

Globeform's Kentucky Derby Special '25

Previews and ratings by Geir Stabell



UPDATED WITH ABC SELECTIONS / CONCLUSION MAY 2

12



GLOBEFORM RANKING

KENTUCKY DERBY (G1) 10 fur dirt, Churchill Downs, May 3

Horses ranked in pounds (0.45kg). 1 length = 2 pounds over this distance

Rank	No.	Name of horse	Globeform	GF most recent runs	Trainer / Jockey
From right to left (most recent first)					
0p	8	JOURNALISM	122p	113+ 122p - 115p	McCarthy / Rispoli
6p	1	CITIZEN BULL	116p	92 - 115+ 116p	Baffert / Garcia
6p	5	AMERICAN PROMISE	116p	116p - 97 - 91	Lukas / Juarez
9p	18	SOVEREIGNTY	113p	110+ 113p - 111p	W Mott / Alvarado
9p / 12+	12	EAST AVENUE <i>GF 113p in Oct '24</i>	113p / 110+	110+ 0 - 93	Walsh / M Franco
10p	7	LUXOR CAFE	112p	112p - 108p - ?p	Hori / Moreira
11p	9	BURNHAM SQUARE	111p	111p - 107 - 106p	Wilkes / Hernandez Jr
11p	4	RODRIGUEZ	111p	111p - 95 - 100	Baffert / Smith
13p	17	SANDMAN	109p	109p - 102+ 105p	M Casse / J L Ortiz
13p	21	BAEZA	109p	109p - 106p - 98	Shirreffs / Prat
13p	14	TIZTASTIC	109p	109p - 92 - 102p	Asmussen / Rosario
13	16	COAL BATTLE	109	98 - 109 - 106p	Briley / Vargas
14p	3	FINAL GAMBIT	108p	108p - 96p - 89p	Cox / Machado
14p	20	OWEN ALMIGHTY	108p	103+ 108p - 107	Lynch / Castellano
15	6	ADMIRE DAYTONA	107	107 - 101 - ?p	Kato / Lemaire
18p	10	GRANDE	104p	104p - 101p - ?p	Pletcher / Velazquez
18	2	NEOEQUOS	104	104 - 104 - ?p	Joseph Jr / L Saez
18	19	CHUNK OF GOLD	104	104 - 103p - 95p	West / Loveberry
18	13	PUBLISHER	104	104 - 96 - 89	Asmussen / I Ortiz Jr
21	15	RENDER JUDGMENT	101	101 - 100 - 86	McPeck / Leparoux
22	11	FLYING MOHAWK	100	100 - 97p - 96p	Beckman / Ramos

Globeform rating with a "p" attached = this was the horse's best rating to date and the horse is likely to improve

Globeform rating with a "+" = this was not its best rating but the horse ran better than the rating suggests

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Most recent winners of the Kentucky Derby

2024	MYSTIK DAN	GF 117	Ken McPeek	Brian Hernandez Jr
2023	MAGE	GF 119p	Gustavo Delgado	Javier Castellano
2022	RICH STRIKE	GF 121	Eric Reed	Sonny Leon
2021	MANDALOUN *	GF 118	Brad Cox	Florent Geroux
2020	AUTHENTIC **	GF 125p	Bob Baffert	John Velazquez

* 2021: Medina Spirit (GF 119) first past the post, subsequently disqualified

** 2020: Kentucky Derby staged on September 5

Average winning Globeform: 120

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GLOBEFORM ANALYSIS | KENTUCKY DERBY 151

JOURNALISM is the horse to beat in this year's Kentucky Derby. Well drawn in stall eight, he should get a good trip. This imposing son of Curlin has been impressing more with each run through his five straight wins. His San Felipe success two starts back stamped him as the top 3yo around and his Santa Anita Derby performance, where he overcame trouble in running to get the job done, gave him much needed education. The one thing that may count against him at Churchill Downs is that only once has he had more than four rivals. That's a far cry from taking part in a 20-runner field in front of the Twin Spires on the first Saturday in May. Santa Anita day was well attended so he did get some experience with the crowds as well on that occasion but this horse is mentally strong and well balanced; a 150,000 may not be a negative factor. There are so many other things that can be, however, and it's often being said that the Kentucky Derby isn't won by the best horse, it is won by the horse that gets the best trip. Well, I'm not so sure that is absolutely right; if trip really is *everything* then it's a bit funny to think back on how the Kentucky Derby winner has very often been the best horse. Bad trips can make horses that should have won lose but good trips hardly ever make horses that lack class win, at least at the top level. It happens, but rarely and more often in pace-less turf events than in route races on the dirt.

Journalism hasn't lost a race since he ran third when making his first start in a 6-furlong maiden at Santa Anita on October 27 last year. That's a conservatively late racecourse debut. When he ran for the first time, Breeders' Cup Juvenile winner Citizen Bull, Arkansas Derby winner Sandman and Louisiana Derby winner Tiztastic had all been to the races three times already. A big colt, Journalism was never going to be particularly precocious - but when he began to roll he was rolling in a serious way. He broke his maiden covering a mile at Del Mar a month after his debut and four weeks after that he took the 8.5-furlong Los Alamitos Futurity by 3 1/2 lengths, simply bushing Getaway Car aside like he was a run of the mill allowance horse. Getaway Car was exiting good efforts behind Citizen Bull in the American Pharoah Stakes (second) and the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (fourth) and Gaming, who ran third at Los Alamitos, was runner-up to Citizen Bull at the Breeders' Cup. Journalism beat smart - and above all - precocious horses in his stakes debut and he beat them with ease.

