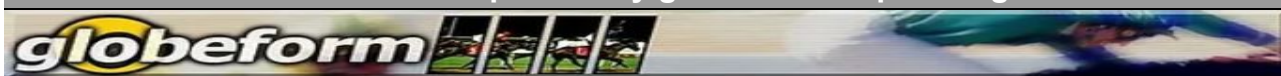


Premier members' exclusive

Globeform Notebook Horses '25

Horses selected as potentially good bets in upcoming races



4 Mar 25

Ballerina d'Oro 3yo filly by Medaglia d'Oro

Trainer: Chad Brown

3rd Davona Dale Stakes, Gulfstream Park, March 1

Recommending Ballerina d'Oro as a notebook horse is not exactly original but this Chad Brown trainee may still be underrated by many after her third in the Davona Dale Stakes at Gulfstream Park. It was not a high class performance, as she was beaten almost three lengths by The Queens MG, who was giving her 2lbs. La Cara, just a nose better than Ballerina d'Oro in second place, was giving her 5lbs, so yes, Ballerina d'Oro was favored by the weights and tasks lying ahead will be tougher, but it was the way she ran that got me interested. Breaking from the outside in the five-runner field, she was last early but soon moved up to be in good contention as they were heading for the only turn in the one-mile race (though also travelling a touch too freely with no cover). Forced to be wide around the turn, she hit a bit of a flat spot and lost ground as the leaders quickened the pace at the top of the lane, only to close in on them through the last 100 yards. She finished much faster than La Cara, was well in front of that filly a few strides after passing the winning post and galloped out well. She seemed a bit green when asked to pick up steam, something that was a bit surprising, given that she had four runs last year; but note that this was only her second try on dirt. She came from much further off the pace when runner-up in the 9-furlong Demoiselle Stakes at Aqueduct last fall (beaten a length by the odds-on favorite Muhimma).

The Queens MG and La Cara were precocious juveniles last year but they have both trained on well to prove that they are more than just 'typical 2-year-olds' unlikely to make an impact at three. La Cara was coming off an impressive win in the Suncoast Stakes at Tampa Bay Downs and The Queens MG had finished third to Eclatant in the Forward Gal Stakes on her seasonal bow (performing very much like a runner in need of the race). These are smart fillies, in fact they should be seen a legitimate contenders for the Kentucky Oaks. Perhaps we will soon be saying the same about Ballerina d'Oro?

We all know that her sire Medaglia d'Oro can give us top class performers and interestingly two of his very best runners were outstanding fillies; Songbird and Rachel Alexandra, who beat the boys in three high profile events - the Preakness Stakes, Haskell Invitational and the Woodward Stakes. Elate, another high class daughter of Medaglia d'Oro, wasn't too far behind those stars in terms of ratings. These fillies were out of mares by Roar (Rachel Alexandra), West Acre (Songbird) and Distorted Humor (Elate). The bottom half of Ballerina d'Oro's pedigree looks somewhat different. Out of a Tapit mare, she is bred along the same lines as Endorsed, who won two graded stakes over a mile but stayed well enough to run fourth in the 10-furlong Travers Stakes. Will Ballerina d'Oro appreciate the 9-furlong trip if she gets to run in the Kentucky Oaks? She certainly did so in the Demoiselle and why should anything have changed this year? The way she finished in the Davona Dale one would have to think that an extra furlong is just what she wants.

Players in a position to get a Kentucky Oaks future bet on Ballerina d'Oro should put something on her now, as she can be backed at **40-1, 33-1 and 25-1** with various betting firms (<https://www.oddschecker.com/horse-racing/ante-post-racing/international/kentucky-oaks/winner>). All of those prices are too big in my opinion - and let's hope such a disregard for the filly is going to be reflected in her odds next time she turns up at the races, probably then to punch her ticket to Louisville in early May.

