

Offbeat guide to picking your Derby winner

Brandon Vogel / FOXSports.com
Posted: 9 hours ago

There's a man in New York named Giacomo Barbaro. Guess who he had in the past two Kentucky Derbies?

Hint: It wasn't Steppenwolf or Afleet Alex.

Those were my horses and I missed by about ten lengths. But it is that easy to find a Derby winner. All you need is to be born with the first name of the second biggest long shot ever and the surname of the most dominant winner in 60 years.

Or, if you like being humbled, you can actually try to handicap this thing. Remember, these horses are young. The crowd is bigger, the field more cluttered. Nobody is quite sure if these horses know exactly what's going on yet.

If you're a devoted punter and like hurting that good, maybe the process is worth all the Mellencamp-misery. If you're not, you might be better served by the approach that probably trumped your serious analysis in your NCAA Tournament pool: totally baseless, unfounded picks based on subjective preference.

So let's take a look at a few of the horses, paying specific attention to things that will have no bearing on the race itself but might help you make the tough choices with just a few minutes to post (odds in parentheses):

- **Sedgefield (50-1):** Sort of like a college freshman at a first kegger. Sedgefield represents the first Derby entry for his owner, trainer and jockey. I suspect they'll all remember it as much cooler than it actually was.

- **Zanjero (30-1):** The only horse in the field to be directly connected to, and indirectly threatened by, Ice Cube. Zanjero is owned by the son of Verne Winchell, founder of Winchell's Donuts. In his song "Down for Whatever," Ice Cube famously claimed to have "the potentials to blow up a Winchell's." If you like donuts, rap or *Office Space*, this is your horse.

- **Storm in May (30-1):** This horse, like Dick Vitale, is blind in one eye but nowhere near as loud or annoying. While it won't win, could there be a better recommendation?

- **Imawildandcrazyguy (50-1):** When naming a race horse you only get 18 characters and this horse used all of them just to reference an SNL skit that will be remembered far longer than the horse itself.

- **Cowtown Cat (20-1)** Jockey Fernando Jara is probably the second most famous Panamanian in New York behind Mariano Rivera. Thus far in 2007, Jara has deserved every penny of his \$5 million in earnings, while Rivera's \$10.5 million represents a million dollars for every point on his ERA. We call that an overlay.

- **Street Sense (4-1):** Perhaps the most talented horse in the field, Street Sense might have the most seasoned jockey as well. According to KentuckyDerby.com, Calvin Borel started riding in match races when he was 10. That puts betting on the Little League World Series in a whole new light.

- **Hard Spun (15-1):** Trainer Larry Jones, at 180 pounds and 50 years old, likes to ride his horses, which is sort of like seeing those old Notre Dame videos where Knute Rockne is wearing football pants and taking part in practice. Just doesn't happen anymore.

- **Liquidity (30-1):** The horse is owned by J. Paul Reddam, who holds a PhD in Philosophy from USC. So that's what you do with a Philosophy degree.

- **Teuflesberg (30-1):** The horse's name means Devil's Mountain in German. I can't imagine many things much more frightening than hearing those two words spoken in German. Be afraid.

- **Bwana Bull (50-1):** The second straight linguistic challenge. Bwana, a Swahili word, means sir or lord in

Kentucky Derby

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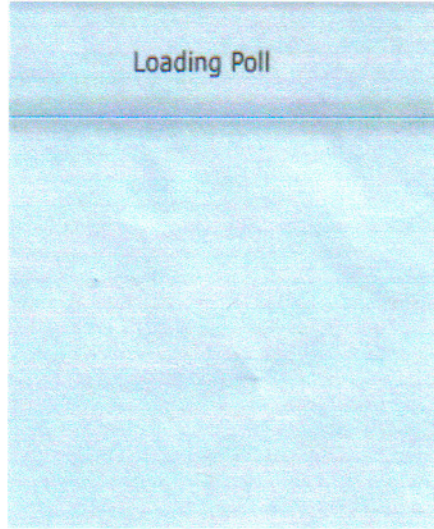


What will a philosophy degree from USC get you? This fine animal. (Ed Reinke / Associated Press)

POLL

English. Not so intimidating, is it?

- **Nobiz Like Shobiz (8-1):** Elizabeth Valando owns the horse. Her husband was Tommy Valando, producer of *Fiddler on the Roof* and a number of other Broadway hits. Oddly enough, Tommy did not produce *Annie Get Your Gun*, which gave us the song that inspired the horse's name. I sense resentment out of the owner's box.
- **Tiago (15-1):** Peter Frampton, that's all I can say. Jerry Ross, the man who co-founded A&M Records and owns Tiago, is the reason you can't escape "Baby I Love Your Way." Support that if you can.
- **Stormello (30-1):** The best silks of the group. It's like the jockey has been rendered in boxy 8-bit graphics for a Nintendo game. You think uniforms don't matter? Just try the color method next March.
- **Great Hunter (15-1):** I have no proof to support this, but I'll just assume that the horse's name is a nod to the late, great Hunter S. Thompson, a Kentucky native.



Will any of this help you come Saturday? Probably not, but this race is so hard to predict that I'm not sure all the past performances, speed figures or bloodlines in the world would either. That's why it's exciting.

As for me and my potential trifecta? Let's just say you can call me Mr. Street Sense Great Hunter Storm in May for the rest of the week.

Brandon Vogel was the winner of the Next Great Sportswriter 2 competition on FOXSports.com. Check out his blog, [HiPlainsDrifter](#). E-mail him at brandonvogel@gmail.com.

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