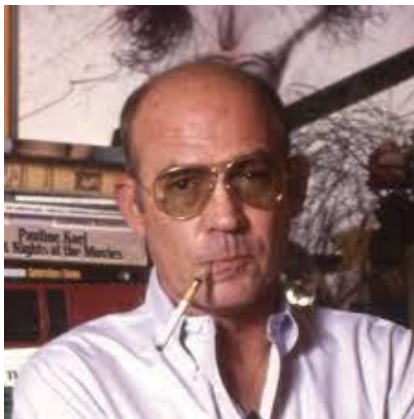


# RICE'S DERBY CHOICE JOURNAL

2023

44<sup>th</sup> Edition



DR. HUNTER S. THOMPSON

*"Luck is a very thin wire between survival and disaster, and not many people can keep their balance on it. People who count on luck don't last long in the business of defusing bombs and disarming land mines. "*

Daniel Boone, the paradigmatic American pioneer and trailblazer, first surveyed the thirteen-hundred-acre expanse, shortly after the American Revolutionary War. The Old Frankfort Pike, in present day Lexington KY, bisects that choice parcel of arable land,

In 1906, the mythical Colonel E.R. Bradley acquired the property and named it Idle Hour Farm. There then began a thirty-year run wherein Idle Hour became America's foremost thoroughbred factory.

The Colonel remains one of the most revered personages in the chronicles of our game. Edward Riley Bradley (Colonel was a Kentucky honorific he disdained) was born in 1859 to needy Irish-immigrant parents in Johnstown PA. He worked in the steel mills there as a child before heading west as a mid-teen. That was chapter one of a lionized bio that included cowboy, Indian scout, gold miner, gambler, casino magnate, philanthropist, and commanding force in thoroughbred breeding and racing.

In New Mexico he was a quick study to proficiency in dealing Faro and Poker. With that skill came a reputation, rarely seen there, for running honest games. Was he friends with Wyatt Earp? Almost certainly. Did he know Billy the Kid? So he said. Any hyperbole added by his devotees could not gainsay the fact that he went west poor and, after a few decades, came back east a wealthy man.

Bradley's homebreds, all of whose names began with B, won four Kentucky Derbies in twelve years: Behave Yourself (1921), Bubbling Over (1926), Burgoo King (1932), and Broker's Tip (1933).

He employed no dissimulation as to the source of his wealth. In testimony before the U.S. Senate in 1934, the following exchange occurred with Louisiana Senator Huey Long.

Senator Long: "What is your business?"

Mr. Bradley: "I am a speculator. I breed horses and race horses, and gamble."

Senator Long: "And what do you gamble on?"

Mr. Bradley: "On anything."

The gamble was indeed the Colonel's business. He developed or purchased many entertainment and gaming emporia notably in Chicago, Palm Beach, and New Orleans. Most, if not all, were legal.

He owned a luxury OTB in New Orleans, The Palmetto Club, and in 1926 purchased the Fair Grounds Race Track there. He built the grandiose Beach Club in Palm Beach and made book in Hot Springs, Chicago, and St. Louis.

His success with thoroughbreds gained him a degree of acceptance among the society grandees of Lexington, but the combination of Irish Catholic and professional gambler did not tick the boxes needed for membership in the Lexington Country Club. In response to that rejection, E.R. then developed his own, the Ashland Golf Club.



