



KENTUCKY
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xb wager guide

MAY 6, 2017 • CHURCHILL DOWNS



Nyquist and jockey Mario Gutierrez win 2016 Kentucky Derby.

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Fellow Racing Fan,

Welcome to Xpressbet's FREE Kentucky Derby Wager Guide!

This has been a wide-open Kentucky Derby prep season complete with success, failure and injury—to the same competitor, no less. McCracken, winner of the Sam F. Davis at Tampa Bay Downs and then third in the Blue Grass, was forced to miss training due to a minor injury. Classic Empire, the 2016 2-year-old champ, also spent time on the bench. They're both back, have had prep races, and will attract plenty of wagering support in this year's Derby.

The Kentucky Derby becomes infinitely more interesting when you have a few bucks riding on the outcome. And that's where Xpressbet comes in. We're the best online, telephone and mobile wagering service in the nation. In order to help you to cash a ticket on the race we're proud to present this FREE Kentucky Derby Wager Guide.

Xpressbet will offer online, phone and mobile wagering for the entire Triple Crown—and produce free Wager Guides for remaining events: Preakness (available May 12) and Belmont (available June 2).

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The Kentucky Derby is an important racing day worldwide and Xpressbet is happy to arm horseplayers with valuable information. That's why we've recruited top handicappers, writers and broadcasters to examine the race—Analysis, Main Contenders, Value Plays and \$100 Wagering Strategies.

In addition to race-by-race expert commentary, inside you'll also find oodles of useful Stats and Trends, a handy Exotic Wagering Chart and much more.

This season, following the Kentucky Derby post-position draw, Xpressbet will produce an updated version of this Guide to reflect adjustments in expert opinions based on up-to-the-minute information. Make certain to return to Xpressbet.com the day before each Triple Crown event for a FREE revised and enhanced version of the Guide.

Xpressbet hopes your 2017 Kentucky Derby wagering experience is fruitful and we look forward to serving as your advance deposit account wagering provider for the big day and into the future.

Sincerely,
Ron Luniewski
President
Xpressbet

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See How They Prep

By Jeremy Plonk *NBC Sports Triple Crown Researcher*

*Since 1986, every Kentucky Derby champion except Charismatic exited a 9-furlong final tune-up.
A strong prep finish often is an indicator of Kentucky Derby success.*

Spiral Stakes (March 25): **FAST AND ACCURATE** pressed a fast pace and survived over the final 3 furlongs in approximately 40.53. The slow come-home time also included 14.11 the final furlong. Last year's Spiral was about 3 full seconds faster the final 3 furlongs.

Sunland Derby (March 26): The race that produced Blue Grass winner **IRAP** and Arkansas Derby runner-up Conquest Mo Money also was the final prep for **HENCE**, who rallied from 10th to win behind a final 3 furlongs in about 37.58, a sharp move. His final eighth was 12.39.

Florida Derby (April 1): Trakus clocked winner **ALWAYS DREAMING** in a blistering 36.56 the final 3 furlongs while pressing the pace, including 12.53 the final furlong. Runner-up **STATE OF HONOR** (37.43, 13.19) and late-running third **GUNNEVERA** (36.59, 12.67) also are Derby-bound. This race came home stronger than recent Florida Derby editions.

Louisiana Derby (April 1): **GIRVIN** made up 5 lengths over the final 3 furlongs and did so in approximately 37.60 with a final furlong in 12.97. Runner-up **PATCH** moved just behind him in tandem in about 37.85. **LOCAL HERO** lost 5 lengths to **GIRVIN** over the final 3 furlongs (approximately 38.60). These are stronger numbers than we've seen recently in the Louisiana Derby.

Santa Anita Derby (APRIL 8): In an epically slow Santa Anita Derby—slowest in more than 60 years—winner **GORMLEY** managed a final 3 furlongs in 39.73, just 13.45 the last furlong. Pacesetters **BATTLE OF MIDWAY** (40.37, 13.74) and **ROYAL MO** (40.38, 13.65) floundered late. By comparison, California Chrome came home here in 36.55.

Blue Grass (April 8): **IRAP** pressed the pace and upset the field behind a final 3 furlongs in 38.03, according to Trakus, and a final eighth in 13.07. Runner-up **PRACTICAL JOKE** ran the fastest fourth quarter and final furlong in the race to post 37.95 and 13.02 splits. Favorite **MCCRACKEN** disappointed with 38.27 and 13.42 splits. **J BOYS ECHO** (38.56, 13.42) and **TAPWRIT** (39.48, 13.94) also failed to rally. Last year's Blue Grass went marginally quicker late.

Wood Memorial (April 8): The top two pace players ruled this prep as **IRISH WAR CRY** came home in 38.98 the final 3 furlongs to forge past **BATTALION RUNNER** with a final furlong of 12.95. Trakus also showed the runner-up posted splits of 39.57 and 13.57 to remain clear of Cloud Computing (39.82, 13.28). Note that the last time the Wood was on a fast track two years ago, Frosted came home nearly 3 full seconds faster the final 3 furlongs.

