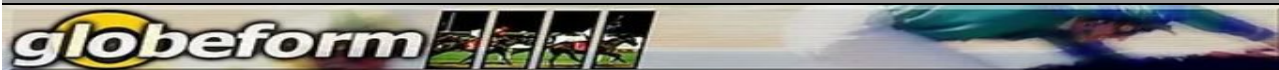


Globeform's Kentucky Derby Special '26

Previews and ratings by Geir Stabell



11

5:39 ET



GLOBEFORM RANKING

OLD FORESTER BOURBON TURF CLASSIC (G1) 9 fur Turf, Churchill Downs May 2

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 | 6 | RHETORICAL | 116p | 113 - 116p - 115p | Walden / I Ortiz Jr |
| 3 | 9 | TEST SCORE | 113 | 113 - 108+ 107+ | Motion / M Franco |
| (0) 3+ / 5 | 4 | PROGRAM TRADING <i>GF 113+ in Oct '25</i> <i>GF 116 in May '24</i> | (116) 113+ / 111 | 108 - 111 - 110+ | Brown / Prat |
| 4 | 5 | MERCANTE | 112 | 108 - 111 - 100 | Knippenberg / Ramos |
| 4 | 8 | ASTRONOMER <i>GF 112 in Nov '24</i> | 112 | 104 - 100 - 111 | Callaghan / Castellano |
| 5 | 10 | MAKE ME KING | 111 | 110 - 111 - 102 | Jehani / J L Ortiz |
| (1) 2 / 7 | 7 | GOLD PHOENIX <i>GF 114 in Nov '25</i> <i>GF 115 in Nov '24</i> | (115) 114 / 109 | 109 - 103 - 114 | D'Amato / Berrios |
| 7 | 1 | CORRUPTION | 109 | 109 - 99 - 107 - 107 | M Casse / Velazquez |
| 10 | 2 | DASHMAN <i>GF 106 in Jan '25</i> | 106 | 100 - 105+ 105 | Lynch / Rosario |
| 11p | 3 | ASBURY PARK | 105p | 105p - 97 - 92 | Brown / Prat |

Globeform ratings are expressed in pounds. The "Rank" column shows the horse best in at the weights based on Globeform ratings on top, with other horses ranked down in pounds. For example; rank figure 6 tells us that the horse is 6lbs below the top ranked horse. Length values: 5-6 furlongs: 3lbs per length. 7 fur: 2.5lbs. 8 - 11 fur: 2lbs. 12 fur: 1.5lbs

*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.*

Most recent winners of the Turf Classic

| | | | | |
|------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 2025 | SPIRIT OF ST LOUIS | GF 114 | Chad Brown | Manuel Franco |
| 2024 | PROGRAM TRADING | GF 116p | Chad Brown | Flavien Prat |
| 2023 | UP TO THE MARK | GF 122 | Todd Pletcher | Irada Ortiz Jr |
| 2022 | SANTIN | GF 116 | Brendan Walsh | Tyler Gaffalione |
| 2021 | DOMESTIC SPENDING | GF 119p | Chad Brown | Flavien Prat |
| 2020 | DIGITAL AGE | GF 114 | Chad Brown | Javier Castellano |

Average winning Globeform: 116.8

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GLOBEFORM ANALYSIS

RHETORICAL ran well enough when placed in the Maker's Mark Mile at Keeneland - his first start of the season - to confirm that he has trained on at five; though one worry is that he became restless in the stalls and might have wasted a bit of energy and / or lost focus - but he was a game third behind Zulu Kingdom (who went gate to wire) and One Stripe (who came from off the pace). Rhetorical raced in the first three throughout, and he performed to GF 113, not at all far below his best rating last year. Expected to take a step forward, he is the selection in the Turf Classic. He did his best over a mile in 2025, but he also won a stakes event over 8.5 furlongs at Saratoga (in lesser company) and we can take a chance on his stamina. Though without much speed signed on this race might not become a particularly strong 9-furlong test anyway. A moderate pace would increase this favorite's chances even further. He is the morning line chalk, so we are not likely to get great value, but he is the logical selection.