THE ASHLAND GOLF CLUB

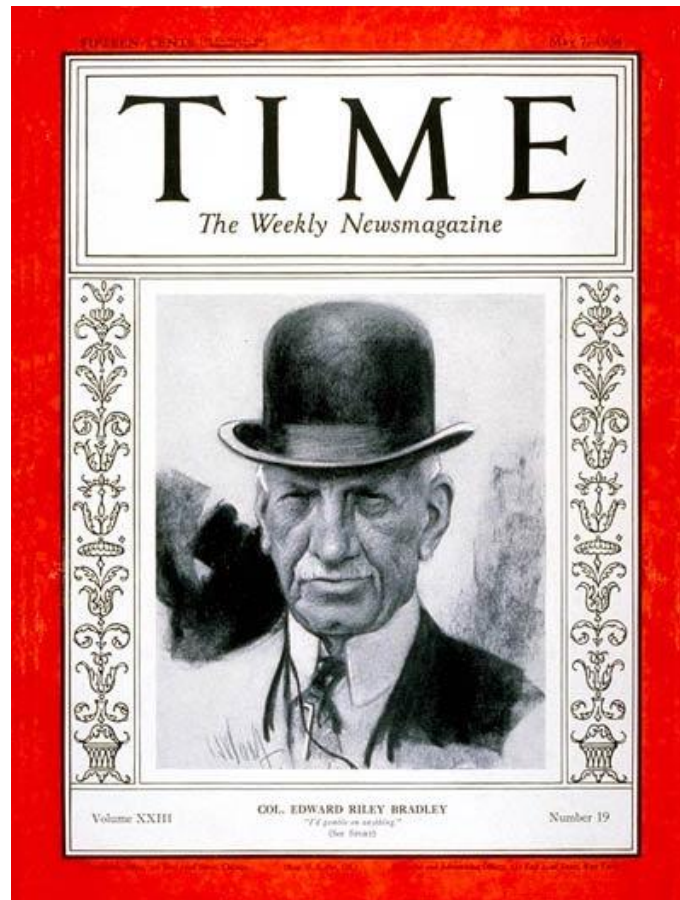
Bradley's marriage to Agnes Curry lasted until his wife's sudden death in 1926. They had no children but endowed orphanages and funded medical facilities in every community he touched. He never remarried.

His generosity extended to his employees, all of whom were provided for in his will. All workers that died while employed remained on payroll as long as any family members survived.

The only racial discrimination he displayed was that only his black employees had horses named for them. His foundation sire was Black Toney (named for his valet and cook) who sired Derby winners Black Gold and Broker's Tip, as well as champions Bimelech, Black Helen, and Miss Jemima. There was the runner-up in the '21 Derby, Black Servant (ouch!), also named to honor the loyalty of Toney. At the Colonel's funeral, all eight pallbearers were black employees of Idle Hour Farm.

A chronic heart ailment reduced his engagement beginning in 1937. In 1946, a year before his death, he retired from all his businesses. He directed that upon his passing all gaming entities be closed and the properties be converted to public parks.

The Colonel was known for keeping his own counsel and the only clue he gave to his lifelong benefaction rested in a single sentence: “I have no desire to be the richest man in the cemetery.”



MAY 7, 1934

The Bradley Estate sold Idle Hour Farm at auction in multiple parcels. Ogden Phipps bought the most valuable equine assets that seeded his storied breeding and racing enterprise.

In 1949 an Ohio-based commercial real estate developer, John W. Galbreath, purchased the core 650 acres of Idle Hour. Galbreath grew up on an Ohio farm as one of six children. His education was interrupted by service in World War I as a field artillery lieutenant. In 1920 he graduated from Ohio University and ventured into the real estate business.

Galbreath began buying thoroughbreds in 1935 after acquiring a farm west of Columbus OH. He named the farm by combining the name of the creek that ran along the farm with the name of his son.



JOHN W. GALBREATH

That two-word combination would also be the new name of what had once been Idle Hour Farm, and would come to stand beside that one in greatness.

The name was Darby Dan.

Galbreath's ingress into Ohio thoroughbred racing was at humble venues with names like Beulah Park, where his string's quotidian bloodlines were competitive. Most of his early runners were originally bought as prospective polo ponies. Galbreath knew Darby Dan Kentucky would need much more select pedigrees to live up to the legend of Idle Hour. He began the upgrade at once.

Galbreath acquired the 1955 Kentucky Derby winner, Swaps, for stud duty in 1957 and eventually bought him outright for a total of \$2 million. Two years later he rocked the thoroughbred world with a deal to import the undefeated European champion, Ribot. Possibly the most heralded of Euro greats, Ribot retired 16 for 16 including a pair of victories in the grueling Arc de Triomphe.

Meanwhile Galbreath's band of broodmares, under the direction of the sagacious Olin Gentry, was growing in prestige and numbers. Gentry once

said of his boss: “He’s a little guy. Thinks he can do anything. Damn near can.”

Their purchase of Banquet Bell, as a yearling for \$7K, was remarkable. When bred to Swaps she produced 1962 champion mare, Primonetta. A reprise of that mating gave me my first Derby and Belmont winners in 1963. Chateaugay, at 9/1, upset the favorites Candy Spots, No Robbery, and Never Bend. More about another Banquet Bell foal later.