His 3yo debut came in the 8.5-furlong San Felipe Stakes on March 1. Barnes, who had been most impressive in the San Vicente eight weeks earlier, was the 2/5 favorite and he looked good for the win as they went around the bend, but Journalism was beginning to find his stride and making up ground. Coming with a run reminiscent of the legendary Easy Goer, he got to Barnes half a furlong out, went by him and won the race convincingly by 1 3/4 lengths. **RODRIGUEZ** was third, beaten all of 11 1/4 lengths. Journalism improved to **Globeform 122p** in the San Felipe. He did not reproduce that high rating when following up in the 9-furlong Santa Anita Derby just over a month further into the spring - but he probably would have if given a clean run. He had anything but, and what happened in this event brings us back to racing trips. He had a difficult trip in the Santa Anita Derby. Again the field counted just five runners but small fields do not guarantee plenty of room for everyone at all stages of the contest. Breaking from post one, Journalism was sticking to the rail and held up in what was a compact field. He was checked badly as they went into the home turn, dropping back to about five lengths off the pace, set by Citizen Bull who had pressure from Baeza's pacemaker Westwood. Baeza moved up from the back, going wide; he joined Citizen Bull and put the early leader away early in the straight but could not withstand a late run from Journalism. The Michael McCarthy trained favorite got up to win by three parts of a length - obviously being value for more than the bare margin. Both he and Baeza, who was lugging in and looked a bit green when taking the lead away from Citizen Bull, galloped out well after passing the wire. That the maiden Westwood was 8 1/2 lengths behind Baezin wasn't a surprise but it was a bit baffling to see him beating Citizen Bull for third. Citizen Bull had nothing give coming down the late, retreating ominously. Either way, the Santa Anita Derby was turned into a two-horse affair and those two are both very talented runners. Journalism has always performed like a runner that will improve when he stretches out and he has the physique of a horse that's likely to improve as he gets older. Out of the Uncle Mo mare Mopotism, he is already the best horse in his family. Not that the pedigree page was too shabby before his career began; his dam won the La Canada Stakes, ran second in the Las Virgenes Stakes, Summertime Oaks, Santa Maria Stakes and Indiana Oaks and third in four G1 events, proving efficient from 7 to 9 furlongs. Her dam Peppy Rafaela was a half-sister to G2 winning sprinter Songster. >>>

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CITIZEN BULL, winner of the Breeders' Cup Juvenile at Del Mar last year, ran way, way below his true form when beaten almost ten lengths to finish fourth of five behind Journalism in the Santa Anita Derby. True, he did not look particularly fit as he came off a two-month break but that could hardly have been the whole explanation. His performance was simply too bad to be true so let's just draw a line through it. He ran to **Globeform 116** when winning at Del Mar last year, making him one of the highest rated horses going for the Kentucky Derby. A high rating doesn't necessarily make a horse a strong contender for a race and in his case the worrying factor is the distance. Can Citizen Bull, a need the lead type who got away with soft fractions in front at the Breeders' Cup (and to an extent also since), be competitive over 10 furlongs at Churchill Downs? From post one he has no alternative but to gun for the lead. Citizen Bull is fast enough to defend his position on the inside - but does he have enough stamina for 10 furlongs? Most likely, he will be ridden as if stamina is not an issue with the 'if he stays he stays' approach. >>>

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>>> Bob Baffert is never one to take a horse out of its comfort zone and he likes to let talented speed horse use their weapon. Yours truly was among those who doubted Authentic's stamina in 2020. And what happened. He was sent straight to the lead and won the Derby going wire to wire. He was a much better horse than Citizen Bull is though, and he did not face the kind of pace pressure we are likely to see in this year's Run for The Roses. Given that Baffert also has another speed horse in the field, all the way Wood Memorial winner Rodriguez, this really is an intriguing scenario. Perhaps we will see both the Baffert trainees going forward and race as a pair on the lead - then try to slow things down. Easier said than done of course and tactics that we see more often in long turf races than on the dirt. It may not be silliest of theories, however; think about it, what riders would be tempted to kick on and join Citizen Bull and Rodriguez to create a hot speed duel heading down the back stretch? On the other hand, what riders would be happy to hand an efficient front-runner a soft lead if one of those two shakes loose? This Derby is so fascinating on many levels. There is a lot of speed signed on and sometimes when that's the case we see a moderate pace, simply because nobody dares to go fast early. So let's not dismiss these Baffert contenders completely.

Citizen Bull won the American Pharoah Stakes at Santa Anita to get to the Breeders' Cup last fall, beating his barnmate Getaway Car by 2 lengths in the 8.5-furlong race. The distance was the same at Del Mar but that track is much more speed favoring - and when East Avenue (who had made all in an impressive prep win) blew the start from his inside post and was out of the contest there and then, Citizen Bull ended up with an easy trip in front. He kept on gamely to beat another barnmate, Gaming, by 1 1/2 lengths, with 61-1 Euro shipper Hill Road 3 1/4 lengths further adrift in third and Getaway Car fourth. Without going too much in detail on these three; the 2024 Breeders' Cup Juvenile was not a vintage renewal. It was won by a precocious young horse holding all the aces and didn't have all that much to beat. Fast forward to his 3yo career. Would Citizen Bull be able to maintain the same level, or progress even? His seasonal debut was positive; he overcame a stumble at the start to get up to the lead after a furlong in the one-mile Robert Lewis Stakes at Santa Anita and won by 3 3/4 lengths while spotting his nearest rival, Rodriguez, 4lbs. It was a solid performance and it was clear that Citizen Bull had trained on. It was yet another unsatisfactory event though, as Baffert had three of the four runners (Madaket Road completed the "BB trifecta"). The two that took his trio on were not exactly horses with Triple Crown aspirations; G3 winning turf runner Clock Tower and maiden claiming winner Valentines Candy rounded out the field. It was, in effect, a well paid Baffert workout. Rodriguez went for the San Felipe Stakes a month later, and was absolutely hammered in third place behind **JOURNALISM**, and Citizen Bull experienced the same fate when fourth to the Kentucky Derby favorite in the Santa Anita Derby. Not only was he beaten out of sight by a winner that encountered serious trouble, Citizen Bull also finished behind Baeza's pacemaker Westwood, a maiden going off as the 44-1 rank outsider. It bears repeating; Citizen Bull's run in the Santa Anita Derby was so bad that it poses the question; what was wrong with him that day? Nothing has been reported, other than comments on lack of fitness, but it is interesting to note that Baffert was contemplating removing the blinkers after that disappointment. In the end, Bob said 'blinkers stay on'; I wonder when that call was made? Before or after he drew post one?

