

# Kentucky Derby wide open; favorite's odds?

BY CAMERON DRUMMOND  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Those looking for a handicapping edge in Saturday night's Grade 1, \$5 million Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs in Louisville should look to the top of the odds board, then disregard it.

The Derby is currently in a dry spell when it comes to favorites winning the race.

It's been eight years since the post-time favorite has won the Derby. Justify — who went on to also capture the Preakness Stakes and Belmont Stakes as part of a Triple Crown-winning campaign in 2018 — was the last post-time favorite to win the Run for the Roses.

Since then, seven post-time favorites have loaded into the Derby starting gate and failed to win the race.

This happened again last year when Journalism, who went off at 3-1 odds, came home in second place behind Sovereignty.

Will fortunes change for the race-time favorite this year?

That process starts with determining which horse will be favored when post time arrives for the Derby at 6:57 p.m. Saturday.

Several horses are in play to be the post-time favorite. Renegade, a Todd Pletcher trainee who has been assigned post position No. 1 for the race, was named the morning-line favorite for the Derby following this past weekend's post-position draw.

Renegade — who won the Grade 1 Arkansas Derby on March 28 in his most recent start — was given 4-1 odds to be established as the morning-line favorite for the race. It's noteworthy that Renegade will start the race from the furthest inside post, and that post No. 1 hasn't produced a Derby winner since Ferdinand in 1986.

Commandment, So Happy, The Puma, Chief Wallabee and Further Ado are all also in contention to be the post-time Derby favorite based on this week's betting trends.

How has the race-time favorite performed in the Derby? Here's a look at the history.

Information used is from the pari-mutuel wager era (since 1908).

How often does the post-time favorite win the Kentucky Derby?

The Kentucky Derby has been run 118 times since 1908, and the post-time favorite has won the race 40 times. That's a success rate of 33.9%.

This includes occasions when there have been co-favorites at post time. For example, Secretariat's win in the 1973 Kentucky Derby counts, because Secretariat was the co-favorite with Angle Light, who ran 10th.

The post-time Derby favorite won six straight editions of the race from 2013-2018, but none since.

This isn't the longest streak of race-time favorites failing to win the Derby. From 1980 through 1999, the Derby was run 20 times without the post-time favorite winning.

Improbable was fourth in 2019. Tiz the Law finished second in 2020. Essential Quality ran third in 2021. Epicenter had the lead in the stretch before finishing in second behind historic long shot Rich Strike in 2022.

Angel of Empire had a third-place finish as the favorite in 2023. In 2024, Fierceness wasn't a factor in his 15th-place effort. Last year, Journalism was second-best in a stretch battle against Sovereignty.

Those are mostly solid finishes, and horses that leave the starting gate as the favorite typically run at least respectable races in the Derby.

Besides Fierceness, only 10 horses have finished worse than 12th as the race-time Derby favorite since 1908: Cherry Pie (20th in 1923), Picketeer (15th in 1923), Bay Beauty (13th in 1929), Proud Appeal (18th in 1981), Golden Derby (21st in 1981), Total Departure (20th in 1983), Althea (19th in 1984), Demons Begone (DNF in 1987), Serena's Song (16th in 1995) and Friesan Fire (18th in 2009).

Furthermore, the post-time Derby favorite frequently hits the board with a top-three finish in the race.

One of the safest bets to make on the Kentucky Derby is to wager on the favorite finishing in the money.

In the 118 editions of the Kentucky Derby in the pari-mutuel wagering era, the Derby favorite has finished in the top three on 75 occasions. That's an in-the-money success rate of 63.6%, including instances when two horses were co-favorites for the Derby at post time.

# Looking for a Kentucky Derby long shot? best bets for big payouts

BY BEN ROBERTS  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

While the 2026 edition of the Kentucky Derby appears to be a relatively wide-open race, there's still a clear top tier of contenders.

Arkansas Derby winner Renegade is the morning-line favorite and will look to become the first horse in 40 years to win the Derby from the No. 1 post position. Santa Anita Derby winner So Happy, Florida Derby winner Commandment and Blue Grass Stakes winner Further Ado are all drawing big win money in the early wagering, and The Puma — runner-up in the Florida Derby — is among the top choices, as well.

The more lightly raced Chief Wallabee and Emerging Market have also emerged as "buzz" horses this week, and their odds have stuck around the 10-1 range in the early betting.

But what about the long shots?

Finding the right horse to hit the board at a big number on Derby Day would provide quite a thrill, and it happens more often than not. As you finalize your picks leading up to Saturday's 6:57 p.m. ET post time, here are a few long-shot bets to consider.

## PICKING A LONG SHOT TO WIN

The most likely scenario is that one of those aforementioned Derby contenders will be wearing the roses in Louisville on Saturday night, but recent runnings of the race have provided surprises.

Mystik Dan won the 2024 Derby at 18-1 odds. Mage was the winner as a 15-1 shot the year before that. Rich Strike shocked the racing world as the 81-1 winner in 2022, and Country House was declared the winner via DQ at odds of 65-1 three years earlier. So don't be surprised if a horse with longer odds finds his way to the finish line first.

