



THE DERBY DISPATCH

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ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES FEATURES THREE MAJOR PREP RACES SATURDAY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, March 29, 2024) – Less than six weeks remain until the 150th running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) and Saturday's trio of "Championship Series" races from around the world will have major implications on who's in and who's out of this year's field.

At Gulfstream Park in South Florida, **Repole Stable's** 2-year-old champion **Fierceness** will attempt to return to his brilliant form last season when he faces a competitive field of 10 rivals in the \$1 million Florida Derby (GI). About one hour after the Florida Derby, **WinStar Farm** and **Siena Farm's** Rebel Stakes (GII) winner **Timberlake** will be in search of big money and Grade I glory when he faces nine rivals at Oaklawn in the \$1.5 million Arkansas Derby.

The Road to the Kentucky Derby action begins early Saturday at 9:50 a.m. ET when Japanese star **Forever Young (JPN)** leads the field in the \$1.5 million UAE Derby (GII), part of the Dubai World Cup night program at Meydan Racecourse.

CHAMPION FIERCENESS TABBED 8-5 FAVORITE IN FLORIDA DERBY – **Repole Stable's** Breeders' Cup Juvenile (Grade I) winner **Fierceness** will attempt to return to the winner's circle when he faces 10 rivals in Saturday's \$1 million Florida Derby (GI), South Florida's final prep race on the Road to Kentucky Derby 150.

The Florida Derby, which will go as Race 14 at 6:42 p.m. (all times Eastern), will award the top five finishers qualifying points on a 100-50-25-15-10 scale towards a spot in the starting gate for the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on Saturday, May 4. Run at 1 1/8 miles, the Florida Derby field features several of South Florida's best 3-year-olds including Fierceness, Holy Bull (GII) winner **Hades** and up-and-coming colt **Conquest Warrior**.

Trained by **Todd Pletcher**, Fierceness was brilliant when he won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile by 6 ¼ lengths at odds of 16-1. The son of City of Light made his 3-year-old debut eight weeks ago in the Holy Bull (GIII) where he finished a disappointing third to front-running Hades. Fierceness will break from post No. 10 of 11 with Hall of Famer **John Velazquez** in the saddle.

The aforementioned Hades will attempt to stamp his place in the starting gate for the Kentucky Derby in the Florida Derby. Owned by **D J Stable** and **Robert Cotran** and trained by **Joe Orseno**, Hades set slow early fractions in the Holy Bull and was able to kick clear late for a two-length victory. Like Fierceness, Hades, an undefeated Florida-bred son of Awesome Slew, has been off since the 1 1/16-mile Holy Bull.

One of the new shooters on the Road to the Kentucky Derby is **Courtlandt Farms'** recent allowance winner Conquest Warrior. Trained by 2013 Kentucky Derby-winning trainer **Shug McGaughey**, Conquest Warrior turned heads two starts ago when he was pinched badly at the start but still rallied for a half-length victory over next-out maiden special weight winner **Antiquarian**. McGaughey won the Florida Derby in 2013 with **Orb** en route to his victory in the Kentucky Derby.

Here is the complete field for the Florida Derby from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Frankie's Empire** (Miguel Vazquez, Bo Yates, 12-1); **Hades** (Paco Lopez, Orseno, 7-2); **Bail Us Out** (Irada Ortiz Jr., Pletcher); **Grand Mo the First** (Emisael Jaramillo, Victor Barboza Jr., 15-1); **Real Macho** (Javier Castellano, Rohan Crichton, 20-1); **Le Dom Bro** (Edwin Gonzalez, Eniel Cordero, 15-1); **Catalytic** (Julien Leparoux, Saffie Joseph Jr., 20-1); **Seminole Chief** (Joel Rosario, Jack Siston, 30-1); **Conquest Warrior** (Jose Ortiz, McGaughey, 3-1); **Fierceness** (Velazquez, Pletcher, 8-5); and **Iris's Dream** (Jorge Ruiz, Cheryl Winebaugh, 30-1).