AMERICAN PROMISE has been underrated by odds-makers leading up to this Kentucky Derby. Set at 30-1 on an early Derby line in the US, he is currently available at 33-1 with some bookmakers, and that's a price subscribers in a position to do so should take. Whether we get 33-1 or 25-1 it is way too big; and there are a couple of reasons why these odds have ended up so high.

Firstly it seems that many simply do not believe in his big run in the Virginia Derby, and secondly, the fact that the Virginia Derby was run around one turn may also have influenced many; making people think that this colt is unlikely to run as well in a two-turn race. Perhaps they are right but then again perhaps they are completely wrong. American Promise, who was a May foal, is a very big horse, standing 17 hands, and it is *possible* that turns are not ideal for this son of Justify. On the other hand, one-turn races over a mile plus put extra emphasis on stamina and there can be little doubt that he will stay 10 furlongs. He pressed Getaway Car in a ferocious pace duel at Colonial Downs and when the leader (a short priced favorite) folded, this massive Wayne Lukas trainee just kept going. The further he went, the better American Promise looked. He powered home to win by 7 1/2 lengths, with Render Judgment beating Omaha Omaha by 3/4 length for second. Render Judgment is no star, but note that he was beaten no more than 4 lengths when fifth to Burnham Square in the Blue Grass Stakes four weeks later. So why is Burnham Square 14-1 and American Promise 33-1? >>>

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>>> With Render Judgment close to his Blue Grass form at Colonial Downs, American Promise produced **Globeform 116p** in that prep. This figure makes him the joint second highest rated horse going into the Derby. Assessing his performance via Render Judgment and Omaha Omaha (who had run 2nd in the Jerome and 3rd in the Withers preciously) is just one piece of this puzzle. American Promise's time confirmed that he did run a strong race at Colonial. Winning the 9-furlong event in 1.46.41, he passed the mile in 1.33.02. Lure Him In, a useful allowance horse with stakes winning form, won a mile event in 1.34.41 on the same day, and the 8.5-furlong Virginia Oaks winner Fondly passed the mile marker in 1.35.78, then stopped the clock in 1.42.51. Fondly may not be a top notch Kentucky Oaks contender and the Virginia Oaks had a slow pace but let's use this angle; "how bad can she be" and observe that American Promise ran the mile 2.76 sec. faster than the filly. That equals almost 14 lengths. Comparing American Promise's time to Lure Him In's time we see that he ran the mile about 8 lengths faster than that horse; *and* he was still able to cover the last furlong in 13.39 sec., marginally faster than Fondly's final furlong. She produced that finishing split after a *slow* pace, American Promise did it after a being part of a *wicked* pace (the first 6 furlongs of the Derby was 1.8 sec. quicker than the Oaks).

So, there you have it - American Promise is coming off an interesting prep run. Next question; was it a fluke? It's no wonder we have to ask whether it was, because the Virginia Derby was his ninth start and nothing he had done previously had suggested he was a high class runner. In fact, he has been a very slowly developing sort and broke his maiden at the fifth time of asking last year, when he beat this year's Arkansas Derby runner-up Publisher at Oaklawn Park. It's quite normal for such big horses to need time to develop and American Promise is similar to last year's Preakness Stakes and Pennsylvania Derby winner Seize the Grey. Also very big, Seize the Grey was just a so-so runner leading up last year's Pat Day Mile. It was his ninth start, he was part of a competitive 12-runner field, he went off at 9-1 and he beat them all. Two weeks later he won the Preakness, beating Kentucky Derby winner Mystik Dan by 2 1/4 lengths.

Could it be that Lukas was preparing these horses quietly, running them in early season stakes without having them anywhere near fit; educating them while at the same time allowing them to grow nicely into their big frames without too much pressure? That's the way it seems to me - and that's a good way to make a young horse mentally strong. American Promise could well take another step forward at Churchill Downs, a track he raced over three times as a juvenile, and if he does he will be a major player in the Run for The Roses. By a Triple Crown winner out of two-time mile winner Tapella, he is a half-brother to Hoosier Philly (Into Mischief), an exciting juvenile who wintered as many people's idea of the next Kentucky Oaks winner a couple of years ago. She did not live up to such expectations but, unlike American Promise, she had been asked to fire some big shots in her first season. Looking one step further down on his pedigree page does not make this colt any less interesting; his second dam is Princess Arabella. Trained by Bob Baffert, she was a very talented runner who won all of her three races, most notably the Sunland Park Oaks, a race she took by 8 lengths.

