



THE DERBY DISPATCH

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KENTUCKY DERBY CONTENDERS CHASING BIG MONEY IN SATURDAY'S \$1.25 MILLION REBEL

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024) – Big money and 105 qualifying points will be on the line Saturday as the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series continues with the \$1.25 million Rebel Stakes (Grade II) at Oaklawn Racing Casino Resort in Hot Springs, Ark.

The Rebel Stakes is annually a key race on the Road to the Kentucky Derby having produced three future winners of the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI): **American Pharoah** (2015), **Smarty Jones** (2004) and **Sunny's Halo** (1983). Ironically, all three future Derby winners also won the Rebel.

Last year, the race produced three starters in the "Run for the Roses": **Confidence Game** (finished 10th in the Derby), **Reincarnate** (13th) and **Verifying** (16th).

Like last Saturday's Risen Star Stakes, the kickoff race on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series, the winner will receive 50 points and a likely spot in the starting gate for the \$5 million Kentucky Derby on Saturday, May 4. The runner-up will be awarded 25 points with 15-10-5 points awarded to the next three finishers, respectively.

GRADE I WINNER TIMBERLAKE MAKES 3-YEAR-OLD DEBUT IN REBEL STAKES – WinStar Farm's Grade I winner **Timberlake** is set to make his 3-year-old debut against an accomplished field of 12 colts and geldings in Saturday's \$1.25 million Rebel Stakes (Grade II) at Oaklawn.

The 1 1/16-mile Rebel will be contested as Race 11 of the 12-race program with a post time of 6:23 p.m. ET.

Timberlake, trained by **Brad Cox**, was installed as the 6-5 morning line favorite and will make the seven-hour van ride to Oaklawn from his winter base at Fair Grounds. The dynamic son of Into Mischief dazzled racing fans seven months ago when he broke his maiden by an impressive 9 ¼ lengths at Ellis Park. Following his disappointing runner-up finish to **Nutella Fella** in the Hopeful (GI), Timberlake rallied for a 4 ¼-length score in the Champagne (GI) in early October at Aqueduct. His last start of his 2-year-old campaign came in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI) when he finished an even fourth, beaten eight lengths by **Fierceness**.

Timberlake will be ridden by Oaklawn's leading rider **Cristian Torres** in the Rebel from post No. 7.

Another 3-year-old with a stakes-filled resumé is **Bc Stables' Just Steel**. The nine-time starter for four-time Kentucky Derby winner **Wayne Lukas** finished second in the Southwest Stakes (GIII) and Smarty Jones Stakes, the first two of four Road to the Kentucky Derby races at Oaklawn. The son of Justify has won two times, once when he broke his maiden by a scant nose over **Be You** and **Locked** in early August at Saratoga and when he defeated seven rivals by 2 ½ lengths in the Nov. 25 Ed Brown Stakes at Churchill Downs. Just Steel will be ridden in Saturday's Rebel by **Ramon Vazquez** out of post 11.

Vazquez is no stranger to success in the Rebel having won the race in 2022 aboard 75-1 longshot **Un Ojo**.

Here is the complete field for the Rebel from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Carbone** (Isaac Castillo, Steve Asmussen, 15-1); **Northern Flame** (Julien Leparoux, Kenny McPeek, 5-1); **Common Defense** (Brian Hernandez Jr., McPeek, 30-1); **Tejon Pass** (Chris Landeros, Peter Miller, 30-1); **Magic Grant** (Harry Hernandez, Eddie Milligan Jr., 50-1); **Dimatic** (Tyler Gaffalione, Steve Asmussen, 8-1); Timberlake (Torres, Cox, 6-5); **Next Level** (Jose Riquelme, Keith Desormeaux, 30-1); **Lagynos** (Keith Asmussen, Steve Asmussen, 20-1); **Mena** (Francisco Arrieta, Steve Hobby, 10-1); Just Steel (Vazquez, Lukas, 7-2); **Woodcourt** (Manny Esquivel, Cipriano Contreras, 20-1); and **Time for Truth** (Rafael Bejarano, Ron Moquett, 15-1).

