



THE DERBY DISPATCH

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Brisnet Past Performances:

Fountain of Youth: <https://www.brisnet.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FoY25.pdf>

Gotham: <https://www.brisnet.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Gotham25.pdf>

San Felipe: <https://www.brisnet.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/SanFelipe25.pdf>

Inside the Kentucky Derby podcast: <https://www.kentuckyderby.com/horses/news/inside-the-kentucky-derby-championship-series-race-previews/>

COAL BATTLE FUELS KENTUCKY DERBY DREAMS; CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES RAMPS UP WITH THREE KEY PREPS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, Feb. 28, 2025) – With just nine weeks remaining until the first Saturday in May, the Road to the Kentucky Derby is heating up.

Last weekend belonged to **Coal Battle**, who delivered an underdog story for the ages in the \$1.25 million Rebel Stakes (GII). The 72-year-old trainer **Lonnie Briley** watched as his 3-year-old colt swept past **Madaket Road** in mid-stretch and gave journeyman jockey **Juan Vargas**—a former part-time rider and longtime exercise rider for **Steve Asmussen**—a career-defining victory. The win catapulted Coal Battle to the top of the Kentucky Derby leaderboard with 70 qualifying points, all but securing his place in the starting gate for the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) on Saturday, May 3.

One day prior to Coal Battle's victory in the Rebel, **Aaron and Victoria Haberman's California Burrito** held off a late charge by favorite **Baby Max** to win the John Battaglia Memorial (Listed) at Turfway Park, the Prep Season finale on the Road to the Kentucky Derby.

Attention now turns to a trio of pivotal Championship Series races on Saturday. At Gulfstream Park, **Burnham Square**, the standout Holy Bull Stakes (GIII) winner, headlines the \$415,000 Fountain of Youth (GII). On the West Coast, undefeated **Barnes** tests two turns for the first time in the \$300,000 San Felipe Stakes at Santa Anita. Up north at Aqueduct, a competitive field of 10 3-year-olds is set for the one-mile \$300,000 Gotham Stakes (GIII).

HOLY BULL WINNER BURNHAM SQUARE SET TO RETURN IN FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH – **Whitham Thoroughbreds' Burnham Square**, an impressive winner of the Holy Bull Stakes (GIII) one month ago, will face seven rivals entered in Saturday's \$415,000 Fountain of Youth (GII) at Gulfstream Park.

The 1 1/16-mile Fountain of Youth is the local prep for the Florida Derby (GI), held Saturday, March 29 at 1 1/8 miles. The Fountain of Youth which goes as Race 13 at 5:44 p.m. (all times Eastern), is part of the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series and awards qualifying points toward the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI) to the top five finishers on a 50-25-15-10-5 scale.

Trained by **Ian Wilkes**, Burnham Square will attempt his third consecutive win at Gulfstream Park. The gelded son of Liam's Map scored by nine lengths in a maiden special weight race on Dec. 28 and followed with a 1 3/4-length victory in the Holy Bull on Feb. 1, both starts being equipped with blinkers. Jockey **Edgard Zayas** retains the mount from post No. 3.

Hall of Fame trainer **Todd Pletcher** sends out two runners making their two-turn debuts in the Fountain of Youth: **River Thames** and **Gate to Wire**. Owned by **CHC Inc. and WinStar Farm**, River Thames debuted Jan. 11 at Gulfstream with a 4 3/4-length win at six furlongs and stretched out to a mile for a 6 1/2-length score on Feb. 1. **John Velazquez** rides the son of Maclean's Music from post 6.

Gate to Wire, owned by **Donegal Racing**, rallied to a five-length upset victory in the seven-furlong Swale Stakes on the Holy Bull undercard. The Munnings colt will be piloted once more by **Dylan Davis** from the rail.

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Making his seasonal bow is **Godolphin's Sovereignty**. Trained by Hall of Famer **Bill Mott**, the Into Mischief colt closed his juvenile campaign with a five-length victory in the Street Sense Stakes (GIII) at Churchill Downs. **Junior Alvarado** has the call and will break from post 2.

Another horse returning off a layoff is **St. Elias Stable, West Point Thoroughbreds** and **CJ Thoroughbreds' Keep It Easy**, the dominant 5 ¼-length winner of the Ed Brown Stakes on Nov. 30 at Churchill Downs. The **Dale Romans**-trained son of Hard Spun breaks from post 8 with **Corey Lanerie** in the irons.

