incorporated from competing in the Kentucky Derby.

The former Baffert-trained Fort Bragg is now in the care of **Tim Yakteen** and will attempt to avenge his fifth-place finish in the San Felipe (GII). The well-bred son of Tapit is the top rated horse in the Sunland Derby on Brisnet's Prime Power Rating (138.8). He'll be ridden by **Juan Hernandez** from post No. 3.

One of the three non-Triple Crown nominated horses in the Sunland Derby is dazzling 14-length Mine That Bird Derby winner **Henry Q**. Trained by **Todd Fincher** and ridden by **Edwin Maldonado**, Henry Q led every step of the way in the Feb. 28 1 1/16-mile event and drew away easily to earn a 101 Brisnet Speed Rating. He'll break from post 4 in the Sunland Park Derby.

Hard to Figure, who will be ridden by **Flavien Prat**, enters the Sunland Park Derby following his runner-up effort to **Newgate** in the Robert B. Lewis Stakes (GIII). **Hard to Figure** will break from post 6.

Here is the complete field for the Sunland Park Derby from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds):

1. **How Did He Do That** (Alfredo Juarez Jr., Steve Asmussen, 9-2)
2. **Low Expectations** (Mario Gutierrez, Antonio Garcia, 6-1)
3. **Fort Bragg** (Hernandez, Yakteen, 4-1)
4. **Henry Q** (Maldonado, Fincher, 3-1)
5. **One in Vermillion** (Harry Hernandez, Esteban Martinez, 6-1)
6. **Hard to Figure** (Prat, Baffert, 2-1)
7. **Wild On Ice** (Ken Tohill, Joel Marr, 20-1)

LOUISIANA DERBY QUOTES –

Tom Amoss, trainer, Curly Jack: “I don’t see a lot of pace in the race but what I don’t want to do is get caught up in being too quick early. Drawing in post 3 along the rail allows us to break and not have to worry about trying to position closer to the rail than we already are. It’s going to be break, relax, save as much ground as possible and hopefully get a trip where we can get out when we want to get out.”

Steve Asmussen, trainer, Disarm: “He needed that race (at Oaklawn when he finished second in an allowance contest) and he needs this. He’s a talented horse playing catch up. From where we were at, I only felt we could get two runs in him before the Kentucky Derby and the distance of the Louisiana Derby will move him forward. He’s a horse who will stay on nicely but needs some racing. He has a high talent level and deserves this chance.”

Steve Asmussen, trainer, Shopper’s Revenge: “We worked him out of the gates on Monday and he’s gotten a little caught up away from the gates a couple times. His one victory was when he was away recently and led wire to wire. With drawing the rail, I want him to get away cleanly and we worked him from the gates trying to assure a better start for him. He’s a beautiful athlete and will stay on really well.”

Neil Pessin, trainer, Baseline Beater: “He’s never had a clean run, not one time. Hopefully it will be Saturday. He’s not fast out of the gate. Last time he broke as good as he can. He still takes back but he can close. And it doesn’t matter about tight spots, he’ll go wherever you put him, just give him a spot to go and he’ll finish.”

JEFF RUBY STEAKS QUOTES –

Chris Landeros, jockey, Wadsworth: “I’m really excited about our draw. I think breaking on the outside (post 11) will allow him to show his natural speed into the first turn and allow us to see what horses go or don’t go inside us. He’s a horse that has really impressed us this winter and I think can make a step forward in this spot.”

Larry Rivelli, trainer, Two Phil’s: “At one point the horse did a two-minute lick for me one time over a synthetic surface and it was almost an eye-opening move. I’ve been trying to think of the easiest spot for the money and I think this will be the spot. If he absolutely hates the surface, that’s on me. I’m sort of putting myself out there saying that I think he will run well over it. Working a half-mile or five-eighths is a lot different than running a race. That’s when you find out if a horse doesn’t like a surface. I’m pretty confident he will like it but like anything else in racing there could be a chance he doesn’t like it. I didn’t think he’d like the mud at Churchill (in the Street Sense) until he did. He definitely belongs with the top horses in this crop. Is he capable of taking this next step? Who knows? There are going to be horses that start falling off but as long as no horses like **Justify** or **American Pharoah** come out of the woodwork, it could be a Derby this year that you could throw a dart.”

FORTE REMAINS AHEAD ON ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD – Repole Stable and St. Elias Stable’s Forte stamped himself as the early Derby favorite when he won the \$400,000 Fountain of Youth (GII) at Gulfstream Park. He remains in the top spot but that will change after this weekend’s quartet of Championship Series contests.

