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Kentucky Derby 2025: Odds, Top Contenders, and Best Bets to Watch

Our Friends · Sunday, March 30th, 2025

The thrill of the Kentucky Derby is back, and anticipation is building for the most electrifying two minutes in sports. On Saturday, May 3, 2025, Churchill Downs will once again be the stage where legends are made, as the world's top three-year-old thoroughbreds charge toward immortality in a high-stakes battle for glory.

With the 151st edition fast approaching, fans and bettors alike are diving deep into the latest odds, top contenders, and strategic betting insights. Whether you're a seasoned bettor or a first-time viewer, getting ahead of the action is key. Let's break down everything you need to know to make the most of this year's Derby.

Current Odds

Tracking the odds leading up to the Derby is crucial for spotting betting opportunities. **FanDuel betting** and other platforms continuously adjust odds based on race results, workouts, and public betting trends. Bettors should focus on line movements and market shifts to identify value plays.

As of early March 2025, here are the latest Kentucky Derby odds for some of the top contenders:

- Barnes – 8-1 (Current favorite)
- Citizen Bull – 9-1
- All other 3-year-olds – 9-2
- East Avenue – 15-1
- Journalism – 20-1
- River Thames – 25-1
- Rodriguez – 20-1
- Patch Adams – 30-1

Before making any 2025 Kentucky Derby picks, bettors should check SportsLine's expert predictions, including insights from Jody Demling. A fixture in horse racing, Demling has correctly predicted the Kentucky Oaks-Derby double 11 times in the last 16 years.

He also predicted the Belmont Stakes winner in four of the last seven years and called 10 of the last 20 Preakness winners, including the 2023 winner, exacta, trifecta, and superfecta. His expertise has helped bettors land significant payouts over the years.

Top Contenders

CBS Sports has identified several key contenders based on recent performances, pedigree, and trainer expertise. While these rankings will evolve leading up to the Derby, here are five standout horses:

1. *River Thames (25-1)* – This promising Todd Pletcher trainee remains unbeaten after securing victories in his first two outings. His 94 Beyer Speed Figure indicates strong potential for further development. Having competed on a short three-week turnaround in his last race, he is expected to be even sharper in his next appearance. His upcoming run in the Fountain of Youth Stakes will be crucial in assessing his Derby viability.
2. *Rodriguez (20-1)* – A strong contender from Bob Baffert's stable, Rodriguez is the son of 2020 Kentucky Derby winner Authentic. He has demonstrated his stamina with a two-turn win and a solid 100 Beyer Speed Figure. Although he was unable to overtake Citizen Bull in their previous encounter, the pace of the race didn't work in his favor. Baffert remains confident in his ability to improve, making him one to watch as the Derby approaches.
3. *Patch Adams (30-1)* – Under the guidance of trainer Brad Cox, Patch Adams showed impressive speed as a juvenile, recording a 98 Beyer Speed Figure. While his recent fourth-place finish in the Southwest Stakes raised concerns, Cox has a history of preparing horses for peak performance at the right time. A strong showing in his next race could solidify his standing as a serious Derby contender.
4. *Journalism (20-1)* – A son of Curlin, Journalism claimed victory in the Los Alamitos Futurity in December. However, a temporary setback due to illness disrupted his training schedule. Now back on track, he is slated to compete in the San Felipe Stakes. While his speed figures need improvement, Curlin's lineage suggests that he could continue developing as he gains more experience and covers longer distances.
5. *East Avenue (15-1)* – One of the Derby's early favorites, East Avenue is preparing for his next test in the Risen Star Stakes. A victory could shorten his odds considerably, making him a less attractive future bet. However, if he underperforms, his odds may drift higher, presenting a potential value opportunity for bettors. His next race will be instrumental in gauging his true capabilities.

Best Bets to Watch

Betting on the Kentucky Derby isn't just about picking the fastest horse. It's also about understanding the different wager types and how they align with a bettor's strategy. Each bet carries a different level of risk and reward, making it essential to choose wisely.

1. *Win Bet (Straight Bet)* – A fundamental bet where you pick a horse to finish first. Horses with consistent speed figures and strong recent form offer the best chances. However, low payouts on favorites can limit profitability, so bettors should seek value where possible.
2. *Exacta Bet (Picking 1st and 2nd in Order)* – This bet requires predicting the top two finishers in exact order. Using an exacta box increases flexibility, but the risk remains high since both horses must finish in the correct order.
3. *Trifecta Bet (Picking 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in Order)* – A more challenging bet that predicts the top three finishers in exact order. Including a mid-tier odds horse can improve potential payouts, but the cost increases when more horses are added to combinations.
4. *Superfecta Bet (Picking 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th in Order)* – A high-risk, high-reward bet that predicts the top four finishers in exact order. A superfecta box provides more flexibility but

significantly raises the cost. Due to its difficulty, it's best to place small wagers.

5. *Multi-Race Bets (Daily Double, Pick 3, Pick 4, Pick 6)* – A series of wagers predicting winners across multiple consecutive races. Bettors should focus on horses with proven consistency. However, these bets carry high risks since missing just one selection results in losing the entire wager.

A New Chapter in Derby History Begins

The Kentucky Derby never fails to deliver unforgettable moments, and 2025 promises to be no different. With evolving odds, rising contenders, and strategic betting angles, every bettor has a chance to find an edge. Keeping up with race-day insights and expert predictions will be essential for those looking to make the most of this year's Run for the Roses.

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