

**BRUINS**

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he’s going to be around for a couple of years, which will be really good for Fort Knox.”

Central Hardin crossed the 10-run threshold in the bottom of the fifth inning with Price’s bases-loaded RBI-single to score Carson Nichols and secure the mercy rule victory.

Fort Knox dropped to 1-6 in the 17th District with one district game remaining against North Hardin at home at 5:30 tonight.

“The season is almost over and we’re



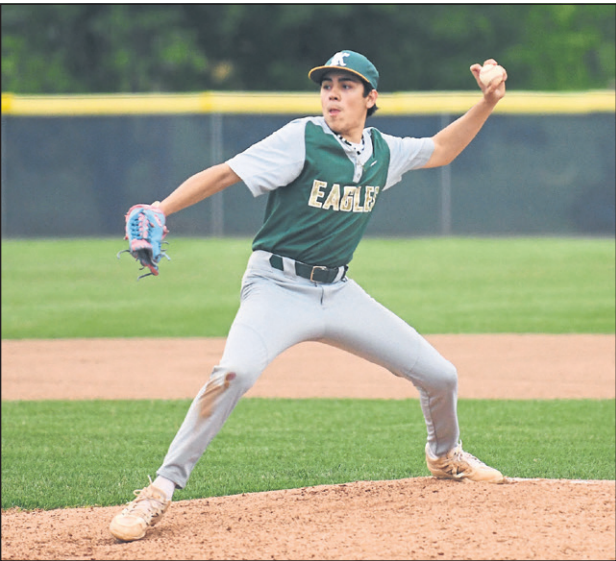
Central Hardin senior Chase Price is called safe Tuesday night on a throw to Fort Knox third baseman Angel Santiago at Central Hardin High School.

better than what we were when we started,” Stricklin said. “I’m proud of the guys for

improving and that’s really all I could ask for. We’ve played more five to seven inning games

this year than I think we have in a long time.”

Central Hardin hosts Bullitt East at 6 tonight.



Fort Knox sophomore pitcher Mannex Garcia throws a left-handed pitch Tuesday night against the Bruins at Central Hardin High School.

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**DERBY**

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more than an elite human can —and by elite human, I mean Olympic athlete,” said Gianni Castiglione, the study’s co-author. “They have a bigger tank of gas and they have a more efficient engine ... and this mutation is contributing to both of those things.”

**WHAT IS BEHIND HORSES’ SPEED AND OTHER SKILLS?**

Other aspects of a horse’s biology enhance its abilities.

Horses store extra red blood cells in their spleens. These cells are released to carry even more oxygen around the body during intense exertion.

“Adrenaline when exercising causes the spleen to release extra red blood cells into circulation,” veterinarian Hilary Clayton said. “What horses are doing is essentially ‘blood doping’ themselves.”

Meanwhile, horses’ brains allow them to process sensory information and react quickly. That’s despite having frontal lobes, parts of the brain used for thought and planning that are proportionally smaller than those in humans.

“Brainwise, they’re designed with a real desire to play and run independent of any fear,” said Dr. Scott Bailey, a veterinarian at Claiborne Farm in Paris, Kentucky, a thoroughbred breeding farm where Secretariat is buried. Horses are also able to focus intently, which “is really important for an athlete.”

Bone structure and muscu-



A race horse works out at Churchill Downs on Tuesday in Louisville, Ky.



A race horse works out at Churchill Downs on Wednesday in Louisville, Ky.

lature also help. The ligaments and tendons in their hind legs

act like springs, Farmer said, helping propel them forward.

Like other large prey animals, he added, they have “long, thin legs that are meant to run.”

**WHAT ABOUT THE RISKS FOR HORSES?**

The adaptations that make horses faster also predispose them to injury, Reed said. Their skinny legs absorb the impact of each stride, she said, and over time the repetitive stress of racing and training can lead to deformation of tendons and ligaments.

In 2023, deaths occurred not only at Churchill Downs, but other major racing venues, affecting public perceptions of the sport and sparking changes. Reviews found no single cause for the deaths. But for

2024, Churchill Downs upgraded equipment used on its dirt surface and added an equine safety and integrity veterinarian.

In its annual report, the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority noted the steps being taken to reduce injuries and fatalities — expanded veterinary protocols, pre-race inspections and uniform medication oversight. And, it said, the rate of deaths at authority-accredited tracks dropped in 2024, by 27%.

**WHAT MAKES A CHAMPION?**

Experts say a healthy, safe environment brings out the best in a horse — but they still don’t know what makes certain horses standouts at the race track.

“That’s the million-dollar question,” Bailey said. “Every thoroughbred owner is trying to match the genetics of the parents in order to make the horse with the greatest chance of winning.”

Breeding is only part of the equation, experts said; nurture, training and the horse-rider relationship also factor in. Each time a horse emerges seemingly out of nowhere to win the Kentucky Derby, Farmer is reminded of this.

“You don’t have to be this star-studded bred horse that cost a million dollars at sale to come and win and be a great runner,” he said, raising his voice slightly above the din of galloping hooves. “There are a lot of great horses.”

Larson reported from Washington, D.C.

**SEC**

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In 13 games last season, edge rusher Dylan Stewart had 23 tackles, including 6 ½ sacks, and was widely regarded as one of the best freshmen defenders in the country. There already are comparisons to Jadeveon Clowney and speculation that the 6-foot-5, 245-pounder has the potential to be a top pick in 2027.

**TENNESSEE**

CB Jermod McCoy was a lockdown cornerback as a sophomore in 2024 — a semifinalist for the Jim Thorpe Award — after transferring from Oregon State. Pro Football Focus gave the 6-foot, 193-pound Texan an 89.6 coverage grade and a near-perfect score (99.9) in its athleticism metric.

**TEXAS**

RB CJ Baxter was projected to be the team’s starter when he tore two ligaments in his

right knee in August 2024. As a true freshman in 2023, Baxter ran for 659 yards and averaged 4.8 yards a carry. He’s fully healthy now and expected to share carries with Quintrevion Wisner.

**TEXAS A&M**

CB Will Lee III surprised some outsiders when he decided to stay in school for his senior season. It was a boon for second-year coach Mike Elko’s defense. Lee finished last season with 42 tackles and

two interceptions, including a 93-yarder for a score against rival Texas in late November.

**VANDERBILT**

G Chase Mitchell anchors an offensive line tasked with keeping dynamic quarterback Diego Pavia upright. Mitchell is one of five transfers up front

for the Commodores and the unit’s only returning starter.

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