

ANIMAL KINGDOM STARTING TO GET SOME RESPECT FROM DERBY PRESS TEAM VALOR HOME-BRED TURNS IN AWESOME WORKOUT ON SATURDAY MOTION WILL PUT UP ALBARADO NEXT SATURDAY AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

From *The Blood-Horse* comes this week's "Derby Dozen," by Steve Haskin, which includes for the first time Team Valor International's Animal Kingdom.

DERBY DOZEN by Steve Haskin

1 **Dialed In** *Nick Zito*

Mineshaft —Miss Doolittle, by Storm Cat

Breezed a half in :49 4/5, but will have only one more five-furlong work before the Derby, relying mostly on long gallops. Because of his late start and huge jump from a maiden sprint to his Holy Bull score, Zito is handling him very carefully. He is even keeping him at the quieter Palm Meadows until Derby week, feeling the colt trained at Churchill for a month last fall and broke his maiden there, so there is no rush to get there. There is always a risk having such a lightly raced horse as the top-ranked Derby horse, but he has certainly accomplished a lot in his four starts.

2 **Archarcharch** *William Fires*

Arch—Woodman's Dancer, by Woodman

Some will downplay his Arkansas Derby victory because Nehro was getting to him quickly. But he had to do more, showing a much quicker turn of foot on the far turn when he left Nehro in a flash. That is twice now that he's shown the ability to quicken away from horses. He also threw in a :47 1/5 half in his second and third quarters. He has shown a tendency to wait on horses once in front, so timing is very important. Remember, this is a horse who has the speed to have won a 6-furlong stakes in 1:10 2/5 as a maiden, so he can turn in those quick middle fractions to put himself in good position. Love his stride and his determination, and what a great story Jon Court winning the Derby would make, as well as Jinks Fires.

3 **Toby's Corner** *Graham Motion*

Bellamy Road—Brandon's Ride, by Mister Frisky

With the discovery that Uncle Mo was suffering from a GI infection, some may downplay his Wood victory. That would be a big mistake. This colt earned every inch of that win and is only going to keep improving as he matures, mentally and physically. The blinkers seemed to make him more aggressive, as evidenced by his display of broken field running, which can only help him in a 20-horse Derby field.

4 **Nehro** *Steve Asmussen*

Mineshaft —The Administrator, by Afleet

Well, we know now this horse is for real and improving with every start. In his last two starts he's saved his best running for the final furlong. He couldn't match the winner's move on the turn, but was running him down at the end. That was as impressive a stretch run as we've seen all year. You also have to like the fact that he's run huge at both Fair Grounds and Oaklawn, rallying on the inside and the outside, from third and from 10th, and has left a lot of good horses behind him. There are a number of talented late-running horses heading to the Derby and he's certainly right up there will all of them.

5 **Uncle Mo** *Todd Pletcher*
Indian Charlie—Playa Maya, by Arch

Still believe in this horse, but can't rank him or any horse higher that had an intestinal infection four weeks before the Derby that probably caused him to perform well below his best. Have to see how he bounces back from this, and we won't have an idea until he works. Even then you never know, as the Derby will expose even the slightest weakness. A big work, however, at least would boost one's confidence. We don't know to what extent the infection affected his performance or if its lingering effects will hamper him in the Derby. If he was unable to perform at his best, how much did he get out of the race? He is an extraordinarily gifted colt and we can only hope he will be at his best on May 7.

6 **Midnight Interlude** *Bob Baffert*
War Chant—Midnight Kiss, by Groom Dancer

The more I watch the Santa Anita Derby the more amazed I am at what he was able to do with so little experience. He ran like a seasoned 5-year-old. Between this performance and his 1:10 3/5 work, it appears obvious this is a beast. I don't think we have a clue how good he really is. He's a big, muscular brute who has been known to ambush unsuspecting passersby, but is the consummate pro outside the barn. Once again, he does have Apollo hanging over his head, as he will try to become the first horse since 1882 to win the Derby without having raced at 2.

