

TRACK PHANTOM

2026 KENTUCKY DERBY DAY GUIDE



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CHURCHILL DOWNS

KENTUCKY DERBY DAY FULL CARD ANALYSIS



CHURCHILL DOWNS	CHURCHILL DOWNS	CHURCHILL DOWNS	CHURCHILL DOWNS	CHURCHILL DOWNS
Pick 5	Pick 5	Pick 5	Pick 5	BEST BET OF THE DAY 10 JOE SHIESTY (6-1) RACE 8
3 rd 3,4,5,6,8,9,10,12	5 th 3,7,8,9	8 th 1	10 th 6,7	LIVE LONGSHOT 7 VERY CONNECTED (12-1) RACE 2
4 th 1,4,5,6	6 th 2,3,4,5,10,11	9 th 4,6,7,8,10,12,14	11 th 3,6,9	MOST LIKELY WINNER 11 POWERSHIFT (3-1) RACE 1
5 th 10	7 th 2,3,4,7,8	10 th 1,2,4,5,6,7	12 th 1,6,7,12,14,18	
6 th 2,3,4,10,11	8 th 1,6,8	11 th 3,6,9,10	13 th 1,5,7,8,9,10,11	
7 th 2,3,4,7,8	9 th 4,7,10,12	12 th 1,6,7,12,14	14 th 1,4,9,14	
Total \$350	Total \$360	Total \$420	Total \$504	

1 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (11:00 ET) 83
MAIDEN SPECIAL WEIGHT 120K, 1M 1/16 DIRT

- 11 POWERSHIFT 3-1 I ORTIZ**
- 9 WINSTON AVE 9-2 HERNANDEZ
- 6 CROMWELL 6-1 J ORTIZ
- 8 BOURBON DREAM 5-1 GUTIERREZ

PICK: 11 POWERSHIFT
Was 2nd to the next out La Derby winner (and entrant in the Ky Derby) Emerging Market in an awesome debut. They were within a length of each other and over 13 clear of the rest of the field. Ran evenly in the Tampa Bay Derby which is a key race. Dam was 3rd in the '09 G1 BC F&M Sprint. Has a G1 placed sibling who was 6th in the 2023 Kentucky Oaks.

VALUE: 6 CROMWELL
This is a 500k purchase. He is a sib to the Bob Baffert colt Arabian Knight. That one was a G1 winner (won the Pacific Classic at Del Mar in '23). This one really has had just three starts going long on a fast dirt track. Those resulted in two second place finishes and one 4th place finish. The winner of last went wire to wire and third in the G3 Lexington next.

A) 11 B) 6 C) 2,3,4,5,8 D) 7

2 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (11:32 ET) 57
OPTIONAL CLAIMING 127K, 1M 1/16 DIRT

- 7 VERY CONNECTED 12-1 ELLIOTT
- 8 TAPTASTIC 3-1 I ORTIZ
- 9 OUR MONEYMAN 6-1 CONCEPCION
- 6 MAKE MY DAY 8-1 SAEZ

PICK: 7 VERY CONNECTED
Consistent colt for Kenneth McPeck. He was third at 13-1 in the Street Sense here going this distance. He was beaten just 3 in the Ky Jockey Club to major Derby player Further Ado 4 starts ago. Nothing wrong with a runner-up finish in last start. The winner got loose on the lead going slow in the early stages. Would be dangerous if the pace gets going.

VALUE: 9 OUR MONEYMAN
La-bred is 6 for 6 in the exacta. The last 4 races were in La-bred stakes. He won twice and was second twice. Went long for the first time in last and gamely hung on to win at 4-5 odds. The question is how do the La-bred stakes match up against open class allw/stakes types. He has two stakes winning siblings who won going long. A likely overlay here.

