

**The Grade II Louisiana Derby Presented by TwinSpires.com**  
**1 1/8 miles – purse \$1,000,000 (100-40-20-10 Kentucky Derby points)**

**#1 BRAVAZO (KY)**



Hodges Photography

**Jockey: Gary Stevens**

**Trainer: D. Wayne Lukas**

**Owner: Calumet Farm**

**Pedigree: Awesome Again --**

**Tiz o'Gold by Cee's Tizzy**

**Career Record: 7-3-1-1**

Hall of Fame trainer D. Wayne Lukas is sending Gr. II Risen Star Stakes winner Bravazo back to the Fair Grounds for what "The Coach" hopes is another big step towards the Gr. I Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve.

The son of Awesome Again won both of his starts as a 3-year-old. Prior to the Risen Star, Bravazo won an allowance race at Oaklawn Park on Jan. 13. He has breezed four times at the Hot Springs oval in preparation for the Louisiana Derby, including two five-furlong drills. On Monday, Mar. 12 he worked the distance in 1:00.00 and the following Sunday stopped the clock in 59.60. He currently sits at No. 3 on the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard with 54 points.

"I didn't know it was that close," Lukas said of the Risen Star win. "He (Miguel Mena) was getting into him pretty good and he drifted out. That cost us a little bit. He's a fighter. He's tough. He's got real good tactical speed. He's a horse that carries his weight well and can withstand training up to the (Gr. I Kentucky) Derby."

The last time Lukas won the Louisiana Derby was in 1996 with eventual Kentucky Derby winner Grindstone. With Mena recently injured, fellow Hall of Famer Gary Stevens, who was originally named to pilot in the Risen Star, jumps back in the saddle.

**Kristufek's Take:** Bravazo is experienced and tough as nails. With a clean trip from the rail draw, Stevens may be in line for a stalking trip from the pocket behind an honest pace. It's tough to envision him not running another big race, but remember, he already has more than enough points to get into the Kentucky Derby.

## #2 NOBLE INDY (KY)



Lauren King Photos

**Jockey:** John Velazquez

**Trainer:** Todd Pletcher

**Owner:** WinStar Farm LLC and Repole Stable

**Pedigree:** Take Charge Indy - Noble Maz by Storm Boot

**Career Record:** 3-2-0-1

Following a third-place effort in the Risen Star, trainer Todd Pletcher is sending Noble Indy back to the Fair Grounds for another crack at major event on the *Road To The Kentucky Derby*. The son of Take Charge Indy suffered his first loss in the Risen Star following a pair of victories over the Gulfstream Park main track.

Pletcher and co-owner WinStar Farm teamed up in 2013 to win the Louisiana Derby with Revolutionary.

“We feel that he continues to mature and make progress,” Pletcher said. “It seems like he’s really maturing the way we want him too. (Jockey) Johnny (Velazquez) been pleased with him and he has always liked him. The horse continues to show improvement.”

**Kristufek’s Take:** The addition of blinkers for the Louisiana Derby makes him even more intriguing. He’s improved with every start, and got a bit of an education in his third place Risen Star run.

## #3 MARMELLO (KY)



LTD Photography

**Jockey:** Jack Gilligan

**Trainer:** Mikhail Yanakov

**Owner:** Olympia Star Inc.

**Pedigree:** Concord Point -- Anychanceatadance by Scat Daddy

**Career Record:** 2-M-0-0-1

Marmello is the lone maiden in the Louisiana Derby. With two starts under his belt, he was third over the Stall-Wilson Turf Course in February before making a switch to the main track in his following start where he was fourth beaten 4 ½ lengths.

**Kristufek’s Take:** I get it that the connections are excited about his potential, but he’s still a maiden, and if he runs here, he’s biting off way more than he can chew at this early stage of his career.

#### #4 GIVEMEAMINIT (LA)



Hodges Photography

**Jockey: Javier Castellano**

**Trainer: Dallas Stewart**

**Owner: Valene Farms**

**Pedigree: Star Guitar --**

**Powerful Nation by Turkoman**

**Career Record: 8-1-2-1**

The lone Louisiana –bred in the Louisiana Derby field will be looking to give trainer Dallas Stewart his first victory in the race since Kimberlite Pipe in 1999, who also became the trainer’s first starter in the Kentucky Derby.

