



THE DERBY DISPATCH

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Brisnet Free Past Performances (copy and paste into web browser):

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Rebel: https://www.twinspires.com/documents/brisnet/past-performances/Rebel_OaklawnPark_ultimatepps_2026.pdf

CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES HITS DECISIVE STAGE WITH TRIO OF PREPS NINE WEEKS FROM DERBY

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026) – With nine weeks remaining until the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I), the Championship Series on the Road to the Kentucky Derby enters a decisive phase this weekend with three major stops in Florida, New York and Arkansas.

Saturday's \$425,000 Fountain of Youth Stakes (GII) at Gulfstream Park and the \$300,000 Gotham Stakes (GIII) at Aqueduct precede Sunday's \$1 million Rebel Stakes (GI) at Oaklawn. Each race awards 50-25-15-10-5 qualifying points to the top five finishers in their pursuit of the Garland of Roses on the first Saturday in May.

Several accomplished 2-year-olds are set to launch their 3-year-old campaigns, including **Napoleon Solo** in the Fountain of Youth along with **Blackout Time** and **Litmus Test** in the Rebel. In many respects, this weekend resembles a set of regional semifinals in three critical battlegrounds where Derby contenders often sort themselves out ahead of next month's 100-point Championship Series races.

Following this weekend, only 11 Championship Series races remain on the Road to Kentucky Derby 152.

For a preview, the "Inside the Kentucky Derby" podcast is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and <https://www.kentuckyderby.com/horses/news/cat/podcast/> (available Thursday afternoon).

GRADE I WINNER NAPOLEON SOLO RETURNS TO ACTION IN SATURDAY'S \$425,000 FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH – **Gold Square's** undefeated Grade I hero **Napoleon Solo** is set to make his 3-year-old debut when he faces an uber-competitive field in Saturday's \$425,000 Fountain of Youth Stakes (Grade II) at Gulfstream Park.

The Fountain of Youth, part of the Championship Series on the Road to the Kentucky Derby, is the local prep for the \$1 million Florida Derby on Saturday, March 28. Run at 1 1/16 miles, the Fountain of Youth goes as the finale on Gulfstream Park's 14-race card with a post time of 6:11 p.m. (all times Eastern).

Trained by **Chad Summers**, Napoleon Solo is a perfect 2-for-2 with a maiden-breaking score on Aug. 8 at Saratoga and a dominant 6 1/2-length victory in the Oct. 4 Champagne. A gray son of Liam's Map, Napoleon Solo has recorded six published workouts leading up to his seasonal bow.

"We came here with a plan," Summers said. "We looked and saw Sovereignty had six breezes before his Fountain of Youth last year and we decided to make that plan as close as we could."

Napoleon Solo drew post No. 7 in Saturday's race and will be ridden by **Kendrick Carmouche**.

The deep field for the Fountain of Youth also includes **Wathnan Racing's** Mucho Macho Man (Listed) winner **Commandment**. Trained by **Brad Cox**, Commandment was a convincing 6 3/4-length winner in the Mucho Macho Man under **Irad Ortiz Jr.** Prior to that start, Commandment broke his maiden by an impressive 5 1/4 lengths at Churchill Downs. Ortiz will ride in the Fountain of Youth from post 4.

Trainer **Saffie Joseph Jr.** entered a trio for the Fountain of Youth: **Chris Fountoukis'** undefeated **Solitude Dude** (post 10, jockey Flavien Prat); **Albert Ciuffetelli, Stephanie Brennan, Shining Stables, BAG Racing Stables** and **Paul Bravermans'** Holy Bull (GIII) runner-up **Bravaro** (post 5, jockey Tyler Gaffalione) and **Peachtree Stable** and **Mark Corrado's** maiden winner **Bull by the Horns** (post 8, Micah Husbands).

The complete field for the Fountain of Youth (with jockey and trainer):

- **Jackson Hole** (John Velazquez, Todd Pletcher)
- **Rockies Balboa** (Luis Saez, Dale Romans)
- ~~**Talkin** (Joel Rosario, Danny Gargan)~~
- Commandment (Ortiz, Cox)
- Bravaro (Gaffalione, Joseph)
- **Chief Wallabee** (Junior Alvarado, Bill Mott)
- Napoleon Solo (Carmouche, Summers)
- Bull by the Horns (Husbands, Joseph)
- ~~**Global Aviator** (Joe Bravo, Rohan Crichton)~~
- Solitude Dude (Prat, Joseph)
- **+Lost Money** (Javier Castellano, Juan Arias)

+Lost Money is not nominated to the Triple Crown but can become eligible with a \$6,000 payment due by Monday, April 6.