RIBOT (1952-1972)

Ribot arrived to justified acclaim in Kentucky. His matings with Flower Bowl remain among the most notable and produced the full brothers Graustark (1963) and His Majesty (1968).

In 1965, Graustark and Buckpasser established themselves as generational superstars at two. They never faced one another. Braulio Baeza, who road both, favored Graustark that year but Buckpasser’s more extensive resume earned him the champion two-year-old honor. Graustark was 3 for 3 but Buckpasser was 9 for 11.

A quarter crack kept Buckpasser out of the Triple Crown competition leaving Graustark the odds-on, undefeated Derby favorite going into his final prep in the Blue Grass. He was leading by six lengths when he suddenly gave way finishing second by a nose. The colt was later found to have experienced a fractured coffin bone that ended his racing career.



As a stallion, he sired 52 stakes winners including 1975 Belmont winner Avatar, 1985 BC Classic winner Proud Truth, and 1972 three-year-old champion Key to the Mint. Graustark was also the broodmare sire of 1993 Kentucky Derby champ, Sea Hero (picked here at 13/1).

His younger brother, His Majesty, set a new track record at Hialeah Park for a mile and an eighth. He was sire of 1981 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Pleasant Colony, grandsire of 1994 Kentucky Derby winner Go for Gin, and broodmare sire of 1988 Preakness and Belmont winner Risen Star.



HIS MAJESTY



GRAUSTARK

Ribot also sired 1969 Belmont winner Arts and Letters, 1965 three-year-old champion Tom Rolfe, and Queen Sucree, the dam of 1974 Kentucky Derby winner, Cannonade.

In 1967 the Derby conversation began and ended with the estimable Damascus who started at 8/5. Darby Dan's homebred, Proud Clarion, was a 30/1 dismissal after finishing second to Fair Grounds favorite, Diplomat Way, in the Blue Grass. But when the blanket of roses was placed over the withers of the winner, the distinctive fawn and brown silks of Darby Dan again completed the picture. In fewer than ten years, John Galbreath and Darby Dan had reached the summit of thoroughbred breeding and racing.

Much like his predecessor along the Old Frankfort Pike, the departed Colonel, John Galbreath possessed an extended reach. In 1950 he became majority owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates Baseball Club. Coming along for a quarter interest was his fellow sportsman and pal, Bing Crosby.

Crosby played on the Gonzaga University baseball team. He was a founding member of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club's ownership group. His

recording of that track's anthem, "Where the Turf Meets the Surf," is played before the first heat on every race day.



BING CROSBY TAKING BP AT PIRATES' SPRING TRAINING

The Pirates largely dwelt in the National League basement throughout the 1940's and continued so through much of the 1950's. During that spell, the New Orleans Pelicans were the AA farm club of the Pirates. As a kid, devoted to baseball as a player and fan, I went to Pels games at every opportunity and listened on the radio when not at the games.

At that time, the manager of the Pels was former Pirate second baseman, Danny Murtaugh. His promotion to Pirates' manager and the progression of the young Roberto Clemente foretold an upward turn for the club that culminated in the epochal World Series of 1960 against the NY Yankees.

In those days World Series games were all played in daytime. I was a freshman at L.S.U. and participating in a U.S. Army ROTC drill when the deciding seventh game began. I got back to the frat house in time to see Pirate's second baseman, Bill Mazeroski, break a 9-9 tie with a walk off home run. In a lifetime of enduring baseball moments, for me that one is unforgettable.

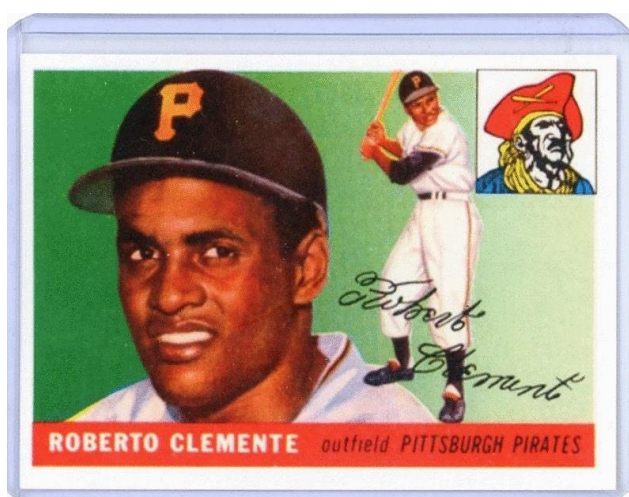
During the thirty-five years of Galbreath's ownership, the Bucs were almost always contenders and would win world championships in 1971 and 1979.