It took the son of Louisiana legend Star Guitar a while to find the winner’s circle, but when he did he won by eight lengths as the heavy favorite. Prior to his first victory, he was proven competitive among graded stakes company. Some of his starts against such caliber include a third beaten only a neck behind Grade I winners Sporting Chance and Free Drop Billy in the Gr. I Hopeful Stakes at Saratoga.

He will be looking to rebound following an eighth-place finish in the Risen Star.

“The Risen Star was a puzzling race,” Stewart said. “It didn’t pan out right. The horse was training very well since then so we’re going to go ahead and give him another shot. I think that he deserves another chance. We’ll find out where we’re at and go from there.”

**Kristufek’s Take:** I liked the way he ran in the maiden breaker and it gave me hope that the Louisiana-bred would at least be competitive in the Risen Star, but instead he laid an egg. Not sure how he could possibly do enough to make a serious impact here.

#### #5 RETIREMENT FUND (KY)



Hodges Photography

**Jockey: Shaun Bridgmohna**

**Trainer: Steve Asmussen**

**Owner: L and N Racing**

**Pedigree: Eskendereya --**

**Northern Station by Street Cry (Ire.)**

**Career Record: 3-2-0-0**

Following a disappointing effort at Oaklawn Park in the Gr. III Southwest Stakes, Hall of Fame trainer Steve Asmussen has sent Retirement Fund back to the Fair Grounds, where he is a perfect 2-for-2 over the main track. Both wins took place in wire-to-wire fashion at the mile and 70 yard distance.

“I don’t know evaluate the off track race in Hot Springs but he’s trained solidly back,” Asmussen said. “Both he and Snapper have drawn well for who they are.”

**Kristufek’s Take:** He won his first two starts in reasonably impressive fashion, and it’s tough to hold the Southwest debacle against him. He was in tight between horses over a muddy track and was not persevered with to the wire. Not sure he’s good enough to win this, but he could potentially add some spice to the gimmick equation.

## #6 HYNDFORD (KY)



Leslie Martin Photography

**Jockey:** Joe Bravo

**Trainer:** Todd Pletcher

**Owner:** Donegal Racing

**Pedigree:** Street Cry (Ire.) –  
Niji's Grand Girl by Candy Ride (Arg.)

**Career Record:** 3-1-1-0

Along with Noble Indy, Pletcher also sends Hyndford who's only victory took place when running for a \$50,000 tag at Gulfstream Park. A Louisiana Derby victory from the Donegal Racing-owned son of Street Cry (Ire.) would flatter stable mate and Gr. II Rebel Stakes winner Magnum Moon, who defeated Hyndford in a Tampa Bay Downs allowance event.

"He put in a good effort at Tampa behind Magnum Moon and he's trained well since then," Pletcher said. "It's an ambitious jump but it's that time of year to find out where we stand."

**Kristufek's Take:** The second to eventual Rebel winner Magnum Moon will open a lot of eyes, but somebody had to be second that day, and he was entered for a \$50,000 claiming tag the race prior. Can't completely count him out, but he won't be prominent on my tickets.

## #7 SNAPPER SINCLAIR (KY)



Grace Clark Photography

**Jockey:** Jose Ortiz

**Trainer:** Steve Asmussen

**Owner:** Bloom Racing LLC

**Pedigree:** City Zip --

True Addiction by Yes It's True

**Career Record:** 6-2-1-1

Snapper Sinclair was only inches away from his first graded stakes victory last time out in the Risen Star but got out nosed by Bravazo. While his victories have only taken place on turf, he has proven himself competitive on the main track with his game effort in the Risen Star as well as a third-place finish in the Lecomte. He is currently No. 13 on the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard with 22 points.

"Obviously some very solid runs from Snapper in both the Lecomte and the Risen Star," Asmussen said. "It would be nice to find a little more on Saturday. He's trained beautifully. We expect a big run from him."

**Kristufek's Take:** Bred to be a turf miler, he proved his merit on dirt with game runs in both the Lecomte and Risen Star. His cozy post should allow him to stalk or press the pace while in the clear, and you know he's going to give 100% down to the wire. I would not be surprised to see him win this, but I also believe that his eventual best game will be on the green at shorter distances.