Arkansas Derby (April 15): **CLASSIC EMPIRE** closed 1 3/4 lengths over the final 3 furlongs to win, posting a come-home time of approximately 37.40. His final furlong was about 12.10. Consider that about 1 1/2 lengths faster than deep closer Creator came home in last year's Arkansas Derby. Third-place **LOOKIN AT LEE** made up nearly 2 1/4 lengths on the winner in the final 3 furlongs, going approximately 36.95 (including a sparkling final furlong in about 11.95). **SONNETEER** absolutely flew late for fourth, erasing 8 lengths on the winner, and must be taken seriously as a Derby closer if he gets in (35.95, 11.55). Pace players **MALAGACY** (approximately 38.20, 12.85) and **UNTRAPPED** (38.60, 13.00) also could move on Louisville.

Expert Selection Grid

Expert	Bob Neumeier (NBC Sports)	Laffit Pincay (XBTV.com)	Jeff Siegel (XBTV.com)	Jon White (Santa Anita)	Dick Jerardi (Daily Racing Form)	Steve Byk (SiriusXM Radio)
First	Always Dreaming	Always Dreaming	Always Dreaming	Thunder Snow	Irish War Cry	McCracken
Second	Girvin	Gunnevera	Classic Empire	Irish War Cry	McCracken	Classic Empire
Third	Classic Empire	Practical Joke	Irish War Cry	Classic Empire	J Boys Echo	Always Dreaming
Fourth	Battle of Midway	Lookin at Lee	Gunnevera	McCracken	Classic Empire	Gunnevera



Derby Extras

Jeremy Plonk *NBC Sports Triple Crown Researcher*

Know This:

Battling Apollo

Since 2009, only Todd Pletcher and Bob Baffert have challenged 'Apollo's Curse' by starting sophomores in the Kentucky Derby that did not race as 2-year-olds. With such runners the pair of powerhouse trainers is a combined 0-for-4 during that time. In the past three Derbies, Materiality (6th in 2015) is the only one to attempt to vault the 1882 hurdle which now is 59: 0-3-4 all time.

Easy as 1-2-3-4

The top 4 wagering choices in last year's Kentucky Derby ran 1-2-3-4 for the first time ever as individual betting interests.

No April Prep

Since 1920, Derby starters without an April prep are 91: 5-6-5. The five winners are Orb, Animal Kingdom, Mine That Bird, Big Brown and Needles. Notably, a horse without an April prep has finished in the Derby top three in 9 of the last 10 years.

Outside Looking 'Win'

Following filly Genuine Risk's 1980 Derby victory, the era of massive Derby fields began in earnest. The 1981 Derby gate ballooned to 21 starters and has attracted near-capacity fields since. During that time, posts 5-16 have won 29 of 36 Derbies. Also, 25 horses have finished in the Derby's top three in the past 35 years (105 total possible spots) from the auxiliary gate.

Drive for Five

The Derby favorite will try to make it five straight for the first time since 1895. That year marked the fifth of a record six straight successful bids by the race's chalk.

Stats & Trends:

Winning Derby Post Positions

(Since 1930)

Post	Wins	Last Winner	Year
1	8	Ferdinand	1986
2	7	Affirmed	1978
3	5	Real Quiet	1998
4	5	Super Saver	2010
5	9	California Chrome	2014
6	2	Sea Hero	1993
7	6	Street Sense	2007
8	8	Mine That Bird	2009
9	4	Riva Ridge	1972
10	9	Giacomo	2005
11	2	Winning Colors	1988
12	3	Canonero II	1971
13	5	Nyquist	2016
14	2	Carry Back	1961
15	5	American Pharoah	2015
16	4	Animal Kingdom	2011
17	0	N/A	N/A
18	1	Gato Del Sol	1982
19	1	I'll Have Another	2012
20	1	Big Brown	2008

Winning Derby Beyer Figures

(Last 20 years)

Year	Horse	BSF
2016	Nyquist	103
2015	American Pharoah	105
2014	California Chrome	97
2013	Orb	104
2012	I'll Have Another	101
2011	Animal Kingdom	103
2010	Super Saver	104
2009	Mine That Bird	105
2008	Big Brown	109
2007	Street Sense	111
2006	Barbaro	111
2005	Giacomo	100
2004	Smarty Jones	107
2003	Funny Cide	108
2002	War Emblem	114
2001	Monarchos	116
2000	Fusaichi Pegasus	108
1999	Charismatic	108
1998	Real Quiet	107
1997	Silver Charm	115

Five of Last Nine Won From Auxiliary Gate

Post	Horse	Year
20	Big Brown	2008
19	I'll Have Another	2012
16	Animal Kingdom	2011
15	Orb	2013
15	American Pharoah	2015
13	Nyquist	2016
8	Mine That Bird	2009
5	California Chrome	2014
4	Super Saver	2010

Most Career Derby Starters

Sts.	Trainer
48	D. Wayne Lukas
45	Todd Pletcher
27	Bob Baffert
26	Nick Zito
26	Dick Thompson

Most Derby Starters Without Win

Sts.	Trainer
15	Steve Asmussen



Meet The 2017 Derby Contenders

by Johnny D Xpressbet.com

Classic Empire

They say you must knock out the champ to claim the crown. Well, no one's flattened Classic Empire—the 2-year-old champ—yet. He's had two races in 2017—third in the Holy Bull at Gulfstream and first in the Arkansas Derby. The Florida defeat probably came more because of a hoof abscess, discovered right after the race, than the competition. The Arkansas Derby win validated the colt's championship quality and topped a determined comeback following a winter chock-full of setbacks, including the hoof abscess, a slight back issue, and assorted training interruptions. It is noted that Classic Empire switched to his right lead late in Arkansas and that can mean something...or not!