A) 7,8 B) 1,4,6,9,11 C) 2,3 D) 5

3 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (12:05 ET) 60
OPTIONAL CLAIMING 134K, 1M DIRT

- 6 WHO DEY 9-2 HERNANDEZ
- 4 COMPORT 15-1 J ORTIZ
- 5 JOHN HANCOCK 6-1 I ORTIZ
- 12 PRAEFOR 3-1 PRAT

PICK: 6 WHO DEY
The pride of Ohio. He's won over half a million dollars. That is saying something as an Ohio-Bred. He more than held his own vs. open class, graded stakes company. The 4th last time out in the Clark was huge. The winner returned to take the G1 Dubai World Cup. 2nd, 5th won graded stakes. Third was 2nd in the '25 La Derby. He often runs well when fresh.

VALUE: 4 COMPORT
Broke his maiden here about 11 months ago on this dirt at 5.5 furlongs. Beaten a head in a G3 here 4 starts later. Willing to look past the last start. He was 4-1 off the layoff and hated the slop at Keeneland. Adds blinkers and Lasix. Has a sizzling 4F move just a week ago. Attracts Jose Ortiz who has been riding better than about anyone here at CD.

A) 4,6 B) 5,8,9,10,12 C) 1,2,14 D) 3,7,11,13

4 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (12:38 ET) 77
DERBY CITY DISTAFF (G1) \$1M, 7F DIRT

4 WAYS AND MEANS	8-5	J ORTIZ
5 SPLENDORA	2-1	PRAT
6 R DISASTER	6-1	GAFFALIONE
1 USHA	9-2	HERNANDEZ

PICK: 4 WAYS AND MEANS

This Grade 1 winning 5YO mare makes her first start off the layoff in this spot. She did the same thing last year and was third on a very sloppy track that she might not have really cared for. She absolutely destroyed a loaded field in her last start. The runner-up, Scylla, won the BC Distaff by 5 lengths for Mott. Talent not an issue. Layoff is the question.

VALUE: 6 R DISASTER

There is a pathway for this one to win. She's all speed. She's won 8 times and every one of them was wire to wire. Would probably need 45 and change for the half to be able to hang on to hold off the closers. It may depend on whether Baffert sends Usha from the rail to keep it honest for Splendor. Saffie Joseph has been winning at the highest level in '26.

A) 4,5 B) 1,6 C) D) 3

7 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (2:38 ET) 47
CHURCHILL DOWNS DISTAFF TURF \$1M, 1M TURF

7 MOVIN' ON UP	12-1	J ORTIZ
8 PIN UP BETTY	7-2	HERNANDEZ
4 TEMPTABLE	8-1	ALVARADO
3 PORTFOLIO DURATION	4-1	PRAT

PICK: 7 MOVIN' ON UP

The pace is going to be set by 5 Classic Q. She could go wire the field but she has a tendency to get rank and pull. She will come back to them. This one is going to be sitting in a perfect spot to take over when that happens. She was third in this last year with Jose Ortiz (beaten just one). 1M is the right distance for her. She has run well enough on this turf.

VALUE: 4 TEMPTABLE

Not interested in her first stateside run last out. She drew 11 in there and ended up with a 5-wide trip. She passed some late to finish within 3-lengths. The 4th place finisher was Crevalle d'Oro. Won the G3 Suwanee River (over the top choice) next and was 2nd beaten a half in the G2 Pegasus F&M Turf. Mott 14 for 51 (27%) graded stakes for Juddmonte.

A) 3,4,7,8 B) 2 C) 1,5,9 D) 6

5 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (1:12 ET) 82
TURF SPRINT (G2) 600K, 5.5F TURF

10 JOE SHIESTY	6-1	DE LA CRUZ
3 MY BOY PRINCE	5-2	J ORTIZ
9 LITIGATION	3-1	I ORTIZ
8 MONDOGETSBUCKETS	8-1	GAFFALIONE

PICK: 10 JOE SHIESTY

The tactics are very simple. Break running from the gate and clear off quickly as possible. There is other speed in here but nothing like his if De La Cruz gets him out on top. Won the William Walker here at 30-1 wire to wire in 2024. He also won another stakes, going 43.4, wire to wire on this turf last year. Outside post is ideal. Has a pace advantage.

