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ASSINIBOIA DOWNS



The Inside Track | Issue #117 | February 2, 2024



DINING



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140 VLTS

ASD Hours

- Open daily from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m.
- VLT machines are sanitized between use

2024 Live Race Dates

- Monday, May 20 to Tuesday, September 17 - click [here](#) for schedule

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Do the Downs!

Upcoming Handicapping Tournaments

Player's Choice Tournaments:

- Saturday, February 17
- Saturday, March 16
- Saturday, April 13
- Saturday, May 11



Tournament Winners:

- Player's Choice - Saturday, January 20 - Winner: Ron Phelps

Club West Gaming Lounge



140 VLTs are available daily in our spacious Club West Gaming Lounge from 10 a.m. through 1 a.m. Enjoy complimentary coffee or tea. We also have fantastic deals on daily.

[drink specials](#), [happy hour specials](#), [daily lunch](#) and [nightly food features](#). Please note that our VLTs are sanitized between play.

Free daily draws take place for your chance to win cash!

- **Break Open Bonanza! Draws to win \$10 plus 20 break-open tickets! Monday through Friday from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m.**
- **Lucky Spins! Draws for \$20 in FREE VLT Spins Friday, Saturday & Sunday from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.**

There's Always a Deal at ASD!

\$11.95 Daily Lunch Specials

Enjoy breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks from our Club West Dining Room menu or try our ever changing \$11.95 lunch special.

- Club West Dining Room & Lounge [menu](#)
- Daily Happy Hour [specials](#)



Daily Drink Features All Day Long

- Monday - Margarita \$6 (lime, peach or strawberry)
- Tuesday - Corona \$5
- Wednesday - Wine \$4.50 (6 oz. glass of house white or house red)
- Thursday - Beer \$4.75 (house pint of beer)
- Friday - Trifecta Tea \$6 (Absolut peach vodka, lemonade, sweet tea)
- Saturday - RazDerby Lemonade \$6 (Absolut raspberry vodka, lemonade)
- Sunday - Caesar \$6



Daily Evening Chef's Specials

Monday - BBQ Ribs \$19.95: Smoky char-broiled ribs with our signature BBQ sauce. Served with french fries and coleslaw.



Tuesday - Tacos \$9.95: Two flour tortillas stuffed with taco beef, chicken or fish, lettuce, green onions, cheese and diced tomato. Served with a drizzle of avocado cilantro lime sauce and taco chips.



Wednesday - Two Topping Pizza \$14.95: Thin crust pizza with mozzarella and tomato sauce. Choose from pepperoni, bacon, ham, spicy beef, chicken, tomato, mushroom, peppers, black olives or onions.



Thursday - Chipotle Mozza Burger \$14.95: Our signature sirloin patty and crispy bacon smothered in melted mozzarella. Topped with fresh sliced tomato, fried onion rings, chipotle mayo and sweet bold barbeque sauce.



Friday - Steak & Suds \$24.95: 8 oz. Sirloin steak charbroiled and seasoned with our smoky dry rub. Served with fresh vegetables and a choice of mashed potatoes or french fries. **Plus a complimentary pint of ASD Lucky Lager.**



Saturday - Prime & Wine \$29.95: Certified Angus Prime Rib (8 oz. cut.) Served with fresh vegetables and a choice of mashed potatoes or french fries, horseradish, and Yorkshire pudding au jus. **Plus a complimentary 6 oz. glass of house wine.**



Sunday - Fish & Chips \$14.95: Two pieces of beer battered cod with tartar sauce and lemon. Served with french fries and coleslaw.



Reservations are not required. The above specials are available from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

Everyone who purchases one of the above specials will receive a coupon to play our free "Pick to Win" game in the VLT lounge for a chance to spin our lucky cash wheel where you can win up to \$100 cash!

