

Sports

Alvarado rebounds from fall, wins muddy Kentucky Derby aboard Sovereignty

BY GARY B. GRAVES
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Temporarily sidelined by a hard fall, jockey Junior Alvarado put it behind him with the ride of a lifetime in the Kentucky Derby.

Most satisfying was guiding Sovereignty past other horses in the slop before drawing a bead on 3-1 favorite Journalism and chasing him down to win the 151st running at Churchill Downs by 1 1/2 lengths. The effort left Alvarado and his mount caked in mud, worn proudly along with the garland of red roses that was draped over the winner.

“Still sinking in, to be honest,” the 38-year-old Venezuelan rider said of his breakthrough, which came in his ninth try. “It means the world to me, for me and my family. Coming from my country where the only race we would be able to watch back there was just the Kentucky Derby.”

“I said that would be nice to be in the United States and ride in the Kentucky Derby. Little by little I started to point that out to be, to make it come true. Today, we did just that.”

Alvarado’s Derby win highlights a career of Grade 1 triumphs, many on some of horse racing’s biggest stages. He earned a Triple Crown win in the 2021 Preakness on Romabauer, has a handful of Breeders’ Cup championships and won the \$3 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational two years ago aboard Bill Mott-trained Art Collector at Gulfstream Park in Florida.

Saturday’s impressive performance came after Alvarado fractured his shoulder in a March 23 fall at Gulfstream after his horse had a heart attack. He returned to racing three weeks later at Keeneland and won a couple of claiming races at Churchill Downs this week — including another fall on Thursday — before bouncing back with a



Abbie Parr / AP photo

Sovereignty, ridden by Junior Alvarado, left, crosses the finish line to win the 151st running of the Kentucky Derby horse race at Churchill Downs Saturday, May 3, 2025, in Louisville, Ky.



Brynn Anderson/AP photo

Junior Alvarado holds the trophy as he celebrates after riding Sovereignty to victory in the 151st running of the Kentucky Derby horse race at Churchill Downs on Saturday in Louisville.

signature ride.

Riding Sovereignty was never in question despite the injury. He missed the Grade 1 Florida Derby on March 29 — where Manny Franco rode the bay colt to a second-place finish behind Tappan Street — but Mott, the Hall of Fame trainer, reiterated that as long as Alvarado was healthy, the horse

he rode to two graded stakes wins on the Derby trail awaited him.

“It gave me peace of mind,” the jockey added.

The next step was clearing several obstacles as the 7-1 third betting choice coming out of the gate.

For starters, clipping heels with a competitor as

the 19-horse field passed the grandstand the first time. There was concern that Sovereignty might lose a shoe from the contact. Then, making sure he didn’t lose too much ground while rounding the turns.

“When we turned to the backside, he was still traveling very beautifully until we hit the five-eighths pole,” Alvarado said. “That’s when he kind of said to me, ‘I’m ready.’”

Alvarado steered Sovereignty into contention along with Journalism entering the stretch before finally clearing him in the stretch. The finish earned firsts for Dubai-based stable Godolphin, an outright win for Mott after getting the 2019 Derby via disqualification and vindication for Alvarado after a scary setback.

“Junior did a terrific job of getting him over,” Mott said. “Fortunately, there was a lot of speed in the race. It set up well for us because they had an honest pace. ... He tipped him out and got him in a spot that he was going to be clear down the backside.”

Bruins, Lady Waves claim victories

Central Hardin, Meade County win early before rain

BY THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

Central Hardin and Meade County each took one win Saturday at the Softball Catholic Classic at Jack C. Fisher Park in Owensboro before getting rained out for their second games.

Central Hardin 8, Lyon County 6

The Bruins rode two big innings to victory for a shortened win against Lyon County Saturday at the Softball Catholic Classic.

Central Hardin scored four runs in the bottom of the second inning and three more in the bottom of the fourth to retake the lead and secure the win.

Senior Payton Campbell drove in a team-leading three runs on her bases-clearing triple in the second inning.

The five other Bruin runs were unearned on Lyon County’s five total errors.

Central Hardin hosts Oldham County at 6 tonight.