SOVEREIGNTY is a strong contender. He looked a high class colt in the making when winning the Street Sense Stakes here at Churchill Downs last fall and he has continued his progress with two fine performances at Gulfstream Park this spring. He took the 8.5-furlong Street Sense by 5 lengths, proving much too good for **TIZTASTIC**, who was a neck better than **SANDMAN**. Nobody could say for sure how good a race that was at the time but - even allowing for the fact that the placed horses have improved a lot this year - it sure looked okay now, right? Tiztastic has won the Louisiana Derby and Sandman has won the Arkansas Derby and they are both also part of the Kentucky Derby field. Sovereignty, wan attractive, big scopey son of Into Mischief, enjoyed a long winter break and came back in the Fountain of Youth Stakes in early March. Facing the race fit, impressive allowance winner River Thames over a course that would play more to the latter's strength, Sovereignty seemed to be up against it in the 8.5-furlong test - and he was, but he overcame it to get up for an impressive win. Making up ground from the pack, he got the better on River Thames in the last few strides and beat him by a neck, with **NEOEQUOS** a non-staying third and subsequent Blue Grass winner Burnham Square back in fourth. Sovereignty could not have had a better start to his 3yo campaign and he went off favorite to follow up in the Florida Derby four weeks later. Nine furlongs was expected to suit him better and he was the logical selection; but favorite players lost their money. He came up short against Tappan Street, who beat him by 1 1/4 lengths. The prominent runner Tappan Street got first run on Sovereignty >>>

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>>> and Gulfstream is a track that favors horses with his running style - but he kept on running right to the wire that day and Sovereignty never got close enough to make it an exciting finish. Mott's horse was beaten fair and square, checking in 2 3/4 lengths in front of the third placed **NEOEQUOS**. There was a bit more to the story though; as we have seen some mornings at Churchill Downs the past two weeks, Sovereignty can get a bit sweaty - and that happened also behind the gate prior to the start of the Florida Derby (but not prior to the Fountain of Youth), so it may have been a case of the colt not feeling good. He has seemed to be getting better as the days went by when out on the track past week, so hopefully this is not going to be a factor on Derby day; though anyone planning go in with a win bet on this horse should wait until seeing him in the paddock and the parade before determining the size of that wager.

Sovereignty is out of the unraced Bernardini daughter Crowned, who has not produced anything else worth mentioning but is a daughter of Mushka (Empire Maker), a filly Bill Mott trained to win the 9-furlong Spinster Stakes and run second in the Breeders' Cup Distaff when she was a four-year-old. Having an unusual campaign, she was also runner-up in the 11-furlong Sheepshead Bay Stakes on turf the same season. Crowned came from the family of top class filly Lakeway, a winner of three Grade Ones and second in the Kentucky Oaks. There is, in other words, stamina in Sovereignty's family - and it shows when he runs. He is likely to stay 10 furlongs and there's also a good chance that he will get a fast pace in front of him, setting things up for his closing style. He has post 18, which is not so bad for a horse with his running style, Alvarado will probably drop him in behind the pace and ride the colt for luck. Give Sovereignty a traffic free trip, and he is in with a winning chance.

EAST AVENUE, whose two best races have come at Keeneland, bounced back to form in the Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland, a race he almost managed to win going wire to wire. His seasonal debut, a really tame run in the Risen Star Stakes, was very worrying but he showed up in a much better light at Keeneland. With strong form as a juvenile, this good looking colt must be respected - he has been working with great zest at Churchill Downs - but if he must have the lead to run his race, well, then this will not be an easy task for him. There is also a question mark about the distance - ten furlong could prove to be a a furlong further than what he likes. He ran to **Globeform 113p** when winning the Breeders' Futurity at Keeneland last fall, just 3lbs lower than Citizen Bull's rating in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile, when the race was practically over as soon as the gates opened for East Avenue. Drawn by the rail, East Avenue stumbled badly as the start at Del Mar, ended up at the back and was soon beaten. He was the clear favorite at the Breeders' Cup, having been a deeply impressive winner of the Breeders Futurity four weeks prior. Going off second favorite behind Ferocious there he had no problems in beating that rival in the 8.5-furlong event; with the rest strung out to the tune of 36 lengths behind, he looked a top class prospect on what was only his second start. He was sent straight to the lead and dominated the race from start to finish. East Avenue travelled strongly in front and he ran out a very easy 5 1/4-length winner. He had the race won halfway around the home turn and he was under a hand ride through the last furlong, winning with plenty up his sleeve. With that winning performance and his narrow second in the Blue Grass in the book, East Avenue is an interesting Derby contender. Drawn in stall 12, his main problem is that there is a lot of speed to his inside, so going forward could mean ending up very wide on the first turn. Perhaps connections will decide to rate him this time?



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LUXOR CAFE, brother to Japanese dirt champion Cafe Pharoah and half-brother to the high class turf filly Regal Glory, is an intriguing contender for this year's Kentucky Derby. With 4 wins from 6 runs at home, he won his final prep for this race in some style and there is probably better still to come from this horse. Given that Forever Young went so close to winning the Derby for Japan last year, it's likely that Luxor Cafe will be a bit of an underlay though. Some observers have suggested that he may go off as the second or third favorite and perhaps that will be the case but note that Forever Young, who had won both the Saudi Derby and the UAE Derby, was a 7-1 third favorite last year.