The field for the Fountain of Youth from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- Gate to Wire (Davis, Pletcher)
- Sovereignty (Alvarado, Mott)
- Burnham Square (Zayas, Wilkes)
- **McKellen** (Tyler Gaffalione, Jose D'Angelo)
- **Solid Left** (Luis Saez, Brian Lynch)
- River Thames (Velazquez, Pletcher)
- **Neoequos** (Irad Ortiz Jr., Saffie Joseph Jr.)
- Keep It Easy (Lanerie, Romans)

*McKellen is not an early Triple Crown nominee but can become eligible for the series of races with a \$6,000 late payment due by Monday, April 7.

STANDOUT 3-YEAR-OLD BARNES MAKES TWO-TURN DEBUT IN SAN FELIPE – **Zedan Racing's** undefeated 3-year-old colt Barnes, an impressive winner in both starts for six-time Kentucky Derby-winning trainer **Bob Baffert**, headlines Saturday's Grade II, \$300,000 San Felipe Stakes for 3-year-olds at 1 1/16 miles at Santa Anita Park.

The San Felipe, which is the local prep for the April 5 Santa Anita Derby (GI), will go as Race 8 with a post time of 6:43 p.m. The race is part of the Road to the Kentucky Derby Championship Series and awards qualifying points to the top five finishers on a 50-25-15-10-5 scale for the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI).

Barnes, making his two-turn debut, broke his maiden at Churchill Downs in November going 5 ½ furlongs, then dominated the seven-furlong San Vicente Stakes (GII) by 5 ½ lengths. Barnes has recorded six works since the San Vicente, including a six-furlong drill in 1:12.20 on Sunday at Santa Anita. **Juan Hernandez**, aboard for both prior starts, retains the mount from post No 3.

Baffert will also saddle **Rodriguez**, runner-up to champion **Citizen Bull** in the Robert B. Lewis Stakes (GIII). The son of Authentic romped by seven lengths in a maiden special weight race at a mile on Jan. 4. **Flavien Prat** will ride Rodriguez for the first time from post 4.

Among Barnes' other rivals in the San Felipe is **Bridlewood Farm, Don Alberto Stables** and **Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners, Elayne Stables 5** and **Bob LaPenta's Journalism**, who will make his 3-year-old debut after winning the Los Alamitos Futurity (GII) in December. The **Michael McCarthy** trainee will be ridden by **Umberto Rispoli** from post 2.

The field for the San Felipe from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- **Mellencamp** (Mike Smith, Baffert)
- Journalism (Rispoli, McCarthy)
- Barnes (Hernandez, Baffert)
- Rodriguez (Prat, Baffert)
- **Smooth Cruisein** (Ricardo Gonzalez, Karen Headley)
- **Berlin Wall** (Tiago Pereira, Steve Knapp)

*Berlin Wall is not early Triple Crown nominated but can become eligible with a \$6,000 payment due by Monday, April 7.

UNDEFEATED NEW YORK BREDS SACROSANCT, SAND DEVIL FACE OFF IN ONE-MILE GOTHAM – Undefeated New York-breds **Sacrosanct** and **Sand Devil** will face eight fellow 3-year-olds in Saturday's \$300,000 Gotham Stakes (GIII), run at a one-turn mile at Aqueduct Racetrack.

The Gotham was carded as Race 8 on Saturday with a post time of 4:18 p.m. The race is a Championship Series event on the Road to the Kentucky Derby and awards qualifying points to the top five finishers on a 50-25-15-10-5 scale toward the \$5 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (GI).

Sacrosanct, owned by **Lady Sheila Stable, Net Birdie** and **Schwing Thoroughbreds** and trained by **Brad Cox**, brings a perfect record from four starts into the race. The son of Honest Mischief was last seen winning the New York Stallion Series contest on Dec. 14. **Manny Franco**, who's been aboard for all four starts, has the return call from post No. 4

Breaking one post to his outside is **Chester Browman's** Sand Devil. Trained by **Linda Rice**, Sand Devil is a perfect three-for-three, including a victory four weeks ago in the Damon Runyan Stakes. **Jose Lezcano** has the mount.