Frankie's Empire and Iris's Dream are not nominated to the Triple Crown but can become eligible with a \$6,000 payment due by Monday.

REBEL WINNER TIMBERLAKE ATTEMPTS TO BLAZE TRAIL TO DERBY IN \$1.5 MILLION ARKANSAS DERBY – WinStar Farm and Siena Farm’s Rebel Stakes (Grade II) winner **Timberlake** will attempt to continue his path toward the Kentucky Derby when he faces nine rivals in Saturday’s \$1.5 million Arkansas Derby (GI) at Oaklawn.

Run at 1 1/8 miles, the Arkansas Derby will award the top five runners qualifying points on a 100-50-25-15-10 scale should they be eligible to compete in the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI). The Arkansas Derby will go as Race 12 at 7:47 p.m. ET.

Trained by **Brad Cox**, Timberlake made his 3-year-old debut on Feb. 24 when he defeated 11 competitors in the Rebel. The son of Into Mischief was highly regarded as a 2-year-old after dominating the Champagne (GI) and finishing second in the Hopeful Stakes (GI). Jockey **Flavien Prat** will be aboard Timberlake for the first time at morning line odds of 9-5.

Another Kentucky Derby hopeful entered in the Arkansas Derby is Southwest Stakes (GIII) winner **Mystik Dan**. The son of Goldencents received a brilliant ride by **Brian Hernandez Jr.** in the Southwest when he cut the corner and skimmed the rail for a widening eight-length score. Hernandez will be back aboard the **Kenny McPeek** trainee at odds of 5-2.

The 8-5 morning line favorite is **Zedan Racing Stables’** San Vicente (GII) winner **Muth**. The former \$2 million OBS March 2023 purchase is under the care of trainer **Bob Baffert**, who is suspended by Churchill Downs Incorporated from running at their tracks in 2024 and is ineligible to compete in the Kentucky Derby.

The Arkansas Derby field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Will Take It** (Francisco Arrieta, Eddie Milligan Jr., 50-1); Timberlake (Prat, Cox, 9-5); **Dimatic** (Cristian Torres, Steve Asmussen, 20-1); **Time for Truth** (Rafael Bejarano, Ron Moquett, 20-1); **Liberal Arts** (Tyler Gaffalione, Robbie Medina, 15-1); **Informed Patriot** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Steve Asmussen, 30-1); Muth (Juan Hernandez, Baffert, 8-5); **Just Steel** (Keith Asmussen, Wayne Lukas, 15-1); Mystik Dan (Hernandez, McPeek, 5-2); and **Imperial Gun** (Manny Esquivel, Steve Asmussen, 30-1).

Will Take It is the lone horse in the Arkansas Derby not nominated to the Triple Crown. His connections can make him eligible for the three-race series by paying \$6,000 fee due Monday.

JAPAN’S FOREVER YOUNG TRIES TO QUALIFY FOR KENTUCKY DERBY IN UAE DERBY – Undefeated Japanese-based colt **Forever Young (JPN)** will attempt to qualify for Kentucky Derby 150 as the headliner in Saturday’s \$1.5 million UAE Derby (Grade II) at Meydan Racecourse.

The 1 3/16-mile UAE Derby will go as Race 5 on the Dubai World Cup program with a post time of 9:50 a.m. ET.

Trained by **Yoshido Yahagi**, Forever Young is undefeated in three starts with two victories in his home country and the third in the \$1.5 million Saudi Derby (GIII) on Feb. 24. The talented colt is expected to be a heavy favorite and will break from the far outside post No. 11.

One of the American-based runners in the UAE Derby is New York-bred **Pandagate**. A New York-bred son of 2017 Dubai World Cup winner Arrogate, Pandagate recently won the Gander Stakes at Aqueduct by an impressive five lengths for trainer **Christophe Clement**.

