

WINNER'S CIRCLE / PRESENTATION STAND

The Kentucky Derby Winner's Circle, that small plot of hallowed land that so many horsemen have longed to stand in on the first Saturday in May, has been a Derby tradition since Lawrin received his honors for winning the 1938 Kentucky Derby.

Prior to that time, there were various areas used for honoring the Kentucky Derby winner. From 1875-1929, the Kentucky Derby winner would stand on the racetrack in a circled area drawn out in chalk dust, leading to the phrase "winner's circle." Track officials moved the presentation from the track from 1930-37 and made the winner's presentation in an area that adjoined the clubhouse.

Finally for the 64th running in 1938, a presentation stand, featuring a new electric odds board was constructed. Every Kentucky Derby winner since that time has been led to the infield presentation area to be honored. Since 1944, the winner's circle has included a landscaped horseshoe floral arrangement that the winning horse is led into for photographs.

Over the years, the presentation stand has undergone various changes including the addition of terraced planters that were constructed adjoining the area when the Matt Winn Turf Course was developed in 1985. The odds board that helps make up the presentation stand was outfitted with an electronic message center display system in 1997 to replace the incandescent bulbs that previously provided odds and payoffs. The presentation stand underwent a renovation, which included new framing and a new rooftop, was completed in the fall of 2016.

Although the winner's circle only has been used to honor the Kentucky Derby winner, a limited number of couples have used the site for weddings over the years. And although officials do not encourage the practice, as a last request, the ashes of some involved in the horse racing and breeding industry have discreetly been spread on the hallowed ground.

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 Brittainy 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.