

2006 Run for the Roses: A Kentucky Derby Primer

The excitement in the air is perceived by everyone. The horses are nervous, the owners, jockeys, and trainers are going over last minute details. Crosses are kissed, and four-leaf clovers are secretly invoked...

Soon, the jockeys are up, and the call to the post is sounded. Thousands upon thousands of people are in the stands and the infield. They are talking, analyzing, laughing, and being merry. The place is simply buzzing...

But suddenly, when the last of the horses are loaded into the gate, time seems to be suspended. No one breathes. The stillness of crowd seems to last forever, and then BANG! The starting gate flies open and the air is consumed by roars and shouts. You find yourself momentarily taken over. Nothing can prepare you for the deafening sensation of 25,000 lbs. of galloping horses and 70,000 cheering humans.

The thundering hooves become your heart beat, the roaring crowd becomes your voice, and the silent fire of the horse's grim determination, captivates your soul. The horses strain every muscle, giving every measure of themselves to do what they were bred to do. Run.

In that very moment you are transported to a dimension beyond yourself. You become part of the most famous horse race in the world. The Kentucky Derby.

This will be the 132nd running of the Kentucky Derby, and without a doubt, is the best known horse race in the world today. Live television coverage starts at 5:00pm on May 6th on NBC, with pre and post race coverage by ESPN. And for those of you really into horses, there is extended National Coverage of the Derby all during this week.

As we get critically close to the first Saturday in May, many Derby hopefuls have either stayed on the trail, or are off the trail with injuries and hard luck stories. Everyone strives for this dream... to win the Kentucky Derby.

Here's my rundown of the current contenders:

With names like "Steppenwolfer", and "Sinister Minister", do you really think "Sweetnorthern saint" stands a chance? Is his "Cause to Believe" strong enough to get him to the "Sacred Light"? Will "Lawyer Ron" protect "Bob and John" or is this just "Deputy Glitters"? Will "Barbaro" or "Jazil" be the "Keyed Entry"? After a "Point Determined", will "Brother Derek" really have a "Sharp Humor"? Maybe "Flashy Bull", and "Bluegrass Cat" will make a "Private Vow", to retire with their "Storm Treasure" ... or will "A.P. Warrior" settle things just by "Showing Up"...

The next question is, Who Will Win!

The Winner of the very 1st Kentucky Derby was a horse named Aristides, in the year 1875. His sire (father) was Leamington, and his dam (mother) was Sarong. Sarong's sire was the fastest four miler of his time, and was the fantastic horse: Lexington. Among Lexington's progeny was a horse named Cincinnati, who was General Grant's favorite charger during the Civil War...

There are many ways to choose a horse to root for. One way might be to learn about their families. Another might be a catchy name, and still another might be to do lots of research about all of the horses, and their track records.

In any case, it is a very exciting time of year, with the promise of warm days and summer fun right around the corner. The Derby trail started many months ago, and many of 2003's best Thoroughbreds have been proving themselves since last fall.

Which ever horse you choose, don't miss being a part of the "most watched 2 minutes in Sports", and don't forget: the Kentucky Derby is the first race of the Triple Crown. The Preakness will be run on May 20th, and the Belmont on June 10th.

You can find out more about the Kentucky Derby and all the television coverage at: www.kentuckyderby.com/2006/

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