Magic Grant and Woodcourt are not early Triple Crown nominees but can become eligible with a \$6,000 late payment due by April 1.

REBEL QUOTES

- **Brad Cox**, trainer, **Timberlake** – “His last work was a big-league move but he’s a big-league horse. He’s a Grade I winner. I think the Rebel is going to be a good race. We’re really looking forward to getting him back to the races to start his year.”
- **Wayne Lukas**, trainer, **Just Steel** – “He’s still carrying a little weight (after the Southwest Stakes). He’s a big, powerful horse and I think with racing, he’ll drop some of that weight and he’ll be a bit better at finishing. I look forward to the Rebel. That one should be starting to get us where we want to be. I think he needs racing.”
- **Kenny McPeck**, trainer, **Northern Flame**, **Common Defense**: “(Northern Flame) has improved from 2 to 3. He fought on well in that allowance race. He’s a good, solid colt. ... (Common Defense) didn’t like the mud last time. I’m hoping for a dry track this weekend. I started to take him to the (March 2) Battaglia Memorial at Turfway because I think ultimately his future may be on turf. He worked so good this week that I went ahead and put him back in at Oaklawn.”

HOW TO WATCH THE REBEL – The Rebel goes as Race 11 on Saturday’s 12-race program at Oaklawn Park and has an approximately post time of 6:23 p.m. ET. It will air live on FanDuel TV, “America’s Day at the Races” on the Fox Sports family of networks and can also be watched on 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

- 9:05 a.m. ET, MEY 2, \$190,620 UAE Oaks (GIII), 3yo f, 1 3/16 M
- 7:55 p.m. ET, TP 5, MSW, 3yo, 1 M (Tapeta)

Saturday

- 9 a.m. ET, KAR 4, \$1.5 million Saudi Derby (GIII), 3yo, 1 M
- 1 p.m. ET, OP 1, OC 100k n1x, 3yo, 1 1/16 M
- 1:31 p.m. ET, OP 2, MSW, 3yo, 6 F
- 1:37 p.m. ET, GP 4, MSW, 3yo, 1 1/8 M
- 2:01 p.m. ET, OP 3, MSW, 3yo f, 6 F
- 2:16 p.m. ET, AQU 3, MSW, 3yo f, 1 M
- 3:02 p.m. ET, OP 5, MSW, 3yo f, 1 1/16 M
- 3:45 p.m. ET, FG 5, MSW, 3yo, 6 F
- 4:02 p.m. ET, LRL 8, \$100,000 Miracle Wood, 3yo, 1 M
- 5:10 p.m. ET, OP 9, \$400,000 Honeybee (GIII), 3yo f, 1 1/16 M
- 6:23 p.m. ET, OP 11, \$1.25 million Rebel (GII), 3yo, 1 1/16 M
- 6:53 p.m. ET, OP 12, MSW, 3yo, 1 1/16 M

RISEN STAR HERO SIERRA LEONE LEADS ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD – Through 21 races on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, recent Risen Star (GII) hero Sierra Leone tops the leaderboard with 55 points. The talented Chad Brown trainee is likely to make his final start prior to the Kentucky Derby in the April 6 Blue Grass Stakes (GI) at Keeneland