Trainer **Danny Gargan** reported Talkin is likely to scratch in favor of the March 7 Tampa Bay Derby (GIII). Also, Global Aviator is sidelined with a bone bruise for the next several months, according to a report by *Daily Racing Form's* **Mike Welsh**.

The Fountain of Youth will award the top five finishers qualifying points on a 50-25-15-10-5 scale toward a spot in the starting gate for the 152nd running of the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on Saturday, May 2 at Churchill Downs.

BLACKOUT TIME TABBED AS 8-5 FAVORITE IN SUNDAY'S REBEL – BR Thoroughbreds, Lance Gasaway and Magdalena Racing's Blackout Time is tabbed as the 8-5 morning line favorite versus eight rivals in Sunday's \$1 million Rebel Stakes (GII), part of the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series at Oaklawn.

The Rebel Stakes, which produced 2015 Triple Crown winner **American Pharoah**, is the local prep for the \$1 million Arkansas Derby on Saturday, March 28. Run at 1 1/16 miles, the Rebel goes as Race 11 with a post time of 6:23 p.m. ET.

Trained by **Kenny McPeek**, Blackout Time joined the Road to the Kentucky Derby as a 2-year-old when he finished a game runner-up to eventual Eclipse Award winner **Ted Noffey** in the Breeders' Futurity (GI) at Keeneland. A son of Not This Time, Blackout Time broke his maiden at second asking on Aug. 2 at Ellis Park by an eye catching 9 3/4 lengths under **Brian Hernandez Jr.** Saturday's Rebel will be the first start of the season for Blackout Time, who went to the sidelines following a regulatory veterinarian scratch from the Oct. 31 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI). Hernandez has the mount in the Rebel from post No. 4

Another talented 3-year-old entered in the race is Los Alamitos Futurity (GII) winner **Litmus Test**. Similar to Blackout Time, Litmus Test will make his first start of the season in the Rebel. Based in Southern California with trainer **Bob Baffert**, Litmus Test finished fourth in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI) as a 21-1 outsider. Baffert will be seeking his record-extending ninth victory in the Rebel Stakes with prior wins coming with **Concert Tour** (2021), **Nadal** (2020), **Cupid** (2016), **American Pharoah** (2015), **Hoppertunity** (2014), **Secret Circle** (2012), **The Factor** (2011) and **Lookin at Lucky** (2010). **Flavien Prat** has the mount in the Rebel from post 2.

Other top contenders in the field include **John Oxley's** Southwest (GIII) winner **Silent Tactic** and Smarty Jones (Listed) winner **Strategic Risk**; **St Elias Stable's** Southwest runner-up **Soldier N Diplomat**; and **WinStar Farm, First Go Racing and CHC Inc.'s** Swale (Listed) runner-up **Class President**.

The field for the Southwest in order of post position (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds):

- ~~**Bravaro** (Francisco Arrieta, Saffie Joseph Jr., 8-4)~~
- Litmus Test (Prat, Baffert, 7-2)
- **Class President** (John Velazquez, Todd Pletcher, 10-1)
- Blackout Time (Hernandez, McPeek, 8-5)
- **+Honey's to Blame** (Manny Esquivel, McPeek, 20-1)
- Strategic Risk (Javier Castellano, Mark Casse, 12-1)
- Silent Tactic (Cristian Torres, Mark Casse, 9-2)
- **Rancho Santa Fe** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Brad Cox, 12-1)
- **Time for Music** (Keith Asmussen, Steve Asmussen, 30-1)
- Soldier N Diplomat (Jose Ortiz, Steve Asmussen, 10-1)

+Honey's to Blame is not nominated to the Triple Crown but can become eligible with a \$6,000 payment due by Monday,

April 6.

Trainer **Saffie Joseph Jr.** reported Bravaro is likely to bypass the Rebel and run in Saturday's Fountain of Youth at Gulfstream Park.

DEBUT WINNER IRON HONOR JOINS ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY IN SATURDAY'S \$300,000 GOTHAM – St. Elias Stable, William Lawrence and Glassman Racing's impressive debut winner Iron Honor will join the Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve when he tests winners for the first time in Saturday's \$300,000 Gotham (Grade III) at Aqueduct.

Run at a mile, the Gotham goes as the finale on Aqueduct's 10-race card with a post time of 5:18 p.m. ET.