This well bred son of American Pharoah has improved with every start. When he won the Hyacinth Stakes back in February, it was by a fast diminishing half-length from the slow starting filly Promised Gene. She came flying late (overcoming the moderate pace) and was 1 1/2 lengths in front of Don In The Mood, who beat the staying-on Admire Daytona by 1 1/4 lengths for third. Luxor Cafe stepped up on that performance with an impressive (admittedly long odds-on) win in the Fukuryu Stakes over 9 furlongs at Nakayama in late March; beating wide margin allowance winner Meisho Zuin very easily by 5 lengths while conceding 2lbs. That race was staged a week before the UAE Derby, which **ADMIRE DAYTONA** won by a nose from Heart Of Honour, with Don In The Mood third. What do we read into the fact that Luxor Cafe's connections decided to bypass the UAE Derby? The Fukuryu Stakes was a much softer spot - the betting suggested that he was going to be far too good for his ten rivals and that's also what happened. He came from a few lengths off the pace to take command coming into the home stretch and won as he pleased. The margin could easily have been bigger than five lengths but he was 1/3 in the betting so the manner of victory was no surprise. He earned a provisional **Globeform 112p** in the process.

What, other than the two UAE runners, has Luxor Cafe beaten in Japan? Spotting his nearest rival Meisho Zuin 2lbs, he outclassed that colt in the Fukurya Stakes, where Golden Cloud was third. Meisho Zuin, who needed four runs to break his maiden, had been a 5-length favorite allowance winner three weeks earlier. Golden Cloud was a debut maiden winner who had been placed twice in allowance company leading up to the Fukuyra - and that's all there is to report, as neither has raced again since the Fukuyra. Two of the unplaced runners in the Fukuyra have run in allowance company since, with one running second and the other running tenth. Looking at the Hyacinth Stakes; we find that Promised Gene, who ran such a good race to be second to Luxor Cafe after very slow start in that race, had won her two previous races, taking the Oxalis Sho Stakes on her second outing (beating a next out winner who has been fourth twice in minor stakes races since), but unfortunately Promised Gene has not raced since the Hyacinth, so using her to assess the form isn't all that easy. One could argue, however, that she was the best horse on the day - and perhaps the Hyacinth was a tougher race than the Fukuyra; if so the latter wasn't much of a stamina test for Luxor Cafe. He won it in 1.52.1, about two lengths slower than an allowance race for older horses on the same day.

His dam Mary's Follies, was a turf runner who captured the Mrs. Revere Stakes over 8.5 furlongs at Churchill Downs as a 3yo, having won the Boiling Spring Stakes over the same distance at Monmouth Park as a juvenile. Luxor Cafe's brother Cafe Pharoah won the one-mile February Stakes twice in Japan and his half-sister Regal Glory was at her best over a mile, winning the Just a Game and the Matriarch Stakes over that distance. So one question regarding Luxor Cafe must be; does he have the required stamina for this classic?

BURNHAM SQUARE put his name firmly back into the Kentucky Derby picture when winning the Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland last month. It was a case of silencing some critics after a somewhat disappointing fourth in the Fountain of Youth Stakes - when he was beaten 4 lengths as the 2-1 favorite. The reason for that price was an impressive win in the Holy Bull Stakes back in early February. He took the 8.5-furlong Holy Bull by 1 3/4 lengths from **TAPPAN STREET** and the job was done by coming from off the pace. For whatever reason, he wasn't able to make the anticipated progress when running over the same course and distance in the Fountain of Youth but it all happened the right way for him in the 9-furlong Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland. Held up for a late run by new rider Brian Hernandez Jr, Burnham Square finished fast to just get up for a narrow win over **EAST AVENUE**, who almost managed to pull off a gate to wire win. The official margin given was a nose but a short head would have been a better description. Burnham Square >>>

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>>> definitely was a worthy winner and he confirmed the impression given in the Holy Bull; that he wants to go long. But for the fact that the Belmont Stakes will be run over 10 furlongs again this year, not twelve, this gelding would fit right into the 'ideal Belmont horse basket'. River Thames, second in the Fountain of Youth, was third in the Blue Grass and the Holy Bull form was franked when Tappan Street won the Florida Derby, beating Fountain of Youth winner **SOVEREIGNTY**, so yes, Burham Square deserves his place in the field. With so much speed signed on, the son of top class miler Liam's Map does have a chance in the first leg of the Triple Crown but, just like Sandman, he is a contender who needs to work out a trouble free trip as he tries to close in from the back.

BAEZA draws into the Derby field after the defection of Rodriguez. A half-brother to 2023 Kentucky Derby winner Mage and last year's Belmont & Haskell Stakes winner Dornoch, came up with a very good performance in the 9-furlong Santa Anita Derby last month. Having his fourth start, almost two months after breaking his maiden, he finished second to the heavy favorite Journalism, who overcame a rough trip (blocked and lost lengths / momentum on the home turn). Baeza had a pacemaker in the race -his maiden barnmate Westwood went with Citizen Bull on the lead - and he took advantage of scenario that with a nice move from off the pace to join Citizen Bull at the top of the lane. He soon had the upper hand against Citizen Bull (who was unusually flat at the finish) but keeping Journalism at bay was not going to be possible. Journalism came rolling in his typical, determined manner and won by 3/4 length without reproducing his San Felipe form. There were multiple positives to take out of Baeza's run; at least if we accept that it was greenness that made him hang left and coming off a straight line for a few strides as the chips were down. It probably was and it was good to see him gallop out well after the race. He improved from GF 106p, recorded when he won a mile maiden in February, to **Globeform 109p** in the Santa Anita Derby. That figure puts him a few lengths below the top group in the Kentucky Derby but Baeza is almost certainly open to improvement. Bred to relish the distance, he must be respected.