Always Dreaming

This son of Bodemeister has won the last three of five lifetime starts, including a romping, five-length score in the Xpressbet Florida Derby last out at a mile and one-eighth. Moved to trainer Todd Pletcher's care after his first two races—a third at Belmont and a second at Saratoga, respectively—Always Dreaming hasn't lost since. He broke his maiden by over 11 lengths at Tampa, was 'ridden out' to win by four in a mile and one-eighth first-level allowance race at Gulfstream, and then dominated the Florida Derby! It would not be a total surprise if he's the lukewarm starting favorite in this year's Kentucky Derby.

Irish War Cry

Winner of the Holy Bull at Gulfstream and the Wood at Aqueduct, Irish War Cry would be an extremely popular entrant in this year's Kentucky Derby if it weren't for an inexplicable 'no-show' performance in the Xpressbet Fountain of Youth Stakes, also at Gulfstream. If a horseplayer can forgive and forget, Irish War Cry seems a suitable choice in the Kentucky Derby. He has a pair of races with a Beyer Speed Figure of 101 (wrapped around a silly 63) and he's the only runner in the field that can make that claim.

McCraken

Unbeaten in his first four starts at two, including three wins at Churchill Downs, McCraken got off to a rousing start to the 2017 Triple Crown season on Feb. 11 when he won the Sam F. Davis at Tampa Bay Downs. Unfortunately, following the race, he experienced swelling in an ankle and was forced to rest for a short while. He didn't race again until April 8 when

third in the Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland. Trainer Ian Wilkes was assistant trainer to Carl Nafzger when Street Sense won the Derby in 2007. That Derby winner also finished third in the Blue Grass Stakes. Can you say 'Déjà vu all over again?'

Gunnevera

This colt brings a feel-good story with him to the Kentucky Derby. Purchased for just \$16,000 as a yearling, he's now made over \$1.1 million for his Venezuelan connections. Trainer Antonio Sano, all-time leading trainer in that country, has had success in

the United States, but this is the first time he's had a runner on the game's biggest stage. A winner of four of nine starts, Gunnevera has a deep-closing style that can inhale foes in a few giant strides. The full force of Gunnevera's kick was on display when he won the Xpressbet Fountain of Youth by more than five lengths at Gulfstream. In his next start, the Xpressbet Florida Derby, he broke from the far outside, trailed the field throughout and could only manage a third-place finish.

Practical Joke

Although he hasn't won a race since October, Practical Joke has been hitting the board in some pretty important events. A multiple Grade 1 winner at two, Joke finished second in both the Xpressbet Grade 2 Fountain of Youth and in the Grade 2 Blue Grass. He's trained by Chad Brown, the nation's reigning top conditioner, has three wins, two seconds and a third in six starts against top competition, has enough pace to be mid-pack in the Derby and he's never been passed in the lane. All things considered, in this year's Kentucky Derby Practical Joke is no 'joke!'

2017 KENTUCKY DERBY FUTURE WAGER POOL 4 (March 31 - April 2)

Wagering Interest	Morning Line Odds	Final Odds	\$2 Will Pay
McCraken	6-1	5-1	\$13.80
Always Dreaming	50-1	6-1	\$14.20
Gunnevera	6-1	9-1	\$20.40
Classic Empire	12-1	10-1	\$22.20
Tapwrit	10-1	10-1	\$23.20
All Other 3yos	10-1	11-1	\$24.80
Malagacy	30-1	16-1	\$35.80
Girvin	30-1	17-1	\$36.80
Irish War Cry	15-1	21-1	\$45.00

Morning Line Odds by Mike Battaglia

Pass the Excedrin

by Bob Neumeier *NBC Sports Reporter*



Analysis: After perusing the Kentucky Derby past performances, a persistent migraine has permeated my skull. It's a dull, lingering pain that no dosage of Tylenol, Excedrin or morphine can cure. The annual list of Derby questions to answer has grown from five or six to 10,000. Is **CLASSIC EMPIRE** healthy? Did **MCCRACKEN** need the race in the Blue Grass? What transpired in the Fountain of Youth debacle for **IRISH WAR CRY**? Did owner Paul Reddam even bet on the improbable Blue Grass winner **IRAP**? And, does trainer Todd Pletcher need a village to house his entrants?

Main Contenders: Assuming **ALWAYS DREAMING** receives a positive draw, he should establish a pace-pressing position on or near the lead. If this speedy son of Bodemeister wins, NBC cameramen will need a wide-angle lens to capture the 13,432 owners on the stage. Racing media is sure to ask trainer Todd Pletcher about his 'sketchy' Derby record (1-for-45), but there is a reason why he's a 7-time Eclipse Award winner. **GIRVIN** has won three of four and could sneak under the radar. Sorry, I can't find a blemish on paper so long as his final workout goes as planned. However, the paths of **CLASSIC EMPIRE**, **IRISH WAR CRY**, and **MCCRACKEN** have been littered with pieces of broken glass, a negative in handicapping the Derby.