Iron Honor, trained by **Chad Brown**, broke his maiden Dec. 13 at Aqueduct and earned an impressive 99 Brisnet Speed Rating. A son of Kentucky Derby winner Nyquist, Iron Honor will break from post No. 6 under jockey **Manny Franco**.

The Gotham field also includes several stakes winners, most notably James F. Lewis III winner **Balboa**; Advent Stakes winner **Dirty Rich**; and two-time New York-bred stakes winner **Crown the Buckeye**.

The lineup for the Gotham from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- Balboa (Sheldon Russell, Brittany Russell)
- +**Hammond** (Jaime Rodriguez, Saffie Joseph Jr.)
- +Crown the Buckeye (Ricardo Santana Jr., Mike Maker)
- **Fourth and One** (Jose Lezcano, Jeremiah Engelhart)
- **Right to Party** (Chris Elliott, Kenny McPeck)
- Iron Honor (Franco, Brown)
- +**Exhibition Only** (Ruben Silvera, Rudy Rodriguez)
- ~~+**Creole Chrome** (Jaime Torres, Joe Sharp)~~
- Dirty Rich (Ramon Vazquez, Peter Miller)

+ = Hammond, Crown the Buckeye, Exhibition Only and Creole Chrome are not currently nominated to the Triple Crown but can become eligible with a \$6,000 payment due by Monday, April 6.

Trainer **Joe Sharp** reported Creole Chrome is likely to run in Saturday's Louisiana Stallion of the Year Star Guitar Stakes at Fair Grounds instead of the Gotham.

FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH QUOTES

- **Trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. (Bravaro; Bull by the Horns; Solitude Dude):**
 - Bravaro: "We wanted him to show up around two turns off the layoff (in the Jan. 31 Holy Bull), and he did. He's a very nice horse and should move forward off that race."
 - Solitude Dude: "I think he's an upper-level talent. Two turns is a question mark, but I think he's an upper-level talent."
- **Trainer Todd Pletcher (Jackson Hole):** The original plan was to run him in an allowance race at Tampa Bay Downs. The entry day for Tampa Bay was after the entries closed for the allowance race at Fair Grounds. So we committed to run him at Fair Grounds with that race guaranteed to go and unsure if the race at Tampa Bay would fill. It ended up filling but instead of shipping him back up to Fair Grounds we decided to keep him home for the Fountain of Youth. ... I didn't think his debut was as impressive as he trains in the morning. When we saw him get to the lead he sort of idled. I thought the race at Fair Grounds was much better and much more professional."
- **Trainer Chad Summers (Napoleon Solo):** "We came here with a plan. We looked and saw Sovereignty had six breezes before his Fountain of Youth last year and we decided to make that plan as close as we could."
- **Trainer Dale Romans (Rockies Balboa):** "We're not sure about the competition he beat in his last two starts but he did it the right way and was very impressive. I think he's just now starting to figure things out and this is the right time to try a race like this. There's a lot of nice horses in this field and a lot of them like to show speed. We don't want to take his speed away from him, especially drawn toward the inside, but if others go to the front I wouldn't mind him seeing him in fourth or fifth early."

GOTHAM QUOTES

- **Trainer Brittany Russell (Balboa):** "As disappointed as you are to lose, you still have to appreciate the effort (running second in the Jerome). The race before I thought was a good effort, too, and he got beat by good horses that day, so he's keeping good company and hopefully he continues to progress. ... He's a big, good-looking, classy individual. He's a big horse, but at this stage I'd say he's matured a bit. He's a cool horse mentally, so that gives you confidence with these better races. You want a horse that does things right and has class; they just take things in, and that's him."
- **Trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. (Hammond):** "I thought he ran well last time against some good horses. He didn't break the best, so then he was always in a compromised spot. He made a run and then flattened out, but he did make a very good jump in the figures. He seems to have done better since that race, we'll give him a try in the Gotham. This is a distance he should like. He has tactical speed. Hopefully he breaks well and puts himself in a good spot, and from there, everything goes the right way."

- **Trainer Chad Brown (Iron Honor):** “I rarely do that (debut with blinkers), but he had trained inconsistent – however, the times that he had worked good were really good. When he wouldn’t work good, it confused me a little bit, so we put a little blinker on him, and he put it all together and he debuted good. ... I’m excited to get this horse stretched out. He’s bred to run longer. His debut number was one of the fastest in the country for 2-year-old colts. I think letting the horse get over that fast number first time out and come together for this will be beneficial for him. He’s a good horse. I would expect him to move forward here.”