VALUE: 8 MONDOGETSBUCKETS

He has the kind of running style that he could secure a great spot or get shuffled right out of the race before he's had any real chance to run. Tracked close in the last few and that will put him in the first tier behind the top choice. All 3 starts in stakes on turf were very good. He's improved each of those. Trip will decide his fate. He's a playable price.

A) 10 B) 3,4,5,7,8,9 C) 2,6 D) 1

8 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (3:23 ET) 86
PAT DAY MILE (G2) 750K, 1M DIRT

1 ENGLISHMAN	3-1	J ORTIZ
6 CRUDE VELOCITY	5-2	GEROUX
8 CREOLE CHROME	8-1	I ORTIZ
7 CROWN THE BUCKEYE	6-1	PRAT

PICK: 1 ENGLISHMAN

Showed blazing speed in both starts. He was pushed hard by the favorite (finished 3rd) in the debut. He kicked away from that one and romped in the end. Was little more than a paid workout in the opt clm at FG last out. He was taken under a hard hold in the final furlong (up 12 before geared down). Draws the rail. They will send and hope he stays on.

VALUE: 8 CREOLE CHROME

This is a pattern and style that has been successful in this race. 6 of the last 9 versions of this race were won by a router with speed who last ran in a Derby prep. 3 of those winners were exiting the Blue Grass. La-bred actually faced better-than-average competition in Louisiana this year. He gets Irad Ortiz. Awesome drill on 4/25. It opened some eyes.

A) 1,6,8 B) 7 C) 2,4 D) 3,5,9,11,12

6 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (1:53 ET) 62
KNICKS GO 200K, 1M DIRT

11 MOONLIGHT	8-1	J ORTIZ
4 BE YOU	7-2	VELAZQUEZ
2 DRAGOON GUARD	3-1	I ORTIZ
3 BANJO CHRIS	20-1	MORALES

PICK: 11 MOONLIGHT

The last two starts were uncharacteristically bad. He had 4 wins in his prior 6 starts prior to the last two. One of those wins came here 3 back in the Cherokee at 6-1 with Jose Ortiz riding. In fact, Ortiz has 3 wins from his 6 starts when he has been up. The last time Chris Block gave him 2.5 months off, he won here at 6-1. Is 3 for 4 at this distance.

VALUE: 3 BANJO CHRIS

He appears to be a step below these but his 4th at 64-1 in the Cherokee behind the top choice was legit. He finished behind two main foes in here but in front of two others. Looks as if there will be a fast pace with the speed signed on. Could fall into a great trip and come running. Half his wins have come at CD. Form is good. Use him in the exotics.

A) 2,4,11 B) 3,10 C) 5,6,7 D) 8,9

9 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (4:06 ET) 35
AMERICAN TURF (G1) \$1M, 1M 1/16 TURF

4 STARK CONTRAST	4-1	PRAT
12 REMEMBER MAMBA	9-2	J ORTIZ
7 ALPYLAND	8-1	CASTELLANO
10 VASY	10-1	VELAZQUEZ

PICK: 4 STARK CONTRAST

First start after the 2.5 month layoff came against strong company in the Jeff Ruby. He made a bit of an early move to the front and dueled with the Brad Cox winner down the lane. He goes back to the turf where he is 3 for 4. The only loss came in the G1 BC Juvenile Turf when he was 2nd by a length at 58-1. Clockers really high on the works here at CD.

VALUE: VALUE: 12 REMEMBER MAMBA

Undeclared 3 for 3 for Cherie DeVaux. Crushed in the first 2 starts before he tried the G3 Transylvania over some of the foes in here. He came off the layoff and ran to the off-odds favoritism in the win. He really closed strongly to get up late in the race. Jose Ortiz been riding in a zone in 2026. Just about everything he's on has been live. A major player.