The UAE Derby will award the top five finishers qualifying points for the Kentucky Derby on a 100-50-25-15-10 scale. Southern Hemisphere-bred 3-year-olds are ineligible to accrue points and cannot compete in the Kentucky Derby.

Free Brisnet.com past performances for the UAE Derby will be available Friday on www.TwinSpires.com.

ARKANSAS DERBY QUOTES

- **Brad Cox, trainer, Timberlake:** “I really like the timing of the Arkansas Derby to the Kentucky Derby. Obviously, he has the experience there now after winning the Rebel. I kind of thought the Rebel was the spot when we were getting started this winter. That worked out well and it leads nicely to the Arkansas Derby.”
- **Ron Moquett, trainer, Time for Truth:** “We’re still trying to put it all together. He’s a very talented horse that we’re just trying to see where his maturation is. The other day we noticed, even though he won, when he made the front, he kind of waited on a horse for a second but then galloped out well. So, we’re trying to get him to do everything that he’s supposed to do to be more professional.”

FLORIDA DERBY QUOTES

- **Eniel Cordero, trainer, Le Dom Bro:** “We faced Dornoch in the Remsen at Aqueduct and we finished last, very far back but the horse wasn’t really fit for the race. We were trying. It was an experience but when he finished second in the Fountain of Youth, it was very emotional for me. ... A lot of trainers have been training for years and they haven’t had an opportunity to go to the Kentucky Derby. If this horse breaks well in the Florida Derby, we may accomplish that. I’d be in shock.”

- **Jose Ortiz, jockey, Conquest Warrior:** “He’s improved all winter. He had a lot go wrong when he broke his maiden and he was able to overcome it all that day. In his last race he was very impressive and handled the longer distance just fine. He’s been working very well coming into the Florida Derby.”
- **Joe Orseno, trainer, Hades:** “He has exceeded my expectations (in his training to the Florida Derby). Even with his last breeze going into the Florida Derby he did everything perfect. He just handles himself very professionally. He gets things easily where other horses struggle.”
- **Todd Pletcher, trainer, Fierceness:** “Normally I’d be afraid of the outside post but Forte won from the 11 last year so you can overcome that. Everybody knows Gulfstream two-turn races are tricky and I think that’s why the start is so important, getting away cleanly. I think what happens in a lot of these two-turn races is the jockeys are so conscious of having to get to the first turn in good position that it can get a little rough leaving the gate sometimes. ... The horse gives you a lot of confidence watching him breeze. It seems like he’s in really good form, so we’re expecting a good performance from him.”

UAE DERBY QUOTES

- **Aidan O’Brien, trainer, Henry Adams:** “Henry Adams is a lovely, big, uncomplicated horse. He’s a No Nay Never horse so he could be interesting on the dirt. We will be guided by how he goes there in Dubai as to what he does afterwards.”
- **Bhupat Seemar, trainer, Guns and Glory, Mendelssohn Bay:** “Guns and Glory was getting terrible draws every time and finally got a good draw the last time. He’s a big of a playboy, he is a very high class horse and with blinkers on him it should do the trick again. ... Looking at Mendelssohn Bay, I think it was a very good decision to miss Super Saturday and come directly to the (UAE) Derby. He has filled out and he looks different with a nice coat on him. He has got plenty of stamina in his pedigree. We don’t know how good he is but we’ll find out on Saturday.”

FLORIDA DERBY PRODUCED MOST KENTUCKY DERBY WINNERS – Saturday’s Florida Derby has historically been the most productive race on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, producing 25 winners in the “Run for the Roses” including last year’s winner **Mage**.

The Florida Derby first served as a prep race for the Kentucky Derby winner in 1953 when **Dark Star**, who finished a disappointing 13th in the Florida Derby, was victorious on the first Saturday in May.