TIZTASTIC has an unusual background for a Kentucky Derby horse. Having broken his maiden and won the Juvenile Mile over the undulating turf course at Kentucky Downs last year, he is now an accomplished dirt runner who has been getting good at the right time. A big, long striding son of Belmont Stakes winner and Kentucky Derby runner-up Tiz the Law, he took a nice step forward when landing the 9.5-furlong Louisiana Derby at the Fair Grounds in March. That is the longest of the domestic Derby preps and Tiztastic sure looked like a stamina test won't bother him. Held up in the early stages in the ten-runner field, he was produced for an impressive stretch run to win by 2 1/4 lengths, beating **CHUNK OF GOLD**, a rival exiting a runner-up effort also in the Risen Star Stakes, where he was hammered to the tune of almost ten lengths by Tiztastic's barnmate Magnitude. Subsequent results suggest that Magnitude is a proper top class runner but unfortunately he was stopped by injury and won't be racing again for a while. This means that Steve Asmussen, who is still without a Kentucky Derby win, goes to war with his second best 3yo and a maiden. Still, North America's winning-most handler seems confident that his team is in with a chance. Tiztastic's 2025 campaign has been somewhat similar to American Promise's, in that his runs prior to the break out win were below what we associate with future G1 winners. His form isn't up to the same level as American Promise though and another step up will be needed for him to make a serious bid for glory on the first Saturday in May. He has been fitted with ear plugs in his morning works.

Globeform's Kentucky Derby Special '25

Previews and ratings by Geir Stabell

COAL BATTLE notched up four straight wins from early November to late February, when he produced his career best performance to win the 8.5-furlong Rebel Stakes at Oaklawn Park. Coming off a 7-week break since his easy win in the Smarty Jones Stakes at the same course, he stepped up in class in the Rebel and coped with yet another stiffer challenge. He came with a strong run from off the pace to beat the Madaket Road by 1 1/4 lengths. **SANDMAN** stayed on late to get up for third place, passing the winning post 1 3/4 lengths behind Coal Battle, and he reversed the form when they met again in the Arkansas Derby over the same track, a 9-furlong contest run on March 29. Sandman appreciated the longer distance and was also benefiting from a strong pace. Still a bit green, the Mark Casse trainee ran out a solid 2 1/2-length winner from the maiden **PUBLISHER**, a surprise runner-up who also booked his berth in the Kentucky Derby. Coal Battle, reportedly a bit short on work going into the event, was third, beaten 7 lengths by the winner. We know he is better than that showing but it seems likely that his peak came when he landed the Rebel Stakes and Sandman is a stronger Kentucky Derby contender. He has improved gradually while getting the hang of this racing game, running to GF 105p when second to Speed King after a very slow start in the Southwest Stakes in January, then to GF 102+ when third in the Rebel and to **Globeform 109p** when winning the Arkansas Derby. He took that race in the manner of a horse ready to step up in distance and Sandman appears to be made for 10 furlongs. He has been finishing well from some way back in most of his races and fast early fractions (which is likely in this year's Derby) is just what he wants. What he doesn't want, on the other hand, is too much traffic as he tries to work out a trip at Churchill Downs. Deep closers have won the Kentucky Derby but it is much better to be handy in this race, so perhaps getting up to a Trifecta / Superfecta role is the best Sandman's connections can expect. Unless, of course, the early pace becomes seriously wicked and causes a meltdown on the front at the business end. Such a scenario would give Sandman the best chance of winning.

FINAL GAMBIT was visually impressive - and probably took even those closest to him a bit by surprise - when humiliating his 11 rivals in the Jeff Ruby Steaks over 9 furlongs on the Tapeta track at Turfway Park in March. He had broken his maiden at a third attempt when winning by 2 1/2 lengths over a mile at the same venue in February, but that performance was only worth GF 96p and his runner-up that day, Bermuda Triangle, ran sixth in a similar contest next time out. Final Gambit took a big step forward in the Jeff Ruby though; sitting about eight to ten lengths off the pace when last going into the first turn, he came from well off the pace, swept by horses and gained an easy 3 1/2-length win over **FLYING MOHAWK**, a colt who had recorded GF 96p and GF 97p on his two preceding outings. He stepped up again in the Derby prep, running to Globeform 100, but all eyes were on Final Gambit of course. He took the race going away and improved to **Globeform 108p** with this strong performance. It's not every week we see a Brad Cox trained stakes winner go in at 15-1 and there's no wonder many posed the question 'was this a fluke'? Final Gambit was making only his fourth start so he was entitled to improve - and the main reason he did so was most likely the added distance. The way he won indicated that 10 furlongs won't be any problem for this son of Not This Time, but the switch to dirt creates another new challenge. He has been seen moving smoothly over the >>> main track at Churchill Downs and some horses coming off stakes wins over the synthetic surface at Turfway have coped well with this switch in the past, most notably the 2011 Kentucky Derby winner Animal Kingdom, top class filly Idiomatic and Just Phil's - who ran second in the Run for The Roses after winning the Jeff Ruby two years ago. And before you ask, no Rich Strike has not been forgotten in this office; he ran third in the Jeff Ruby before causing a huge upset by beating Epicenter in the 2022 Kentucky Derby. What these horses had in common was that they improved when racing on dirt - so perhaps they were natural dirt horses all along, and won at Turfway through pure class in the races that were not all that strong. Four horses is no sort of a sample and assuming Final Gambit will be happy racing on dirt just because these four were seems a bit strange. Has anybody come up with the list of stakes winners at Turfway Park who failed badly when going for high level races on dirt?