A) 4,7,12 B) 8,10,14 C) 1,2,6,9 D) 3,11,13

10 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (4:50 ET) 79
CHURCHILL DOWNS (G1) \$1M, 7F DIRT

6 KNIGHTSBRIDGE	9-5	ALVARADO
7 IMAGINATION	6-1	PRAT
1 DISCO TIME	6-1	VELAZQUEZ
4 HALL OF FAME	20-1	J ORTIZ

PICK: 6 KNIGHTSBRIDGE

There are literally dozens of examples when Bill Mott gets an older horse right, he keeps them right. Think of Cigar in the 1990's or Cody's Wish recently as a few years ago. They seem to just keep producing. This one has 6 wins in 8 starts and each seems better than the last. Undefeated 4 for 4 with blinkers. CD start was 10-length win at this 7F distance.

VALUE: 7 IMAGINATION

Loved him in the G1 BC Sprint two back but he just ran into a superstar sprinter that day. Gamely won the Riyadh Sprint in Saudi Arabia last time out. Was a \$1M purchase back in 2022 so there were expectations. \$2.1M in the bank so far. Prat was aboard in the Saudi win and he stays with him in this spot. Can rate. Will get a great trip in here today.

A) 6,7 B) 1,2,4,5 C) 8,9,10,11 D) 3

13 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (8:00 ET) 38
OPTIONAL CLAIMING 127K, 6.5F DIRT

8 GILDED BANDIT	3-1	ALVARADO
5 HULKAMANIA	8-1	GAFFALIONE
7 SAV'N MONEY	20-1	HERNANDEZ
10 BUETANE	5-2	I ORTIZ

PICK: 8 GILDED BANDIT

Not unexpectedly, Bill Mott runner improved dramatically from start one to start two. He was off slow in the debut but had some kick late. He ran huge to win (first in blinkers as well) last out. The runner-up was 13 clear. Place finisher was a Brad Cox 2nd timer who went off as the 6-5 favorite. Mott 3 for 7 with a maiden winner last out in opt clm on dirt.

VALUE: 5 HULKAMANIA

Really going all in on the Florida preps. This one comes out of the Tampa Bay Derby when he showed some speed before fading late. The winner was nosed out in the Florida Derby. The runner-up won the Blue Grass by 11 lengths. 5th place ran third in the Blue Grass. Bred to be a sprinter. Gets top level rider Gaffalione. Cut back in distance should help.

A) 5,7,8,10 B) 1,9,11 C) 2,4 D) 3

11 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (5:39 ET) 76
TURF CLASSIC \$1.5M, 1M 1/8 TURF

6 RHETORICAL	5-2	I ORTIZ
9 TEST SCORE	7-2	FRANCO
3 ASBURY PARK	8-1	PRAT
10 MAKE ME KING	6-1	J ORTIZ

PICK: 6 RHETORICAL

If you give this young trainer a good horse, he has shown he knows what to do with it. This one has 5 wins in 8 starts. The losses were big runs. No one was beating Zulu Kingdom in the Makers Mark when he was able to set the pace going 47.3. Surged to the front in the BC Mile but was run down late beaten just 2 lengths. He's 3 for 4 traveling beyond 1M.

VALUE: 3 ASBURY PARK

It's significant that Prat chooses to ride this one for trainer Chad Brown and opts off the one to the outside for the same trainer when he's ridden that one 11 straight. Strong closing kick to win the G2 last out at Aqueduct. Hit the gate in the starts 2 and 3 back. It certainly cost him in each of those races. Bred to be an absolute turf monster by Frankel.

A) 3,6,9 B) 1,10 C) 2,4,5 D) 7

14 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (8:33 ET) 42
MAIDEN SPECIAL WEIGHT 120K, 7F DIRT

1 BOYLSTON	10-1	VELAZQUEZ
14 BRAVE PILOT	8-1	HERNANDEZ
4 SLEEPING WARRIOR	15-1	CORRALES
9 BIG JAKE	8-1	PRAT

PICK: 1 BOYLSTON

Trainer William Walden has 5 wins and 11 in the top 3 from his last 12 first time starters. In addition, he's 4 for 7 at this quirky distance of 7F with a debut runner at CD. Has a very nice pedigree. Dam won \$2.7M and the 2019 G1 BC Distaff at Santa Anita. The sire a G1 winner at this same distance on dirt. Inside post could be a problem with a slow dispatch.

