



THE DERBY DISPATCH

Contacts: Darren Rogers (502) 636-4461 (o), (502) 345-1030 (m) or Darren.Rogers@KyDerby.com @DerbyMedia
Kevin Kerstein (502) 635-4712 (o), (610) 420-6971 (m) or Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com @HorseRacingKK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Kevin Kerstein
Kentucky Racing Communications
Churchill Downs, Ellis Park, Turfway Park
(610) 420-6971 (mobile)
(502) 635-4712 (office)
Kevin.Kerstein@KyDerby.com

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

Saturday's Jeff Ruby Steaks (TP 12 at 6:25 p.m. ET): https://www.twinspires.com/documents/brisnet/past-performances/JeffRuby_TurfwayPark_ultimatepps_2026.pdf

Saturday's Louisiana Derby (FG 12 at 6:42 p.m. ET): https://www.twinspires.com/documents/brisnet/past-performances/LouisianaDerby_FairGrounds_ultimatepps_2026.pdf

TWINSPIRES.COM LOUISIANA DERBY, JEFF RUBY STEAKS TAKE CENTER STAGE ON ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, March 19, 2026) – The Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series heads into the final six weeks with the \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (Grade II) and \$777,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII) highlighting Saturday's action.

The Louisiana Derby and Jeff Ruby Steaks are the first two races on the Road to the Kentucky Derby to award 100 qualifying points to the winner, which would solidify their spot in the starting gate for the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI). The second through fifth place finishers receive points on a 50-25-15-10 scale in their attempt to qualify for the first Saturday in May.

Fans can catch both races as part of NBC's coverage of the Road to the Kentucky Derby in a special 6-7 p.m. ET telecast on NBC Sports Network and Peacock.

CHIP HONCHO MADE 3-1 MORNING LINE FAVORITE IN SATURDAY'S LOUISIANA DERBY – Leland Ackerly Racing, James Sherwood, Jode Shupe and John Cilia's Gun Runner Stakes winner **Chip Honcho** was installed as the 3-1 morning line favorite against a competitive field of nine 3-year-olds entered in Saturday's \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (Grade II) on the Road to Kentucky Derby Championship Series.

Run at 1 3/16 miles, the Louisiana Derby is the headliner of a blockbuster 14-race card at Fair Grounds. The Louisiana Derby goes as Race 12 at 6:42 p.m. (all times Eastern). First post is 1 p.m. Fans can watch and wager on the Louisiana Derby on www.twinspires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated, and watch the action on NBC Sports Network and Peacock beginning at 6 p.m.

Chip Honcho enters the Louisiana Derby following a game, runner-up finish to **Paladin** in the Fasig-Tipton Risen Star (GII) at odds of 7-1. Trained by Hall of Famer **Steve Asmussen**, who seeks his first Kentucky Derby winner, Chip Honcho will exit post No. 3 with jockey **Luis Saez** in the irons.

Asmussen will attempt to break the tie with **Todd Pletcher** for the most wins in the Louisiana Derby, each with five wins. Asmussen's previous victories in the race came with **Fifty Stars** (2001); **Pyro** (2008); **Gun Runner** (2016); **Epicenter** (2022); and **Tiztastic** (2025).

Chief among his rivals appears to be **Klaravich Stable's** impressive maiden winner **Emerging Market**. Trained by **Chad Brown**, who won the Risen Star with **Paladin**, **Emerging Market** scored a three-quarters of a length debut win on Feb. 7 at Tampa over **Powershift** while earning a sharp 99 Brisnet Speed Rating. The son of **Candy Ride (ARG)** will be piloted by **Flavien Prat** from post 9.

Also entered in the race is **Phipps Stable** and **St Elias Stable's** Lecomte (GIII) winner **Golden Tempo**. Trained by **Cherie DeVaux**, **Golden Tempo** could only manage third in the Risen Star, beaten six lengths to **Paladin** and **Chip Honcho**. He'll add blinkers for the Louisiana Derby and be ridden by **Jose Ortiz** from post 5.