Early in the year of the 1971 Pirates World Series win, Galbreath sent a homebred, two-year-old colt by Hail to Reason (Proud Clarion's sire) to Ireland to be trained by the venerable Vincent O'Brien.

The Epsom Derby was the principal goal in that move, and O'Brien had already been winning trainer of that race three times. The colt would be called Roberto after the Pirates star right-fielder, Roberto Clemente.

In 1971 Roberto the horse earned the two-year-old champion colt honors in Ireland. Roberto the player earned mvp honors in the seven game World series matchup with the Baltimore Orioles. The 37-year-old veteran hit safely in all seven games (.414 average) duplicating his 1960 performance.



1971 WORLD SERIES MVP ROBERTO



1972 EPSOM DERBY WINNER ROBERTO

Clemente typically spent much of his off-seasons doing charitable work in his native Puerto Rico. Two months after that 1971 World Series, he died in a plane crash while delivering emergency aid to victims of the Nicaraguan earthquake. In a special election, he was inducted posthumously into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Had there been a Humanitarian Hall of Fame, he would have been a first ballot inductee there as well.

The following June, the masterful Lester Piggott drove the equine Roberto a nose in front of Rheingold in the Epsom Derby. With that, John Galbreath became the first person to breed and/or own the winner of that race and the Kentucky Derby.

Galbreath brought Roberto back home the following year to stand at Darby Dan. Roberto's genetic influence is still prominent today. His sons include Kris S. (sire of five Breeders Cup winners), Dynaformer (sire of 2006

Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro), Brian's Time (sire of Japanese Triple Crown winner Narita Brian), and personal favorite Sunshine Forever (1988 Champion Turf Horse).

And what about the other Banquet Bell foal we promised more on earlier? That would be the unraced Luiana (by My Babu). When she was bred to the French champion, Seabird, the result was a colt named Little Current.

I was sure my wager on that colt at 22/1 was live in the 1974 Derby. Sadly, for me and him, he broke last in the twenty-three-horse field. He was still seventeenth a quarter mile from the finish after being stopped in traffic multiple times. He closed strongly to be fifth which sealed my loyalty for the Preakness and the Belmont. He won both of those and was voted champion three-year-old of 1974. Four years later, a daughter of Graustark, Tempest Queen, delivered a string of Grade I wins and was voted champion 3-year-old filly of 1978.

Into the 1980's the decline of Darby Dan's major wins coincided with John Galbreath's age related health concerns. In 1985 he sold the Pittsburgh Pirates for \$22 million. That same year his Graustark mare, Outward Sunshine, delivered a colt by Roberto. His name was Sunshine Forever.

John Galbreath died on July 20, 1988, age ninety. The following month marked the passings of both Roberto and Graustark. At year end, Sunshine Forever was voted top turf horse becoming the last of the Darby Dan line of champions. After his stud duty in Japan, he was retired to Old Friends Farm.



SUNSHINE FOREVER (1985-2014) AT OLD FRIENDS FARM

John Galbreath's final days were spent at his beloved Darby Dan Farm where he died of a weakened heart. He received bountiful and justified praise for his generosity and integrity in every aspect of his life.



JOHN WILMER GALBREATH (1897-1988)

His son, Dan, became Chairman of the Galbreath Company in 1980 and oversaw all business, sporting interests, and family's philanthropy until his untimely death from cancer in 1995 at age 67.

At that point his younger sister, Joan Galbreath Phillips, led Darby Dan until her death, age 83, in 2014. Since then, her son, John G. Phillips, now 71, has overseen the successful transition of Darby Dan from a private breeding and racing concern to a full-service commercial farm.

That move was necessitated by the boom in the commercial market that began late in the last century. The explosion in stud fees, auction yearlings and breeding stock prices made the private breed to race model anachronistic for all but multi-billionaires and syndicates.