The other winners of the Kentucky Derby who exited the Florida Derby are **Always Dreaming** (2017), **Nyquist** (2016), **Orb** (2013), **Big Brown** (2008), **Barbaro** (2006), **Monarchos** (2001), **Thunder Gulch** (1995), **Go For Gin** (1994), **Strike the Gold** (1991), **Unbridled** (1990), **Swale** (1984), **Pleasant Colony** (1981), **Spectacular Bid** (1979), **Foolish Pleasure** (1975), **Cannonade** (1974), **Forward Pass** (1968), **Kauai King** (1966), **Northern Dancer** (1964), **Carry Back** (1961), **Venetian Way** (1960), **Tim Tam** (1958), **Iron Liege** (1957) and **Needles** (1956).

FUKURYU STAKES WINNER T O PASSWORD ACCEPTS INVITATION TO COMPETE IN KENTUCKY DERBY – **Tomoya Ozasa** has accepted the invitation for his colt, **T O Password (JPN)**, to compete in the 150th running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I), according to Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby representative **Kate Hunter**.

T O Password, a gutsy winner of the Fukuryu Stakes at Nakayama, earned 40 points on the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby and secured his invitation to the Kentucky Derby.

The son of Copano Rickey, T O Password is a perfect 2-for-2 in his young career. Trained by **Daisuke Takayanagi**, T O Password debuted Jan. 6, defeating 15 rivals by two lengths at Kyoto Racecourse. In the Fukuryu Stakes, T O Password was a 14-1 longshot but was able to get the early lead and took the field gate-to-wire.

More information will be available in the coming days when T O Password plans to ship to Churchill Downs.

LOUISIANA DERBY WINNER CATCHING FREEDOM SETTLES IN AT CHURCHILL DOWNS – **Albaugh Family Stable’s** TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (Grade II) winner **Catching Freedom** arrived at Churchill Downs early Monday morning and will begin his preparations for the 150th running of the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) in the coming days.

“He seemed to come out of the race very well,” trainer **Brad Cox** said as he stood outside Catching Freedom’s stall in Barn 22. “We’re excited how he handled everything in the Louisiana Derby and looking forward to improving even more from that in the Kentucky Derby.”

Catching Freedom, who was in last during the early stages of the Louisiana Derby, held fellow closer **Honor Marie** at bay by one-length. The bay son of Constitution could have three of four works prior to the Kentucky Derby, according to Cox.

Trained by **Whit Beckman**, Honor Marie arrived from Fair Grounds to Churchill Downs on Wednesday and is stabled in Barn 37. The improving son of Honor Code is targeting the Kentucky Derby which would be his third start of his 3-year-old campaign.

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CATCHING FREEDOM NEW LEADER ON ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY – Following Saturday’s TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII), Albaugh Family Stable’s Catching Freedom is the new leader on the Road to the Kentucky Derby leaderboard with 125 points.

Just seven races remain on the traditional Road to the Kentucky Derby to decide the field for the first Saturday in May. Here are the Top 20 horses on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard:

