MRH STAFF

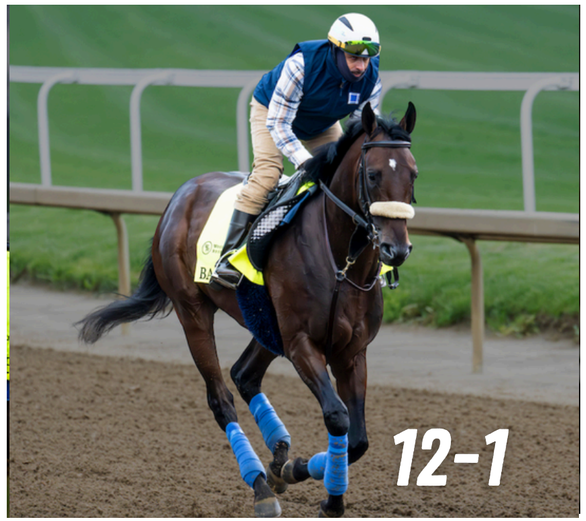
Kentucky Derby PICKS

MICHAEL BEHRENS

CEO/Founder

Opening Race Summary Statement

Baeza looks poised to run a monster race—he earned one of the fastest figs last out, has a strong sheet pattern with a 38% chance to top, and now teams up with top jockey Flavien Prat. The outside post is tough, but at around 20-1, I love the value. I also really like the maiden Publisher. The $600K son of American Pharoah is starting to figure things out and should relish the added distance and expected blistering pace—with Irad Ortiz in the irons, he'll have the right pilot to navigate his way through the field.



TOP PICK:

BAEZA

Watch out for Baeza to make the trifecta at a huge number, his progression has been impressive and expecting another step form for this half to Dornoch and Mage.



LIVE LONGSHOT:

PUBLISHER

I really like this maiden Steve Asmussen trainee, can he upset the field?

JOE MORAN

Head of US Bloodstock & Racing

At the end of the day, this race is Journalism's to lose, but a lot can go wrong in a 20-horse field. He has been able to overcome every obstacle in short fields, but the game could change change on Saturday and ultimately I will be greedy as 3-1 or less isn't good enough of me in the Derby. With so many of the main contenders coming from off the pace I'm going to look to those who can eliminate trouble.



TOP PICK:
EAST AVENUE

East Avenue was the only horse people could talk about leading into the BC Juvenile this past November. After stumbling badly at the start, he lost all chance. He returned 10 weeks later in the G2 Risen Star, which was a real head scratcher, but bounced back in the G1 Blue Grass with a huge effort. He looks tremendous again in the mornings and it seems trainer Brendan Walsh has turned the pressure up since the Risen Star. He has responded positively to that change of training and addition of blinkers. With most of the other speed to his inside, Franco will be able to do what he chooses. He's arguably the fastest in the field, but Walsh has always said he doesn't need the lead and would love to see him sitting third or fourth in the clear.



LIVE LONGSHOT:
BURNHAM SQUARE

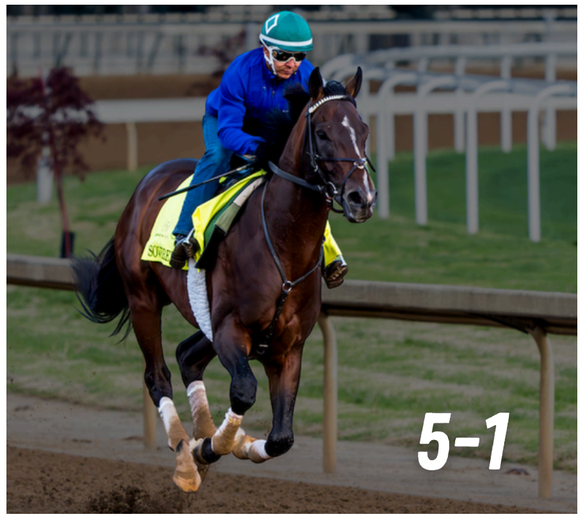
Burnham Square defeated my top pick East Avenue in the Blue Grass, which I believe is going to prove to be a very live race. This horse has done no wrong and I simply think he is being overlooked.

BRIAN DIDONATO

Stable Operations Manager

There are a lot of question marks surrounding members of this field, as well as the pace scenario.

Even though Journalism is a standout on paper, there aren't a ton of horses among this group that would completely shock me if they won if the favorite fails to show up or finds trip trouble. I'll hope to get live to a bunch of longshots in the multi-race bets for that reason.



TOP PICK: SOVEREIGNTY

He'll need pace and a clean trip, but Sovereignty has always struck me as a true 10-furlong horse and I love that he owns a big win over the track and against a couple of these rivals. I've got no real knocks on Journalism, but will try for a slightly better price on top.