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

- **Pavlovian** (Edwin Maldonado, Doug O'Neill, 6-1)
- **Autobahn** (Marcelino Pedroza Jr., Brad Cox, 8-1)
- Chip Honcho (Saez, Asmussen, 3-1)
- **Universe** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 12-1)
- Golden Tempo (Ortiz, DeVaux, 7-2)
- **Spirit of Royal** (Francisco Arrieta, Dallas Stewart, 20-1)
- **Blacksmith** (Florent Geroux, Bob Baffert, 6-1)
- **Easterly** (Edgard Zayas, Brad Cox, 6-1)
- Emerging Market (Prat, Brown, 6-1)

STARK CONTRAST INVADES FROM SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOR JEFF RUBY STEAKS – Amerman Racing's Grade III winner **Stark Contrast** will invade Northern Kentucky from Southern California to face a full field of a dozen 3-year-olds entered in Saturday's 55th running of the \$777,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), the marquee race of the Turfway Park Racing & Gaming Winter/Spring Meet.

The Jeff Ruby Steaks, run at 1 1/8 miles on Tapeta, is part of the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series and will award the winner 100 qualifying points and a spot in the starting gate for the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on Saturday, May 2 at Churchill Downs.

The blockbuster 13-race program at Turfway Park gets underway at 12:45 p.m. (all times Eastern), with the Jeff Ruby Steaks scheduled as Race 12 at 6:25 p.m. The card also includes the \$300,000 TwinSpires Kentucky Cup Classic (GIII); \$300,000 Bourbonette Oaks (Listed); \$250,000 Latoria (Listed); \$250,000 Animal Kingdom; and \$250,000 Rushaway.

Along with Stark Contrast, the Jeff Ruby Steaks field also includes **David Romanik**, **Warren Cheekes**, **Deborah Dougherty**, **C2 Racing Stable**, **BAG Racing Stable** and **Robert Liedel's** Grade I winner **Argos**; **St. Elias Stable** and **Starlight Racing's** multiple stakes-placed **Fulleffort**; and **Gold Square's** stakes winner and Grade I-placed **Two Out Hero**.

Southern California invader Stark Contrast breaks from post No. 11 under jockey **Kazushi Kimura**. Trained by **Michael McCarthy**, Stark Contrast won the Zuma Beach (GIII) by one length and scored a 2 1/4-length victory in the Eddie Logan (Listed) at Santa Anita. The Jeff Ruby Steaks will be Stark Contrast's first start over a synthetic surface, with all three of his victories coming on turf.

McCarthy won the Jeff Ruby Steaks two years ago with **Endlessly**, who is entered earlier on the card in the \$300,000 TwinSpires Kentucky Cup Classic (GIII).

Trainer **Brad Cox** entered the duo of Fulleffort and Argos in the Jeff Ruby Steaks.

Fulleffort finished second in both the Leonatus and John Battaglia Memorial (Listed) at Turfway Park. Prior to those stakes tries, the son of Liam's Map broke his maiden by a dominate five lengths at Keeneland. **Irad Ortiz Jr.** rides from post 2.

Cox, who won last year's Jeff Ruby Steaks with eventual Kentucky Derby fourth-place finisher **Final Gambit**, also entered Grade I winner Argos. The son of Nyquist was recently transferred to Cox following five starts with **Riley Mott**, including his head victory in last year's Summer Stakes (GI) at Woodbine. **Luan Machado** has the mount from post 10.

Two Out Hero won the Soaring Free Stakes last season at Woodbine prior to finishing third to Argos in the Summer Stakes. Trained by **Kevin Attard**, Two Out Hero disappointed one month ago in the John Battaglia Memorial when he finished ninth at odds of 4-1. **Gerardo Corrales** rides from post 4.

Another horse invading from Southern California is **Perry Bass II** and **Ramona Bass's** stakes-placed **Medici**. Trained by Hall of Famer **Richard Mandella**, Medici finished second in last month's Pasadena at Santa Anita. **Mirco Demuro** rides from post 6.

Trainer **Brendan Walsh** entered the duo of Black Gold Stakes winner **Black Hornet** and two-time winner **Stop the Car**.

Owned by **Calumet Farm**, Black Hornet scored a 1 1/4-length victory in last month's Black Gold Stakes at Fair Grounds at odds of 7-1. **Declan Cannon** rides from post 5.

Stop the Car was targeting the John Battaglia Memorial but was scratched with a minor setback. Owned by **Tradewinds Farm**, Stop the Car won on debut in a \$150,000 maiden claiming contest at Keeneland and then captured a first-level allowance at Churchill Downs. **Edgar Morales** has the mount from post 12.

