



THE DERBY DISPATCH

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CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES MARCHES ON WITH GRADE II, \$1 MILLION REBEL

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023) – Action on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series is set to continue Saturday where 11 3-year-olds were entered in the Grade II, \$1 million Rebel Stakes at Oaklawn. The winner of Saturday's Rebel will receive 50 points toward their spot in the starting gate in the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI).

The Championship Series began its 16-race stand Saturday when Pennsylvania-bred **Angel of Empire** upset 13 rivals in the \$400,000 Risen Star (GII) at Fair Grounds. Angel of Empire's victory brought his point total to 54 and elevated him to the No. 1 spot over Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI) winner **Forte** (40).

Angel of Empire is conditioned by **Brad Cox**, who has ruled this year's Road to the Kentucky Derby series. Owned by **Albaugh Family Stables**, Angel of Empire is one of eight horses under the 2021 Derby-winner's care to earn points. Angel of Empire's owners led four horses over for the Kentucky Derby: **Brody's Cause** (7th), **J Boys Echo** (15th), **Free Drop Billy** (16th) and **Thousand Words** (scratched in paddock).

Saturday's Rebel Stakes is a key prep on Oaklawn's calendar for the \$1.25 million Arkansas Derby (GI) that will be held on Saturday, April 1.

Sit back and hold tight, the excitement on the Road to the Kentucky Derby is taking flight.

DOMINANT ALLOWANCE WINNER VERIFYING 2-1 FAVORITE IN GRADE II, \$1 MILLION REBEL – Westerberg, Mrs. John Magnier, Jonathan Poulin, Derrick Smith and Michael Tabor's dominant 5 ¼-length Oaklawn allowance winner **Verifying** headlines a field of 11 3-year-olds entered in Saturday's \$1 million Rebel (Grade II) at Oaklawn.

The Rebel, run at 1 1/16 miles, will award the Top 5 finishers points on a 50-20-15-10-5 scale for the Championship Series on the Road to the Kentucky Derby. The Rebel will go as Race 11 of 12 at 6:23 p.m. (all times Eastern).

Trained by **Brad Cox**, **Verifying** impressed many as a 2-year-old after breaking his maiden by 1 ¾ lengths at Saratoga and finishing second to **Blazing Sevens** in the Champagne (GI) at Belmont at Aqueduct. In the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (GI), **Verifying** had a difficult start and only managed to finish sixth, beaten 12 lengths by eventual champion **Forte**. The son of 2018 Triple Crown winner **Justify** rebounded in a big way in his 3-year-old bow on Jan. 14 at Oaklawn where he dominated five rivals, including two next-out winners. **Verifying** earned a 95 Brisnet Speed Rating for that victory, the second highest last race figure of any horse in the Rebel.

Jockey **Florent Geroux**, who has yet to ride **Verifying** in any of his previous four starts, will fly from his winter base at Fair Grounds for the mount and break from the rail.

Verifying's stablemate **Giant Mischief** is another top Rebel contender and was tabbed as the 5-2 second choice on the morning line odds. Owned in partnership by **Spendthrift Farm, Steve Landers Racing, Martin Schwartz, Michael Dubb, Ten Strike Racing, Jim Bakke, Titledown Racing Stables, Kueber Racing, Big Easy Racing, Winners Win, Mike Caruso and Stonestreet Stables**, **Giant Mischief** will make his first start as a 3-year-old following his runner-up effort to **Wildatlanticstorm** in the Springboard Mile.

Giant Mischief had modest beginnings for Cox and his partners when he broke his maiden at 5 ½ furlongs on Sept. 22 at Horseshoe Indianapolis. **Giant Mischief** quickly found himself back with Cox's string in Louisville and he gamely defeated **Arabian Lion** in a first-level allowance on the undercard of Breeders' Cup Future Stars Friday. **Giant Mischief** was tabbed as the 4-5 favorite in the Springboard Mile but after trouble at the start and a mid-race move, the **Into Mischief** colt was defeated 2 ¼ lengths.

Jockey **Irad Ortiz Jr.**, who has won at a 21% clip for Cox over the last six years, will have the mount from post No. 5.