7 **Mucho Macho Man** *Kathy Ritvo*
Macho Uno—Ponche de Leona, by Ponche

Now this is the way you're supposed to train a horse going into the Derby off a six-week layoff. His 7 furlong work in 1:23 3/5, following a :58 1/5 drill, has this horse sharp and fit and ready to kick some butt on May 7. But he still has a couple of more works at Churchill and we'll know more then. Remember, this is a June 15 foal, so there should be a lot more improvement in him. He won't even turn 3 until a week after the Belmont. With so many pace horses and stone closers heading to the Derby, he is the kind of grinder you want who can sit in midpack and just keep steadily coming.

8 **Shackleford** *Dale Romans*
Forestry—Oatsee, by Unbridled

The bottom line with him is if Dialed In is now the early Derby favorite, he certainly has to be taken seriously. His running style on paper may work against him, but with his big stride and ability to relax he looks like a horse who will rate. He's improving rapidly and he's a game competitor who doesn't like to lose and that makes him dangerous. He's already at Churchill Downs, where he broke his maiden, and I love to see horses settle in early and get a lot of training in over the track. He's been galloping long, will work on Apr. 23 and Romans says he is thriving and couldn't be doing any better.

9 **Soldat** *Kiaran McLaughlin*
War Front—Le Relais, by Coronado's Quest

He's scheduled to have his first work back on April 21 and then have his final Derby work on the 29th. McLaughlin says he's training great and is fit. The Florida Derby is looking more and more like a toss. Garcia was pushing him at the start, but he still couldn't get anywhere near the lead, and seemed to have no interest in running when Garcia went to the whip nearing the head of the stretch. So, this just might have been an off day right from the start, whether it was the heat or whatever. Throw the race out and you can make a case for him. Fortunately he has two big efforts at 1 1/8 miles under his belt this year to fall back on.

10 **Master of Hounds** *Aidan O'Brien*
Kingmambo—Silk and Scarlet, by Sadler's Wells

Coolmore confirms he's a go. If O'Brien or any European is ever going to pull this off, this is the year. We have no idea how he'll handle dirt, but his performance in the UAE Derby was sensational and he's already run at Churchill. Yes, it was on the grass, where he was beaten three lengths as the favorite, but Kingmambo has sired among others Lemon Drop Kid, a champion on dirt. He has excellent tactical speed and to carry that speed 1 3/16 miles in the UAE Derby on Tapeta off an almost four-month layoff and be beaten the shortest of noses was impressive. He showed his courage in that race, fighting back when challenged by a very classy filly in Khawlah, who had won the UAE Oaks. Now that he's pointing for the Derby he is an intriguing alternative at a big price.

11 **Pants on Fire** *Kelly Breen*
Jump Start—Cabo de Noche, by Cape Town

Been waiting for three weeks for him to show up on the work tab, and he returned with a bang, breezing 5 furlongs in a bullet :58 3/5. Before that he was open galloping for a week. One more work at Palm Meadows and then it's off to Kentucky. He certainly was flattered by Nehro's performance in the Arkansas Derby. He looks like one of a number of pace horses in the Derby, but his race in the Risen Star, when he took back to seventh and was forced 6-wide turning for home, was not nearly as bad as it looks on paper and shows he does have the ability to take back off the pace.

12 **The Factor** *Bob Baffert*
War Front—Greyciousness, by Miswaki

Most everyone is going to toss him after the Arkansas Derby, but that would be very premature. He was running over a much deeper track, had to contend with a horse on a suicide mission, was crowded into the rail, and displaced badly from being strangled. Garcia could hear him gurgling down the backstretch. Baffert will train him at Churchill and if he trains well he will run in the Derby, and this time will go hell-bent-for-leather, and pity any horse who tries to run with him. His winning Beyers consistently tower over most of these horses. Can anyone say Spend a Buck?

12 **Animal Kingdom** *Graham Motion*
Leroidesanimaux—Dalia, by Acatenango

Sorry, another baker's dozen. Yes, the dirt is a big question mark, and he's bred for the turf, but he looked good winning the Spiral, and the horse he beat by 6 lengths came back to be beaten a nose in the Blue Grass. He made an impressive early move in the Spiral, so you know he has a turn of foot. And he's bred to run forever, so you just have to take the chance that he'll be as effective on dirt. In this kind of year, it's a chance worth taking if the price is right.