The field for the Gotham from the rail out (with jockey and trainer):

- **Scorching** (Eric Cancel, John Charalambous)
- **Normandy Coast** (Ben Curtis, Eddie Kenneally)
- **Calling Card** (Kendrick Carmouche, Mike Maker)
- Sacrosanct (Franco, Cox)
- Sand Devil (Lezcano, Rice)
- **Pagode** (Luan Machado, Paulo Lobo)
- **Flood Zone** (Reylu Gutierrez, Cox)
- **McAfee** (Lane Luzzi, Rick Dutrow Jr.)
- **Garamond** (Javier Castellano, Chad Brown)
- **My Mitole** (Luis Rivera Jr., Caros Martin)

*Pagode, McAfee and My Mitole are not early Triple Crown nominated but can become eligible with a \$6,000 payment due by Monday, April 7.

SAN FELIPE QUOTES

- **Barnes (trainer Bob Baffert):** "You always think that he can do it (win around two turns) but he's got to actually do it. He's a big, strong horse. He should handle it."

FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH QUOTES

- **Burnham Square (trainer Ian Wilkes):** "He wouldn't run his race without blinkers. He'd run away from horses. He wouldn't run into the dirt. Jocks were riding him at the half-mile pole and he was going nowhere. He just needed blinkers. ... It was a solid five-eighths in 1:01 (in his Feb. 22 work). He galloped out good. I loved the gallop out. He came off the track happy."
- **River Thames (trainer Todd Pletcher):** "He's been very good in both of his starts and he handled the stretch-out from six furlongs to a mile. He seems to like the track. You always get added encouragement anytime they've been over it a couple of times."
- **Sovereignty (director of bloodstock for Godolphin Michael Banahan):** "He's had a good month behind him and a few nice works consistently, so we're looking forward to getting him started again. Hopefully, if he runs well for us, we can go on to the next step which would probably be a better situation for him with a bit more distance to get to, which is probably what he wants to do. Looking forward to seeing him get back on track."

GOTHAM QUOTES

- **Flood Zone (U.S. advisor to Wathnan Racing Case Clay):** "He showed a lot of promise in his last race. Hopefully, he continues to do well. Time will tell, but I think he is a horse that could potentially go longer. He won a 6 1/2-furlong race but I think he can go longer, that was kind of the main thing."
- **Normandy Coast (trainer Eddie Kenneally):** "He's young and lightly raced, so I don't know if he's adopted any particular running style yet, but he does have natural speed. It was a good comeback race for him. He had already gone seven furlongs when he broke his maiden. When he came back in January the race was at six furlongs and he handled it fine but it may be a little short for what his best is."
- **Sacrosanct (assistant trainer Dustin Dugas):** "His last work was good. A nice, little breeze in company with Uncle Jim. I'm happy with the way he did it and he came out of it in good shape. The time reflected it as well but he didn't have to overexert himself to run a :49. It was a really good breeze."
- **Sand Devil (trainer Linda Rice):** "He's doing good. We will see what the race shapes up like. He just ran so I may or may not get a work into him before the race. I think he is fine at the mile. He has run well at one mile already. It might actually be better for him than the seven furlongs."

HOW TO WATCH FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH, SAN FELIPE

- The Fountain of Youth and San Felipe will both be shown on CNBC as part of the 1/ST Racing Tour beginning at 5 p.m. The show will also be streamed live on Peacock.
- FanDuel TV will have live, on-site coverage at both Gulfstream Park and Santa Anita.
- Stream live on TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated and the Kentucky Derby.

HOW TO WATCH THE GOTHAM

- “America’s Day at the Races” will feature live, on-site coverage from Aqueduct on FS2.
- Stream live on TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated and the Kentucky Derby.