## WHO'S THE MOST LIKELY LONG SHOT IN THIS FIELD TO PULL OFF AN UPSET?

Of the contenders at odds of 20-1 or longer, Potente is an intriguing choice.

Purchased for a whopping \$2.4 million as a yearling — the highest price tag, by far, of any horse in this field — Potente didn't make his on-track debut until Jan.

31, winning a maiden race at Santa Anita Park.

The son of Into Mischief — sire of three of the past six Derby winners — returned to that track a few weeks later for his first stakes race, and he won that one, too, beating a San Felipe Stakes field that included So Happy and earning an 89 Beyer Speed Figure for his effort.

So Happy turned the tables on Potente in the Santa Anita Derby on April 7, but the runner-up that day ran closer to the pace in the early going and showed some real fight in the stretch before So Happy passed him for the victory.

Potente, whose damsire, Awesome Again, won the Breeders' Cup Classic at Churchill Downs in 1998, turned in a bullet workout in his first serious go around the Louisville track last weekend, a promising sign for a colt who will be running his first race away from Santa Anita Park.

Those speed numbers have improved over each of his first three starts, topping out at 95 in the Santa Anita Derby, and a similar jump Saturday would likely put him in the thick of things at the end. It's also fair to project that lessons learned in his last start could lead to better results in his fourth career race.

Oh, and his trainer? It's Bob Baffert, who has six Kentucky Derby victories on his résumé and brings Potente to Louisville as his best shot at a record-breaking seventh win in the race.

As of this writing, Potente was sitting at 24-1 in the early Derby wagering. Those seem like mighty long odds for a clearly talented colt out of the Baffert barn on the first Saturday in May.

## BETTING TIPS FOR THE DERBY TRIFECTA

Even if Renegade, Commandment, Further Ado or one of the other favorites wins the Kentucky Derby on Saturday, the exotic payoffs could still be significant.

A couple recent examples of lucrative tickets with a favorite on top:

Authentic won the 2020 Derby at 8-1 odds, with 3-5 favorite Tiz the Law coming in second, but the \$1 trifecta still paid more than \$1,300, thanks to Mr. Big News finishing in third place at 46-1 odds.

Always Dreaming won the 2017 Derby as the 9-2 favorite, but 2-3 finishers that day were Lookin At Lee (33-1) and Battle of Midway (40-1). A \$1 trifecta bet paid more than \$8,000, even with the race favorite on top.

In seven of the past nine Derbys, a \$1 trifecta bet has paid at least \$982. And until last year, at least one horse with odds of 15-1 or longer had finished in the top three in each of the previous six Derbys.

The superfecta — correctly picking the 1-2-3-4 finishers in the race — can also be a lucrative endeavor on Derby Day, even if a few of the top choices end up on the board.

Last year's race featured Sovereignty (7-1), Journalism (the 3-1 favorite) and Baeza (13-1) in the top three. The \$1 trifecta paid \$231 as a result of that rather chalky finish. But Final Gambit finished fourth at 17-1 — not that long of a shot — and the \$1 superfecta paid nearly \$1,700.

It's important to note that win pools are different from exacta, trifecta and superfecta pools, so the odds you see next to a horse's name on Derby Day won't correspond exactly to his value in the exotic bets. But those win odds are typically a pretty good indicator of who's a long shot and who isn't when it comes to the trifecta wagers.

That said, here are a few candidates — in addition to Potente — to hit the board and spice up an exotic wager this year (with each horse's morning-line odds):

- One of the best ways to work a long shot into your exotic wagers on Derby Day is to find a horse that likes to come from the back of the pack, should have plenty of tolerance for the distance and will be in a position to pass the inevitable parade of tired horses that can't hold on in this grueling test. Golden Tempo (30-1) is a late closer that shouldn't be anywhere near the early speed and has already shown a penchant for running down others at the end. He's improved over each of his previous four starts — always a good sign leading into the Derby — and the son of Curlin is incredibly well-bred for the distance. The far outside post shouldn't be worrisome, since jockey

Jose Ortiz will surely look to angle toward the rail in the early going and let others race to the first turn. Louisiana Derby winner Emerging Market might be the buzziest horse of Derby week, and he beat Golden Tempo by only a length in that race. Don't ignore him.

- The only horse in this field to win twice at Churchill Downs is Incredibolt (20-1), and he would be getting a lot more attention if his performance two races back had gone differently. As one of the favorites in the Holy Bull Stakes — his first race in three months — Incredibolt basically stopped running, and trainer Riley Mott said afterward that he came out sound, offering no excuses for the head-scratching performance. In need of Derby qualifying points, Mott sent his colt to the mid-tier Virginia Derby, where he turned in one of the most visually pleasing performances of the prep season, beating that field by 4 lengths. The seven-week layoff from there to here would be a modern Derby record for a winner, but, again, we're looking for a big number to hit the board, and this guy certainly has talent. He should be fine with the Derby distance, and the Churchill experience adds some spice to his profile.