Breaking just to **Verifying's** outside in post 6 is **SF Racing, Starlight Racing, Madaket Stables, Robert Masterson, Stonestreet Stables, Jay Schoenfarber, Waves Edge Capital and Catherine Donovan's** Sham Stakes (GIII) winner **Reincarnate**. Under new trainer **Tim Yakteen**, **Reincarnate** was transferred from **Bob Baffert's** care for the Rebel. **Baffert** is suspended by Churchill Downs Incorporated from competing in the 2023 Kentucky Derby.

A son of Good Magic, Reincarnate defeated four rivals, including future Robert B. Lewis Stakes (GIII) winner **Newgate**, in the Sham. His victory earned him a 98 Brisnet Speed Rating, three points better than Verifying in his Oaklawn allowance win. Reincarnate raced on turf in the first two starts of his career prior to his dirt debut on Nov. 4 at Santa Anita where he finished second to stablemate **Fort Bragg**. Hall of Fame rider **John Velazquez** will have the mount and the duo was tabbed at morning line odds of 7-2.

Here is the complete field for the Rebel from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): Verifying (Geroux, Cox, 2-1); **Powerful** (Isaac Castillo, Steve Asmussen, 20-1); **Red Route One** (Cristian Torres, Asmussen, 10-1); **Gun Pilot** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Asmussen, 8-1); Giant Mischief (Ortiz, Cox, 5-2); Reincarnate (Velazquez, Yakteen, 7-2); **Confidence Game** (James Graham, Keith Desormeaux, 15-1); **Talladega** (Flavien Prat, Rodolphe Brisset, 30-1); **Event Detail** (Gerardo Corrales, Paulo Lobo, 30-1); **Bourbon Bash** (Mickaelle Michel, D. Wayne Lukas, 20-1); and **Frosted Departure** (Francisco Arrieta, Kenny McPeck, 20-1).

Fans can wager on the Rebel at www.TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated and the Kentucky Derby.

REBEL QUOTES

- **Brad Cox**, trainer, **Giant Mischief**: “We gave him a little bit of time after the Springboard Mile to get him ready for the Rebel. It was a planned break. We’re hoping this race shows us enough that we’re able to take a look at Grade I on the Derby trail.”
- **Florent Geroux**, jockey, **Verifying**: “He’s been extremely talented in the afternoons and I think is starting to get better with age both physically and mentally. He wasn’t quite there mentally at first but that’s starting to come around.”
- **D. Wayne Lukas**, trainer, **Bourbon Bash**: “That’s a very, very good horse (Gun Pilot) that won (the Feb. 4 allowance) the race, so we were not disappointed hooking into him. We tried him at the eighth pole. The thing with Bourbon Bash is he’s real feminine and he hasn’t matured yet. If the next two months to three months, he’ll get a little stronger – just physically, he’s OK mentally – he’s got enough tactical speed that we can put him in a race where he belongs. He doesn’t need the seasoning. He needs the strength.”

COX’S WORLD – Kentucky Derby winning trainer **Brad Cox** has dominated this year’s Road to the Kentucky Derby. Through last week’s Risen Star Stakes (GII), Cox is represented by eight colts on the Road to the Kentucky Derby leaderboard, the most of any conditioner at this stage since **Steve Asmussen** in 2019.

Cox, who began training in 2004, had his first horse on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard in 2016 when **Dazzling Gem** finished third in the Louisiana Derby (GII) and fourth in the Arkansas Derby (GI). The meteoric rise of Cox, especially on the Kentucky Derby scene, wasn’t until 2019 when he won his first Championship Series race with **Owendale** in the Lexington Stakes (GIII).

“The Kentucky Derby is why we do what we do every day,” Cox said. “It’s the biggest race for any of us (trainers) to win and it’s the goal I have every year.”

However, even though Cox is represented by eight horses on the leaderboard, in 2019, when Asmussen had the same amount, he only had one starter in the Kentucky Derby (**Long Range Toddy**).

REBEL PRODUCED THREE KENTUCKY DERBY WINNERS – Saturday’s Rebel Stakes is the key prep at Oaklawn toward the Arkansas Derby (GI) that will be staged on Saturday, April 1.

In its previous 62 editions, the Rebel has produced three winners of the Kentucky Derby: **American Pharoah** (2015); **Smarty Jones** (2004) and **Sunny’s Halo** (1983).