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 Fountain of Youth 1 st Breeders’ Cup Juvenile 1 st Breeders’ Futurity	April 1: Florida Derby	90
2	Practical Move	Tim Yakteen	1 st San Felipe 1 st Los Alamitos Futurity	April 8: Santa Anita Derby	60
3	Confidence Game	Keith Desormeaux	1 st Rebel 3 rd Lecomte 5 th Iroquois	April 1: Arkansas Derby or April 8: Blue Grass or May 6: Kentucky Derby	57
4	Angel of Empire	Brad Cox	1 st Risen Star 2 nd Smarty Jones	April 1: Arkansas Derby	54
5	Raise Cain	Ben Colebrook	1 st Gotham 2 nd Gun Runner	April 8: Blue Grass	54
6	Tapit Trice	Todd Pletcher	1 st Tampa Bay Derby	April 8: Blue Grass	50
7	Rocket Can	Bill Mott	1 st Holy Bull 2 nd Fountain of Youth	April 1: Arkansas Derby	40
8	Red Route One	Steve Asmussen	2 nd Rebel 2 nd Southwest 3 rd Breeders’ Futurity 4 th Kentucky Jockey Club	March 25: Louisiana Derby	33
9	Instant Coffee	Brad Cox	1 st Lecomte 1 st Kentucky Jockey Club 4 th Breeders’ Futurity	March 25: Louisiana Derby	32
10	Classic Car Wash	Mark Casse	2 nd Tampa Bay Derby 3 rd Sam F. Davis	April 8: Blue Grass	26
11	Sun Thunder	Kenny McPeck	2 nd Risen Star 4 th Southwest	March 25: Louisiana Derby	24
12	General Banker	James Ferraro	3 rd Gotham 3 rd Withers 3 rd Jerome	April 8: Wood Memorial	24
13	Two Phil’s	Larry Rivelli	2 nd Lecomte 3 rd Risen Star	March 25: Jeff Ruby Steaks	23
14	Congruent	Antonio Sano	1 st John Battaglia Memorial	March 25: Jeff Ruby Steaks	20
15	Hit Show	Brad Cox	1 st Withers	April 8: Wood Memorial	20
16	Geaux Rocket Ride	Richard Mandella	2 nd San Felipe	April 8: Santa Anita Derby	20
17	Slip Mahoney	Brad Cox	2 nd Gotham	April 8: Wood Memorial	20
18	Classic Legacy	Bill Mott	3 rd Tampa Bay Derby 4 th Sam F. Davis	TBA	19
19	Curly Jack	Tom Amoss	1 st Iroquois 2 nd Kentucky Jockey Club 5 th Breeders’ Cup Juvenile	March 25: Louisiana Derby	17
20	Blazing Sevens	Chad Brown	1 st Champagne 4 th Breeders’ Cup Juvenile	April 8: Wood Memorial	16

DOWN THE STRETCH –

A field of 14 3-year-olds are set to contest the Fukuryu Stakes Saturday at Nakayama – the close of the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby. Five horses in the field are nominated to the Triple Crown: **Curren Alcantara (JPN)**, **Lux Frontier (JPN)**, **Mokku Mokku (JPN)**, **Till Dawn**, **Vendaval y Rabiari (JPN)**. The Fukuryu has a scheduled post time of 2:10 a.m. ET.

Fans can watch Saturday's \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII), \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII) and \$400,000 Fair Grounds Oaks (GII) on CNBC. The one-hour broadcast will start at 6 p.m. ET. Action from both Fair Grounds and Turfway Park will also be shown on FanDuel TV with live on-site coverage at both tracks.

Trainer **Todd Pletcher** reported Sam F. Davis winner **Litigate** suffered a minor setback and is off the Derby trail. ...

Trainer **Ben Colebrook** reported Wednesday Gotham (GIII) winner **Raise Cain** would contest the \$1 million Blue Grass (GI) at Keeneland. Colebrook had stated the colt would either run in the Blue Grass or Wood Memorial (GII). ...

There were 23 horses nominated to the Florida Derby but many trainers have stated they will chose other options in order to not run against heavy favorite **Forte**. Among the Florida-based horses shipping out of state for another engagement is Holy Bull (GII) winner **Rocket Can**, who will contest the \$1.25 million Arkansas Derby (GI). ...

Likely Florida Derby heavy favorite **Forte** returned to the Palm Beach Downs work tab for the first time since his victory in the Fountain of Youth (GII). The son of Violence worked an easy half-mile on Friday in :50.72. ...

Extra Anejo, one of the very early favorites on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, returned to the work tab for the first time since his impressive maiden victory in October at Keeneland. The **Steve Asmussen** trainee worked a half-mile in :52.20 on Sunday at Fair Grounds. Extra Anejo was taken out of training in December with an ankle injury. ...

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. ...

Following its annual closer for winter renovations, the Churchill Downs stable area will reopen Tuesday, March 28 and the first day of training is scheduled for Thursday, March 30. The stable area was originally scheduled to open March 21 but following severe storms in the Louisville area, officials pushed back the opening one week to fix several roofs that were damaged from winds that howled at upwards of 80 mph.

UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

April 1 (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): Cyclone Mischief (Dale Romans); Dubyuhnell (Danny Gargan); Forte (Todd Pletcher); Il Miracolo (Antonio Sano); *Mr. Ripple (Saffie Joseph Jr.)*; *West Coast Cowboy (Saffie Joseph Jr.)*

April 1 (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): Angel of Empire (Brad Cox); *Bourbon Bash (Wayne Lukas)*; *Confidence Game (Keith Desormeaux)*; *Hit Show (Brad Cox)*; Interlock Empire (Kenny McPeek); Mendelssohns March (Kenny McPeek); Red Route One (Steve Asmussen); Reincarnate (Tim Yakteen); Rocket Can (Bill Mott); Two Eagles River (Chris Hartman); *Victory Formation (Brad Cox)*;

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): Arctic Arrogance (Linda Rice); Blazing Sevens (Chad Brown); *Hit Show (Brad Cox)*; Shadow Dragon (Bill Mott); Slip Mahoney (Brad Cox);

April 8 (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): *Bourbon Bash (Wayne Lukas)*; *Confidence Game (Keith Desormeaux)*; Hayes Strike (Kenny McPeek); Raise Cain (Ben Colebrook); Tapit Trice (Todd Pletcher); Verifying (Brad Cox)

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): *Cave Rock* (Bob Baffert); Dazzlemesilver (Keith Desormeaux); Geaux Rocket Ride (Richard Mandella); I Don't Get It (Doug O'Neill); Mandarin Hero (JPN) (Terunobu Fujita); Practical Move (Tim Yakteen); Skinner (John Sherriffs);

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): *Bo Cruz* (Al Stall Jr.)

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.

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