At The Post with G.S. Thompson

Kentucky Derby Preps

Four good betting races to find your Derby horse in, before they peak



Undefeated Otello (left), shown here winning the Mucho Macho Man Stakes at Gulfstream Park on New Year's Day, has been listed at 9/2 as he takes on 2023 2-year-old champ Fierceness in the Holy Bull Stakes (G3) on Saturday. (Adam Coglianese)

The Road to the Kentucky Derby picks up momentum this weekend with four key prep races across the USA. We'll be looking for horses that do something out of the ordinary, and hoping it doesn't get noticed by the masses. We're searching for horses that will peak on the first Saturday in May, preferably at long odds, while at the same time trying to cash a few tickets along the way.

At Gulfstream Park in Florida the Grade 3 Holy Bull Stakes has drawn a competitive field of eight 3-year-olds going 1 1/16-miles. Fierceness, winner of the Breeders' Cup Juvenile last year, returns as the 3/5 heavy favourite off a layoff but faces some tough challengers including Otello and Hades. Will he be fit enough, mentally and physically?

Out west at Santa Anita, the Grade 3 Robert Lewis Stakes will be run at a mile. Undefeated Nysos looms large for trainer Bob Baffert, having won his first two starts by a combined 19 1/4 lengths. However, he faces his first test around two turns against eight rivals including multiple graded stakes-placed Stronghold.

Down south at Oaklawn Park, a full field of twelve will line up for the Grade 3 Southwest Stakes at 1 1/16- miles. The Steve Asmussen duo of Carbone and Otto The Conqueror have home field advantage, but Street Sense Stakes winner Liberal Arts and Los Alamitos Futurity winner Wynstock appear dangerous.

Finally, at Aqueduct in New York, nine 3-year-olds are entered in the historic Grade 3 Withers Stakes at 1 1/8-miles. El Grande O and Lightline are the morning line favourites, but longshots like Society Man and Uncle Heavy have some people watching the odds.

With big fields and promising contenders, this weekend's Kentucky Derby preps offer plenty of wagering value, while at the same time offering the opportunity to spot improving sophomores as they roll towards the Run for the Roses on Saturday, May 4.

Watch closely.

Sincere Condolences: David Blake

Longtime horse owner and Handicapper of the Year loses his battle with cancer



"Just under 5 years ago we toasted the memory of Ardell Sayler. Yesterday our friend David Blake (middle) succumbed to his battle with cancer. We will return to the place in this photo this summer and honour our good friend Dave at Assiniboia Downs, one of his absolute favourite places. It's time to rest Dave." ~ Randy Premachuk

Assiniboia Downs is sad to announce that former horse owner and Handicapper of the Year David Blake passed away earlier this week after a long battle with cancer.

Local fans and friends of David would probably remember his top horse Jaya Ho, who won 10 races for him at Assiniboia Downs and Turf Paradise.

"She was a pretty good horse," said Blake in an earlier interview with The Inside Track after he won last September's Las Vegas Handicapping Challenge. "She paid her way. We

ended up breeding her to Upper Mesa Falls and she's got a little baby that's going to hopefully race next year at the Downs."

The 2019 Handicapper of the Year had many friends in the backstretch, and he was a big supporter of Assiniboia Downs. He simply loved the sport of horse racing, and his horses.

The last time we spoke with David, he said that being able to play in the local handicapping contests helped him to keep his spirits up, while facing the toughest fight of his life.

"Every time I get up, it just doesn't work out," he said. "The racing keeps me going. I just love the races, as you know. I didn't own any horses this year, but I've kind of lived vicariously through Randy Premachuk and Steve Holborn there. They keep in touch with me all the time."

Doctors had given David less than a year to live in September, unless he could get into one of the experimental trials at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto.

"Thank God I have people going to bat for me," he said at the time. "I'm just taking it day by day here. Let's hope for the best. Hopefully they can come up with something and extend my life for a little bit longer. I just hope I get a little more time on this earth, but I guess somebody upstairs will decide that for me and we'll see what happens"

"I can't express enough how thankful I am for everyone's love, prayers and financial support for me," wrote David on a GoFundMe page that was set up to help pay for his medication. "It truly is overwhelming. I hope all is well with everyone."