American Pharoah was the lone Derby winner of the trio to compete in the Rebel during the Road to the Kentucky Derby points system era that began in 2013. Since then, the Rebel has produced 20 Derby starters and the only other horse besides American Pharoah to hit the board in the “Run for the Roses” was **Lookin At Lee** (2017).

WATCHING THE WEATHER – Saturday’s early National Weather Service forecast in Hot Springs, Ark. calls for a high near 53 degrees with a 50% chance of showers.

Since the Rebel had its inaugural running in 1961, the track condition was listed “sloppy” just three times: 2020, 2015 and 1985.

REBEL FIELD INCLUDES 10 HORSES WITH CHURCHILL DOWNS TIES – Saturday’s field for the Rebel is filled with horses that already have ties to the home of the Kentucky Derby.

In total, 10 of the 11 3-year-olds were either based or ran at Churchill Downs. The only horse that doesn’t have previous experience at Churchill Downs is California-based **Reincarnate**.

Seven of the horses entered in the Rebel competed at Churchill Downs on the Stars of Tomorrow programs during the Fall Meet: **Bourbon Bash, Confidence Game, Frosted Departure, Gun Pilot, Powerful, Red Route One** and **Talladega**.

KEY RACES TO WATCH – This weekend there are several races around the world that could have implications on the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks. Here are some of the key races:

Friday

- 9:25 p.m. ET, TP 8, MSW, 3yo, 1 M

Saturday

- 1:50 p.m. ET, AQU 3, \$100,000 Gander Stakes, 3yo NY-Bred, 1 M
- 2:34 p.m. ET, OP 4, MSW, 3yo, 1 1/16 M
- 3:35 p.m. ET, OP 6, MSW, 3yo f, 6 F
- 5:43 p.m. ET, OP 10, \$300,000 Honeybee (GIII), 3yo f, 1 1/16 M
- 5:45 p.m. ET, FG 8, OC 80k n1x, 3yo f, 6 F
- 6:23 p.m. ET, OP 11, \$1 million Rebel (GII), 3yo, 1 1/8 M

Sunday

- 1:37 p.m. ET, GP 4, MSW, 3yo, 1 1/8 M
- 2:39 p.m. ET, GP 6, MSW, 3yo f, 1 1/16 M

ANGEL OF EMPIRE NEW LEADER ON ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD – Albaugh Family Stables’ Angel of Empire vaulted to the top of the Road to the Kentucky Derby leaderboard with his upset victory in Saturday’s \$400,000 Risen Star (GII) at Fair Grounds.

Here are the Top 20 horses on the Road to the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard:

| <u>Position</u> | <u>Horse</u> | <u>Trainer</u> | <u>Resume</u> | <u>Possible Next Start</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|--|---|---------------|
| 1 | Angel of Empire | Brad Cox | 1 st Risen Star 2 nd Smarty Jones | March 25: Louisiana Derby or April 1: Arkansas Derby or April 8: Blue Grass | 54 |
| 2 | Forte | Todd Pletcher | 1 st Breeders’ Cup Juvenile 1 st Breeders’ Futurity | March 4: Fountain of Youth | 40 |
| 3 | Instant Coffee | Brad Cox | 1 st Lecomte 1 st Kentucky Jockey Club 4 th Breeders’ Futurity | March 25: Louisiana Derby | 32 |
| 4 | Sun Thunder | Kenny McPeck | 2 nd Risen Star 4 th Southwest | March 25: Louisiana Derby | 24 |
| 5 | Two Phil’s | Larry Rivelli | 2 nd Lecomte 3 rd Risen Star | April 8: Blue Grass | 23 |
| 6 | Rocket Can | Bill Mott | 1 st Holy Bull | March 4: Fountain of Youth | 20 |
| 7 | Hit Show | Brad Cox | 1 st Withers | April 8: Wood Memorial | 20 |
| 8 | Litigate | Todd Pletcher | 1 st Sam F. Davis | March 25: Louisiana Derby | 20 |
| 9 | Curly Jack | Tom Amoss | 1 st Iroquois 2 nd Kentucky Jockey Club 5 th Breeders’ Cup Juvenile | March 25: Louisiana Derby | 17 |
| 10 | Blazing Sevens | Chad Brown | 1 st Champagne 4 th Breeders’ Cup Juvenile | March 4: Fountain of Youth | 16 |
| 11 | Arctic Arrogance | Linda Rice | 2 nd Withers 2 nd Jerome 2 nd Remsen | March 4: Gotham | 16 |
| 12 | Jace’s Road | Brad Cox | 1 st Gun Runner 3 rd Iroquois 5 th Southwest | TBD | 15 |
| 13 | Red Route One | Steve Asmussen | 2 nd Southwest 3 rd Breeders’ Futurity 4 th Kentucky Jockey Club | Feb. 25: Rebel | 13 |
| 14 | Victory Formation | Brad Cox | 1 st Smarty Jones | TBD | 10 |
| 15 | Dubyuhnell | Danny Gargan | 1 st Remsen | TBD | 10 |
| 16 | Practical Move | Tim Yakteen | 1 st Los Alamitos Futurity | March 4: San Felipe | 10 |
| 17 | Lugan Knight | Michael McCarthy | 1 st Jerome | March 4: Gotham | 10 |
| 18 | Tapit’s Conquest | Brad Cox | 4 th Risen Star | March 25: Louisiana Derby | 10 |
| 19 | General Banker | James Ferraro | 3 rd Withers 3 rd Jerome | March 4: Gotham | 9 |
| 20 | Shadow Dragon | Bill Mott | 2 nd Holy Bull | March 4: Fountain of Youth | 8 |

