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2009 Kentucky Derby
Free Handicap

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DERBY ROOKIE KNOCKS IT OUT OF THE PARK IN FIRST AT-BAT

As an amateur handicapper I try to look for a few simple things that I have been taught. Distances, tracks, workouts, speed figures (to the disdain of some) and finally where they finished all play into my scheme. I don't pay my bills at the racetrack but I do get to eat out once in a while. I have given these horses a pretty serious look and I will apply my most capable abilities on this but in the end I'm also going to have to go with my gut on a few of these...after all, it is gambling.

"Blind Pick"-I initially handicapped these horses on PPs only. I blocked out their names as well as trainers, owners etc...In the past I have really ruined a few good opportunities by letting my misconceptions based on names ruin my typically stellar judgment.

This is my first attempt at handicapping with such a large audience. Usually it is just my girlfriend, parents or person standing closest to me. There have been successes and there have been failures but it has always been fun. So I hope you have fun with these and Happy Derby!

-Will Rouse

(1) **Friesan Fire:** Boss man Brown ordered Friesan Fire at the top prior to my evaluation and I have to say that in my "blind pick" I chose him as well. All signs point to victory including the intimidating workout turned in Monday.

(2) **Dunkirk:** I think Dunkirk can be a contender. He ran well against Quality Road and has turned in some consistent workouts. There is also something about him that I can't get past. History points to this horse failing and while I don't think he will win I have to put him in my top 3.

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(3) **Pioneer of the Nile:** This is a nerve-racking decision for me. I do not like the fact that this horse has never run on the dirt. However, Bob Baffert is a much wiser man than I and this horse knows how to win. Even though his last workout was nothing stellar he has the pedigree to make it on the board.

(4) **I Want Revenge:** He has put up some serious speed numbers in the past and does not seem to mind what surface he is running on. I hesitate to put him any higher because I believe he may have run his best already. Even with that, though, I think he will round out my top four nicely.

(5) **Papa Clem:** Papa Clem has faced some tough competition and responded well. Even the change in surface did not seem to bother him much. His recent workouts are nothing spectacular but I expect him to finish near the top.

(6) **Desert Party:** Street Cry is a world-class sire and Desert Party has been successful at home and abroad. His international attempts are not as highly regarded, though, as the efforts of the others placed before him.

(7) **General Quarters:** This is kind of a confusing horse for me. His “on again off again” style is not what I look for. I understand this to be the “Cinderella Story” for the Derby but I already have my gutsy pick lined up.

(8) **Regal Ransom:** Despite being the top earner I don’t think he has done what the others have. He has a strong pedigree but I just don’t get the feeling that he is ready to pop.

(9) **Musket Man:** I actually had Musket Man much higher up on my initial list but took him off after looking closer at the races he was winning. I still think he has some decent stuff but not enough for a better finishing position.

(10) **West Side Bernie:** I liked him a lot in the beginning but he is prone to a let down. He has run well on the dirt but I don’t think he will be a major player. He represents the end of the beginning for me.

(11) **Chocolate Candy:** Here we have the beginning of the end. Chocolate Candy has never run on the dirt, only Polytrack, and despite winning some of those races and always hitting the board he has not been able to capture his Grade 1 opportunities. He just does not give me any confidence.

(12) **Mine That Bird:** Takes me back to my childhood when all I watched was Follow That Bird. While those were good days I don’t think childhood reminiscing is a good method for picking Derby runners. The time off seems to have done something good for him but I don’t think he will have much gusto.

(13) **Hold Me Back:** Was completely held back in his only dirt trip. I have no confidence in his ability to show up on the dirt despite the pair of great efforts he has most recently turned in.

(14) **Summer Bird:** 3 starts as a three year old...we’ve been through this already and they were much bigger and badder than this one. I still think the gentle progression of speed figures compared to distance and place affords better than last, or even almost last.

(15) **Flying Private:** I have heard that flying private is the supposed to be the BEST way to travel. I do not see much in this horse and expect about the same.

(16) **Join in the Dance:** I don’t see an opportunity for him to join in this dance.

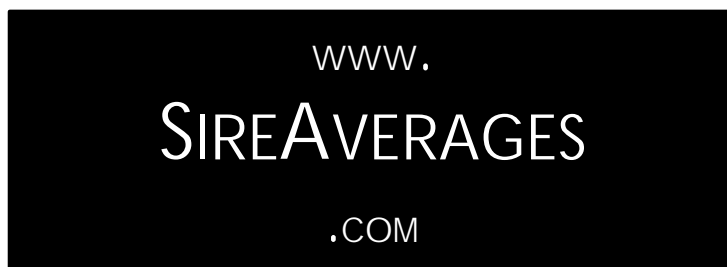
(17) **Advice:** I have read that this horse was not meant for the Derby so I will not consider him for it. He is another horse who did not show up on the dirt and was not stellar in his Polytrack appearances either.

(18) **Win Willy:** One huge G2 performance and then a decent G2 performance. This is not my recipe for the Derby. I don’t think he has the abilities to get the job done.

(19) **Mr. Hot Stuff:** Looks “cool” at best.

(20) **Flat Out:** Flat out no. For us cynics, lurking in dark corners, wishing for the last place pool so we can yell and scream for some body to lose without getting scorned...this is my lock.

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