Final Gambit made his debut running on turf last year, running third to Maui Strong (G3-placed since) in a good maiden heat at Churchill Downs, and the Kentucky Derby will be his first race on dirt. As a son of Not This Time out of a Tapit mare may seem to have a pedigree for dirt, but that's not the case. His dam Pachinko began her career with Andre Fabre in France (0-for-4 at two and three) and she raced exclusively on turf also after being shipped across the pond to join Brad Cox, who saddled her to win a mile maiden at Ellis Park shortly before her retirement. Out of the English 7-furlong winner Hachinta (Gone West), Pachinko

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>>> is a half-sister to Announce (Selkirk), a 10-furlong G1 winner in France, where she also took a G3 event over 12.5 furlongs. This successful Juddmonte family has produced a number of very good turf runners and that was the reason why Final Gambit's dam, who was bred in Kentucky, sent her to Monsieur Fabre as a yearling. His sire Not This Time has given us all sorts of runners capable of competing at the highest level, like Kentucky Derby runner-up come Travers champion Epicenter, top notch 10-furlong turf performer Up To The Mark, champion turf sprinter Cogburn, high class dirt sprinter Sibelius and multiple dirt marathon stakes winner Next.

With these facts to hand, are we any wiser regarding this colt's chances in the Kentucky Derby? Perhaps not - but he did not not beat much at Turfway and he is bred for turf. On the other hand, there was something about how he finished the race off at Turfway that makes one wary - and is likely to stay the trip. Whatever happens on May 3 he will probably win more good races this year.

OWEN ALMIGHTY looked a smart colt in the making when beating Chancer McPatrick by 3 1/2 lengths in the Tampa Bay Derby over 8.5 furlongs in early March. Dominating the race, which was rather slowly run, he quickened right off for a visually impressive win. The runner-up, who had won the Hopeful Stakes and Champagne Stakes last year, was making his seasonal debut and he was spotting Owen Almighty 4lbs, so he appeared to run a decent race too - but Owen Almighty was never in any danger of losing at Tampa Bay. His attempt at following up in the 9-furlong Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland a month later did not go so well, however; a dead heat for last place in that race, 4 1/4 lengths behind the winner Burnham Square, seemed to confirm that Owen Almighty lacks stamina. And who was he in a dead heat with? Chancer McPatrick. Suddenly, the Tampa Bay Derby form didn't look that great. Owen Almighty is probably a natural miler but his connections made the call to take a shot at the Kentucky Derby, rather than the Pat Day Mile (where he might have been the favorite) and in all likelihood he will be up against it in this field - especially from post 20.

ADMIRE DAYTONA got lucky when winning the UAE Derby over 9.5 furlongs at Meydan in March, just hanging on to win by a nose from the late charging Heart Of Honour, who had previously run second, beaten a head by Galactic Star, in a Listed race over the same course. Galactic Star was then coming off a third placed finish behind two massive longshots in an allowance race, and he finished last in the UAE Derby - so these formlines are somewhat inconclusive. Third and fourth in the UAE Derby also fell to Japanese runners; Don in The Mood and Shin Forever, while the substandard UAE Oaks winner Queen Azteca was fifth, beaten 8 1/2 lengths. It was not a vintage renewal of the UAE Derby and it's a shame that winning or running second this race secures a berth in the Kentucky Derby (at the expense of others). That said, the result told us that **LUXOR CAFE** is an interesting contender. When he won the Hyacinth Stakes back in February, it was by half a length from the filly Promised Gene. She was 1 1/2 lengths in front of Don In The Mood, who beat the staying-on Admire Daytona by 1 1/4 lengths for third. Luxor Cafe stepped up on that performance with an impressive (admittedly long odds-on) win in the 9-furlong Fukuryu Stakes at Nakayama in late March; beating wide margin allowance winner Meisho Zuin very easily by 5 lengths while conceding 2lbs. Admire Daytona ran to GF 101+ when second to Luxor Cafe and he improved to **Globeform 107** when racing up with the pace all the way for his narrow win in Dubai. That he has won over 9.5 furlongs is a plus and, with just six runs under his belt, he could of course improve again.

GRANDE takes very little experience into this battle. Having made a winning debut in a mile maiden at Gulfstream Park in January and followed up in an allowance heat over 9 furlongs at the same venue in February, he punched his ticket to Churchill Downs by running second behind **RODRIGUEZ** in the Wood Memorial Stakes at Aqueduct in April. Again tackling 9 furlongs, Grande was a bit up against it the Wood, which was won in gate to wire fashion by Rodriguez, while Grande had a wide trip pretty much all the way. He ran on gamely coming down the lane, and he improved to **Globeform 104p**, but he was never a real threat to the winner, who passed the winning post 3 1/2 lengths in front of him. A son of Curlin, >>>

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>>> Grande is a half-brother to Ticker Tape Home (Medaglia d'Oro), who won the 7-furlong Seaway Stakes at Woodbine as a 3yo. The dam, Journey Home, won the 8-furlong Jimmy Durante Stakes on turf at Del Mar as a juvenile and she was later placed in G3 events over 8 and 8.5 furlongs on turf. The Aqueduct track favored speed on Wood Memorial day and it is therefore interesting to note that a colt without much stamina on the distaff side of his pedigree ran second - behind a winner that had shown more speed than stamina in this previous races. Could it be that these two contenders are more likely to thrive over a mile, not a mile and a quarter, as they mature? Third place in the Wood, 1 3/4 lengths behind Grande, went to the Brad Cox trained Passion Rules; a colt exiting an allowance win (his third straight) over 8.5 furlongs at Oaklawn Park, where came home by 2 1/4 lengths from Hymn, who was beaten 2 lengths into fourth place behind Louisiana Derby third Instant Replay in the Bathhouse Row Stakes next time out. Grande's steady progress through his first three races makes him an interesting horse but he needs to improve quite a lot to become competitive against the best in the Kentucky Derby.