Davona Dale Stakes finish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19gfirakdK8>

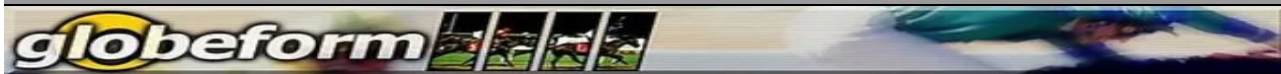
Davona Dale Stakes full race: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KF1CM3ENFOE>

Demoiselle Stakes 2024: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnW-sSHDm0Y>

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5 Feb 25

Goncora 3yo colt by Iffraaj

Trainer: Chad Brown

Won 8.5-furlong 3yo maiden, Tampa Bay Downs, February 1

Hardly a week goes by without Chad Brown saddling a nice European bred turf winner - and even his maiden winners recruited from across the pond normally merit attention. Also those he sends to Tampa Bay Downs, a course Chad likes as a good place to educate young talents. As it was Tampa Bay Stakes on Saturday, he added a lightly raced three-year-old to the van load. The French import **Goncora (GB)** was hardly a passenger making up the numbers. Having only his second start, and his first in the US, he justified odds-on support in the betting by cruising home 5 lengths clear under Flavien Prat. Brown and Prat were just warming up ahead of a big race double with Saffron Moon in the Endeavour Stakes and Running Bee in the Tampa Bay Stakes and when the day was over they had four winners from four runners.

Goncora is some way off taking part in stakes events but he looked a bit special as he instigated the powerful team's four-timer. Positioned some eight lengths off the pace at the halfway stage, he was racing with great zest throughout the 8.5-furlong trip and when Prat signalled that it was time to make a move, the colt responded like a good one. He passed horses effortlessly negotiating the home bend and the race was pretty much over as he came in to the straight. He won comfortably under a hand ride, absolutely outclassing Juddmonte's well bred Bill Mott trainee Atlat; a grandson of multiple G1 winner Close Hatches (dam of G2 winners Tacitus and Scylla). Atlat was coming off a third placed finish behind subsequent Withers Stakes winner Captain Cook in December, and prior to that run he was second in a maiden won by Rookie Card, with Mucho Macho Man Stakes runner-up Treaty of Rome behind him in third place. Treaty of Rome is a possible starter in the Sam Davis Stakes at Tampa Bay on Saturday.

There's every reason to believe that the performance Goncora produced on Saturday is above the average turf maiden winners in Florida these days, never mind those at Tampa Bay Downs. He earned a provisional **Globeform 97p**. It's easier for Brown to grab good purses with fillies coming up this route but there was a lot to like about Goncora's performance, and he is clearly up to beating much better rivals than those he faced here. It will be interesting to see where he runs next; my hope is that it will be in a 3yo turf stakes (where he might offer value in the betting), though he could of course take in an allowance race before making that step up in class. He has good tactical speed but he looks like a runner that will be capable of stretching out to 9 or 10 furlongs this season. His pedigree would point to mile races in Europe and such horses often get further when competing around turns on flat tracks in North America.

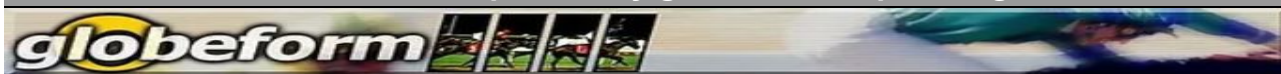
Goncora raced once for his owner/trainer Mauricio Delcher Sanchez in France last year, finishing second to a nice colt called Sir Tommy Cen over 7 furlongs at lowly Dieppe in July. Sir Tommy Cen franked the form by winning a much better race at Deauville in August and he took yet another step up when beaten just a length into fourth place behind Houquetot in the Prix la Rochette at Longchamp in September. Although it has taken time for this colt to get going, it seems that Goncora was a good buy when changing hands for just 20,000 guineas at the Tattersalls October Sale in 2023. The price was probably considerably higher when a private sale sent him to Chad Brown last year. His dam Sparkle (Oasis Dream) failed to win but has also produced the four-time sprint winner Grace Angel (a daughter of high class sprinter Harry Angel) and she is from a good family. Sparkle's half-brother Nugget was a smart performer who managed to run third in the top level Orr Stakes over 7 furlongs in Australia, where he also won a Listed event over 8.5 furlongs. Nugget had previously landed the Spring Handicap at Newbury in England as a four-year-old. Another of Sparkle's siblings, a Dubawi son called UAE Jewel, took the Newmarket Stakes over 10 furlongs on his second start. He looked an exciting prospect but went wrong and ran just once more. Goncora's second dam Gemstone, a quite stoutly bred daughter of Galileo, won a mile Listed event at the Curragh at three, when she was also runner-up in a G3 over the same course and distance. She was trained by Aidan O'Brien. (5 Feb 25)