Value Plays: **BATTLE OF MIDWAY** has early speed, which gives him a chance in this race. He joined Royal Mo and American Anthem in an insane, suicidal early pace in the Santa Anita Derby. The last two will not join the party in Louisville. On paper, it appears that **BATTALION RUNNER** 'needed' his last race and is a threat. Maybe. Maybe not. In the event the pace melts, maybe **LOOKIN AT LEE** will give us a Giacomo rendition late in the going at boxcar mutuels. Trainer Steve Asmussen has won a gazillion races, none in the Kentucky Derby. He's not alone. Bobby Frankel? Bill Mott? Kieran McLaughlin?

Wagering Strategies (\$100):

- \$60 Exacta: **ALWAYS DREAMING** over **GIRVIN** (\$60)
- \$20 Exacta: **GIRVIN** over **ALWAYS DREAMING** (\$20)
- \$10 Exacta Part-Wheel: **ALWAYS DREAMING** over **CLASSIC EMPIRE**, **BATTLE OF MIDWAY** (\$20)

Xpressbet Kentucky Derby Wager Guide free daily online updates with revised Analysis, Picks and Wagering Strategies begin Tuesday, May 2.

Picks

1. ALWAYS DREAMING
2. GIRVIN
3. CLASSIC EMPIRE
4. BATTLE OF MIDWAY

Updated Wager Guide Available May 5

Stats & Trends:

Win-Place-Show Odds

(Last 25 years, Odds to \$1)

Win Odds

Average: 13.39

High: 50.60 (Mine That Bird, 2009)

Low: 2.30 (Fusaichi Pegasus, 2000)

Notable: 3 consecutive winners have been 5-2 or less.

Place Odds

Average: 16.86

High: 71.60 (Closing Argument, 2005)

Low: 2.50 (Empire Maker, 2003)

Notable: Bodemeister in 2012 was the last favorite to run second.

Show Odds

Average: 10.47

High: 33.30 (Dance Floor, 1992)

Low: 2.70 (Indian Charlie, 1998)

Notable: Only once in the last 24 years has the show horse been over 20-1 odds.

Exacta Payoffs

(Last 25 years, \$2 Payoffs)

Average: \$820.55

High: \$9,814.80

(Giacomo-Closing Argument, 2005)

Low: \$30.60

(Nyquist-Exaggerator, 2016)

Notable: Last year's exacta was lowest since Sunday Silence-Easy Goer, 1989 at \$15.20.

Know This:

Favorites on a Roll

The current 4-year run of winning favorites in the Kentucky Derby is tied for the second-longest such streak in the event's history. The last time 4 in a row won was 1972-'75, while the record streak of 6 straight dates back to 1891-'96.

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Exotic Wagering Chart

Kentucky Derby exotic wagers usually produce hefty payoffs. Use this handy Exotic Wagering Chart to help plan your attack.

EXACTA BOX: (\$1 Wager)

2 horse box.....	\$2
3 horse box.....	\$6
4 horse box.....	\$12
5 horse box.....	\$20
6 horse box.....	\$30
7 horse box.....	\$42
8 horse box.....	\$56

EXACTA WHEEL: (\$1 Wager)

One Horse with All

6 horse field.....	\$5
7 horse field.....	\$6
8 horse field.....	\$7
9 horse field.....	\$8
10 horse field.....	\$9

TRIFECTA BOX: (\$.50 Wager)

3 Horse Box.....	\$3
4 Horse Box.....	\$12
5 Horse Box.....	\$30
6 Horse Box.....	\$60
7 Horse Box.....	\$105
8 Horse Box.....	\$168

TRIFECTA WHEEL: (\$.50 Wager)

One Horse with All with All

(Example: 1/All/All or All/1/All or All/All/1)

7 Horse Field.....	\$15
8 Horse Field.....	\$21
9 Horse Field.....	\$28
10 Horse Field.....	\$36

One Horse with Two Horses with All

(Example: 1/2,3/All or 2,3/1/All or 1/All/2,3 or 2,3/All/1 or All/1/2,3 or All/2,3/1)

7 Horse Field.....	\$5
8 Horse Field.....	\$6
9 Horse Field.....	\$7
10 Horse Field.....	\$8

TRIFECTA KEY: (\$.50 Wager)

1 Horse with 3 others.....	\$3
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4/2, 3, 4)	
1 Horse with 4 others.....	\$6
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4, 5/2, 3, 4, 5)	
1 Horse with 5 others.....	\$10
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4, 5, 6/2, 3, 4, 5, 6)	
1 Horse with 6 others.....	\$15
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)	
1 Horse with 7 others.....	\$21
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)	

SUPERFECTA BOX: (\$1 Wager)

4 Horse Box.....	\$24
5 Horse Box.....	\$120
6 Horse Box.....	\$360

SUPERFECTA WHEEL: (\$1 Wager)

One Horse with All with All with All

(Example: 1/All/All/All or All/1/All/All or All/All/1/All or All/ All/ All/1)

7 Horse Field.....	\$120
8 Horse Field.....	\$210
9 Horse Field.....	\$336
10 Horse Field.....	\$504

One Horse with Two Horses with All with All

(Example: 1/2,3/All/All or 2,3/1/All/All or 1/All/All/2,3 or 2,3/All/All/1 or All/All/1/2,3 or All/All/2,3/1)