VALUE: 4 SLEEPING WARRIOR

Trainer Phil Bauer 4 for 13 (31%) with 9 in the money (69%) with a firster in a dirt MSW here at CD for this ownership when off at 5-1 or less. That includes Tetiaroa who won by 6 on this date in 2025. Dam was a 7-time La-bred stakes winner in her career. Works been decent. Only concern is having a rider he doesn't use much. Check for any betting.

A) 1,4,14 B) 3,7,8,9 C) 6,10,11,13 D) 2,12

12 - CHURCHILL DOWNS (6:57 ET) 84
KENTUCKY DERBY (G1) \$5M, 1M 1/4 DIRT

12 CHIEF WALLABEE	8-1	ALVARADO
6 COMMANDMENT	6-1	SAEZ
7 DANON BOURBON	20-1	NISHIMUR
7 DANON BOURBON	20-1	NISHIMURA

PICK: 12 CHIEF WALLABEE

The top three selections are all exiting the Florida series of prep races, and most notably, the Florida Derby. They were 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the Florida Derby less than a length was separating them in the end. This one was green, swaying in and out in the lane between runners. It was just the kind of performance that indicated major upside with racing. The trainer won the Derby last year with Sovereignty and won in '19. Any improvement might be enough to win this.

2ND: 6 COMMANDMENT

While the feeling is the Florida preps were the strongest, it must be said that this colt won them all. While they were all very close finishes, this one was best in each. Thought that win in the Fountain of Youth two back was better than it may appear. He came up the inside on a track that had a dead rail. Gets third rider in 3 starts. Prat is on Emerging Market for Chad Brown and Irad Ortiz is on the favorite Renegade. Scary 500k purchase for supertrainer Brad Cox.

3RD: 7 DANON BOURBON

There have been three winners of the Fukuryu stakes (Japan) run in the Ky Derby. Luxor Café last year ran 13th with a bad trip. But the other two really outran their boxcar odds (5th and 7th). This one ran the fastest Fukuryu stakes time in its history. Japanese runners have been winning everywhere on the big stage. Forever Young almost won in 2024 (probably should've) and he was a Japan import. Love the distances he's been going. He looks of a live longshot.

4TH: 1 RENEGADE

He looked sensational this winter and spring. His only loss after the debut was a runner-up finish in the Remsen in a race he came from off the pace. The winner returned from that race to win the G2 Risen Star for Chad Brown (injured and on the shelf since). Todd Pletcher has won the Derby 2 times but has also flopped in this race with strong horses like this many times. Not over concerned about him being on the rail. Has one of the best riders in the world. Big shot.