HOW TO WATCH THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

- NBC will present live coverage of the Fountain of Youth, along with the Honey Fox Stakes and Mac Diarmida Stakes, starting at 5 p.m. ET
- Live, on-site coverage will be available on FanDuel TV
- Watch and wager online with www.TwinSpires.com

HOW TO WATCH THE GOTHAM

- Fox Business will air “America’s Day at the Races” starting at 3:30 p.m. ET
- Watch and wager online with www.TwinSpires.com

HOW TO WATCH THE REBEL

- America’s Day at the Races will have live, on-site coverage at Oaklawn on Fox Sports 2
- Live, on-site coverage will be available on FanDuel TV
- Watch and wager online with 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

- Dundalk, R5 (1 p.m.), \$40,122 Patton, 3yo, 1 M (nine entries)

Saturday

- TAM, R2 (1:05 p.m.), Mdn 55k, 3yo, 1 M 40 Y (seven entries)
- AQU, R2 (1:13 p.m.), \$200,000 Busher (Listed), 3yo f, 1 M, (five entries)
- GP, R5 (1:33 p.m.), Mdn 84k, 3yo, 1 M (11 entries)
- GP, R11 (4:34 p.m.), \$225,000 Davona Dale (GII), 3yo f, 1 M (nine entries)
- AQU, R10 (5:18 p.m.), \$300,000 Gotham, 3yo, 1 M (nine entries)
- OP, R9 (5:27 p.m.), OC 150000n1x, 3yo, 1 1/16 M (eight entries)
- GP, R14 (6:11 p.m.), \$425,000 Fountain of Youth (GII), 3yo, 1 1/16 M (11 entries)

Sunday

- GP, R2 (12:50 p.m.), Mdn 84k, 3yo, 1 M, (eight entries)
- GP, R7 (3:22 p.m.), OC 75000n1x, 3yo, 1 1/8 M (seven entries)
- SA, R2 (4 p.m.), Mdn 70k, 3yo f, 1 M (six entries)
- OP, R9 (5:15 p.m.), \$750,000 Honeybee (GIII), 3yo f, 1 1/16 M (10 entries)
- OP, R10 (5:47 p.m.), Mdn 110k, 3yo, 1 1/16 M, (11 entries)
- OP, R11 (6:23 p.m.), \$1 million Rebel (GII), 3yo, 1 1/16 M (10 entries)

ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD –

Here are the Top 20 horses on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard including a possible three invitational spots, two from the Euro/Mideast Road to the Kentucky Derby and one from Japan:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Horse</u>	<u>Trainer</u>	<u>Resume</u>	<u>Possible Next Start</u>	<u>Points</u>
1	Paladin	Chad Brown	1 st – Risen Star 1 st – Remsen	April 4 Blue Grass	60
2	Chip Honcho	Steve Asmussen	1 st – Gun Runner 2 nd – Risen Star 4 th – Lecomte	March 21 Louisiana Derby	39
3	Golden Tempo	Cherie DeVaux	1 st – Lecomte 3 rd – Risen Star	March 21 Louisiana Derby	35
4	Silent Tactic	Mark Casse	1 st – Southwest 2 nd – Smarty Jones	March 1 Rebel	25
5	Renegade	Todd Pletcher	1 st – Tampa Bay Derby 2 nd – Remsen	March 28 Arkansas Derby	25
6	Intrepido	Jeff Mullins	1 st – American Pharoah 2 nd – Robert B. Lewis 5 th – Breeders' Cup Juvenile	March 7 San Felipe	23
7	Universe	Kenny McPeck	2 nd – Kentucky Jockey Club 3 rd – Champagne 5 th – Risen Star	March 21 Jeff Ruby Steaks or Louisiana Derby or March 28 Arkansas Derby	23
8	Pavlovian	Doug O'Neill	1 st – Sunland Derby	March 28 Arkansas Derby or April 4 Santa Anita Derby	20
9	Express Kid	Justin Evans	1 st – Springboard Mile 2 nd – Sunland Derby	March 28 Arkansas Derby	20
10	Nearly	Todd Pletcher	1 st – Holy Bull	March 28 Florida Derby	20
11	Talk to Me Jimmy	Rudy Rodriguez	1 st – Withers	April 4 Wood Memorial	20
12	Great White	John Ennis	1 st – John Battaglia Memorial	March 21 Jeff Ruby Steaks or April 4 Blue Grass	
13	Litmus Test	Bob Baffert	1 st – Los Al Futurity 3 rd – Breeders' Futurity 4 th – Breeders' Cup Juvenile	March 1 Rebel	19
14	Soldier N Diplomat	Steve Asmussen	2 nd – Southwest 3 rd – Kentucky Jockey Club	March 1 Rebel	13
15	Grittiness	Todd Pletcher	2 nd – Withers 5 th – Remsen	TBA	11
16	Carson Street	Brendan Walsh	3 rd – Lecomte 4 th – Risen Star	TBA	11
17	Napoleon Solo	Chad Summers	1 st – Champagne	Feb. 28 Gotham or Fountain of Youth	10
18 (Euro/Mideast)	Six Speed	Bhupat Seemar	1 st – UAE 2000 Guineas	March 28 UAE Derby	20
19 (Euro/Mideast)	Puerto Rico (IRE)	Aidan O'Brien	1 st – Prix Jean-Luc Lagardere	March 28 UAE Derby or May 2 2000 Guineas or May 10 French 2000 Guineas	10
20 (Japan)	Lucky Kid (JPN)	Yukihiro Kato	1 st – Hyacinth	March 28 UAE Derby or Fukuryu	30