7 Horse Field.....	\$40
8 Horse Field.....	\$60
9 Horse Field.....	\$84
10 Horse Field.....	\$112

SUPERFECTA KEY: (\$1 Wager)

1 Horse with 3 others.....	\$6
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4/2, 3, 4/2, 3, 4)	
1 Horse with 4 others.....	\$24
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4, 5/2, 3, 4, 5/2, 3, 4, 5)	
1 Horse with 5 others.....	\$60
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4, 5, 6/2, 3, 4, 5, 6/2, 3, 4, 5, 6)	
1 Horse with 6 others.....	\$120
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)	
1 Horse with 7 others.....	\$210
(Example: 1/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8/2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)	

Predictable Derby Era Continues

by Laffit Pincay *XBTV.com* & *NBC Sports Reporter*



Analysis: The world's most prestigious horse race should not be a crapshoot – let's get that out of the way. But the manner in which chalk has dominated the Derby since 2000 is beyond ridiculous. Eight of the last 17 Derbies have been won by favorites, including four straight. That's not to mention that the top four betting choices finished 1-2-3-4 last year. The Kentucky Derby point system is working and racing luck isn't playing the role it used to. You're seeing a truer-run race and may the best horse win. Great! No complaints here... but that's not fun for longshot players. There's a reluctance to reach now, gun-shy about betting that 'live' 20-1 shot. But play the horse you like; history will take care of itself.

Main Contenders: At this stage, I'm leaning in the direction of **ALWAYS DREAMING**. He figures to be second choice in the neighborhood of 6-1, which is fine by me. I loved his Xpressbet Florida Derby win, he has the right style and is undefeated this year. There has to be a Derby with trainer Todd Pletcher and jockey Johnny Velazquez' names on it. Pletcher's Derby stats are exaggerated and misleading (1-for-45). Expect a bounce back for **GUNNEVERA**. It's hard to believe Javier Castellano has not hit the board in the Derby, but it took my Hall of Fame old man (Laffit Pincay, Jr.) 11 tries to win his first and only Derby on Swale. Why can't Javier do the same? **PRACTICAL JOKE** has distance suitability critics, but I'll give him one more chance. You have to draw the line somewhere, so I'm eliminating any horse who suffered a significant setback or failed to show up in a prep (**CLASSIC EMPIRE**, **MCCRACKEN** and **IRISH WAR CRY**, despite equal parts respect and fear, fit here).

Value Plays: **LOOKIN AT LEE** is starting to feel a little 'trendy' as a pick, but if he draws in, I will consider him underneath in the exotics in the revised guide available May 5.

Wagering Strategies (\$100):

- \$50 Win: **ALWAYS DREAMING** (\$50)
- \$20 Exacta Part-Wheel: **ALWAYS DREAMING** over **GUNNEVERA**, **PRACTICAL JOKE** (\$40)
- \$10 Exacta: **ALWAYS DREAMING** over **LOOKIN AT LEE** (\$10)

Kentucky Derby History: The Last...

To Close from More than 10 Lengths Back: Orb (2013)

To be Disqualified for Race Interference: Gate Dancer (1984)

Stats & Trends:

Trifecta

(Since 1995, \$2 Payoffs)

Average: \$11,486.90

High: \$133,134.80

(Giacomo-Closing Argument-Afleet Alex, 2005)

Low: \$173.40

(Nyquist-Exaggerator-Gun Runner, 2016)

Notable: Derby trifecta has set record for lowest payoff each of the last two years.

Superfecta

(Since 1996, \$1 Payoffs)

Average: \$81,816.94

High: \$864,253.50

(Giacomo-Closing Argument-Afleet Alex-Don't Get Mad, 2005)

Low: \$350.00

(Silver Charm-Captain Bodgit-Free House-Pulpit, 1997)

Notable: The last 2 superfectas have been the 2nd and 3rd lowest payoffs in the wager's history.

Highest-Priced Super Finishers

(Last 20 Years, Odds to \$1)

Odds	Horse	Year	Fin.
71.60	Closing Argument	2005	2nd
50.60	Mine That Bird	2009	1st
50.30	Giacomo	2005	1st
41.70	Limehouse	2004	4th

Know This:

Home Grown Talent

Homebred runners have won 9 of the last 13 Kentucky Derbies. Nyquist (\$400k 2yo in training), I'll Have Another (\$11k yearling), Mine That Bird (\$9,500 yearling) and Big Brown (\$60k yearling) were purchased. 8 Kentucky Derby winners since 1960 were purchased for \$20k or less.

Picks

1. ALWAYS DREAMING
2. GUNNEVERA
3. PRACTICAL JOKE
4. LOOKIN AT LEE

Updated Wager Guide Available May 5

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Ignore Pletcher's Record

by Jeff Siegel *XBTV.com Analyst*



Analysis: First the bad news. Todd Pletcher's record in the Kentucky Derby is atrocious. The seven-time Eclipse Award-winning trainer has but one victory from 45 starters, and only five others managed to even hit the board. The good news, at least for those planning to play **ALWAYS DREAMING** (or any of his half-dozen possible 2017 starters) is that these negative stats may drive away many punters who would otherwise embrace what the form says is the best colt in the race. **ALWAYS DREAMING** at, say, 6-1? I'll take it, thank you. The son of Bodemeister has the tactical speed that should produce a perfect trip, the pedigree that will allow him to cope with the Derby's grueling 10-furlong trip, and speed figures that simply don't do him justice. He's better than you think.