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Heird hints UL-UK Governor’s Cup game could move to season opener

BY RUSS BROWN
KENTUCKY TODAY

LOUISVILLE — Could Louisville-Kentucky football be going retro?

Since 2014 the annual Governor’s Cup battle between U of L and UK has been played on the final weekend of the regular season, known as Rivalry Week throughout college football. But that could apparently change in the future.

During a recent appearance on ESPN Louisville radio (ESPN 680), U of L athletic director Josh Heird hinted the showdown could move to its original date at the beginning of the season, although he didn’t say how soon it might happen.

The two programs have played every year since 1994, with the exception of 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They played six times from 1912-1924, then didn’t meet again for 70 years. The modern series is tied 15-15 after U of L snapped a five-game losing streak by winning last year’s game in Lexington, 41-14.

The Cards’ longest winning streak is also five, from 2011-2015. The Wildcats lead the overall series 20-16. Next season’s game is scheduled for Nov. 29 in L&N Stadium. The Cards will open at home against Eastern Kentucky on Aug. 30.

Like UL-UK, most of the best rivalries are played at the end of the season, including Alabama vs. Auburn, Michigan vs.



TIMOTHY EASLEY/Associated Press, file

Kentucky players celebrate with The Governor’s Cup following their victory over Louisville in a 2021 college football game in Louisville.

Ohio State, IU vs. Purdue, Alabama vs. Auburn and many others.

“But there still are a handful of those rivalry games at the beginning of the year,” Heird said on the radio show. “CU (Colorado), CSU (Colorado State), I know is always at the beginning of the year. I do think it creates more excitement, because everybody has hope at the beginning of the year.”

“I think that’s one where, let’s continue to have those conversations as far as where it makes the most sense for Louisville-Kentucky to be, as opposed to just, ‘Well,

that’s Rivalry Week. Everybody plays on the last week of the year.’ Continue to explore everything. Fortunately, we’re at a time in this industry where we can just rethink everything that we’re doing.”

The impetus for renewing the series came from the late Howard Schnellenberger’s and former U of L athletic director Bill Olsen’s efforts in the early 1990s. Talks fell through in 1991, but during a trip to Lexington a couple years later, they convinced UK athletic Director C.M. Newton and coach Bill Curry that the time was

right and would be beneficial for both programs.

Olsen and Schnellenberger proposed an arrangement they thought would entice UK: Kentucky would host every game until Louisville moved from old Cardinal Stadium at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center to a new on-campus stadium. UK agreed and the first four games were played in Commonwealth Stadium (now Kroger Field), with the Wildcats winning three.

“At that time Kentucky had plans to renovate their stadium and I think it was an attractive proposal to

C.M. because he wanted the opportunity to play Louisville and us bring the fan following,” Olsen told *The Courier-Journal* in 2019. “It was, ‘we will be happy to do that,’ and then we signed the contract.”

The process wasn’t quite that simple though. For years UK didn’t want to add U of L to a demanding SEC schedule that included tough games against Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee among other challenging league opponents.

“To add another stem-winder, another gut-check game, was just not smart scheduling on our

part, whereas for Louisville, it was a great thing,” Curry said. “I wanted to play, but I didn’t want to kill us. It really became something our players wanted to play. You’re talking about playing against guys you went to high school with, a natural rivalry and all that. So we decided we’d go ahead and do it.”

“Louisville will get their stadium whether or not they play the University of Kentucky,” Newton, who died in 2018, said when the series was announced in June 1993. “But I’ll be very blunt with you: I didn’t want to be put in a position of helping Louisville build a stadium. At the time (1991), I felt like our concern should be to help build this football program.”

The Cards debuted the new Cardinal Stadium in 1998 in the first game of the John L. Smith era, but were drubbed 68-34.

It was felt that playing the game as the season opener would create excitement over the summer and would boost interest in football throughout Kentucky. It would also provide the winning team a chance to build early momentum, while conversely giving the loser plenty of time to still put together a successful season. Now it appears that the two programs could agree to revert to the original timing around Labor Day weekend.

“I would tell you, we’ve had some conversations,” Heird said. “We want to play on that Sunday.”