DOWN THE STRETCH – The Road to the Kentucky Oaks Championship Series continues Saturday at Aqueduct for the \$200,000 Busher (Listed) and Gulfstream Park for the \$225,000 Davona Dale (GII). The series picks up Sunday at Oaklawn for the \$750,000 Honeybee (GIII). The Davona Dale and Honeybee award the top five finishers qualifying points on a 50-25-15-10-5 scale for the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI). Since the Busher only drew a field of five, 25% of the total points will be deducted and awarded to the top five on a 37.5-18.75-11.25-7.5-3.75 scale. ... Trainer **Bob Baffert** reported Robert B. Lewis (GIII) winner **Plutarch** has been removed from the Kentucky Derby trail. ... A total of 89 3-year-old fillies have been nominated for the Longines Kentucky Oaks. To view the nominations, visit www.churchilldowns.com. Connections who didn't pay the \$200 nomination fee can pay a \$1,500 late fee due Wednesday, April 8. ... Stall applications for the Churchill Downs Spring Meet are due Monday, March 2. For more information, visit www.churchilldowns.com.

UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

March 7 (eight weeks out) – \$200,000 San Felipe (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Santa Anita (Top 5: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Boyd (Bob Baffert)*; *Brant (Bob Baffert)*; *Buetane (Bob Baffert)*; *Intrepido (Jeff Mullins)*; *Potente (Bob Baffert)*; *Secured Freedom (Tim Yakteen)*; So Happy (Mark Glatt)

March 7 (eight weeks out) – \$400,000 Tampa Bay Derby (GIII), 1 1/16 miles, Tampa Bay Downs (Top 5: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Canaletto (Chad Brown); Further Ado (Brad Cox); Hulkamania (Whit Beckman); Powershift (Todd Pletcher); Redland Rebels (Patrick Biancone); Roger That Dana (Luis Ramirez); Talkin (Danny Gargan); The Puma (Gustavo Delgado)

March 14 (seven weeks out) – \$500,000 Virginia Derby, 1 1/8 miles, Colonial Downs (Top 5: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Incridibolt (Riley Mott); Ocelli (Whit Beckman)

March 21 (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): Chip Honcho (Steve Asmussen); Emerging Market (Chad Brown) Golden Tempo (Cherie DeVaux)

March 21 (six weeks out) – \$777,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), 1 1/8 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Fulleffort (Brad Cox); *Great White (John Ennis)*; Greenwich Village (Bob Baffert); *Stark Contrast (Michael McCarthy)*

March 28 (five weeks out) – \$1.5 million Arkansas Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Oaklawn (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Express Kid (Justin Evans); Renegade (Todd Pletcher);

March 28 (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): Nearly (Todd Pletcher); Wayne's Law (Amador Sanchez)

April 4 (four weeks out) – \$1.25 million Blue Grass (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Keeneland (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Great White (John Ennis)*; Paladin (Chad Brown); Reagan's Honor (Cherie DeVaux)

April 4 (four weeks out) – \$500,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Santa Anita (Top 5: 100-50-25-15-10)

April 4 (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): Talk to Me Jimmy (Rudy Rodriguez)

April 11 (three weeks out) – \$400,000 Lexington (GIII), 1 1/16 miles, Keeneland (Top 5: 20-10-6-4-2)

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. www.ChurchillDowns.com.