

Top 10 Tips for Betting the Derby

PLAYING
TO WIN
LEVEL 101



The Kentucky Derby is an animal all its own. Here are some tips to get you started on your Derby picks.

1. FAVORITES ARE NO SURE THING

There have only been two favorites since Spectacular Bid won the Derby in 1979 to wear the garland of roses. Fusaichi Pegasus was the favorite in 2000 and Smarty Jones in 2004. So don't get too scared of the favorite.

2. IMPORTANCE OF BEYER SPEED FIGURES

Most Derby winners had posted at least a 100 Beyer Speed Figure in a Derby prep race.

3. TRY AN EXOTIC WAGER

With the big fields on Derby and Oaks day, you can win just as much on an Exacta as you usually could on a Trifecta, so if you are usually a Win-Place-Show bettor, the Derby is a good time to try out an exotic bet.

4. LOOK FOR A HORSE THAT CAN RATE

If there are many horses in the race that are known for being front runners, you might want to look for a horse that can rate, or relax just off the pace and then run by them all in the end. Horses with the ability to rate have been proven to have the most success in the Derby.

5. LOOK AT BLUE GRASS STAKES WINNERS

If you liked a horse going into the Blue Grass Stakes and it did not perform as well as expected, don't despair. Only 2 Blue Grass winners have won the Derby since 1979 – Spectacular Bid in 1979 and Strike the Gold in 1991. Over that same time frame, 5 Blue Grass also-rans have won the Run for the Roses: Gato Del Sol (1982); Alysheba (1987); Unbridled (1990); Sea Hero (1993) and Thunder Gulch (1995). The main reason for this is the difference between the track's surfaces.

6. STAMINA IS IMPORTANT

It is important to figure out which contenders will have the stamina to make the 1 1/4 mile distance. This is the biggest question mark for this race because none of the horses have yet to race that far. Most handicappers attribute the horse's pedigree and running style as the primary signs of one that will get the "Classic" distance.

7. A FAMILIAR SURFACE

Give extra consideration to horses who have had success on the Churchill Downs surface previously.

8. CHOOSE A HORSE WITH A GOOD FOUNDATION

Horses should have run in at least three spring prep races before the Derby to be prepared for the competition. No amount of speed or good looks can make up for a lack of seasoning in the Spring. For a horse to win the Derby, it must have a good foundation.

9. DON'T FAVOR BREEDERS' CUP JUVENILE WINNERS TOO MUCH

Horses that are super good as 2-year-olds are usually not competitive by the time Derby comes around. That's why some people tend to discard the winners of the Breeders' Cup Juvenile. The B.C. Juvenile winner has never won the Derby.

10. A GOOD JOCKEY MATTERS

Keep an eye on who the top jockeys choose to ride. Jockeys like John Velazquez or Edgar Prado ride first call for some of the most powerful stables. Also, jockeys with past Derby success understand what it takes to succeed in a 20-horse field, especially with the amount of pressure that comes with riding in the Derby.



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