Goncora / Tampa Bay Downs maiden win: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5U-mqHSopA>

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3 Feb 2025

River Thames 3yo colt by Maclean's Music

Trainer: Todd Pletcher

Won 1 mile 3yo allowance race, Gulfstream Park, February 1

RIVER THAMES is hardly an original selection to start off with our Notebook list. Many will have noticed his win on Holy Bull day at Gulfstream Park. The reason I want him on my list of horses to monitor and consider backing in upcoming races is not that I'm keen to back him at odds-on if he takes just a small step up in class next time out; the reason is that I'd be happy to side with this New York bred at good odds if Pletcher decided to give him a crack at a Kentucky Derby prep. Pletcher does not have any obvious Derby contenders at the minute and it would not be the biggest of surprises if he runs River Thames in the Fountain of Youth Stakes on March 1. Wherever this colt runs next we need to pay close attention.

To call River Thames a nice horse is probably a bit of an understatement. He may not have beaten much as he strolled home by 6 1/2 lengths over a mile on Saturday, but he won the race so easily and there's good reason to believe that he is every bit as good as the Holy Bull winner Burnham Square. He shook off early pace pressure to win with a really strong performance. His runner-up Souper Times was coming off a promising win when making his debut racing on turf. The form of that race took a bit of a knock when a pair of horses he beat that day were well beaten again in maiden company on Saturday but let's not read too much into that. Souper Times, trained by the in-form Mark Casse, is a \$370,000 half-brother to Las Virgenes Stakes winner Queen of Thorns and, with just one run under his belt, who was to say what surface he should run over? Mark Casse perhaps.

Rolando, third to River Thames, was coming off a runner-up effort behind Cool Intentions, who was a well beaten fifth in the Mucho Macho Man Stakes two weeks later. So, in short, it's correct that River Thames did not beat all that much but it's how he did it, and how fast he ran, that got me interested.

The clock tells us that it would have taken a very good horse to beat him. Making his second start and stepping up in trip after a facile debut win over 6 furlongs in January, River Thames stopped the clock in 1.36.34. Not bad for a horse that wins with more up his sleeve. Burnham Square won the 8.5-furlong Holy Bull in 1.43.60 and the mile split for that race was 1.37.19; about four lengths slower than River Thames's final time. While mile races are run around one turn, the Holy Bull is a two-turn race and we are talking about two different distances here; but only by half a furlong, and note that the runup in the Holy Bull was 80 feet. In River Thames's race it was zero. His time really was good.

The Holy Bull probably wasn't as strong as some reports will have it but this time comparison does suggest that River Thames is a stakes winner waiting to happen. Quite how good he will become is hard to say but he earned a provisional **Globeform 106p**, two pounds better than Burnham Square. Were they to meet next month, Burnham Square would likely be favorite and River Thames a much better price.

Could this son of Maclean's Music develop into a Kentucky Derby contender? He runs like a colt that won't be troubled by going further than a mile, but his breeding is not exactly begging for a grueling 10-furlong test at Churchill Downs. Maclean's Music is best known for having sired high class sprinters Jackie's Warrior and Drain the Clock though he is also the sire of Preakness winner Cloud Computing, who is out of an A.P. Indy mare who won over 9 furlongs and was G3-placed over 10 furlongs. River Thames is out of Proportionality, a daughter of the fast miler Discreet Cat. Proportionality was an ordinary sprinter (3 wins). Her dam, All Mettle, won over 6 furlongs and has also produced 7-furlong 2yo stakes winner Miss Interpret. River Thames's third dam, the low level 6-furlong winner Seeking the Silver, was a half-sister to two G1-winning sprinters; Paulassilverlining and Dads Caps. River Thames has a lot of speed on the distaff side of his pedigree. Is that a reason to hold back with him now? Perhaps not, as it makes sense to take full aim at valuable races shorter than the Kentucky Derby in coming months - and after that, simply hope that he stays.