Soon after the passing of John Galbreath, the historic Darby Dan racing silks were retired. The farm's downsized racing stock then competed in the white and Kelly-green silks of Phillips Racing. In 1999 a Darby Dan homebred, Soaring Softly, won the Breeders Cup Filly and Mare Turf in the Phillips colors. This again disproved the F. Scott Fitzgerald quote that "there are no second acts in American lives."



THE RACING SILKS OF DARBY DAN FARM

If you have made it this far through this *dismal treatise* (Macbeth's term), thank you. My admiration for Darby Dan, its horses and its ethic has endured since my youth and was reflected in my own small breeding and racing operation.

My first yearling purchase in 1979, jointly with my business partner, was a Little Current colt we named Current Venture that was a winner. Later came a Cannonade filly, Violet Collins, that also won. I owned an Arts and Letters mare, New Poems, that produced a \$148k winner, Rhyme Royal, when I bred her to More Than Ready. Other mares were bred to Ribot line stallions Tom Rolfe and Valiant Nature. The last thoroughbred on my farm was a homebred, Monarch Butterfly, from the last crop of His Majesty.

The Ribot line is an undisputed stamina influence but has lost some cachet to the sire lines known for precocious speed. But when I start my annual handicapping of the Kentucky Derby, any sign of Ribot in a prospective candidate's pedigree lights me up.

In the forty-two Kentucky Derbies encompassed by my annual letters, the many disappointments have been, on occasion, blotted out by stunning upsets. For sheer drama and a lottery level payoff, the 2019 edition stands alone.

The first horse across the finish line, Maximum Security (9/2), was followed by our ultra-longshot pick Country House (65/1), our longshot pick Code of Honor (14/1), and our main pick Tacitus (6/1).

The picks had run well but the only likely returns were to come from place and show money on the two longshots. Then the inquiry light came on followed by the customary "hold all tickets" warning from the track

announcer. There followed twenty-two minutes of *Sturm und Drang* for all involved parties.

Max was probably the best horse but he definitely interfered with several runners and deserved a DQ. However, in spite of many roughly run races in the 144 previous editions, there had never been an on-track disqualification.

During stewards' deliberations, the accused horse's number blinks on the tote board. If the order of finish goes dark, seasoned players know the winner is "coming down." And that was precisely what occurred on May 4, 2019 at Churchill Downs.

Our ultra-longshot Country House, the longest odds on the board, returned \$132 for \$2 to win, \$3,009 for a \$2 exacta, and \$11,475 for a \$1 trifecta.

Country House was not the fluke that his odds suggested. His pedigree showed he would love the distance and he closed well in all of his prep races. Due to subsequent illness and injury, the Derby was his final race.

In March of 2021, the swarmy trainer of Maximum Security, Jason Servis, was indicted along with a confederacy of several other corrupt trainers and soulless veterinarians in an illegal medication conspiracy. Servis pleaded guilty in December 2022 and will be sentenced this month to up to four years of minimum security. As Patroclus remarked in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, "good riddance to bad rubbish."

Throughout the spring of Maximum Security's Derby prep races, there had been backstretch whispers about his trainer. Now there is every reason to believe that Maximum Security ran his Derby with a banned, medicinal tailwind. Justice was done.

So why rehash this side story of the 2019 Kentucky Derby when our theme was Darby Dan Farm? My research on the farm's transition to a commercial operation included a look at their stallion roster. At a time when six figure stud fees are no longer uncommon, the highest price on the Darby Dan band of fifteen is \$15,000 for the highly successful Dialed In.

There is also a promising son of Lookin at Lucky, standing for \$7500, whose first foals are yearlings of 2023. A member of his first crop may well turn up as a contender for the 2025 Kentucky Derby.

And who is that promising son of Lookin at Lucky standing at Darby Dan?



His name is:

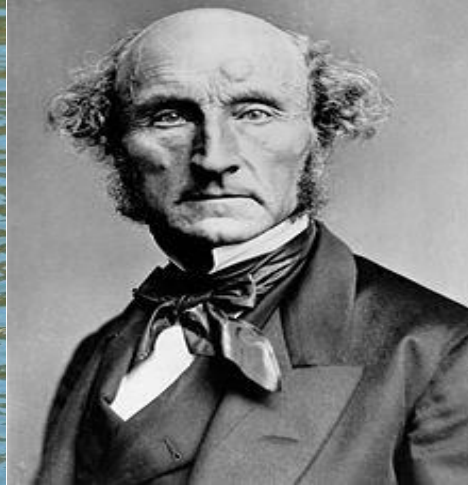


**COUNTRY HOUSE**  
**KENTUCKY DERBY CHAMPION**  
**(2019)**

## THE RACE



BLACK SWANS



JOHN STUART MILL

The 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, John Stuart Mill, cited the black swan to explain his theory of inductive reasoning. Europeans had once believed that all swans must be white since all the swans they had seen there were white. Subsequent European travel to Australia revealed the existence of black swans.