David truly appreciated all the messages of encouragement he received from his friends at Assiniboia Downs, and said they truly helped keep him going.

No obituary was available at the time of this writing, but we will update everyone here as more details come in.

Our sincerest condolences to David's family and many friends.



ASSINIBOIA DOWNS • WINNIPEG, MANITOBA • CANADA



CONDITION BOOK #1

Monday, May 20 - Wednesday, June 19, 2024

Condition book #1 is now available. Click [here](#) or on the image above to download.

2024 SHIPPING INCENTIVE PROGRAM

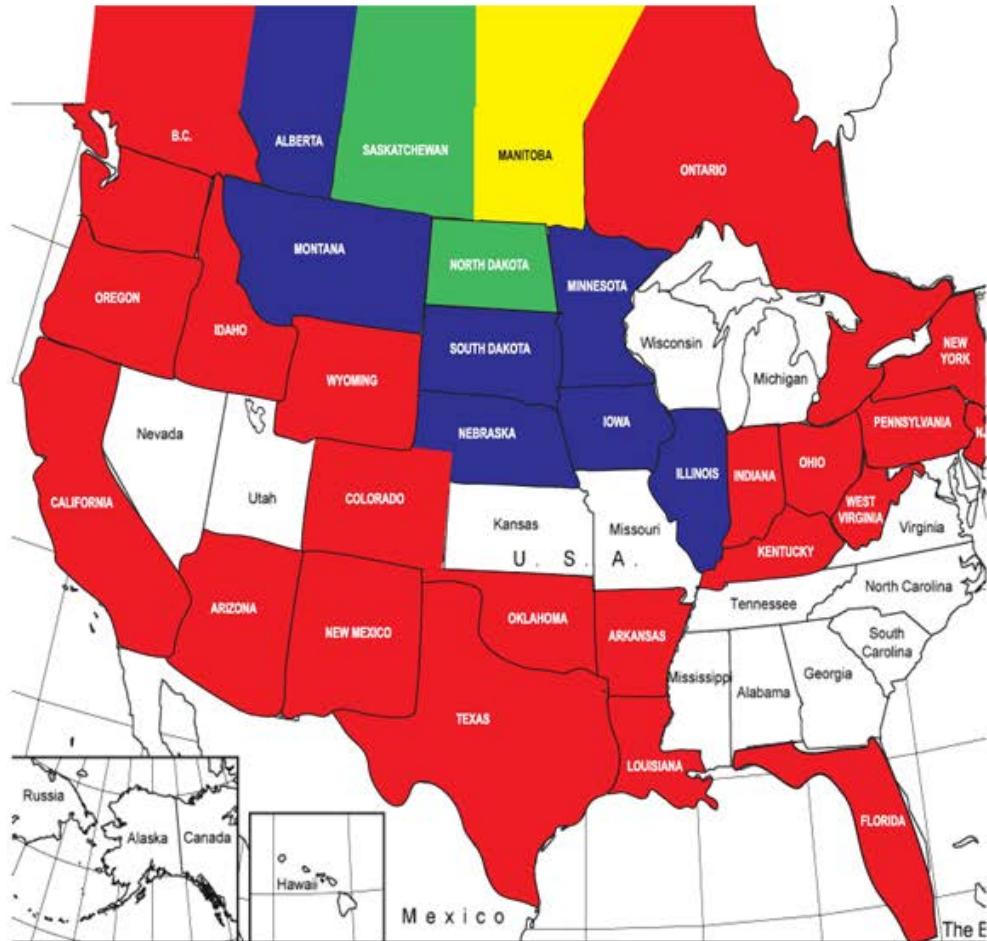
A one time credit per horse is automatically put in the horse owner's account by the racing bookkeeper after the horse has completed one start.

Zone 1 - \$250 per horse

Zone 2 - \$350 per horse

Zone 3 - \$500 per horse

Zone 4 \$1,000 per horse



Coming In At Sundown

Original painting by **Tim Cox**



"Two things define you: Your patience when you have nothing and your attitude when you have everything." ~ Imam Ali. See more original paintings from Tim Cox [here](#).