NEOEQUOS drew into the field when Built and Render Judgment dropped out and, although it's hard to see this son of Neolithic as a live contender, the Gulfstream Park representative deserves to take his chance. He went from a 6-furlong allowance win in January to a much improved performance in the Fountain of Youth Stakes over 8.5 furlongs in early March. Sent off at 14-1, he ran third behind Sovereignty, who beat River Thames by a neck. Neoequos raced in second for the most part and he led heading into the straight but was soon overtaken by River Thames and eventually passes the winning post 2 1/2 lengths behind Sovereignty, carrying 4lbs less than the winner. Burnham Square, also conceding 4lbs, was fourth a neck behind Neoequos. Next up was the Florida Derby; like in the Fountain of Youth, Neoequos flashed his speed and he was right up in the firing line a furlong out, only to tire a finish third. Tappan Street won by 1 1/4 lengths from Sovereignty, who was 2 3/4 lengths better than Neoequos. Although the 9-furlong trip stretched him, Neoequos ran to the dame rating as he had done in the previous race, recording **Globeform 104**. Likely to do better when he cuts back to a mile, he is expected to be part of the early speed in this classic.

CHUNK OF GOLD ran into some horse when he made his dirt track debut in the Risen Star Stakes back in February. Going off at 43-1 on the back of two decent runs over the Tapeta track at Turfway Park, he finished the race off really well to be second, catching **BUILT** in the last few strides, but it was still almost ten lengths too slow to trouble the freakish winner Magnitude (who was sidelined by injury after the race). Chunk of Gold is already a success story; how about having a colt bought for \$2,500 that turned out to be a Kentucky Derby contender? His pedigree is not *that* bad; his dam is a half-sister to dual G3 winner My Boy Jack (who actually went off second favorite in Justify's Kentucky Derby). It's worth noting that Chunk of Gold was foaled as late as on May 11, so he may improve with age; but he did not move much up on the ratings ladder when second, 2 1/4 lengths behind **TIZTASTIC** in the Louisiana Derby, where subsequent stakes winner Instant Replay ran third. It was another honest effort by Chunk of Gold, but his form falls some way short of what will be required to be competitive in this race.

PUBLISHER, who has yet to win a race after seven runs, improved to **Globeform 104** when running second, 2 1/2 lengths behind **SANDMAN** in the Arkansas Derby at Oaklawn Park just over a month ago. Staying on from well off the pace, he beat the third placed **COAL BATTLE** (who had an off-day) by 4 1/2 lengths for second and he ran much like a horse wanting further than the 9 furlongs he was tackling in his Kentucky Derby prep. He was racing with blinkers for the first time. His previous best was GF 96 (distant fifth to **COAL BATTLE** in the Rebel Stakes) and if he takes a similar jump up the ratings ladder he is within reach of a graded stakes win, but it seems unlikely that he will make an impact on the Kentucky Derby.

RENDER JUDGMENT ran second, outclassed 7 3/4 lengths by **AMERICAN PROMISE** in the Virginia Derby at Colonial Downs, and went on to take fifth in the Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland, where he checked on 4 lengths behind **BURNHAM SQUARE**, who beat **EAST AVENUE** by a short head. With **Globeform 101**, Render Judgement falls well short of what will be required to make his presence felt in this classic.

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CONCLUSION: It has to be Journalism - he looks a good cut above the rest, perhaps with the exception of Sovereignty, while the underrated runner in with a chance is American Promise. The Tri / Super plan in this office is to use Journalism as the winner, with at least one of those two (hopefully both!) getting into the top three or four. Hopefully, rain will not affect the Run for The Roses - if it comes up sloppy we will need to reduce our stakes. The selections might as well stay the same, as none of these take wet track experience to the battle. The gut feeling, however, is that a wet track might move American Promise up a bit; he has plenty of experience and may not be too bothered by rough conditions; also, he combines speed with stamina. A wet track would probably also increase the speedy Citizen Bull's chances. Coal Battle, the small horse in more ways than one, handled a muddy track well when winning a minor stakes at two, so if it's a wet track Derby he should also be considered underneath.

GLOBEFORM SELECTIONS

A	8 JOURNALISM 2ND
B	5 AMERICAN PROMISE, 18 SOVEREIGNTY WON 23-1 EXACTA
C	1 CITIZEN BULL, 7 LUXOR CAFE, 9 BURNHAM SQUARE, 12 EAST AVENUE, 17 SANDMAN, 21 BAEZA (+ 16 COAL BATTLE if track is wet)

Journalism / Santa Anita Derby: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ninMzUKI-rc>
2nd Baeza 4th Citizen Bull

Journalism / San Felipe Stakes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bO0tZLNFF8g>
3rd Rodriguez

Citizen Bull / Breeders' Cup Juvenile '24: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edvmeXC_A6s

Citizen Bull / Robert B. Lewis Stakes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDaf0VYZ8vA>

American Promise / Virginia Derby: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5xOOtnxYVI>

Tappan Street / Florida Derby: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvZFFGoTCeU>
2nd Sovereignty 3rd Neoequos

Burnham Square / Blue Grass St.: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUmwgoOeNbU>
2nd East Avenue

Sovereignty / Fountain of Youth Stakes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNliQ20UOqU>
3rd Neoequos

East Avenue / Breeders Futurity '24: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svLBOzE5Pxx>

Sandman / Arkansas Derby: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foQJoBhrXUU>
2nd Publisher 3rd Coal Battle

Rodriguez / Wood Memorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtBwir7xokY>
2nd Grande

Luxor Cafe / Fukuyra Stakes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8GfvUQJ1ig>

Luxor Cafe / Hyacinth Stakes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHcku2mP8HY>

Tiztastic / Louisiana Derby: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sk6doL2892w>