He kept on improving last year and, with just eight career starts, this horse can continue his upward curve. He improved to **Globeform 116p** when taking fourth, 2 lengths behind the top class Euro miler Notable Speech in the Breeders' Cup Mile at Del Mar; where Irad Ortiz may have ridden him a bit too aggressively. Forwardly placed around the track, he kicked into the lead coming into the straight but was caught and passed by three rivals. Now, the home straight is just a furlong at Del Mar, so criticising Ortiz for this move makes no sense. Given the fact that it was Notable Speech who was hunting him down, it might have served him better to keep a bit in reserve. Or perhaps it made no difference. Whichever way we look at this, the fact is that Rhetorical ran a big race in defeat, while at the same time proving that his win in the Coolmore Mile at Keeneland four weeks prior was no fluke.

He caused a bit of an upset when winning the Coolmore Mile in October. The New York bred son of Not This Time had been impressive in an allowance race and in the restricted West Point Stakes at Saratoga, but the Turf Mile represented a big step up in class. He took it all in his stride; positioned just off the pace, he finished well and came home half a length in front **PROGRAM TRADING**, who ran on from the back to get second by a neck from Brilliant Berti. Rhetorical had needed GF 106p to win each of his two preceding races; he jumped right up to GF 115p at Keeneland and ran here to **Globeform 116p** at the Breeders' Cup. He could be an exciting horse in 2026.

TEST SCORE improved to **Globeform 113** when winning the Pegasus World Cup Turf at Gulfstream Park in January. Very much enjoying having the run of the race, he was close behind the leaders, and grabbed the advantage in the lane, then held off to win by a neck from his luckless barnmate One Stripe, who finished well coming wide while attacking from off the pace. With Almendares just a length further back in third place, it was by no means what we call a top class performance but Test Score did everything right from start to finish and he showed that 9 furlongs suits him well. He was a consistent 3yo last year. After running second to this year's Maker's Mark winner Zulu Kingdom in the American Turf Stakes on Kentucky Derby day, the Graham Motion trainee moved up to GF 110p with a 1 1/4-length win over World Beater in the Belmont Derby at Saratoga. World Beater gained revenge when they ran first and third in the Saratoga Derby, and after that Test ran three good races in some of the best 3yo turf races, including a win in the Twilight Derby at Santa Anita. That was also over 9 furlongs. He fits well into the Turf Classic, he comes here on the back of a career best effort, and he has a chance. >>>

WEATHER FORECAST, LOUISVILLE

Fri 01 63°/40°



AM Clouds / PM Sun

💧 18%

Sat 02 60°/38°



Partly Cloudy

💧 11%

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PROGRAM TRADING has been below his previous best in both of his races this season, and he was particularly disappointing the third in the Muniz Memorial at the Fair Grounds in March, beaten 2 lengths behind Lagynos, who runs in the Opening Verse Stakes on Thursday. Program Trading hit the board but he was rather one-paced and ran to no more than GF 108. Having run to GF 111 in the Pegasus World Cup Turf at Gulfstream Park in January, he will now be fitted with blinkers. If it 'wakes him up' and brings him back to his career best then he has a strong chance. 9 furlongs is his optimum trip.

He failed to fire as we have seen him do in earlier seasons when favorite for the 9-furlong Pegasus World Cup Turf, but he ran respectably to finish fifth 1 1/2 lengths behind **TEST SCORE**. The performance was worth GF 111, a fair bit below what he was capable of as a 4yo but not far off his best form last year. He rounded a three-race campaign off by running tenth after a troubled run in the Breeders' Cup Mile last year, beaten 5 1/4 lengths behind top class miler Notable Speech (with **RHETORICAL** fourth). Program Trading returned GF 110+ at the Breeders' Cup, while his run prior was worth GF 113+. That was when he tried a mile for the first time in his 'stop-start' career; he was second 3/4 length behind **RHETORICAL** in the Coolmore Mile at Keeneland in October. Tackling a distance that is a bit too short for him, Program Trading ran much as could be expected at Keeneland; staying on late but running out of ground when trying to deliver a challenge.

He won the 2024 edition of the Bourbon Turf Classic, taking the race off a five-month break since winning the Hollywood Derby in '23. Program Trading raced prominently throughout and beat Naval Power by a head on that occasion. Improving to **Globeform 116** in the process, the son of Lope de Vega looked set for more success but he ended up sidelined once again after running fifth in the Manhattan at Saratoga a month later - this time keeping him out of action for almost 15 months. He has had an interrupted career, but he is still one of the better turf runners around.