VALUE: 7 DANON BOURBON

A) 6,7,12 B) 1,8,14,18 C) 3,11,15,19 D) 2,4,10,16,17,21,22,23

KENTUCKY DERBY

<p>1 RENEGADE</p> <p>Todd Pletcher has had 64 starters in the Ky Derby since 2000. He won the race twice (Super Saver in '10 and Always Dreaming in '17). But it's the number of times he brought a loaded hand into the Derby only to fall flat. Has had 20 starters in the Derby who came off a win in one of the major preps since 2011. He won one time with those (2017). Was off the board in most. He has a superstar here but rail is tough. Have to go back to 1986 with Ferdinand the last time a horse won from this inside post. Dispatched The Puma by nearly 6 in the Sam Davis 2 back. Crushed in the Ark Derby. Looks like one at low odds the public will fade a bit.</p> <p>PREDICTION 4</p>	<p>2 ALBUS</p> <p>320k purchase by Yaupon has two straight wins heading into this. He beat MSW company at Tampa two back and then closed to win the G2 Wood Memorial. They make up the only starts of the season so far for this Riley Mott colt. The problem is neither of those were fast enough to really compete. He beat 5 foes at Tampa. There has been just one horse to have run in the New York preps to hit the board in the Derby since '04 (58 starters) and that was 3rd by Revolutionary in '13. The two post is tough as he's a tactical runner. Would need a big jump forward here but a poor trip is more likely. Others figure more.</p> <p>PREDICTION 12</p>	<p>3 INTREPIDO</p> <p>There are some things to like with this one and some things that are a bit of a problem. He's one of only three to have won a Grade 1 stakes so far. He did that beating five in the American Pharoah in his third career start. He hasn't been able to carry that form lately. He was 4th beaten 10 to So Happy and Potente in the Santa Anita Derby. Only 4 horses in the last 50 years has won the Derby being off the board the most recent prep race (all 4 were 4th and all 4 were boxcar odds in the Derby). Zipped a 45 flat bullet workout just 6 days ago here at CD. No fig above 89 a problem. Is not likely but consider in the super.</p> <p>PREDICTION 11</p>	<p>4 LITMUS TEST</p> <p>We've seen this movie before. Bob Baffert has two in the race. This is his more unlikely runner. He has speed and Martin Garcia up. When Baffert has had two in a Grade 1 in the past, and Garcia riding the big price, he normally has Garcia run havoc up front in a wicked pace. In addition, only 3 runners won in wire to wire fashion in the Derby since 1995. All 3 were trained by Bob Baffert. A win by Baffert would make him the all-time wins leader. Slipped at the break in the Arkansas Derby and never got into it at any point after. Went too fast early in the G2 Rebel and tired. He is likely going to be sent hard fo the lead.</p> <p>PREDICTION 13</p>	<p>6 COMMANDMENT</p> <p>Checks a lot of boxes. He was great in his 3 wins in Florida beating The Puma and Chief Wallabee in those wins. He's trained by supertrainer Brad Cox and ridden by one of the top 3 or 4 riders in the world right now. Game in both graded stakes wins. Thought he ran against the track bias in the G2 Fountain of Youth. The track was favoring those on the outside while he came up on the inside part of the track. Was a 500k purchase in 2024. Done zero wrong in his career. Has the right breeding and connections. Only a poor trip could keep him from being a factor in this race. He has an ideal running style for this one.</p> <p>PREDICTION 2</p>
<p>7 DANON BOURBON</p> <p>There have been 3 winners of the Fukuryu in Japan to run in the Ky Derby next. In '25, Luxor Café was 13th but had a troubled trip. In '24, TO Password finished 5th in the Derby at 49-1 beaten just 6 there. In 2019, Master Fencer ran 7th at 60-1 in the Ky Derby beaten just 4 lengths. This one has run 3 times at 1M 1/8 or longer on heavy dirt in Japan. His 2nd dam won over \$1M in her career. The 1992 G1 Ky Oaks winner Luv Me Luv Me Not is in the female family. He is a 450k purchase and a Ky-bred. Very sneaky in this race and at a nice price. Think he fires Saturday if he can steer clear of any trouble but that is always a big question.</p> <p>PREDICTION 3</p>	<p>8 SO HAPPY</p> <p>He was an upset winner of the G1 Santa Anita Derby. He turned the tables on Potente in the win and he earned a very legitimate 100 Beyer for the victory. That means he has a 96 and a 100 Beyer in 2 of his last 3 starts. Those are numbers that will translate well to this race. He has a forward style but looks like he prefers to rate slightly. Thought he was too close to the pace in the G2 San Felipe 2 back. Mike Smith won the Derby twice (Giacomo '05 and Justify '18). The same running style of '14 Derby victor California Chrome. Pedigree doesn't scream classics. Sire a G1 sprinter. Silver Wagon (in female family) was too.</p> <p>PREDICTION 7</p>	<p>9 THE PUMA</p> <p>Trainer Gustavo Delgado saddled 3 triple crown winners in the So Hemisphere series. A native of Venezuela, he won the 2023 Derby with Mage. The Puma resembles Mage in that both improved start over start. Mage peaked in the Ky Derby. This one beat Further Ado with what was a terrible, wide trip. That should have been his undoing but still charged down a major Derby horse in Further Ado. Should've won the Florida Derby but the rider moved a tad soon to the lead and was just tagged late. He hasn't been out of Florida yet but proven he can overcome less than ideal pace circumstances. Think he peaks at the right time.</p> <p>PREDICTION SCR</p>	<p>10 WONDER DEAN</p> <p>This is the other Japanese colt (Danon Bourbon). This one comes out of a nice win in the UAE Derby in Dubai. He and the runner-up in that race are both here and they were both well clear of the rest in the UAE Derby. There have been 21 runners in the Ky Derby who last ran in the UAE Derby since 2000. They had a 3rd place finish in '24 with Forever Young (should have won the race) and 5th finish in 2011. The rest of the 19 all were 7th or worse in the Ky Derby. Does not appear this UAE Derby was that special so take a stand against in a bit of guesswork. A Derby will be won by one exiting the UAE Derby (at some point). Just not in 2026.</p> <p>PREDICTION 14</p>	<p>11 INCREDIBOLT</p> <p>He stretched out in distance when he won the Grade 3 Street Sense on this track to close out his two-year old season. The runner he beat for second was 4th in the Risen Star and 4th in the Louisiana Derby this year. He flopped in the Grade 3 Holy Bull 2 back running a bad last beaten 25 lengths. He very much redeemed himself when he crushed the field from off the pace to win the 500k Virginia Derby last out. Riley Mott is the son of the '25 Derby winning trainer and the Hall of Famer, Bill Mott. 4th from Va Derby was 11th beaten 16 in the G2 Wood Memorial so it's not like he beat a lot in VA. 2 for 2 at Churchill.</p> <p>PREDICTION 10</p>

