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Kentucky Derby 2014 Odds: Inspecting Early Favorites for Start of Triple Crown

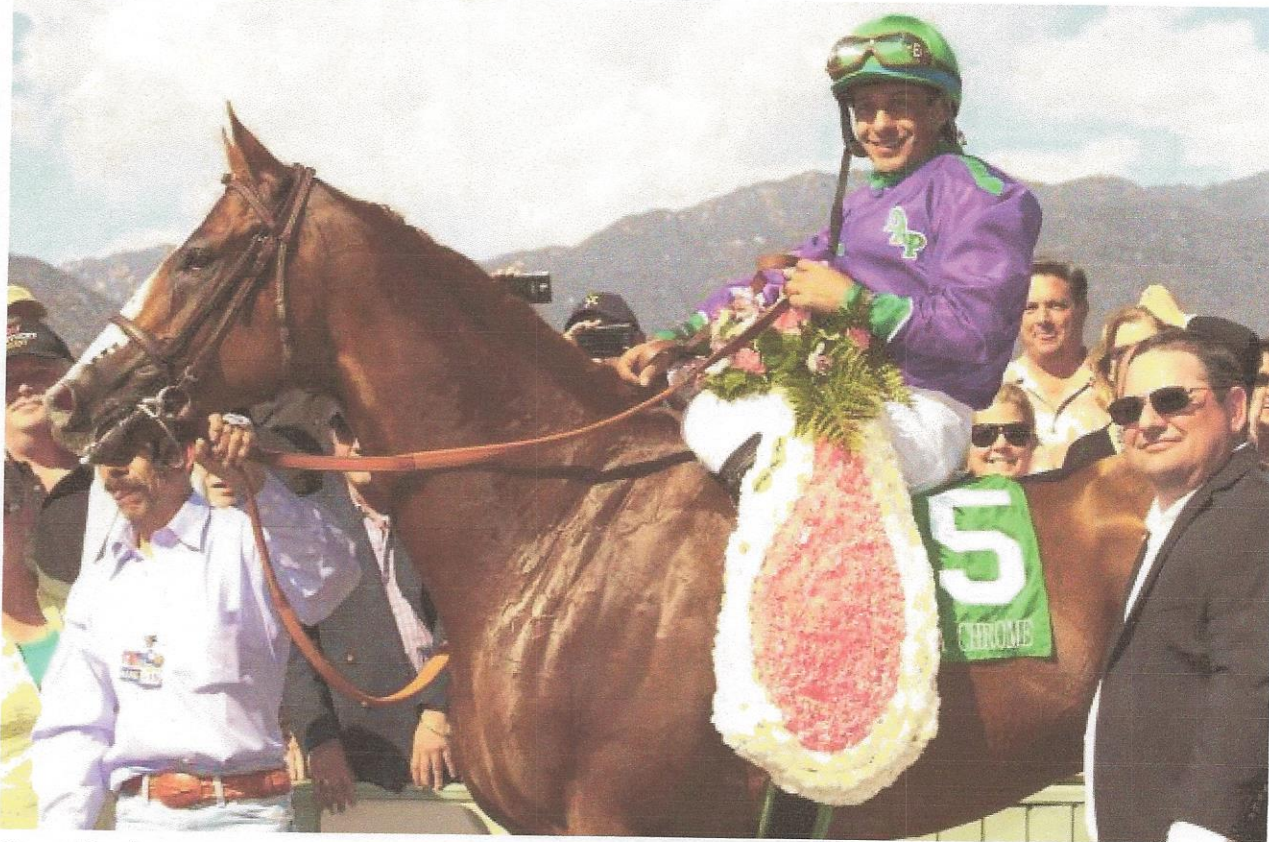
By Richard Langford , Featured Columnist

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California Chrome is a strong early favorite for the Kentucky Derby. Aside from getting a terrible post position in the draw, that status isn't likely to change.

The Art Sherman trainee is checking in at 7-4, according to OddsShark. The next lowest odds come with the pair of horses checking in at 8-1: Danza and Wicked Strong.