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Top NFL Picks by TravyFootball: Conference Championship Recap

Niners defeat Lions 34-31: For the second straight week, the 49ers decided to make it much more difficult than it needed to be, while also wreaking havoc with my emotions. It wasn't looking too great when Detroit jumped out to an early 14-0 lead. The Niners finally answered back with a Christian McCaffrey TD to cut the lead in half, only for the Lions to March right back down the field for another score to make it 21-7, and that's where all the controversy began.



Lions coach Dan Campbell has been notorious for leaving the kicking team on the sidelines when it comes to 4th and short situations, so it left many people scratching their heads as to why he kicked a field goal to end the half. Instead of possibly being ahead 28-7, which would've put a nail in the Niners coffin, it was 24-7, which still seemed pretty insurmountable to come back from. But, with their backs against the wall, the Niners scored 27 points in a row capped off with an incredible "off the defenders facemask pop up in the air" catch by Brandon Aiyuk. When all was said and done, Brock Purdy, in only his second year in the league, took one final knee down that sent him and the 49ers to the Super Bowl. Many people were questioning Dan Campbell's decision, after the fact, and the simple answer to that is, it's what they did all season, so why would they change it now.

Chiefs defeat Ravens 17-10: This game started out like it was going to be a shoot out with each team exchanging touchdowns right off the bat. The Chiefs went into halftime with a 17-7 lead, and that was basically it in terms of scoring for the rest of the game other than a late field goal in the fourth quarter by the Ravens. Once again Lamar Jackson failed to advance to the Super Bowl, and that will only reinforce what people had been saying about him beforehand. Yes, he has won an MVP in the past, and he will probably win MVP this year as well, but when it comes to playoff expectations, he always falls flat. He did not play very well against Kansas City. Part of it was his fault, part of it was the game plan that the Ravens decided to go with.

All season long the strength of this team has been the running game, and for whatever reason they decided to change it up and almost completely abandon it against the Chiefs. They only had 15 rushing attempts, which was well below their team average per game of 30. They did have a chance to cut the Chiefs lead down to three points, but a boneheaded play by Ravens receiver Zay Flowers, in which he dove into the endzone and was stripped of the ball before crossing the line, resulted in a touchback instead of a touchdown. You can't really say enough about Pat Mahomes. This is probably the weakest Kansas City team that he's played on, but he still managed to lead them to another Super Bowl appearance.

Last week: 2-0

Overall Playoff record: 7-1

Road to the Kentucky Derby

- Southwest (OP) - Saturday, Feb. 3 (20 points)
 - Holy Bull (GP) - Saturday, Feb. 3 (20 points)
 - Robert B. Lewis (SA) - Saturday, Feb. 3 (20 points)
 - Withers (Aqu) - Saturday, Feb. 3 (20 points)
-



Valentine's Dinner & Dance

We invite you to join us for our Valentine's Dinner & Dance featuring our renowned Certified Angus Prime Rib Buffet. Savour the exquisite taste of our prime rib buffet, specially prepared for this special occasion. [Menu](#).

After dinner dancing will be available or simply relax and listen to the music. We have something for everyone. Don't have a date? You can still enjoy this special evening with family & friends!

Tickets are \$54.95 per person and available by calling Samantha at 204-885-3330. We look forward to seeing you!



Looking for a Special Photo of Your Big Horse or...?