KENTUCKY DERBY

12 CHIEF WALLABEE

He's the buzz horse this year. It isn't that surprising since Bill Mott may be the most respected trainer in the country and he has two wins in this race since '19. He won it last year with Sovereignty. Couldn't have looked better when he was in hand in the win first time out and he beat The Puma there. He was a bit green in both the Fountain of Youth and Florida Derby. There is a lot of room to move forward. Gets blinkers added here. That is not ideal to test that in front of this massive crowd but it might be what he needs to stay focused. He's been reported to be sensational in drills leading up to this. Major contender to win here.

PREDICTION 1

14 POTENTE

Bob Baffert has won this 6 times in his HOF career. He actually won a 7th time but DQ'd afterwards for a drug violation. After serving a suspension that kept him out of the Derby for a couple of years, he is dead set on winning again and becoming the winningest trainer in the Derby (currently tied with 6 wins). Has some pedigree to win this. Second dam is the strong turf mare Perfect Sting. She won over \$2M on the grass and took the G1 2000 BC F&M Turf. Might be on the lead. Baffert is the only trainer since '03 to have won the Derby wire to wire (did it three times in that span). Not sure how strong the So Cal preps were in '26.

PREDICTION 5

15 EMERGING MARKET

Of those coming out of Louisiana, this is the one you want. He had a few physical issues that cost him time in training. He finally made his debut in early Feb and beat one a serious colt Powershift, the favorite in the first race. He won by less than a length but the top two were 13 clear of the rest in the race. The winners Beyer fig was an amazing 97. He showed it was not a fluke with a victory in the La Derby last out. Problem is those foes were not much. It's likely the one he beat there, Pavlovian, will be last or near it. Chad Brown has gone on record saying he loves this colt. Gets all-world rider Prat here. That alone could be enough.

PREDICTION 8

16 PAVLOVIAN

Really would not have given a wooden nickel for his even being in the Ky Derby before seeing the last two starts. He is a Cal-bred for a Southern California trainer and owner (who won the Ky Derby in 2016 with Nyquist). This one then won the Sunland Derby (over very little) and almost pulled off a 22-1 upset wire to wire in the La Derby. No stamina in the female line. It is all sprint types. He does have some from the sire side but have to think this is not the ideal spot for one with his pedigree. Winless 5 of 6 in facing Cal-breds. Feels like he'll pop and stop here. He'll look for a place to go to bed when the real running starts here.

