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WHAT TO EXPECT AT FIRST KENTUCKY OAKS RACE ON PRIMETIME

Global Sensation Nicole Scherzinger to Perform National Anthem

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, May 1, 2026) – Churchill Downs Racetrack will have an enhanced lineup of events, guest appearances and charitable efforts set to define the 152nd Longines Kentucky Oaks, America’s premier race for 3-year-old fillies held on Friday, May 1.

For the first time, the Kentucky Oaks will be broadcast in primetime on NBC and Peacock, with coverage beginning at 8 p.m. ET for an 8:40 p.m. ET post time. The evening broadcast will bring the energy of Oaks Day under the lights to a broader national audience, building momentum ahead of the 152nd Kentucky Derby the following day. The broadcast will include a national anthem performance by Tony Award winner and vocal superstar Nicole Scherzinger.

“The Kentucky Oaks steps into a brighter national spotlight this year with its move to primetime, and we couldn’t be prouder to see this moment realized,” said Bill Carstanjen, CEO of Churchill Downs Incorporated. “We’re raising the bar for an unforgettable Oaks experience by bringing the energy of this historic race under the lights through an exciting fan program, highlighted by a performance from multi-platinum-selling artist Nicole Scherzinger, along with a strengthened commitment to women’s health initiatives across the track.”

One of the longest-running sporting events in the United States, the Kentucky Oaks commences a weekend steeped in tradition, premier racing and cultural significance at Churchill Downs. At the heart of Oaks Day is its signature “Pink Out” theme, honoring breast and ovarian cancer awareness, alongside the iconic garland of stargazer lilies presented to the winning filly.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THIS YEAR’S KENTUCKY OAKS

Advancing Women’s Health Advocacy Through New Partnership

For nearly 20 years, Churchill Downs has been committed to women’s health advocacy. This year the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF) has been named its National Philanthropy Partner, expanding the Oaks’ charitable giveback to a national stage and amplifying its impact across communities nationwide. BCRF is the largest private funder of breast cancer and metastatic breast cancer research worldwide. Opportunities to give back and recognize survivors will be integrated throughout the day, including point-of-sale donations at select on-site retail locations.

Survivor’s Parade

A cornerstone of Oaks Day, the 18th annual Survivors Parade will once again honor those affected by breast and ovarian cancer. This year’s walk will feature and support Derby Divas through the Norton Cancer Institute Breast Health Program and Horses and Hope through Kentucky Cancer Program, which each provide essential care services to underserved women across the region.

Additionally, the parade will include a special performance by country music artist Lana Scott, returning to Churchill Downs following her standout national anthem rendition at the 2024 Kentucky Oaks.

Star-Studded Appearances

Coming off a Tony Award win for her celebrated performance in Sunset Blvd., Nicole Scherzinger – core member of the pop group global sensation, The Pussycat Dolls – will take the stage at 8:14 p.m. ET to deliver her live rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner” ahead of a historic Kentucky Oaks twilight race.

“The Kentucky Oaks is such a meaningful celebration of tradition, community, the spirit that brings people together and the important role women play in the event’s legacy,” Scherzinger said. “As someone who was raised in Louisville, coming home to be part of it is incredibly meaningful to me and my family who will be joining me. I’m truly honored to represent my hometown.”

Churchill Downs will further emphasize the female-driven spirit of Oaks Day with Camille Kostek serving as this year’s Riders Up announcer. Model, on-camera personality, entrepreneur and a mainstay of the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit franchise – this year appearing in her ninth consecutive issue – Kostek will have a prominent presence across Oaks Day celebrations, also hosting Sports Illustrated’s premium hospitality experience, Club SI, for the day.

A Stadium-Wide Fashion Show

Fashion remains at the forefront of Oaks Day. This year, as racegoers fill the grounds with a vibrant sea of pink attire in support of women’s health, Churchill Downs will be running the stadium-wide fashion show “Style Under the Spires presented by L’Oréal Paris,” where guests can scan a QR code on the big board to digitally enter their looks for a chance to be featured as the best ensemble at Oaks. The overall winner will receive 2027 Kentucky Oaks and Kentucky Derby tickets.

Elevated Culinary Experience

In addition to the fashion, philanthropy and entertainment taking place across the track, guests will also enjoy a refined dining experience. For the first time, Oaks Day will feature both lunch and dinner menus, keeping guests satisfied through the day and into finish the under the lights.

Additional Information

Gates will open to the public at 11 a.m. ET on Friday, May 1 before kicking off a full day of racing at Churchill Downs beginning at 12:45 p.m. ET. Fans can tune into the broadcast of the Longines Kentucky Oaks finale on NBC and Peacock starting at 8 p.m. ET. For more information on Kentucky Oaks, visit kentuckyderby.com/visit/derby-week-events/kentucky-oaks/.

ABOUT THE KENTUCKY DERBY

The \$5 million Kentucky Derby takes place on the first Saturday in May at historic Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky. Inaugurated in 1875, the legendary 1 1/4-mile race for 3-year-old Thoroughbreds is the longest continually held annual sporting event in the United States and the first leg of horse racing's Triple Crown series. Also known as, "The Run for the Roses®" and "The Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sports®," the Kentucky Derby is the most attended horse race in the nation. The 152nd Kentucky Derby will take place on Saturday, May 2, 2026. For more information, please visit www.KentuckyDerby.com

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.

ABOUT THE BREAST CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Breast cancer is a complex disease with no simple solution. Research is the key to stopping it in its tracks. Founded in 1993 by Evelyn H. Lauder, the Breast Cancer Research Foundation is the largest private funder of breast cancer research in the world. We invest in the best minds in science—and foster cross-disciplinary collaboration—to examine every aspect of the disease from prevention to metastasis. Our approach accelerates the entire field and moves us closer to the answers we urgently need. We can't stop now. Join us in fueling the world's most promising research. With you, we will bring the end of breast cancer into focus. Learn more and get involved at BCRF.org.

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