MAKE ME KING, an 8 to 9-furlong performer with decent form both in Europe and in the Middle East, is coming off a fourth placed finish in the Dubai Turf over 9 furlongs at Meydan in late March, when he was beaten 3 1/2 lengths by the odds-on favorite Ombudsman, who was one of the very best horses in Europe last year. The Dubai Turf normally gets a top class field, also with horses from Japan joining in, but due to the war it was quite a depleted renewal this time; and Ombudsman did not have to be anywhere near his best to win the race comfortably by 2 lengths from Quddwah, who was exiting a win in the Singspiel Stakes over the same course and distance a month earlier. 50-1 shot Andreas Vesalius (a 7yo who has never won a stakes) ran third and 33-1 shot Dividend (second to Quddwah in the Singspiel) finished fifth, a neck behind Make Me King, who went off at 40-1 with the bookmakers. Make Me King raced keenly just off the pace in the Dubai Turf and he kept on well without posing a threat to the top three. He had previously won a G2 over a mile in Qatar, where he beat the English trained Listed winner Holloway Boy by 1 1/4 lengths (also then ridden just off the pace). The son of Dark Angel returned a career best **Globeform 111** on that occasion and he ran to GF 110 in Dubai. The Qatar form ties well in with what happened in Dubai, as Holloway Boy was third, 2 3/4 lengths behind Quddwah in the Singspiel Stakes on his next start. Make Me King is a well traveled and experienced runner, he likes this distance and he has a chance of hitting the board.

MERCANTE, second 3/4 length behind the 2025 Pegasus World Cup Turf winner Spirit in St Louis in this event 12 months ago, made a promising return to racing action when second to Willy D's in the Kentucky Cup Classic at Turfway Park in March. He is a game and consistent runner with form good enough to make him a Trifecta contender. As one of three prominent types, he can get a tactical edge on horses being held up. He does not need the lead; his favorite slot is to sit second for most of the way. Trifecta contender.

ASTRONOMER (whose best form has come at Del Mar) and **GOLD PHOENIX** (who will likely find this trip too short) are Californians with ratings close to Mercante's level, but they make little appeal here.

ASBURY PARK, a lightly raced 4yo in Chad Brown's team, came from off the pace when beating Noble Confessor and Hill Road in the Jockey Club Derby over 11 furlongs at Aqueduct last October; improving to **Globeform 105p** as he won by 2 lengths. He needs to take a big step up to have a winning chance and 9 furlongs could be too short for this Frankel colt. On the other hand, his level is not at all far off the rest in this field (outside of the top two), he should improve, and he must be included in Tri and Super plans. Note that he gets Flavien Prat, who has been Program Trading's regular partner over the past three seasons. >>>

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CONCLUSION: With habitual front-runner Corruption drawn by the rail and Dashman, who has often also been forwardly ridden, in post two, we can expect to get the pace from those two, which is good news, as inside speed means there should be a clean race. Mercante may want to part of the early picture from post five. He has a better chance than the other two and becomes a Trifecta horse. The main horses are Rhetorical and Test Score, however - with Rhetorical the one with most class. Program Trading seems dubious but nobody would be surprised if he suddenly bounces back to form. Asbury Park 'could be anything' and such horses should never be tossed. Make Me King has run respectably in better company and he is the fourth horse worth adding to the third line in the selections box. Sticking to one of the favorite Trifecta models it is; A-horse to win, B-horse to be 2nd or third, with C-horses included.

GLOBEFORM SELECTIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| A | 6 RHETORICAL |
| B | 9 TEST SCORE |
| C | 3 ASBURY PARK, 4 PROGRAM TRADING, 5 MERCANTE, 10 MAKE ME KING |

Rhetorical 4th / Breeders' Cup Mile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NS7WEheiFRE&t=19s>
5th Program Trading

Rhetorical / Coolmore Turf Mile: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JS78kfCPjxE>
2nd Program Trading

Test Score / Pegasus World Cup Turf: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0m_FDsdPfAY&t=2s
5th Program Trading

Make Me King 4th / Dubai Turf Stakes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NDqkafxBbg>