DOWN THE STRETCH –

Trainer **Brad Cox** reported the highly-touted colt **Loggins**, runner-up to champion **Forte** as a 2-year-old in the Breeders' Futurity (GI) is off the Kentucky Derby trail but has resumed light training. The colt is likely to return to Cox's string at Churchill Downs. ...

The connections of recent Hyacinth Stakes winner **Perriere (JPN)** stated they will target the \$1 million UAE Derby (GII) on March 25. ...

The Road to the Kentucky Oaks Championship Series will continue Saturday at Oaklawn with the \$300,000 Honeybee Stakes (GIII). **Three Chimneys Farm's** Grade III-placed **Grand Love** was made the slight 3-1 morning line favorite in the 1 1/16-mile race. The Honeybee will go as Race 10 of 12 with a post time of 5:43 p.m. The Top 5 finishers will be awarded points on a 50-20-15-10-5 scale towards the \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI). ...

Santa Anita announced that the Friday-Sunday cards would be postponed due to adverse weather conditions in Southern California. The \$100,000 Santa Ysabel (GIII) on the Road to the Kentucky Oaks Championship Series was scheduled for Saturday but a makeup date has not been announced. ...

There were 103 fillies nominated to this year's \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (Grade I) during the early nomination phase that closed Feb. 18. Those not nominated can do so with a \$1,500 late nomination fee due Saturday, April 15. ...

Derby fans can keep up with all the news and notes on the Road to the Kentucky Derby by listening to **"Inside the Kentucky Derby"** available on iTunes, Spotify and YouTube. ...

Spring meet stall applications are due Friday, March 3. Following its annual closer for winter renovations, the Churchill Downs stable area will reopen Tuesday, March 21 and the first day of training is scheduled for Friday, March 24.

UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

Note: The possible fields for upcoming Kentucky Derby Championship Series races are fluid as owners and trainers vie for points. Known possible horses mentioned to be under consideration for each race are based on published news reports and other sources. Horses listed in *italics* are possible for multiple races.

March 4 (nine weeks out) – \$400,000 Fountain of Youth (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Gulfstream Park (Top 5 points: 50-20-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Blazing Sevens (Chad Brown); Forte (Todd Pletcher); General Jim (Shug McGaughey); Rocket Can (Bill Mott); and Shadow Dragon (Bill Mott)

March 4 (nine weeks out) – \$400,000 San Felipe (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Santa Anita (Top 5 points: 50-20-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Chase the Choas (Ed Moger); Geaux Rocket Ride (Richard Mandella); National Treasure (TBD); *One in Vermillion (Esteban Martinez)*; Practical Move (Tim Yakteen); and *Skinner (John Shirreffs)*.