Main Contenders: There are only a handful of horses that I believe actually can win the Derby, though several others could easily clunk up and hit the board. **ALWAYS DREAMING** is fresh, talented, and ready to explode. **CLASSIC EMPIRE** has the best previous outing, a highly rated victory in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile, and a recent score in the Arkansas Derby indicates he's ready to perform at that high level once again. Wood Memorial winner **IRISH WAR CRY**, like **ALWAYS DREAMING**, has the style to secure an ideal pace-prompting trip. And **GUNNEVERA**, the most dangerous of the deep closers, should love the 10-furlong Derby trip.

Value Plays: **BATTLE OF MIDWAY** may have more room for improvement than any colt in the field. Caught on the pace under pressure from the start, the son of Smart Strike hung on doggedly to be second in the Santa Anita Derby, and with patient tactics on May 6 could move forward a ton. **BATTALION RUNNER** – yes, he's a Pletcher – was dead short in the Wood, but finished a game second. He won't be short in Louisville.

Wagering Strategies (\$100):

- \$50 Win: **ALWAYS DREAMING** (\$50)
- \$5 Exacta Key Box: **ALWAYS DREAMING** with **CLASSIC EMPIRE**, **IRISH WAR CRY**, **GUNNEVERA**, **BATTLE OF MIDWAY** and **BATTALION RUNNER** (\$50)

Kentucky Derby History: The Last...

Good Track: 1990 (Unbridled)

Muddy Track: 1989 (Sunday Silence)

Sloppy Track: 2013 (Orb)

Picks

1. **ALWAYS DREAMING**
2. **CLASSIC EMPIRE**
3. **IRISH WAR CRY**
4. **GUNNEVERA**

Updated Wager Guide Available May 5

Stats & Trends:

2016 Derby Handle Totals

(Handle in Millions Except High-Five)

Pool	Handle
Win/Place/Show	\$50.2
Trifecta	\$27.5
Exacta	\$22.2
Superfecta	\$10.9
Pick Four	\$3.2
Oaks/Derby Double	\$2.5
Pick Five	\$1.7
Pick Six	\$1.1
High-Five	\$392k

Lowest-Priced Derby Favorites

(Last 20 Years, Odds to \$1)

Odds	Horse	Year	Fin.
1.80	Point Given	2001	5th
2.30	Nyquist	2016	1st
2.40	Big Brown	2008	1st
2.50	California Chrome	2014	1st

Highest-Priced Derby Favorites

(Odds to \$1)

Odds	Horse	Year	Fin.
6.30	Lookin At Lucky	2010	6th
6.00	Harlan's Holiday	2002	7th
5.50	Sweetnorthernsaint	2006	7th
5.40	Orb	2013	1st
5.20	Dialed In	2011	8th
4.90	Street Sense	2007	1st
4.80	General Challenge/ Excellent Meeting	1999	5th
4.40	Prairie Bayou	1993	2nd
4.20	Bodemeister	2012	2nd
4.10	Smarty Jones	2004	1st

Know This:

Wood You Help a Brother Out?

Aqueduct's Wood Memorial offers a woeful 30: 0-0-0 Kentucky Derby record since alumni Funny Cide and Empire Maker swept the 2003 exacta.

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Spring Snow in Louisville?

by Jon White *Santa Anita Morning Line Oddsmaker*



Analysis: This year's Kentucky Derby seems a very difficult puzzle for horseplayers. I believe there are two main reasons. First, the absence of Mastery seriously complicates matters. Mastery appears to be a special colt, but unfortunately he is out due to an injury. And second, contenders like **CLASSIC EMPIRE** (third as the favorite in the Holy Bull), **IRISH WAR CRY** (seventh as the favorite in the Fountain of Youth) and **MCCRAKEN** (third as the favorite in the Blue Grass) have had hiccups on the Derby trail. California-based horses have won the Kentucky Derby in 4 of the last 5 years. With the exception of Mastery, this year's California group has been belittled, especially after **GORMLEY** won the Santa Anita Derby in a very slow time. Adding to the mass confusion, a California-based maiden – yes, maiden (**IRAP**) – invaded Kentucky and won the Blue Grass, defeating **PRACTICAL JOKE** and **MCCRAKEN**.

Main Contenders: Amid an apparent lack of clarity, there is this: If **CLASSIC EMPIRE** runs like he did in last year's Breeders' Cup, or **IRISH WAR CRY** runs like he did in this year's Wood, or **ALWAYS DREAMING** runs like he did in this year's Florida Derby, they will have a good chance to win the roses. Beyond those three, I think **THUNDER SNOW** (UAE Derby winner), **MCCRAKEN** (3-for-3 at Churchill Downs), **GUNNEVERA** (Fountain of Youth winner), **GIRVIN** (Louisiana Derby winner and 3-for-3 on dirt) and **HENCE** (Sunland Derby winner) also merit respect.