Track Photographer Jason Halstead may have just what you're looking for

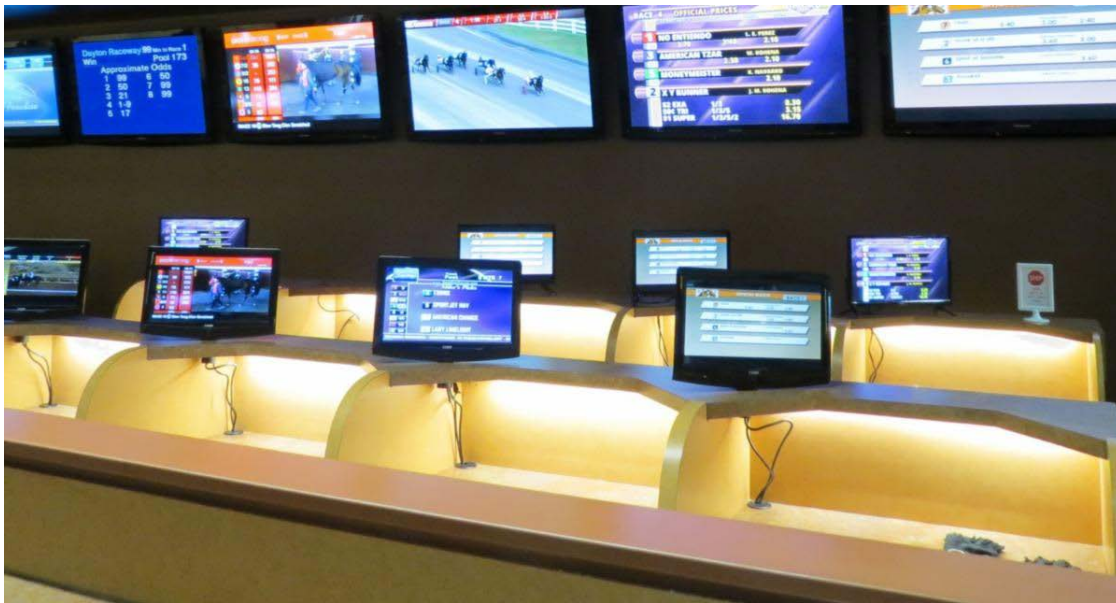


Groom Charlotte Johnston leads Delvecchio into the winner's circle after his victory in the \$40,000 Phil Kives Stakes for owners A2 Thoroughbreds and trainer Mike Nault. Damario Bynoe in the saddle. (Jason Halstead / Assiniboia photo)

Looking for that extra-special photo of your big horse, one you might not find in your win pictures? Track photographer Jason Halstead takes numerous photos during the races, and not all of them can make it into the win photos. If you're looking for

something frameable from your big race, or of your special horse, email Jason at jjhphoto@gmail.com. Prices are excellent! Almost as good as his photos 😊

Wager on Top Tracks



Watch and wager on world class racing from the comfort of your private carrel in our race book located on the 2nd level of the grandstand. The race book is open daily at 10 a.m. Can't make it to the track? Visit one of our partner locations listed below or wager at [HPIibet.com](https://www.hpiibet.com). Click [here](#) for a list of tracks to wager on during the month of February.

Carryover Watch

- Santa Anita (Feb. 2) - Pick 6 carryover \$74,329

See all carryovers [here](#).

Can't make it to the track to wager?

Watch and wager at one of our off-track betting locations:

- Canad Inns Windsor Park - [1034 Elizabeth Road](#)
- Green Brier Inn - [1611 Main Street](#)
- Rookies at Central Hotel - [201 Melrose Avenue East](#)
- Quest Inn - [367 Ellice Avenue](#)
- McPhillips Station Casino - [484 McPhillips Street](#)
- Club Regent Casino - [1425 Regent Ave W](#)
- Nor-Villa Motor Hotel - [1763 Henderson Hwy](#)
- Club 3D - [3317 Portage Avenue](#)
- Wager 24/7 at [HPIibet.com](https://www.hpiibet.com)



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CASH BONUSES FOR WAGERING

PLATINUM BONUS LEVEL	GOLD BONUS LEVEL	SILVER BONUS LEVEL	BRONZE BONUS LEVEL
Bet \$5,000 or more in the week* and receive a cash back bonus of 4%	Bet \$4,000 or more in the week* and receive a cash back bonus of 3%	Bet \$3,000 or more in the week* and receive a cash back bonus of 2%	Bet \$2,000 or more in the week* and receive a cash back bonus of 1%



Wagers must be placed using your HPIbet Rewards Card. The week (*) is designated as Monday through Sunday. Any bonus money earned during this period will be deposited to your HPI account on Wednesday by 5 p.m. Betting bonus cash is in addition to regular HPIbet rewards points earned. Assiniboia Downs reserves the right to alter or amend this promotion at any time. Bonus calculations are available on payouts of \$2.20 and above. Maximum weekly bonus deposit \$1,000.