Today, black swan is a term (chiefly in economics) for an event characterized by its rarity, import, and in hindsight, obviousity.

Our annual Kentucky Derby handicapping is a search for the equine black swan in that race. We found a few: Gato Del Sol (22/1 in 1982), Ferdinand (18/1 in 1986), Unbridled (11/1 in 1990), Sea Hero (13/1 in 1993), Giacomo (52/1 in 2005), and Country House (65/1 in 2019).

Let's take a look at the field and see if there is a black swan hiding there this year.

1- **HIT SHOW**- Son of the revered Candy Ride has gone off the favorite in all of his five starts and won three of them. He got the worst of a three-horse bump fest in the Wood, losing by a nose as the 8/5 choice though probably best. Ranks third on Trainer Cox's depth chart. Would consider the outing a success if he hits the show spot.

2- **VERIFYING**- From the first crop of undefeated champion, Justify, has the ideal stalking style for this race. Difficult to be objective on this guy as one of my very best friends is a co-owner of the colt's dam. Got headed at the

wire by TT in the Blue Grass and has every right to move forward from there. As the Gipper said to Gorby, "Trust but verify."

3- **TWO PHIL'S**- After a second and third in two LA Derby preps, he coasted to a win in the Jeff Ruby Stakes on the synthetic. His Dad, Hard Spun, was our '07 pick and completed our called exacta with winner Street Sense. A bit of a stepchild as the owners (both named Phil) tried to sell him twice without success. T.P is a grinder type whose odds and effort should be generous. His competitors may get their fill of Phil's and we are still trying to figure out the apostrophe.

4- **CONFIDENCE GAME**- Another son of Candy Ride was a \$25k yearling bargain snatched by Louisiana trainer Desormeaux. Upset winner (18/1) in the Rebel Stakes in February but skipped the Ark Derby. Enters here with over two months between starts and none over a mile and a sixteenth. Owns a win over the C.D. surface last year. Has proven he has game but not exuding confidence in this spot.

5- **TAPIT TRICE**- A son of the sainted Tapit, he left it until very late in the Tampa Derby. Showed much more maturity in the Blue Grass duel with Verifying. Tapit has sired four Belmont winners but is 0 for 13 in the Derby. I bet three of the Belmont winners and most of the Derby losers. TT is a big strong boy that could break his Dad's Derby jinx but might end up a short price. So, if you play his number, don't pound it, tap it.

6- **KINGSBARN**- LA Derby champ is named for the 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish golf links. We bet him in the F.G. prep as he wired the field in a paceless race. Now has three starts at three tracks and three wins. Son of the proven Uncle Mo and a Tapit mare checks on pedigree. Trainer Pletcher operates a king's barn himself. An undefeated LA Derby winner finds himself number three on trainer Pletcher's Derby depth chart. Neither impossible nor easy to win this race off of only three starts.

7- **REINCARNATE**- One of four stakes performers in promising sire Good Magic's first crop. Looked the goods after win in the Sham. Entered the transfer portal from Baffert to Yakteen. Gets a pass for Rebel Stakes third in the slop. Cost us dearly with dull third in the Ark Derby. Has been in the money in all seven starts but ceiling should be much higher. Maybe there is karma in his name and he will come back as the horse we thought he was.

8- **MAGE**- Another from Good Magic's first crop. Gets his name from the medieval term for a wizard. His move inside the quarter pole in the Florida Derby appeared other-worldly as he blew by a cluster of foes including Forte only to be passed by that one near the finish. Talent is there but three start foundation and repeated starting gate issues vex. Hall of Famer Castellano returns to ride as Saez opts for T.T. Will have to be more professional to conjure the magic spirits.