The field for the Jeff Ruby Steaks from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- **Turf Star** (John Velazquez, Graham Motion)
- Fulleffort (Ortiz, Cox)
- **Baytown Dreamer** (Orlando Bocachica, Paul McEntee)
- Two Out Hero (Corrales, Attard)
- Black Hornet (Cannon, Walsh)
- Medici (Demuro, Mandella)
- **Maximus Prime** (Joe Ramos, Anthony Mitchell)
- **Chaos Agent** (Joel Rosario, Josie Carroll)
- **Brave Force** (Vincent Cheminaud, Jack Siston)
- Argos (Machado, Cox)
- Stark Contrast (Kimura, McCarthy)
- Stop the Car (Morales, Walsh)

The Jeff Ruby Steaks awards the top five finishers qualifying points on a 100-50-25-15-10 scale toward a spot in the starting gate for Kentucky Derby 152.

Live coverage of the Jeff Ruby Steaks will be shown on NBC Sports Network and Peacock from 6-7 p.m. The broadcast also includes the \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII) at Fair Grounds.

LOUISIANA DERBY QUOTES

- **Cherie DeVaux (trainer, Golden Tempo)** – “He made a really nice run in the Risen Star and just gave himself a lot to do. We’re putting blinkers on him not to change his running style but hopefully to get him in a better position so he doesn’t have to make up so much ground. He’s got a really nice turn of foot but I really just want to get him focused.”
- **Brad Cox (trainer, Autobahn and Easterly)** – “(Easterly) won professionally to break his maiden. We started him around one turn just to get going. I thought he ran a respectable race coming out of a good maiden. Then he was able to graduate last time around two turns doing what we thought he’d do – move forward around two turns. ... (Autobahn) has always been a pretty good worker. We started him short and then stretched him out a little bit more and then he was able to put it all together going the mile and an eighth. I don’t know how strong the race was but I like the way he did it.”

JEFF RUBY STEAKS QUOTES

- **Michael McCarthy (trainer, Stark Contrast)** – “He’s a good work horse and trains with a lot of energy. He seems to be going the right way. It’s a good time to take a swing at a big pot.”
- **Trace Messina (assistant trainer, Argos and Fulleffort)** – “Fulleffort continues to improve this year. He ran two really good starts in the Leonatus and John Battaglia but got a little unlucky not to get the job done. We’re looking forward to seeing him continue to improve and run a top race on Saturday. ... (Argos) is a new arrival to our barn. He’s done everything the right way since we got him at Turfway.”

HOW TO WATCH THE LOUISIANA DERBY AND JEFF RUBY STEAKS

- Watch live coverage of the TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby and Jeff Ruby Steaks on NBC Sports Network and Peacock from 6-7 p.m.
- FanDuel TV will provide live, on-site coverage.
- Watch and wager online with www.TwinSpires.com while enjoying live, on-site coverage at Fair Grounds from **Joe Kristufek** and Turfway Park from **Kaitlin Benson**.

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:

Saturday

- Lrl R8 (3:22 p.m.), \$100,000 Private Terms, 3yo, 1 1/16 M (six entries)
- TP R8, (4:13 p.m.), \$250,000 Rushaway, 3yo, 1 1/16 M (eight entries)
- TP R11 (5:43 p.m.), \$300,000 Bourbonette Oaks (Listed), 3yo f, 1 1/16 M (12 entries)
- FG R11 (6:08 p.m.), \$400,000 Fasig-Tipton Fair Grounds Oaks (GII), 3yo f, 1 1/16 M (seven entries)
- TP R12 (6:25 p.m.), \$777,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), 3yo, 1 1/8 M (12 entries)
- FG R12 (6:42 p.m.), \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby (GII), 3yo, 1 3/16 M (nine 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	Incredibolt	Riley Mott	1 st – Virginia Derby 1 st – Street Sense	May 2 Kentucky Derby	60
3	The Puma	Gustavo Delgado	1 st – Tampa Bay Derby' 3 rd – Sam F Davis	March 28 Florida Derby or April 4 Blue Grass	54
4	Silent Tactic	Mark Casse	1 st – Southwest 2 nd – Rebel 2 nd – Smarty Jones	March 28 Arkansas Derby	50
5	Class President	Todd Pletcher	1 st – Rebel	April 4 Blue Grass or Wood Memorial	50
6	Commandment	Brad Cox	1 st – Fountain of Youth	March 28 Florida Derby	50
7	Iron Honor	Chad Brown	1 st – Gotham	April 4 Wood Memorial	50
8	Potente	Bob Baffert	1 st – San Felipe	April 4 Santa Anita Derby	50
9	Chip Honcho	Steve Asmussen	1 st – Gun Runner 2 nd – Risen Star 4 th - Lecomte	March 21 Louisiana Derby	39
10	Grittiness	Todd Pletcher	2 nd – Virginia Derby 2 nd – Withers 5 th - Remsen	TBA	
11	Further Ado	Brad Cox	1 st – Kentucky Jockey Club 2 nd – Tampa Bay Derby	April 4 Blue Grass	
12	Golden Tempo	Cherie DeVaux	1 st – Lecomte 3 rd – Risen Star	March 21 Louisiana Derby	35
13	Litmus Test	Bob Baffert	1 st – Los Al Futurity 3 rd – Breeders' Futurity 3 rd – Rebel 4 th – Breeders' Cup Juvenile	March 28 Arkansas Derby	34
14	Renegade	Todd Pletcher	1 st – Tampa Bay Derby 2 nd - Remsen	March 28 Arkansas Derby	25
15	Chief Wallabee	Bill Mott	2 nd – Fountain of Youth	March 28 Florida Derby	25
16	Robusta	Doug O'Neill	2 nd – San Felipe	April 4 Santa Anita Derby	25
17	Intrepido	Jeff Mullins	1 st – American Pharoah 2 nd – Robert B. Lewis 5 th – Breeders' Cup Juvenile	April 4 Santa Anita Derby	23
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	TBA	10
20 (Japan)	Lucky Kid (JPN)	Yukihiro Kato	1 st – Hyacinth	March 28 Fukuryu	30