2014 Kentucky Derby Odds

Horse	Odds
California Chrome	7-4
Wicked Strong	8-1
Danza	8-1
Vicars In Trouble	10-1
Hoppertunity	14-1
Dance with Fate	16-2
Wildcat Red	16-1
Intense Holiday	20-1
Tapiture	20-1
Samraat	20-1
Social Inclusion	20-1
Bayern	25-1
Candy Boy	25-1
Chitu	25-1
General A Rod	25-1
Ride On Curlin	25-1
Ring Weekend	25-1

Source: OddsShark

Now, let's dig a little deeper into the favorites.

California Chrome



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There is a good reason California Chrome is such a strong favorite. He's been dominant leading up to the first Saturday in May. This colt has won four straight and done so by a combined 24 lengths.

The last time we saw California Chrome in action, he won the Santa Anita Derby by more than five lengths over the Bob Baffert-trained Hoppertunity.

California Chrome wins Santa Anita Derby



0:00 / 2:35

It has been a stunning and dominant stretch, which lends credibility to the following comments from co-owner Steve Coburn.

The Guardian's Daniel Ross passed along this quote from Coburn:

I'm saying this right now: if this horse gets a clean trip, he will win the Kentucky Derby and he'll go down in history [...] There's not another horse out there that has his speed and his ability. If you look at the statistics, there's not another horse going to Kentucky that's faster than him. So let the games begin.

On paper, there isn't a reason to dispute Coburn. No possible entries resume is as impressive. Now, we will await his post position and see if he can handle the stage.

Wicked Strong



David Alcosser

Wicked Strong was flying under the radar with less-than-dominant showings. Then he blew away the field at the Wood Memorial for three-year-olds at Aqueduct on April 5.

Prior to the Wood Memorial, Wicked Strong had won just one of his five starts and hadn't won a stakes race.

At the Wood Memorial, he won by 3.5 lengths over the previously undefeated Samraat.

Wicked Strong - 2014 Wood Memorial (G1)



0:00 / 2:21

It was a supremely impressive showing and Wicked Strong flashed the kind of form it would take to win the Kentucky Derby.

Which horse will finish the highest?

California Chrome Wicked Strong Danza Submit Vote vote to see results

There is extra reason to root for the James Jerkens trainee. As Paul Burton reported on WBZ-TV, if Wicked Strong wins, the owners will donate almost \$70,000 to One Fund.

Burton passed along this quote from Donald Little Jr. on his motivation for the donation to the charity devoted to helping victims of the Boston Marathon tragedy: "Especially [sic] with his name being Wicked Strong and after the tragedy last year, I along with all of the owners felt we need to give back."

With a poor history prior to the Wood Memorial, this horse is a wild card, but he's shown the form to make a run at this win.

Danza



Danny Johnston

Danza is a lot like Wicked Strong in that he wasn't all that noteworthy until his last start.

Danza's history leading up to the Grade 1 stakes Arkansas Derby at Oaklawn Park was so pedestrian that he went off with odds at 41-1. That was just his second start after a seven-month layoff. His only other start after the layoff was a poor run in an optional claimer at Gulfstream.

He then went out and dominated his way to a win by over four lengths:

2014 Arkansas Derby G1



0:00 / 1:59

So, was that race a fluke, or is Danza just starting to find his stride?

Jockey Joe Bravo, who had the mount at the Arkansas Derby, knows this horse is a potential powerhouse. Here is Bravo, per AmericasBestRacing.net's Vince Mathews, after his winning mount:

Right now it is all about the anticipation. Everything about this horse has been such a nice surprise. Whenever you ride a horse for Todd Pletcher and his team, you always have a little bit of extra confidence; and when I started reading more into Danza, I started falling in love with the horse prior to the Arkansas Derby. Now that we've seen what he can do, it's all about the anticipation of seeing if he can do more in Louisville.

As Bravo mentioned, this horse is trained by Pletcher, and his pedigree certainly drives up interest in this horse.

As with Danza, this horse could be a star or a flash in the pan.

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