9- **SKINNER**- Son of Curlin draws in from the 21 spot after tragic loss of Wild on Ice. A bit backward at two, his three starts this year have showed impressive progress. He is 0 for 2 against Practical Move but cut the difference from three lengths in the San Felipe to a long neck in the S.A. Derby. Will love the mile and a quarter. Trainer Shirreffs brought Giacomo home for us in the '05 Derby. Owner pulls two-time Derby winning jock, Espinoza, for leading S.A. jock Hernandez. Now that he's in, gimme some skin.

10- **PRACTICAL MOVE**- Winners of the S.A. Derby always receive serious consideration here. Son of Practical Joke is two for two this year but sire suggests Derby distance could be a reach after being all-out in the S.A. effort. Trainer Yakteen is not subbing for Baffert here. He has trained P.M. from the get-go. Will have a say but Preakness distance seems a more practical move.

11- **DISARM**- Asmussen trained son of Gun Runner created wise guy buzz after closing second in the LA Derby. Was short on Derby points and needed at least a third in the Lexington to get in. He finished an unimpressive third there but wise guys say he tanked once he was assured of at least third. Plausible but not proven by any means. Top jock in Rosario and pedigree golden. Can he rearm on Saturday? Dunno but don't dis him.

12- **JACE'S ROAD**- Son of the classy Quality Road looked promising wiring the field here in the Gun Runner Stakes the day after Christmas last year. Dull fifth in the slop at Oaklawn in the Southwest Stakes. Stalked Kingsbarns around the track in the LA Derby until being passed late by Disarm. Done enough to earn a spot here but no indication he is getting any better. Probably trainer Cox's weakest link.

13- **SUN THUNDER**- Another Into Mischief who is somewhat of a compiler of Derby points from four eligible races. By far the most impressive was his deep close to be second to Angel in the Risen Star. Subsequent LA Derby and



Blue Grass efforts unimpressive. Word that trainer McPeck was overruled by owners in decision to run here is not good. The clap heard on Saturday not likely to be from thunder.

14- **ANGEL OF EMPIRE**- Part of the trainer Brad Cox bundle comes here after two stout closing wins in the Risen Star and Arkansas Derby. The empirical angle of the Empire Angel's scores suggests he benefitted from a pace meltdown in both races. To get a halo here, he needs the early leaders to wing it.

15- **FORTE**- Pronounced "fortay" as the Jockey Club does not permit the French accent aigu above the E. Nailed the Breeders Cup Juvenile last fall and is undefeated since. In thirty-nine runnings of the BV Juvenile, exactly two winners of that race (Street Sense '06 and Nyquist '15) won the Derby. But this guy's Florida Derby got everyone's attention. As good as he has been this year, he is not any faster than he was at two. At a very short price, that is a concern.

16- **RAISE CAIN**- Same Dad, Violence, as Forte (get it? Violence-Cain) Low profile until his Gotham Mile romp in the mud at 23/1. Made a mild bid to finish fifth in the Blue Grass after breaking tenth. Derby debut for trainer Colebrook. Big step forward needed for Cain to be able here.

17- **DERMA SOTOGAKE**- Owner is a dermatologist and sotogake is a Sumo wrestling move. Why not? This guy overwhelmed the field in the U.A.E. Derby where the Nipponese finished 1-2-3-4. Japan's breeding and racing have become prime time as any observer of international Grade I's can attest. Make no mistake D.S. is legit but is toting the jinx of the 0 for 18 record of U.A.E. Derby winners in this race. May well dictate the pace and if left in front too late, you may hear "Banzai!" at the wire.

18- **ROCKET CAN**- Dad, Into Mischief, is only horse to sire back-to-back Derby winners. Stunning pedigree appeared to deliver in his Holy Bull win and FOY second to Forte. Seemed to lack interest in the Ark Derby finishing fourth as 5/2 chalk. Trainer Mott trying to "unlock talent that I know is there." Switching to blinkers for this one which is no sure thing. Rocket needs to move from can to will.

19- **LORD MILES**- Son of Curlin is trained by Barbados legend, Joseph, and is bred up and down for the mile and a quarter. Survived the Roller Derby stretch run in the Wood to a nose upset at 59/1. Took a big leap forward but



will have to improve again by miles to lord it over a deeper field this Saturday. Another possible but unlikely.