Value Plays: **THUNDER SNOW**, who should be an appealing price in the wagering, has class (a Group 1 winner in France), a perfect record on dirt (2-for-2) and has succeeded going 1 3/16 miles. If there ever was a year begging for a foreign horse to win the Kentucky Derby, this could be it. **J BOYS ECHO**, who most likely will be 20-1 or higher, has a puncher's chance.

Wagering Strategies (\$100):

- \$2 Exacta Wheel: **IRISH WAR CRY** with **ALL** (\$38)
- \$1 Exacta Wheel: **THUNDER SNOW**, **CLASSIC EMPIRE** and **MCCRAKEN** over **ALL** (\$57)
- \$5 Win: **J BOYS ECHO** (\$5)

Xpressbet Kentucky Derby Wager Guide free daily online updates with revised Analysis, Picks and Wagering Strategies begin Tuesday, May 2.

Picks

1. **THUNDER SNOW**
2. **IRISH WAR CRY**
3. **CLASSIC EMPIRE**
4. **MCCRAKEN**

Updated Wager Guide Available May 5

Stats & Trends:

Prior Career Starts for Derby Winners

(Last 10 years)

Year	Derby Winner	Sts	2YO	3YO
2016	Nyquist	7	5	2
2015	American Pharoah	5	3	2
2014	California Chrome	10	7	3
2013	Orb	7	4	3
2012	I'll Have Another	5	3	2
2011	Animal Kingdom	4	2	2
2010	Super Saver	6	4	2
2009	Mine That Bird	8	5	3
2008	Big Brown	3	1	2
2007	Street Sense	7	5	2

Prep Race Winners to Win Derby

Race	Horse	Year
Arkansas Derby	American Pharoah	2015
Blue Grass	Strike the Gold	1991
Florida Derby	Nyquist	2016
Louisiana Derby	Grindstone	1996
Santa Anita Derby	California Chrome	2014
Spiral	Animal Kingdom	2011
Sunland Derby	N/A	N/A
Wood Memorial	Fusaichi Pegasus	2000

Days Between Last Prep & Derby

(Last 5 Years)

Year	Horse	Days
2016	Nyquist	35
2015	American Pharoah	21
2014	California Chrome	28
2013	Orb	35
2012	I'll Have Another	28

Know This:

Hot Hooves

The last four Derby winners entered the race with hot hooves. Nyquist had won 7 in a row; American Pharoah, California Chrome and Orb all had 4-race win streaks.

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Winner Leaves Them Weeping

by Dick Jerardi *Daily Racing Form Columnist*



Analysis: The prep season has been marked by injuries, inconsistency and downright bizarre performances by quality horses. The 20 headed for the Derby starting gate are also, as a group, exceedingly slow, with just four triple-digit Beyers among them. This race has been quite predictable the last few years. This particular Derby does not feel like those races. There simply isn't the pre-Derby consistency of recent winners like Orb, California Chrome, American Pharoah or Nyquist. To feel confident, you must forgive an off day or get on a horse who hasn't run poorly, but also hasn't run fast.

Main Contenders: **IRISH WAR CRY** got two of those four-triple digit Beyers when he won the key prep of the year, the Holy Bull (the Xpressbet Fountain of Youth and Arkansas Derby winners were second and third) and, two months later, the Wood Memorial. In between, he was beaten in the Fountain of Youth by 21 3/4 lengths. Like recent Derby winners, this New Jersey-bred son of two-time Horse of the Year Curlin has enough speed to get early position and make this into a five-horse race instead of a 20-horse race. Trainer Graham Motion obviously knows how to win the Derby as he did it in 2011 with Animal Kingdom. **CLASSIC EMPIRE** looked like a future star when he got that 102 Beyer in winning the Breeders' Cup Juvenile. He has not been close to that in 2017, a year of stops and starts. **ALWAYS DREAMING** is perfect in three races this year for Todd Pletcher, winning them by nearly 21 lengths. **GUNNEVERA** needs a hot, contested pace and it is unclear if that will happen. **MCCRAKEN** has won all three of his starts at Churchill Downs, but was another horse who missed a prep race along the way, never a good thing.

Value Plays: **J BOYS ECHO** was brilliant when he won the Gotham with the fourth triple-digit Beyer in the field. He had an eventful trip in the Blue Grass.

Wagering Strategies (\$100):

- \$100 Exacta: **IRISH WAR CRY** over **MCCRAKEN** (\$100)

Kentucky Derby History: The Last...

New Jersey-Bred to Win: Cavalcade (1934)

Foreign-Bred to Win: Sunny's Halo (1983) Canada

Pennsylvania-Bred to Win: Smarty Jones (2004)

Derby Winner Sired by a Derby Winner: Grindstone (1996) by Unbridled (1990)

Picks

1. IRISH WAR CRY
2. MCCRAKEN
3. J BOYS ECHO
4. CLASSIC EMPIRE

Updated Wager Guide Available May 5

Stats & Trends:

Winter/Spring Homes of Winners

Year	Horse	State
2016	Nyquist	California/Florida
2015	American Pharoah	California/Arkansas
2014	California Chrome	California
2013	Orb	Florida
2012	I'll Have Another	California
2011	Animal Kingdom	Florida/Kentucky
2010	Super Saver	Florida/Arkansas
2009	Mine That Bird	New Mexico
2008	Big Brown	Florida
2007	Street Sense	Florida/Kentucky
2006	Barbaro	Florida
2005	Giacomo	California
2004	Smarty Jones	Arkansas
2003	Funny Cide	Florida/New York
2002	War Emblem	Louisiana/Illinois

