TROPHY

Since the 50th running of the Kentucky Derby in 1924, Churchill Downs has annually presented a gold trophy to the winning owner of the famed "Run for the Roses."

History is unclear if a trophy was presented in 1875 to the winner of the first Kentucky Derby, and trophy presentations were sporadically made in following years. Finally, in 1924, legendary Churchill Downs President Col. Matt J. Winn commissioned a standard design to be developed for the "Golden Anniversary" of the Derby.

Outside of the jeweled embellishments that were added to note special Kentucky Derby anniversaries in 1949 (75th), 1974 (100th), and 1999 (125th), only one change has been made to the original design. For the 125th Kentucky Derby in 1999, Churchill Downs officials decided to defer to racing lore and change the direction of the decorative horseshoe displayed on the 14-karat gold trophy.

The horseshoe, fashioned from 18-karat gold, had pointed downward on each of the trophies since 1924. To commemorate Kentucky Derby 125, the change was made and the horseshoe was turned 180 degrees so that its ends pointed up. The trophy now annually incorporates the horseshoe with the ends pointing up. Racing superstition decrees that if the horseshoe is turned down all the luck will run out.

Since 1975 the trophy has been created by representatives of S.R. Blackinton, the Smithfield, R.I. company that is led by Susanne Blackinton-Juaire and her husband Bill Juaire. Previously they crafted the trophy for Cookson Company's New England Sterling of Attleboro, Mass. **The lone exceptions were 2021-23.**

Susanne Blackinton-Juaire is a fifth-generation silversmith whose family entered the profession in 1862 – 12 years before the first Kentucky Derby was run in 1875.

The Kentucky Derby trophy, which is topped by an 18-karat gold horse and rider, includes horseshoe shaped handles, is 22 inches tall and weighs 67 ounces, excluding its jade base. The entire trophy is handcrafted with the exception of the horse and rider that are both cast from a mold.

To complete the trophy by April, craftsmen begin the process during November of the previous year and work approximately 2,000 hours. The trophy is believed to be the only solid gold trophy that is annually awarded the winner of a major American sporting event.

Additionally, three smaller sterling silver replica trophies are awarded to the winning jockey, trainer and breeder of the Kentucky Derby.

"It is a thrill each year for the members of our team that craft the Kentucky Derby Winner's Trophy, and also a very emotional experience," Susanne Blackinton-Juaire said. "Each individual connected to this coveted trophy takes great care and pride throughout the five-month process during which each year's trophy is crafted. We're sad to see it leave each spring for its journey to Churchill Downs, but it is exhilarating for each of us when we witness the joyful moment on the first Saturday in May when this wonderful trophy is presented to the owner of the Kentucky Derby winner."

2026 Kentucky Derby Trophy Presentation

In accordance with an old-established Derby custom, the tall, stately Derby trophy will be presented to the winning owner by Kentucky's chief executive: Andy Beshear, the 63rd Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The presentation will follow the race around 7 p.m. EDT on the Kentucky Derby Presentation Stand, which is often called the "Cupola" or "Pagoda."

Other dignitaries on hand will be Kentucky First Lady Britainy Beshear; Churchill Downs Incorporated Churchill Downs Incorporated Chief Executive Officer Bill Carstanjen; Churchill Downs President and Chief Operating Officer Bill Mudd; and Churchill Downs Racetrack President Mike Anderson.

NBC will speak briefly with Gov. Beshear prior to the presentation of the trophy, and an interview with the winning owner will follow. NBC also will interview the winning jockey and trainer thereafter.

Once engraved, another presentation of the Kentucky Derby trophies to the winning owner, breeder, trainer and jockey will be scheduled for later in the year.