March 4 (nine weeks out) – \$300,000 Gotham (GIII), one mile, Aqueduct (Top 5 points: 50-20-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Arctic Arrogance (Linda Rice); Carmel Road (Tim Yakteen); Clubhouse (Todd Pletcher); Eyeing Clover (Brad Cox); General Banker (James Ferraro); Howgreatisnate (Andrew Simoff); Lugan Knight (Michael McCarthy); Recruiter (Cal Lynch); Slip Mahoney (Cox); and Uncorrelated (Chad Brown).

March 4 (nine weeks out) – \$150,000 John Battaglia Memorial, 1 1/16 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 5 points: 20-8-6-4-2)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Curly Larry and Mo (Caio Caramori); Ironsides (Vicki Oliver); and Quadra Island (Brad Cox).

March 11 (eight weeks out) – \$400,000 Tampa Bay Derby (GII), 1 1/16 miles, Tampa Bay Downs

Known possible starters (with trainer): Classic Car Wash (Mark Casse); Groveland (Eoin Harty); and Tapit Trice (Todd Pletcher).

March 25 (six weeks out) – \$1 million Louisiana Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Fair Grounds (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Angel of Empire (Brad Cox)*; Baseline Beater (Neil Pessin); Cagliostro (Cherie DeVaux); Curly Jack (Tom Amoss); Denington (Kenny McPeck); Instant Coffee (Brad Cox); Kingsbarns (Todd Pletcher); Litigate (Todd Pletcher); Shopper's Revenge (Steve Asmussen); Sun Thunder (Kenny McPeck); Tapit Shoes (Brad Cox); and Tapit's Conquest (Brad Cox).

March 25 (six weeks out) – \$1 million UAE Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Meydan Racecourse (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)
Known possible starters (with trainer): Perriere (JPN) (Yoichi Kuroiwa); Shirf's Bee (Doug Watson); and Tall Boy (Doug O'Neill).

March 25 (six weeks out) – \$700,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), 1 1/8 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)
Known possible starters (with trainer): Gilmore (Brendan Walsh); Major Dude (Todd Pletcher); Scoobie Quando (Ben Colebrook); and Wadsworth (Brad Cox).

March 26 (six weeks out) – \$600,000 Sunland Derby (GIII), 1 1/8 miles, Sunland Park (Top 4 points: 50-20-10-5)
Known possible starters (with trainer): *One in Vermillion* (Esteban Martinez); and *Two Eagles River* (Chris Hartman).

April 1 (five weeks out) – \$1 million Florida Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Gulfstream Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)

April 1 (five weeks out) – \$1.25 million Arkansas Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Oaklawn Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)
Known possible starters (with trainer): *Angel of Empire* (Brad Cox); *Arabian Knight* (TBD); Disarm (Steve Asmussen); and *Two Eagles River* (Chris Hartman).

April 8 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Wood Memorial (GII), 1 1/8 miles, Aqueduct (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)
Known possible starters (with trainer): Hit Show (Brad Cox)

April 8 (four weeks out) – \$1 million Blue Grass (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Keeneland (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)
Known possible starters (with trainer): *Angel of Empire* (Brad Cox); and Two Phil's (Larry Rivelli)

April 8 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Santa Anita (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10)
Known possible starters (with trainer): *Arabian Knight* (TBD); and *Skinner* (John Shirreffs).

April 15 (three weeks out) – \$400,000 Lexington (GIII), 1 1/16 miles, Keeneland (Top 4 points: 20-8-4-2)

ABOUT CHURCHILL DOWNS RACETRACK

Churchill Downs Racetrack ("CDRT"), the world's most legendary racetrack, has been the home of The Kentucky Derby, the longest continually held annual sporting event in the United States, since 1875. Located in Louisville, CDRT features a series of themed race days during Derby Week, including the Kentucky Oaks, and conducts Thoroughbred horse racing during three race meets in the Spring, September, and the Fall. CDRT is located on 175 acres and has a one-mile dirt track, a 7/8-mile turf track, a stabling area, and provides seating for approximately 60,000 guests. The saddling paddock and the stable area has barns sufficient to accommodate 1,400 horses and a 114-room dormitory for backstretch personnel. CDRT also has a year-round simulcast wagering facility. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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