Position	Horse	Trainer	Resume	Possible Next Start	Points
1	Catching Freedom	Brad Cox	1 st – Louisiana Derby 1 st – Smarty Jones 3 rd – Risen Star	May 4 Kentucky Derby	125
2	Endlessly	Michael McCarthy	1 st – Jeff Ruby Steaks	May 4 American Turf	100
3	Track Phantom	Steve Asmussen	1 st – Lecomte 1 st – Gun Runner 3 rd – Risen Star 4 th – Louisiana Derby	May 4 Kentucky Derby	70
4	West Saratoga	Larry Demeritte	1 st – Iroquois 2 nd – Jeff Ruby Steaks 3 rd – Sam F. Davis 5 th – Breeders’ Futurity	May 4 Kentucky Derby	67
5	Timberlake	Brad Cox	1 st - Rebel 1 st – Champagne 4 th – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile	March 30 Arkansas Derby	66
6	Honor Marie	Whit Beckman	1 st – Street Sense 2 nd – Louisiana Derby 5 th – Risen Star	May 4 Kentucky Derby	65
7	Dornoch	Danny Gargan	1 st – Fountain of Youth 1 st – Remsen	April 6 Blue Grass	60
8	Domestic Product	Chad Brown	1 st – Tampa Bay Derby 2 nd – Holy Bull	April 6 Blue Grass, Wood Memorial or May 4 Kentucky Derby	60
9	Sierra Leone	Chad Brown	1 st – Risen Star 2 nd – Remsen	April 6 Blue Grass	55
10	Deterministic	Christophe Clement	1 st – Gotham	April 6 Wood Memorial	50
11	No More Time	Jose D’Angelo	1 st – Tampa Bay Derby 1 st – Sam F. Favis	May 4 Kentucky Derby	45
12	Common Defense	Kenny McPeck	2 nd – Rebel 5 th – Southwest 5 th – Louisiana Derby	TBA	37
13	Fierceness	Todd Pletcher	1 st – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile 3 rd – Holy Bull	March 30 Florida Derby	36
14	El Grande O	Linda Rice	2 nd – Withers 2 nd – Jerome 3 rd – Gotham	April 6 Wood Memorial	30
15	Seize the Grey	Wayne Lukas	3 rd – Jeff Ruby Steaks 4 th – Iroquois	April 13 Lexington	27
16	Stronghold	Phil D’Amato	1 st – Sunland Derby 2 nd – Los Alamitos Derby	April 6 Santa Anita Derby	25
17	Le Dom Bro	Eniel Cordero	2 nd – Fountain of Youth	March 30 Florida Derby	25
18	Tuscan Gold	Chad Brown	3 rd – Louisiana Derby	TBA	25
19	Just a Touch	Brad Cox	2 nd – Gotham	April 6 Blue Grass	25
20	T O Password (JPN)	Daisuke Takayanagi	1 st – Fukuryu	May 4 Kentucky Derby	JPN

DOWN THE STRETCH

The Road to the Kentucky Oaks will continue Saturday at Gulfstream with the Gulfstream Park Oaks (GII) and at Oaklawn with the Fantasy Stakes (GII). Both races will award the top five finishers qualifying points for the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks on a 100-50-25-15-10 scale. ...

The barn area at Churchill Downs is back open with training hours set from 5:30-10 a.m. Besides **Catching Freedom** (Barn 22), **Honor Marie** (Barn 37) and **Track Phantom** (Barn 38), no other Kentucky Derby contenders are scheduled to arrive until after Saturday's Arkansas Derby and Florida Derby. ...

Trainer **Wayne Lukas** reported he could try **Seize the Grey** in one more Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series race to try and qualify for the Kentucky Derby. Seize the Grey, who has accrued 27 points, could run in either the Blue Grass (GI) or Lexington (GII) at Keeneland. ...

Late Triple Crown nominations are due Monday, April 1. Those wishing to nominate a 3-year-old to the series that haven't done so already must pay a \$6,000 late fee at www.thetriplecrown.com. ...

The 10th season of "Inside Churchill Downs" with **Darren Rogers**, **Kevin Kerstein** and other special guest handicappers from the Churchill Downs team will begin Friday, April 5 on ESPN 680/105.7 in Louisville.

UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

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

Known possible starters (with trainer): Be You (Todd Pletcher); Deposition (Uriah St. Lewis); Deterministic (Christophe Clement); El Grande O (Linda Rice); and Uncle Heavy (Butch Reid).

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

Known possible starters (with trainer): Dornoch (Danny Gargan); Encino (Brad Cox); Epic Ride (John Ennis); Just a Touch (Brad Cox); Lat Long (Kenny McPeck); *Seize the Grey* (*Wayne Lukas*); Sierra Leone (Chad Brown); and Tuscan Sky (Todd Pletcher).

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

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Coach Prime* (*Bob Baffert*); Imagination (Bob Baffert); *Maymun* (*Bob Baffert*); Mc Vay (John Shirreffs); Stronghold (Phil D'Amato); Tessuto (George Papaprodromou); and Wine Me Up (Bob Baffert).

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

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Seize the Grey* (*Wayne Lukas*)

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

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