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	Sierra Leone	Chad Brown	1 st – Risen Star 2 nd – Remsen	April 6 Blue Grass (GI)	55
2	Track Phantom	Steve Asmussen	1 st – Lecomte 1 st – Gun Runner 32 nd Risen Star	March 23 Louisiana Derby (GII)	55
3	Fierceness	Todd Pletcher	1 st – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile 3 rd – Holy Bull	March 30 Florida Derby (GI)	36
4	Stronghold	Phil D’Amato	1 st – Sunland Derby 2 nd – Los Alamitos Derby	TBA	25
5	Catching Freedom	Brad Cox	1 st – Smarty Jones 3 rd – Risen Star	March 23 Louisiana Derby (GII)	25
6	Mystik Dan	Kenny McPeck	1 st – Southwest 5 th – Smarty Jones	March 30 Arkansas Derby (GI)	21
7	Hades	Joe Orseno	1 st – Holy Bull	March 30 Florida Derby (GI)	20
8	Uncle Heavy	Butch Reid	1 st – Withers	April 6 Wood Memorial (GII)	20
9	No More Time	Jose D’Angelo	1 st – Sam F. Davis	March 9 Tampa Bay Derby (GIII) or March 30 Florida Derby (GI)	20
10	Locked	Todd Pletcher	1 st – Breeders’ Futurity 3 rd – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile	TBA	19
11	Liberal Arts	Robert Medina	1 st – Street Sense 3 rd – Southwest 3 rd – Iroquois	March 30 Arkansas Derby (GI) or April 6 Blue Grass (GI)	19
12	West Saratoga	Larry Demeritte	1 st – Iroquois 3 rd – Sam F. Davis 5 th – Breeders’ Futurity	March 2 John Battaglia Memorial or March 9 Tampa Bay Derby (GIII)	17
13	Timberlake	Brad Cox	1 st – Champagne 4 th – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile	Feb. 24 Rebel (GII)	16
14	Just Steel	Wayne Lukas	2 nd – Southwest 2 nd – Smarty Jones	Feb. 24 Rebel (GII)	15
15	Honor Marie	Whit Beckman	1 st – Kentucky Jockey Club 5 th – Risen Star	March 23 Louisiana Derby (GII)	15
16	El Grande O	Linda Rice	2 nd – Withers 2 nd – Jerome	March 2 Gotham (GIII)	15
17	Nash	Brad Cox	2 nd – Lecomte 3 rd – Gun Runner	TBA	13
18	Agate Road	Todd Pletcher	2 nd – Sam F. Davis	March 9 Tampa Bay Derby (GIII)	10
19	Otto the Conqueror	Steve Asmussen	1 st – Springboard Mile	TBA	10
20	Dornoch	Danny Gargan	1 st – Remsen	March 2 Fountain of Youth (GII)	10

DOWN THE STRETCH –

The Road to the Longines Kentucky Oaks will continue Saturday with the \$400,000 Honeybee Stakes (GIII) at Oaklawn featuring Silverbulletday winner **West Omaha** and Martha Washington winner **Band of Gold**. The top five finishers of the race will receive qualifying points on a 50-25-15-10-5 scale towards a spot in the starting gate for the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI). The field of 10 3-year-old fillies will head to post in Race 9 at 5:10 p.m. ...

Zen-Nippon Nisai Yushun winner **Amante Bianco (JPN)** is likely to stay in Japan and compete at the local NAR circuit instead of attempting the Fukuryu Stakes, the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby finale held on the JRA circuit, according to Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby correspondent **Kate Hunter**. ...

Trainer **Whit Beckman** reported Risen Star (GII) fifth-place finisher **Honor Marie** is likely to return to the Road to the Kentucky Derby in the TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII) on March 23. ...

A total of 104 3-year-old fillies were made early nominees for the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI). The nominations were led by two-time Grade I winner and champion **Just F Y I**. ...

Gun Runner Stakes runner-up **Snead** is back in training at Turfway Park following a minor issue that made him miss a scheduled workout, according to trainer **Brendan Walsh**. ...

Breeders' Futurity (GI) winner **Locked** return to the work tab following a minor fever that made him miss a scheduled start in the Sam F. Davis Stakes (GIII). The **Todd Pletcher** trainee worked an easy half-mile in :49.68 Friday morning at Palm Beach Downs. ...

Talented New York-bred and Breeders' Futurity (GI) runner-up **The Wine Steward** is back in trainer **Mike Maker's** barn at Gulfstream Park and returned to the work tab Saturday with a three-furlong move in :36.06. His next start is still to be determined. ...

Undefeated 3-year-old **Doncho** is likely to continue at sprint distances and not join the Road to the Kentucky Derby, according to trainer **Michelle Lovell**. Doncho recently dominated a six-furlong allowance contest at Fair Grounds by 4 ½ lengths, earning a solid 95 Brisnet Speed Rating. ...

"**Inside the Kentucky Derby**" is your place to go for all the latest news and notes on this year's Road to the Kentucky Derby. Listen and subscribe on your favorite podcast platform. ...