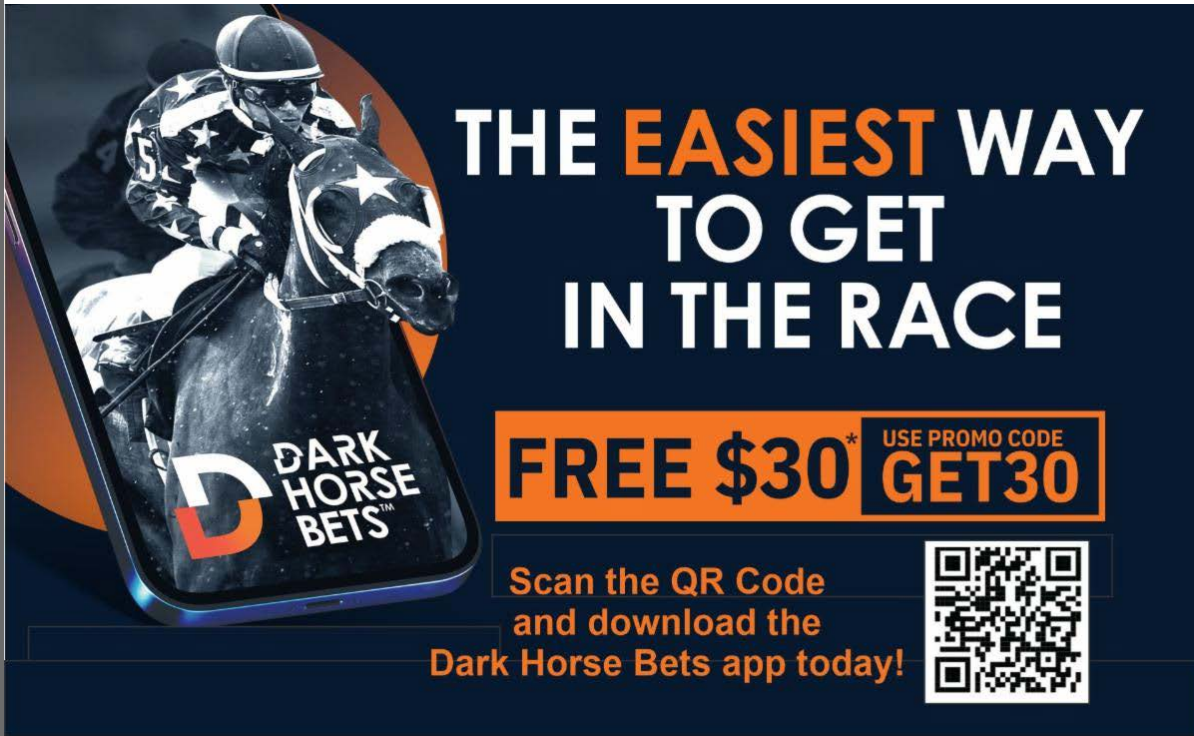
"I Won Bigg" Wagering Group Saturday at 10:30 a.m. (2nd floor plaza)

The "I Won Bigg" wagering group is back in action this Saturday at 10:30 a.m. This week they will be playing Tampa and Santa Anita. \$20 a share. Email [Larry](#) for more information.