DOWN THE STRETCH – The Road to the Kentucky Oaks continues Saturday at Fair Grounds for the \$400,000 Fasig-Tipton Fair Grounds Oaks (GII) and Turfway Park for the \$300,000 Bourbonette Oaks (Listed). The Fair Ground Oaks awards the top five finishers qualifying points on a 100-50-25-15-10 scale toward the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) while the Bourbonette awards the top five on a 50-25-15-10-5 scale.

UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

March 28 (five weeks out) – \$230,000 Fukuryu, 1 1/8 miles, Nakayama (Japan RTKD Top 5: 40-20-12-8-4)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Danon Bourbon (Manabu Ikezoe), Itterasshai (JPN) (Makoto Saito).

March 28 (five weeks out) – \$1 million UAE Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Meydan (Euro/Mideast RTKD Top 5: 100-60-30-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Al Haram (IRE) (Alsidrani Abdullah); Brotherly Love (GB) (Jamie Osborne); Devon Island (Charlie Appleby); Duke of Immatin (Musabbeh Al Mheiri); Go Man (FR) (Richard Chotard); Lino Padrino (Bhupat Seemar); Labwah (Salem Bin Ghadayer); Pyromancer (JPN) (Keiji Yoshimura); Rammaas (Bhupat Seemar); Salloom (Bhupat Seemar); Six Speed (Bhupat Seemar); Union Security (Ahmad bin Harmash); and Wonder Dean (JPN) (Daisuke Takayanagi).

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): Chief Wallabee (Bill Mott); *Commandment* (Brad Cox); Nearly (Todd Pletcher); *The Puma* (Gustavo Delgado); and Wayne's Law (Amador Sanchez).

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): Blackout Time (Kenny McPeck); Bricklin (Rodolphe Brisset); Exosome (Kelsey Danner); Litmus Test (Bob Baffert); Renegade (Todd Pletcher); Silent Tactic (Mark Casse); and Taptastic (Steve Asmussen).

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): Brant (Bob Baffert); *Class President* (Todd Pletcher); *Commandment* (Brad Cox); Further Ado (Brad Cox); Great White (John Ennis); Paladin (Chad Brown); Reagan's Honor (Cherie DeVaux); and *The Puma* (Gustavo Delgado).

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

Known possible starters (with trainer): Cherokee Nation (Bob Baffert); Intrepido (Jeff Mullins); Potente (Bob Baffert); Robusta (Doug O'Neill); Secured Freedom (Tim Yakteen); and So Happy (Mark Glatt).

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): Bravaro (Saffie Joseph Jr.); Buetane (Bob Baffert); Civil Liberty (Doug O'Neill); *Class President* (Todd Pletcher); Courting (Todd Pletcher); Creole Chrome (Joe Sharp); Express Kid (Justin Evans); Iron Honor (Chad Brown); Napoleon Solo (Chad Summers); Otinho (Chad Brown); Red Zone Runner (Hugo Padilla); Right to Party (Kenny McPeck); Taj Mahal (Brittany Russell); and 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)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Canaletto* (Chad Brown)

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.

-END-