

RICE'S DERBY CHOICE JOURNAL

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"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.
Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. "

The foregoing quote, of course, is Macbeth's lament on learning that her Ladyship has offed herself. If Macbeth's tomorrows crept in a "petty pace", they had nothing in common with this year's Derby where the pace will be smoking. The likely 3 favorites (BROTHER DEREK, LAWYER RON, and BARBARO) all like the lead and are unlikely to get it. That will fall to MANE MINISTER with SHARP HUMOR at his throatlatch. Will this lead to an early "dusty death" for these "brief candles?" Will the closers (POINT DETERMINED, JAZIL, A.P. WARRIOR, etc.) "full of sound and fury" run them over "in the last syllables of recorded time?" We'll see. Our Derby tale may well be being "told by an idiot" but we sure hope it signifies something. At this point, dear reader your patience is probably wearing to learn of our conclusion. Macbeth's next line to the messenger probably sums up your thoughts: "Thou com's't to use thy tongue. Thy story quickly." To which we can only reply: "Lay on Macduff, and damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold enough!'"

OUR PICK- For openers let us make clear that this is not a low risk pick. But as we scanned the entries looking for that candidate with significant upside possibility at a price, we kept returning to our pick time and again. His first start last August was so bad (12th by 24 lengths) that 2 humbling decisions were made. First he got the "Kelso prescription" for a gonadectomy to improve his behavior and second he was entered in a \$40,000 maiden claimer at Laurel. He finished first by a whopping 16 lengths but was disqualified for interference. His next start at Aqueduct was his last as a maiden when he came home by 7 3/4 lengths. Then it was back to Laurel for a minor stakes win by 10. Despite this string of dominant performances he was no better than third choice in the Gotham while breaking from the 10 hole. With a short run to the first turn he was hung out to dry and continued wide the entire race. Nonetheless he finished fastest of all to be third by 3/4 length. His next star was the Illinois Derby in which he stalked the pace and simply exploded into the far turn leaving the field behind by 9 plus lengths and (very importantly) galloped out like he wanted more. His final

Derby work on Saturday at Churchill was a perfect ¾ mile in a dazzling 1:11.60 in spite of his rider's oversleeping necessitating a sub.

Our pick's pedigree may not impress many but it's plenty good for us. His sire was on our Derby watch list before being injured. His broodmare sire, WAQUOIT was an old favorite of ours and an undeniable stayer of the best class. The female family may be void of champions but holds a panoply of quality runners. Of great interest to us is that our pick is inbred (4x5) to one of our favorite bearers of stamina genes, the great French champion HERBAGER.

Our trainer is here for the first time but we are impressed with the job he has done thus far. All he has to do now is provide hay, oats, and water until he tightens the girth on Saturday.

Our rider has won this one twice and is a money rider. Kent Desormeaux guided both REAL QUIET '98 and FUSAICHI PEGASUS '00 flawlessly in their scores.

We have selected two geldings over the years and both were just-miss seconds in heartbreakers (BEST PAL '91 and CAVONNIER '96). There have been 8 gelded winners of the Derby and we think that that number will grow by one this Saturday.

Now for the incredible scrolling swami angles: Kent's 2 Derby wins were in red and yellow silks. Yup, our pick's colors are red and yellow. And with all this spiritual stuff, would you believe that one of our pick's owners has the last name Theos? (the Greek word for GOD!) And, in passing, we note the winning gelding of the 1888 renewal was a fellow named MACBETH II.

Down here in New Orleans, excitement reigns as Reggie Bush has become our sweet, western, Saint. How appropriate that this year's Derby winner will be SWEETNORTHERNSAINT!

THE BET- We will bet SWEETNORTHERNSAINT to win and place as we expect double digit odds. We will also take a little bomb insurance and make across the board plays on

A.P. WARRIOR and SHARP HUMOR (probably comes up short but what a heart!). We have to use BROTHER DEREK in exactas and tris with our pick and the 2 long shots. HAPPY DERBY DAY TO ALL!

SPECIAL BONUS PICK- We had prepared the following comment for a colt we were watching as a long shot prospect that ended up 22nd on the list of 20 of Derby eligibles:

SACRED LIGHT- We took a shine to this one after his game second to BRO' DEREK in the Santa Catalina. Same dad (HOLY BULL) as last year's winner and LIGHT's broodmare sire (SUMMER SQUALL is sire of '99 winner CHARISMATIC). Trainer Hofmans is 0 for 1 here but has delivered some biggies for us (ALPHABET SOUP's 20-1 upset of CIGAR in the '96 Breeders' Cup for one). No idea what to think now after he went to his knees at the start of the Santa Anita Derby and lost all chance, but the price may have us beaming.

Well SACRED LIGHT is entered Friday in the Crown Royal American Turf, a race that precedes the Oaks and will be on ESPN. We like him.