A Snapshot in Time by Track Historian Bob Gates



Wow! February, thought by some to be the longest shortest month of the year, is loaded with goodies: Groundhog Day, the bonspiel thaw, and Leap Year, so let's continue with our look of milestones past. Thirty years ago, on July 16, 1994, Bruce Tully's Ranger's Wish bested a field of mid-level claimers. Bruce always said that his bay gelding was one of the best horses to ever look through a bridle. Ranger recorded 26 wins from 93 lifetime starts with his finest year coming in 1996, when he notched 8 wins, a second and a third in 11 outings at the Downs. Who wouldn't have wanted this boy in their barn? (Gerry Hart photo)



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Hades Could Upset Holy Bull

Bettors must consider whether favoured Fireceness will be ready



Fierceness wins the 2023 Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1) at Santa Anita. (Benoit photo)

This Saturday's \$250,000 Holy Bull Stakes (G3) kicks off the Road to the Florida Derby series and offers the winner 20 points on the Road to the Kentucky Derby. Fierceness leads all 3-year-olds at this stage in the season, having amassed 30 points with his six-

length win last November in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1), and bettors will likely expect him to pick up where he left off. One thing they'll have to consider however, is the question of intent, as well as physical fitness after three months off compared to others who have run much more recently. More from the *Paulick Report* [here](#).

Undefeated Nysos a Short-Priced Favourite in Robert B. Lewis

Trainer Bob Baffert looking for record 12th victory in the race



Nysos wins the 2023 Bob Hope Stakes at Del Mar. (Benoit photo)

In 2023, Bob Baffert winning the Robert B. Lewis Stakes (G3) was a foregone conclusion: He trained all four runners. In 2024, it will be tougher, but Baffert still has an excellent chance in the Santa Anita stakes for 3-year-olds slated for this Saturday. Baffert has three of the nine horses in the field, with Nysos likely to be a short price. More from the *Blood Horse* [here](#).

2024 Southwest Stakes at a Glance

Longshot Liberal Arts could get just the right setup at Oaklawn Park



Liberal Arts wins the 2023 Street Sense Stakes at Churchill Downs. (Coady Photography/Cady Coulardot)

A week later than expected, Oaklawn Park's rescheduled \$800,000 Southwest Stakes (G3) will be run this Saturday with another large field. A field of 12 was drawn for the 1 1/16-mile test that offers 42 qualifying points for the 2024 Kentucky Derby. Longshot Liberal Arts (8-1) has not raced since winning the Street Sense at Churchill Downs in October, but he does have a win at the distance and he should get a lively pace to chase. Cannot be ignored in his 3-year-old debut. More from *America's Best Racing* [here](#).

Withers Stakes Analysis

Speedy El Grande O faces more quick rivals than he faced in the Jerome



El Grande O wins the 2023 Sleepy Hollow Stakes at Aqueduct. (Chelsea Durand/NYRA)

Saturday's \$200,000 Withers (G3) is the fourth of six stops on the Aqueduct road to the Kentucky Derby 2024, and 20-10-6-4-2 qualifying points are available to the top five eligible finishers. New York-bred El Grande O is the top earner and most experienced horse in the field with nine starts, including a pair of victories in New York-bred stakes races with front-end efforts. In his last race he set the pace and finished second in the Jerome Stakes. He'll likely use the same tactics again this Saturday, but he'll be facing more speed this time. More from *Horse Racing Nation* [here](#).