## #8 LONE SAILOR (KY)



LTD Photography

**Jockey: James Graham**

**Trainer: Tom Amoss**

**Owner: G M B Racing**

**Pedigree: Majestic Warrior --**

**Ambitious by Mr. Greeley**

**Career Record: 7-1-2-1**

New Orleans native trainer Tom Amoss has had horses at the Fair Grounds for decades and boasts 11 training titles at the track, but still no Louisiana Derby win. That could change with a win from Grade I-placed Lone Sailor, who is in search of his first victory since an 11 length romp in a Saratoga maiden special weight in September.

"I've been seeing a lot from him in the mornings," Amoss said. "As a trainer you're always experimenting and not everything you do is a success, but the secret to be a good trainer is to be creative and try new things. So we went back, to his old style and he ran a good race. He's a confirmed horse that wants to sit back and that's the plan in the Louisiana Derby."

**Kristufek's Take:** The addition of blinkers two back did not work and he ran a lot better last time out when taking the hood off. The pace behind Dark Templar was slow that day, and he did sustain his bid to the wire. He has more ground to work with here and the pace projects as honest. Doubt he can win it, but lighting the tote at a price would not be much of a surprise.

## #9 MY BOY JACK (KY)



Coady Photography

**Jockey: Kent Desormeaux**

**Trainer: Keith Desormeaux**

**Owner: Don't Tell My Wife**

**Stables and Monomoy Stables**

**Pedigree: Creative Cause --**

**Gold N Shaft by Mineshaft**

**Career Record: 8-2-3-1**

Like Amoss, trainer Keith Desormeaux also is a Louisiana native hungry for a victory in the Louisiana Derby. If My Boy Jack can continue his winning ways, Desormeaux's hunger could be satisfied on Saturday. Last out, he won the Gr. III Southwest Stakes at Oaklawn Park. My Boy Jack is currently No. 20 on the Leaderboard with 12 points.

"As soon as he crossed the wire in Arkansas, we started thinking about our next move," Desormeaux said. "When you win over a track, it makes sense to run right back there, but (part-owner) Sol Kumin brought up a good point. The Rebel is not an equal weights race, so off a graded stakes win, we would be at an immediate disadvantage. The Louisiana Derby is equal weights and there are twice as many points offered. It gives us an extra week, one million is a monster pot, and if we are forced to scratch or have an unlucky trip, there is time to get into another prep race and still make the Kentucky Derby."

**Kristufek's Take:** Some will say it was the mud that moved My Boy Jack up in his upset Southwest win, but if you watch his workouts on fast dirt, you might think differently. He should have an honest pace to run at and will likely relish nine furlongs and the long stretch.

## #10 DARK TEMPLAR (KY)



Hodges Photography

**Jockey: Florent Geroux**

**Trainer: Brendan Walsh**

**Owner: Newtown Anner Stud**

**Pedigree: Tapit --**

**Hurricane Flag by Storm Cat**

**Career Record: 4-2-1-1**

Dark Templar impressed trainer Brendan Walsh in his last outing when defeating a handful of winners on Feb. 19. While he has yet to run in a stakes event, he has faced the likes of quality horses such as Principe Guilherme, and fellow Louisiana Derby contenders Lone Sailor and Retirement Fund. A victory in the Louisiana Derby could be the beginning of what trainer Brendan Walsh believes will be a prosperous year for the son of Tapit.

“We’ve worked hard on him mentally,” Walsh said. “The boys have done a good job on him just to get him to relax and he was nice (in his last start). He was happy out in front and he was lobbing away. (Florent Geroux) said he never had to get that serious with him until the very last eighth or sixteenth of a mile when he turned his stick over. It’s a learning process with him and he’s responding so I think he’ll have a good year.”

**Kristufek’s Take:** He’s a nice horse, but I’m not sure how much upside he has. He benefitted from a soft pace on the lead in the allowance win. Today’s pace will be a lot hotter and the extreme outside post doesn’t make the task any easier. Jockey Florent Geroux has been waving his magic wand of late, but not sure it’s enough.