Wire-to-Wire Derby Winners

(Last 50 Years)

Year	Horse	Choice	Field	Half
2002	War Emblem	9th	18	47
1988	Winning Colors	2nd	17	46 4/5
1985	Spend A Buck	2nd	13	45 4/5
1976	Bold Forbes	2nd	9	45 4/5
1972	Riva Ridge	Fav.	16	47 3/5

Fastest Derbies

Time	Horse	Year
1:59 2/5	Secretariat	1973
1:59 4/5	Monarchos	2001
2:00	Northern Dancer	1964
2:00 1/5	Spend A Buck	1985
2:00 2/5	Decidedly	1962

Know This:

Successful Springboards

Nyquist was the sixth straight Derby winner to exit a prep victory. The last to wear roses following a loss was Super Saver in 2010 - he used a runner-up finish in the Arkansas Derby as a springboard to Louisville glory.

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Retain Derby Confidence

by Steve Byk *At the Races (SiriusXM) Host*



Analysis: This season, nearly to a horse, we have been assaulted by fits and starts and in-and-out performances undermining all confidence that your hopeful is the Derby winner. But despite missed starts and training hiccups, the horses that entered the winter as the Derby favorites, **CLASSIC EMPIRE** and **MCCRAKEN**, remain the most logical win candidates. And because they and nearly every other starter May 6 has had a misstep along the way, prices on whomever you like figure to be inflated. Don't let the air of confusion around Derby 143 cloud your judgement. Retain confidence in the opinions you formulated along the way.

Main Contenders: Perfect in two starts at Churchill, 2YO champion **CLASSIC EMPIRE** is not as difficult or mysterious as advertised and simply the best horse in the field if ready. **MCCRAKEN** needs a career best after missing one of his projected starts, but is unbeaten in three Downs tries, bred for Classic trips and in the hands of a John Nerud legacy outfit (Wilkes/Nafzger) famed for hitting targets, including Derby wins from Unbridled and Street Sense. Perfect since joining the Todd Pletcher barn, **ALWAYS DREAMING** is the only horse in the field with two wins at 9 furlongs and a forward-going style that suits John Velazquez and the race flow. One-run closer **GUNNEVERA** has new Hall of Famer Javy Castellano at pilot and a stamina-laden pedigree. A repeat of his Xpressbet Fountain of Youth can win.

Value Plays: Longshot talking-horse **LOOKIN AT LEE** has had a series of late arrivals in preps at Oaklawn, but hasn't won since the Ellis Park Juvenile. **PATCH** and his one eye are a sentimental story, but Calumet's Union Rags colt is distance-bred top and bottom and should get a run in from midpack at boxcars. Florent Geroux-enhanced **HENCE** has done a lot of developing already, but one more move forward off his Sunland Derby win makes him an exotics factor at a square number. Maiden **SONNETEER** would be ideal below in deep exotics.

Wagering Strategies (\$100):

- \$2 Trifecta Part-Wheel: **MCCRAKEN, CLASSIC EMPIRE, ALWAYS DREAMING** with **MCCRAKEN, CLASSIC EMPIRE, ALWAYS DREAMING** with **MCCRAKEN, CLASSIC EMPIRE, ALWAYS DREAMING, GUNNEVERA, PATCH, LOOKIN AT LEE, HENCE** (\$60)
- \$5 Exacta: **MCCRAKEN** with **GUNNEVERA, PATCH, LOOKIN AT LEE, HENCE** (\$20)
- \$20 Win: **MCCRAKEN** (\$20)

Picks

1. **MCCRAKEN**
2. **CLASSIC EMPIRE**
3. **ALWAYS DREAMING**
4. **GUNNEVERA**

Updated Wager Guide Available May 5

Stats & Trends:

Career High Pre-Derby Beyer Fig

(Last 10 years)

Year	Horse	Beyer	Fin.
2016	Exaggerator	103	2nd
2015	Materiality	110	6th
2014	California Chrome	108	1st
2013	Goldencents	105	17th
	Verrazano	105	14th
2012	Bodemeister	108	2nd
2011	Soldat	103	11th
2010	Devil May Care	100	10th
	Sidney's Candy	100	17th
2009	Dunkirk	108	11th
2008	Bob Black Jack	109	16th
2007	Street Sense	108	1st

Active Jockeys Most Derby Mounts

Mounts	Jockey
22	Gary Stevens
22	Mike Smith
20	Kent Desormeaux
18	Corey Nakatani
18	John Velazquez
15	Alex Solis
14	Robby Albarado
12	Calvin Borel
11	Edgar Prado

Note: Record is Bill Shoemaker with 26.

Active Jockeys Most Derby Wins

Wins	Jockey
3	Calvin Borel
3	Kent Desormeaux
3	Victor Espinoza
3	Gary Stevens
2	Mario Gutierrez

Know This:

Pride of Mexico

Jockeys Victor Espinoza and Mario Gutierrez, natives of Mexico, have accounted for 4 of the last 5 Kentucky Derby victories.

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