The barn area at Churchill Downs is set to open March 19 and the first day of training is scheduled for March 22.

UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

Feb. 24 (10 weeks out) – \$1.25 million Rebel (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Oaklawn (Top 5: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Just Steel (Wayne Lukas); Muth (Bob Baffert); Tejon Pass (Peter Miller); Timberlake (Brad Cox); and Time for Truth (Ron Moquett).

March 2 (nine weeks out) – \$400,000 Fountain of Youth (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Gulfstream Park (Top 5: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Conquest Warrior (Shug McGaughey); Dornoch (Danny Gargan); Locked (Todd Pletcher); Real Macho (Rohan Crichton); and Victory Avenue (Gustavo Delgado).

March 2 (nine weeks out) – \$400,000 San Felipe (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Santa Anita (Top 5: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Maymun (Bob Baffert); Muth (Bob Baffert); Nysos (Bob Baffert); Scatify (John Sadler); and Wine Me Up (Bob Baffert).

March 2 (nine weeks out) – \$300,000 Gotham (GIII), one mile, Aqueduct (Top 5: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Air Cav (Brad Cox); Bergen (Brad Cox); Capital Idea (Christophe Clement); Deterministic (Christophe Clement); El Grande O (Linda Rice); Just a Touch (Brad Cox); Lightline (Brad Cox); Maximus Meridius (Butch Reid); Scatify (John Sadler); and Slider (John Sadler).

March 2 (nine weeks out) – \$150,000 John Battaglia Memorial, 1 1/16 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 5: 20-10-6-4-2)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Blue Eyed George (Michael McCarthy); Epic Ride (John Ennis); Salvatore Prince (Jose D'Angelo); and West Saratoga (Larry Demeritte).

March 9 (eight weeks out) – \$400,000 Tampa Bay Derby (GIII), 1 1/16 miles, Tampa Bay Downs (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Agate Road (Todd Pletcher); Domestic Product (Chad Brown); No More Time (Jose D'Angelo); and West Saratoga (Larry Demeritte).

March 23 (six weeks out) – \$1 million Louisiana Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Fair Grounds (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Catching Freedom (Brad Cox); Honor Marie (Whit Beckman); Real Men Violin (Kenny McPeek); and Track Phantom (Steve Asmussen).

March 23 (six weeks out) – \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), 1 1/8 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Le Gris (Al Stall Jr.); Moonlight (Todd Pletcher); and Tennessee (Brad Cox).

March 30 (five weeks out) – \$1 million UAE Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Meydan Racecourse (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Mendelssohn Bay (Bhupat Semar).

March 30 (five weeks out) – \$1 million Florida Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Gulfstream Park (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Fierceness (Todd Pletcher) and Hades (Joe Orseno).

March 30 (five weeks out) – \$1.5 million Arkansas Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Oaklawn Park (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Catching Freedom (Brad Cox); Liberal Arts (Robert Medina); Mystik Dan (Kenny McPeek); Real Men Violin (Kenny McPeek); Sierra Leone (Chad Brown); and Stronghold (Phil D'Amato).

April 6 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Wood Memorial (GII), 1 1/8 miles, Aqueduct (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Catching Freedom (Brad Cox); Domestic Product (Chad Brown); Dornach (Danny Gargan); and Uncle Heavy (Butch Reid).

April 6 (four weeks out) – \$1 million Blue Grass (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Keeneland (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Catching Freedom (Brad Cox); Domestic Product (Chad Brown); Dornach (Danny Gargan); Lat Long (Kenny McPeek); Liberal Arts (Robert Medina); Mystik Dan (Kenny McPeek); Real Men Violin (Kenny McPeek); Sierra Leone (Chad Brown); and Stronghold (Phil D'Amato).

April 6 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Santa Anita (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Stronghold (Phil D'Amato)

April 13 (three weeks out) – \$400,000 Lexington (GIII), 1 1/16 miles, Keeneland (Top 5: 20-10-6-4-2)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Lat Long (Kenny McPeek)

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.

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 and Race and Sports Book. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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