- This one could very well get caught up in a blistering pace battle, but Pavlovian (30-1) showed tremendous grit in his Derby prep season, most recently setting a fast pace in the Louisiana Derby before giving way — but just barely — to Emerging Market, who beat him by a head at the wire. With a staggering seven starts as a 2-year-old (and three more in 2026), he's the most experienced colt in this field by a good margin. That's not necessarily a positive, but it is interesting that Pavlovian's speed numbers have greatly improved over the course of his 3-year-old season, and his trainer, Doug O'Neill, has already won the Kentucky Derby twice. Expect him to be closer to the front in the early going — and that could be dangerous — but he looks like the sort to fight like heck down the stretch, even if he's running out of gas. It wouldn't be a total surprise to see him in the mix as they near the wire.

# Third horse scratched from Kentucky Derby as field changes

BY CAMERON DRUMMOND  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

For the third time during Kentucky Derby week, there's been a change to the expected race field.

On Friday morning, Right to Party scratched out of the Derby.

This moves Robusta — who began the week third on the also-eligible list for the race — into the Derby field.

Robusta — who is trained

by Doug O'Neill and will be ridden by Cristian Torres — is set to begin the Kentucky Derby from post position No. 20.

The horse is a Calumet Farm homebred. O'Neill is a two-time Kentucky Derby-winning trainer with I'll Have Another in 2012 and with Nyquist in 2016. Robusta will be O'Neill's ninth all-time starter in the Derby. He also finished second in the 2021 Kentucky Derby with Hot Rod

Charlie, a finishing spot that was finalized following the disqualification of initial race winner Medina Spirit.

Robusta has won just one of his previous five starts. That victory came in a maiden special weight race at Santa Anita Park in January. Most recently, Robusta finished last out of seven runners in the Grade 1 Santa Anita Derby on April 4.

In Robusta's other two stakes races, the horse

came in second in the Grade 2 San Felipe Stakes in March and sixth in the Grade 3 Robert B. Lewis Stakes in February. Both of those races were also at Santa Anita.

Robusta's sire is Accelerate and his dam is Urbane Legend, who was by Into Mischief.

Robusta is the third also-eligible horse to move into this year's Kentucky Derby field. Earlier this week, Great White replaced Silent

Tactic and Ocelli replaced Fulleffort in the 20-horse field. Silent Tactic scratched due to a bruised foot, and Fulleffort was dealing with a chip left hind ankle.

Only one other horse was listed as an also-eligible for the Derby. That was Corona de Oro, a Dallas

Stewart trainee who only earned six qualifying points on the American Road to the Kentucky Derby pathway.

Corona de Oro won't race in the Derby because the scratch deadline of 9 a.m. Friday has passed.

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**LEGAL NOTICE**  
PUBLIC NOTICE

**BUDGET HEARING REGARDING PROPOSED USE OF COUNTY ROAD AID AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (LGEA) FUNDS**

A public hearing will be held by the Nelson County Fiscal Court in the second floor meeting room at the Old Courthouse on Monday, May 18, 2026, at 6:00 PM for the purpose of obtaining citizens comments regarding the possible uses of the County Road Aid (CRA) and Local Government Economic Assistance (LGEA) Funds.

All interested persons in Nelson County are invited to the hearing to submit verbal or written comments on possible uses of the CRA and LGEA Funds. Comments may also be submitted via email to [judge@nelsoncountyny.gov](mailto:judge@nelsoncountyny.gov). Any person(s) who cannot submit written comments or attend the public hearing but wish to submit comments, should call the Office of the County Judge Executive at 502-348-1800 by May 15, 2026, so that arrangements can be made to secure their comments.

**LEGAL NOTICE**

**INVITATION TO BID**

The Nelson County Board of Education, through Codell Construction Company, is accepting sealed bids for the **Nelson County HS Replacement/Renovation - Phase 1**. This process is for the **new softball field relocation project**.

**PROJECT DETAILS:**  
**Site Location:** 1070 Bloomfield Road, Bardstown, KY 40004  
**Bid Deadline & Opening:** May 6, 2026, at 1:00 PM EDT  
**Submission Address:** Mail or deliver bids to Mr. Alex Martin, Nelson County Board of Education, 288 Wildcat Lane, Bardstown, KY 40004. Mailed bids must be received prior to the bid deadline (Electronic bids will NOT be accepted).  
**Requirements:** A 5% Bid Bond must accompany each bid.

**BID DOCUMENTS:** Complete drawings, specifications, and project manuals are available electronically at no cost from [lynningimaging.com](http://lynningimaging.com), the Board of Education, or Codell Construction.

**QUESTIONS:**  
**Wes Davis** (Construction Manager): 859-744-2222 | [wdavis@codellconstruction.com](mailto:wdavis@codellconstruction.com)  
**Cate Noble Ward** (Architect): 502-499-1100 | [cate@studiokremer.com](mailto:cate@studiokremer.com)

*The Nelson County Board of Education reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive informalities.*