PREDICTION 19

17 SIX SPEED

This is a Kentucky-bred colt who is shipping here to Kentucky by way of Dubai. He's started 5x and all were at Meydan racecourse in Dubai. He has 3 wins, a second (in the UAE Derby to Wonder Dean in the last start) and a third in the first start of his career. A speedy front runner and those kind never seem to run well in the Derby. Only 3 horses have gone wire to wire in the last 31 years (all Baffert colts). It's just so hard to carry speed this distance with pressure on the front end. Was no match in his last start in the UAE Derby to Wonder Dean. Doubt he will hold that one off and the rest of these in this one. Will toss him.

PREDICTION 15

18 FURTHER ADO

Must like Keeneland. He's 2 for 2 on that dirt with a win by 20 (maiden) and a win by 11 last out in the Blue Grass. He looks a lot like Sinister Minister who won the Blue Grass by nearly 13 in 2006 (and with a 116 Beyer). He flashed some speed and stopped at 10-1 (beaten 20). Looked like he was going to win the Tampa Bay Derby but was outfinished by The Puma. Does have the 1996 G1 Arlington Million winner Mecke and 1999 G1 Breeders' Cup Distaff winner Beautiful Pleasure deep in the female line. The highest Beyer into the Derby is just 5 for the last 21 years. 13 of those missed the board. Certainly talented enough.

PREDICTION 6

19 GOLDEN TEMPO

He deserves to be here having won the Grade 3 Lecomte and running third in both the Risen Star and in the Louisiana Derby prepping for this on that circuit. Only issue is the feeling among many that the Louisiana pipeline was weak this year. Consider the runner-up in the La Derby was just a glorified Cal-bred sprinter (who is in this race), Pavlovian. Winner was a second time starter who had just a maiden win. Has a superstar rider in Jose Ortiz and very sharp trainer Cherie DeVaux. Female family of \$2M earner, Heavenly Prize and '89 BC Sprint winner, Dancing Spree. He has looked good training of late here.

PREDICTION 9

21 GREAT WHITE

Gets into the race due to a scratch this week. For context, Rich Strike also drew in from the also-eligible list and won in 2022. Upset winner of the Battaglia at Turfway Park at 15-1 two starts ago. He beat one of the buzz horses in the Ky Derby this year, Fulleffort. Was 7-1 last time out in the Blue Grass but was beaten 22 lengths. He set the early pace and stopped. It was his first start on dirt which doesn't inspire much confidence that he can compete today. Should he win, he would become the first horse in at least 50 years to win after 5th or worse place finish in their final prep. He would be one of the biggest upsets.

PREDICTION 16

22 OCELLI

This is the second also-eligible that draws into the body of the race due to the scratch of Fulleffort on Thu. He is kind of similar to Rich Strike who drew in late and ended up the winner at insane odds in 2022. He and Rich Strike both come from off the pace. So, on the downside, he's winless in 6 career starts. He gets in due to a third in the G2 Wood Memorial last out. He has been unable to really threaten the serious foes in this race that he's faced like Renegade, The Puma and Incredibolt. He was only a length or so behind Albus, Right to Party speaking to the weakness of the G2 Wood at AQU. Not today.

PREDICTION 17

23 ROBUSTA

A pretty big scratch situation early on Friday morning allowed this colt into the race. This Calumet runner has excellent early speed and will at the very least energize what will be a fast pace. Added blinkers 2 back and nearly pulled off a major upset at 67-1 in the San Felipe after he set a fast pace and was beat at the wire by Potente by a head in there. Trainer Doug O'Neill has won this race 2x. Speed types haven't done well (just 3 wire to wire winners since '02 and all trained by Bob Baffert). Had nothing left late in the SA Derby in the last start and was well-beaten. Will break quickly and gun to the lead today.

PREDICTION 18