LIVE LONGSHOT: EAST AVENUE

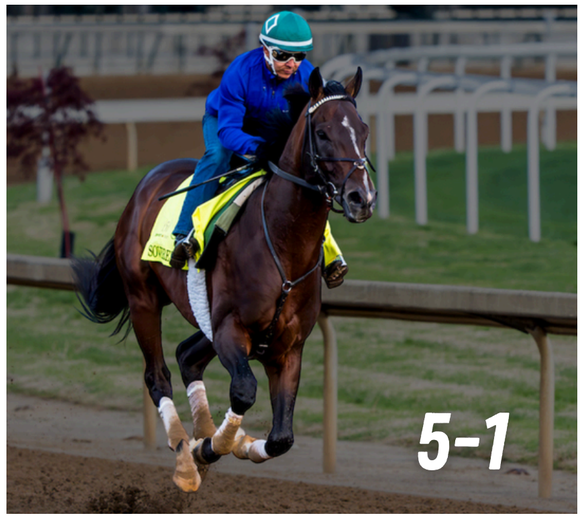
I'm not sure what kind of trip he's going to work out, but East Avenue feels like one of the contenders with the highest upside at the biggest price. His best races are extremely strong. The BC Juvenile seems easy to put a line through, and while the Risen Star is a bit tougher to explain away, he was trying to go nine furlongs off of the bench and it was an odd race in many ways. He ran huge in the Blue Grass. Can he rate effectively here? His expected odds should be high enough to try and find out

MATT O'CONNOR

East Coast Racing Manager

Is this the year that Bill Mott crosses the wire first in the Derby? I think it just might be.

Sovereignty looks to be training out of his skin all week and all signs point to a step forward. As for the competition 3-1 on Journalism is a bit cheap for me for a horse who has done most of his work in five horse fields. Sandman seems to be the fan favorite, but quite frankly I'm not the biggest fan of his, though he should get a favorable pace setup. With that being said anything can happen in a 20 horse field!



TOP PICK: SOVEREIGNTY

This colt really has not done much wrong. Race shape greatly favors his running style and he reunites with Junior Alvarado who knows this horse well. I think he is tactical enough where he will not be too far out of it early. My main concern here is how Junior can try to save some ground from that 18 hole. He took that step forward from his freshman to sophomore campaign as he has paired up 7 Rags in his two starts this year. He has already defeated the likes of Sandman, Tiztastic and Neoequos. One thing to note on him—it is normal for him to get hot and wash out a bit, so I wouldn't read into that too much. I expect another step forward from him in the derby.



LIVE LONGSHOT: FINAL GAMBIT

Final Gambit should want every inch of this 1 1/4 miles and the race shape greatly favors his running style. Though he has not run on dirt before, watching him gallop and breeze over the Churchill Downs surface this week I'd say he should take to it just fine. He will have to get faster, and I am banking on a move forward off of his new top figures last race with the switch to the dirt.

NICK HINES

Bloodstock Advisor

Opening Race Summary Statement
This year's Kentucky Derby has the feel of "logic" prevailing over a "surprise" in the making! Journalism and Sovereignty are two horses that I believe have "Triple Crown" potential. Yet, despite their single digit odds, that doesn't mean we can't make money at the windows today; good luck and enjoy the show!



TOP PICK:
SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty: has the physical attributes and resume to get the distance, and with a Hall of Fame trainer in his corner he has a look of being a true Triple Crown contender. And, with this being his third start off the layoff, expecting to see his best performance yet!



LIVE LONGSHOT:
LUXOR CAFE

Luxor Cafe: a U.S. bred by a former "Triple Crown" winner, American Pharoah, this Japanese flag bearer has an ascending Timeform rating and speed figures, is quite tactical, and adores a wet surface which we're getting today; look out!

NIKKI MORRIS

Digital Marketing Manager

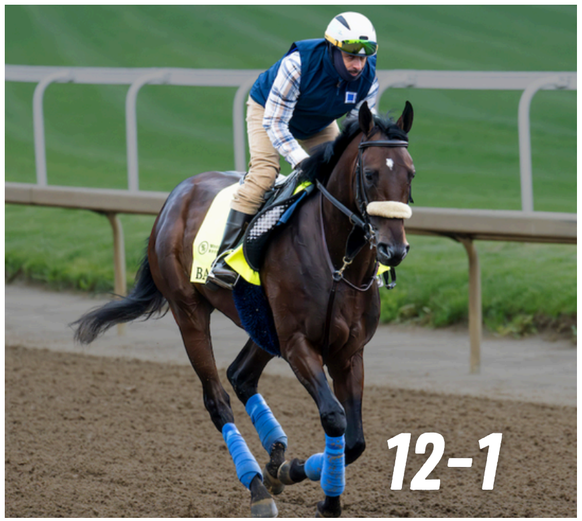
This Kentucky Derby is one filled with extremes, blazing pace setters and the deepest of closers.

Though both of my picks are “long shots”, this field is wide open. Go big or go home, as they say!



TOP PICK: FINAL GAMBIT

It wouldn’t surprise me to see his running style adjusted slightly to keep him more midpack than the back, but even if he does hang at the back, this race is setting up for a speed duel up front. He gives me serious Animal Kingdom vibes, and how could you not take a chance on a grey bearing the Juddmonte silks?



LIVE LONGSHOT: BAEZA

Baeza was a strong second to Journalism in the G1 Santa Anita Derby and owns a 101 Beyer. With top connections and pedigree, he’s peaking at the right time.