KEY RACES TO WATCH 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:

Saturday

- GP, R1 (11:30 a.m.), MSW, 3yo f, 7 F
- AQU, R2 (1:11 p.m.), MSW, 3yo, 7 F
- GP, R6 (2:02 p.m.), MSW, 3yo, 7 F
- GP, R8 (3:04 p.m.), \$215,000 Davona Dale (GII), 3yo f, 1 M
- AQU, R7 (3:47 p.m.), \$200,000 Busher Invitational, 3yo f, 1 M
- AQU, R8 (4:18 p.m.), \$300,000 Gotham (GIII), 3yo, 1 M
- OP, R7 (4:27 p.m.), OClm 20000n1x, 3yo f, 1 1/16 M
- GP, R13 (5:44 p.m.), \$415,000 Fountain of Youth (GII), 3yo, 1 1/16 M
- SA, R8 (6:43 p.m.), \$300,000 San Felipe (GII), 3yo, 1 1/16 M
- TP, R6 (8:25 p.m.), OClm 62500n1x, 3yo f, 1 M

Sunday

- GP, R1 (12:50 p.m.), MSW, 3yo F, 1 1/16 M
- SA, R6 (5:30 p.m.), \$100,000 Santa Ysabel (GIII), 3yo f, 1 1/16 M
- OP, R9 (5:53 p.m.), OClm 20000n1x, 3yo, 1 1/16 M

DOWN THE STRETCH – The Road to the Kentucky Oaks features a duo of Championship Series races on Saturday with the \$200,000 Davona Dale (GII) at Gulfstream Park and the \$200,000 Busher at Aqueduct. On Sunday, the \$100,000 Santa Ysabel (GIII) rounds out the weekend action at Santa Anita. All three races will award the top five finishers qualifying points on a 50-25-15-10-5 scale toward the \$1.5 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI). ...

The Euro/Mideast Road to the Kentucky Derby continued Wednesday with **Godolphin’s Opera Ballo** impressively winning the Road to the Kentucky Derby Condition Stakes at Kempton. Opera Ballo is not currently nominated to the Triple Crown but can do so with a \$6,000 late payment that’s due by Monday, April 7. Two races remain on the Euro/Mideast Road to the Kentucky Derby: the March 7 William Hill Top Price Guarantee Patton at Dundalk and the April 5 UAE Derby (GII) at Meydan Racecourse. ...

Repole Stable’s Grande, trained by **Todd Pletcher** and ridden by **John Velazquez**, won a first-level allowance/optional claiming event over 1 1/8 miles at Gulfstream Park on Thursday by 2 ½ lengths over **Jimmy’s Dailys**. ...

Trainer **Lonnie Briley** said Rebel Stakes (GII) hero **Coal Battle** could run next in the March 29 Arkansas Derby (GI) or bypass the race and wait until the Kentucky Derby, “Sometimes it’s asking a lot of these horses to run their hearts out in five weeks and then have to come back and do it again. If he’s ready, we’ll go to the Arkansas Derby. If not, we’ll wait until the Kentucky Derby.” ...

Trainer **Eoin Harty** confirmed Kentucky Jockey Club (GII) winner **First Resort** is off the Kentucky Derby trail after suffering a stress fracture. Harty said the colt could return to the races in the late summer or early fall. ...

Trainer **Michael McCarthy** said there’s no timetable for **Bullard** to return to the races after he was forced to scratch from the Rebel Stakes (GII) due to a fever. McCarthy told the *Daily Racing Form’s Brad Free* that the objective is to “get him healthy.” ...

ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY LEADERBOARD – 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	Coal Battle	Lonnie Briley	1 st – Rebel 1 st – Springboard Mile	March 29 Arkansas Derby or May 3 Kentucky Derby	70
2	Citizen Bull	Bob Baffert	1 st – Robert B. Lewis 1 st – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile 1 st – American Pharoah	April 5 Santa Anita Derby	60
3	Getaway Car	Bob Baffert	1 st – Sunland Derby 2 nd – Los Al Futurity 2 nd – American Pharoah 4 th – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile	TBA	36
4	Built	Wayne Catalano	1 st – Gun Runner 2 nd – Lecomte 3 rd – Risen Star	TBA	35
5	Madaket Road	Bob Baffert	2 nd – Rebel 3 rd – Robert B. Lewis	TBA	31
6	Sandman	Mark Casse	2 nd – Southwest 3 rd – Rebel 3 rd – Street Sense 5 th – Iroquois	March 29 Arkansas Derby	29
7	Speed King	Ron Moquett	1 st – Southwest 2 nd – Springboard Mile	Feb. 22 Rebel or March 29 Arkansas Derby	25
8	Chunk of Gold	Ethan West	2 nd – Risen Star	March 22 Louisiana Derby	25
9	Burnham Square	Ian Wilkes	1 st – Holy Bull	March 1 Fountain of Youth	20
10	Disco Time	Brad Cox	1 st – Lecomte	TBA	20
11	Captain Cook	Rick Dutrow Jr.	1 st – Withers	April 5 Wood Memorial	20
12	John Hancock	Brad Cox	1 st – Sam F. Davis	March 22 Louisiana Derby or March 29 Florida Derby or March 29 Arkansas Derby	20
13	California Burrito	Tom Drury Jr.	1 st – John Battaglia Memorial	March 22 Jeff Ruby Steaks	20
14	Tiztastic	Steve Asmussen	2 nd – Street Sense 3 rd – Southwest 3 rd – Kentucky Jockey Club 5 th – Rebel	TBA	19
15	Gaming	Bob Baffert	2 nd – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile 3 rd – Los Al Futurity	TBA	18
16	Poster	Eoin Harty	1 st – Remsen 3 rd – Sam F. Davis	April 5 Wood Memorial or Blue Grass	16
17	Jonathan’s Way	Phil Bauer	1 st – Iroquois 2 nd – Kentucky Jockey Club	TBA	15
18	Owen Almighty	Brian Lynch	2 nd – Sam F. Davis 2 nd – Iroquois	Mach 8 Tampa Bay Derby	15
19	Ferocious	Gustavo Delgado	2 nd – Breeders’ Futurity 4 th – Holy Bull 5 th – Breeders’ Cup Juvenile	March 29 Florida Derby	12
20	Omaha Omaha	Michael Gorham	2 nd – Jerome 3 rd – Withers	March 15 Virginia Derby	11

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UPCOMING ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY RACES

March 8 (eight weeks out) – \$400,000 Tampa Bay Derby (GIII), 1 1/16 miles, Tampa Bay Downs (Top 5 points: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Chancer McPatrick (Chad Brown); *Gate To Wire* (Todd Pletcher); Owen Almighty (Brian Lynch); Patch Adams (Brad Cox)

March 15 (seven weeks out) - \$500,000 Virginia Derby, 1 1/8 miles, Colonial Downs (Top 5 points: 50-25-15-10-5)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Omaha Omaha (Michael Gorham); Surfside Moon (Chucky Lawrence); Test Score (Graham Motion)

March 22 (six weeks out) – \$1 million Louisiana Derby (GII), 1 3/16 miles, Fair Grounds (Top 5 points: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Built* (Wayne Catalano); Chunk of Gold (Ethan West); *Instant Replay* (Brad Cox); *John Hancock* (Brad Cox)

March 22 (six weeks out) – \$777,000 Jeff Ruby Steaks (GIII), 1 1/8 miles (Tapeta), Turfway Park (Top 5 points: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Baby Max (Kelsey Danner); California Burrito (Tom Drury Jr.); Charlie's to Blame (Peter Eurton); *Legitimate* (Michael McCarthy)

March 29 (five weeks out) – \$1 million Florida Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Gulfstream Park (Top 5 points: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Ferocious* (Gustavo Delgado); Tappan Street (Brad Cox)

March 29 (five weeks out) – \$1.5 million Arkansas Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Oaklawn (Top 5 points: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Caldera* (Wayne Lukas); *Coal Battle* (Lonnie Briley); *Getaway Car* (Bob Baffert); *Instant Replay* (Brad Cox); *John Hancock* (Brad Cox); Sandman (Mark Casse); *Speed King* (Ron Moquett)

April 5 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Wood Memorial (GII), 1 1/8 miles, Aqueduct (Top 5 points: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Captain Cook (Rick Dutrow Jr.); *Getaway Car* (Bob Baffert); *Poster* (Eoin Harty)

April 5 (four weeks out) – \$1.25 million Blue Grass (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Keeneland (Top 5 points: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): *Caldera* (Wayne Lukas); *Poster* (Eoin Harty)

April 5 (four weeks out) – \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI), 1 1/8 miles, Santa Anita (Top 5 points: 100-50-25-15-10)

Known possible starters (with trainer): Baeza (John Shirreffs); Citizen Bull (Bob Baffert); *Getaway Car* (Bob Baffert)

April 12 (three weeks out) – \$400,000 Lexington (GIII), 1 1/16 miles, Keeneland (Top 5 points: 20-10-6-4-2)

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.

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 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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