20- **CONTINUAR**- Literal translation from the Spanish is “to continue”, but colloquially probably “carry on.” Winner of the designated Japan-bred Derby slot. Chased fellow countryman D.S. in the U.A.E. to third place. Bad post position and slowest path justify a haircut to the ten-length difference with the winner. Pedigree and running style fit the distance and this will be the optimal third start after a layoff. Not impossible but unlikely.

21- **CYCLONE MISCHIEF**- Now first on the also eligible list. As you would guess, a son of Into Mischief. His two third place finishes in the FOY and Florida Derby got points but not enough to make the cut. Needs two scratches to get in. Trainer Romans is 0 for 11 in this race. Certainly can contend but doubt he is capable of a cyclonic rush late.

22- **MAJOR DUDE**- Son of '22 Freshman Champion Sire, Bolt D'Oro, has developed into a turf specialist but took a shot on the synthetic in Two Phil's dominant win in the Jeff Ruby, coming second as 8/5 fave. More dud than dude on dirt but prob runs in G-2 American Turf Stakes on Derby Day where he will be major threat.

23- **MANDARIN HERO**- Son of 2012 Champion 2yo, Shanghai Bobby, is a neck and a nose from being a perfect 6 for 6 including a second by a whisker in his U.S. debut in the G-1 S.A. Derby. Longshot to get in but more hero than zero if he does.

24- **KING RUSSELL**- Son of dependable old pal, Creative Cause, made a quantum jump from maiden win to 58/1 chance in the Ark Derby. Came from the back end of the field to nail Reincarnate for the place. Next to no chance of getting in and if he does, unlikely to rustle any regal feathers.

## THE PICK-

As usual, our betting strategy is no more than a deeply researched, but very flawed, stab. We are looking past the short-priced players.

As proof that we do not learn from our mistakes, we are going to reprise our gaff of 2018 and select the winner of the UAE Derby. That year we picked Mendelsohn who, after being clobbered coming out of the gate, was lucky not to go down, and finished last of twenty. He proved he was a good horse later that year finishing second in the Travers.

We think this year's UAE Derby winner can break the 0 for 18 jinx or give me a win in the Dunning-Kruger cognitive dissonance competition.

Our pick has won twice at a mile and 1/8 an eighth and once at a mile and 3/16. All of his dirt losses were at shorter distances. Though his sire, Mind Your Biscuits, was known as a sprinter, he won a G-3 mile and an eighth race. His pedigree says the longer the better. His dam won at a mile and 5/16. His maternal grandsire is the late Sunday Silence whose wins in the '89 Derby, Preakness, and B.C. Classic will live forever for us. S.S. has proven to be the key genetic shaper of the modern Japanese thoroughbred.

Another Japanese shipper, Mandarin Hero, came second by a nose in the S.A. Derby won by Practical Move. M.H.'s races in Japan were all at lesser tracks (think Golden Gate vs. Santa Anita), and yet he was a head bob away from a U.S. Grade I win. No surprise that M.H.'s paternal grandsire is Sunday Silence.

Jockey Christophe Lemaire rode #1 for the Aga Khan prior to his move to Japan where he is the perennial top rider. This is his second Derby. Last year he was up on Crown Pride, the 2022 UAE Derby winner. The disappointing thirteenth place outcome can be attributed to ending up in an unexpected speed dual.

We expect odds of low double digits and will bet him win and place.

This year's Derby pick is....



**DERMA SOTOGAKE**

## LONGSHOTS

**TWO PHIL'S-** His Jeff Ruby win is being dismissed since it was on synthetic but we liked him before that win. Though he was second and third in his two LA Derby preps here, his physical progression was notable.

**VERIFYING-** Lost a tough one to T.T. in the Blue Grass but was a breakout effort. Our nominee among the forwardly placed to get first mover advantage inside the quarter pole.

## ULTRA LONGSHOT

**SKINNER-** Sneaks into the field late but could have a say. Another improving sort who just missed in the S.A. Derby while covering more real estate than the two in front of him. View here is that jock change is an upgrade despite trading a two-time Derby winner or a Derby rookie.

We will use our pick and the three above in exotics and throw in one short priced name- **Tapit Trice**.

## MOONSHOT

**ROCKET CAN-** If you are looking for a pick that can blow up the tri and super payoffs, this could be your guy. Being ignored after disappointment in Ark Derby as favorite and had been on our contender list prior to that. Trainer Mott adding blinkers.

And as always,

*SLAINTE*

- JTR