Spirit Animal is Out of This World

\$10,000 claim is on a roll for former ASD trainer Martin Drexler

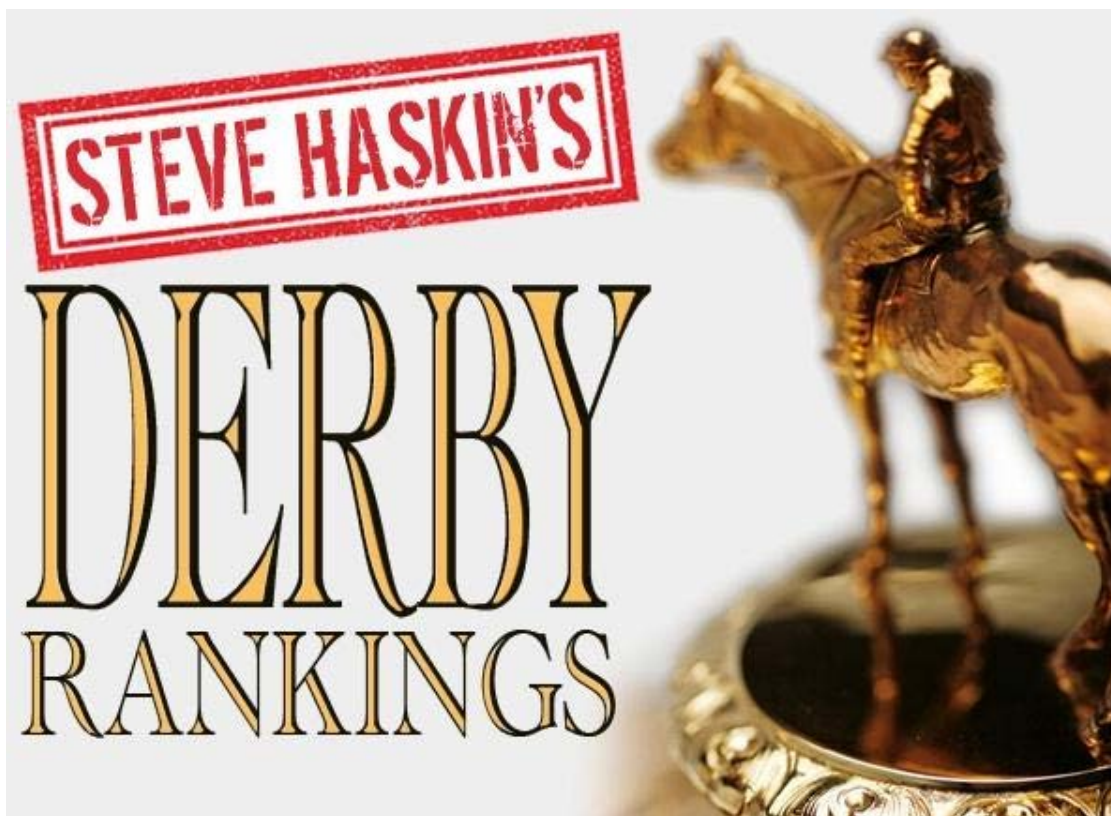


Spirit Animal, a \$10,000 claim, won the \$75,000 City of Light Handicap on Jan. 28 at Gulfstream Park for former ASD trainer Martin Drexler. (Gulfstream Park photo)

"He's just all heart. This horse is all heart." That was former ASD trainer Martin Drexler after Elliott Logan's Spirit Animal (10-to-1) fended off the very good geldings Conglomerate and Fly the W to win the \$75,000 City of Light Handicap at Gulfstream Park on January 28. It was a fascinating win by the dark bay 8-year-old by Lemon Drop Kid, who was recently a stable buddy of Conglomerate, a former Drexler trainee (and also by Lemon Drop Kid). More from Jennifer Morrison at the the *Canadian Thoroughbred* [here](#).

Kentucky Derby Rankings by Steve Haskin

The Road to the Derby Kentucky, January 29, 2024 – Week 2



Steve Haskin looks at this weekend's four graded stakes, a fascinating allowance race, and the much-anticipated return of 2-year-old champion Fierceness. Always worth reading on the Road to the Derby. More at *Secretariat.com* [here](#).

Best of Bob

by ASD Historian Bob Gates

This week Bob tells the touching story of a racing family whose matriarch outlived her husband and three kids and, after all that heartache, just passed away last year. Follow the story of your typical racetrack family that was well-known on the backside for 50 years [here](#). (From August 14, 2020).





Upcoming events at ASD

- Break Open Bonanza - Draws for Break-Open tickets - Monday to Friday - [more info](#)
- Lucky Spins - Draws for \$20 in free VLT Spins - Friday to Sunday - [more info](#)
- Prairie Stride's Annual Market - Saturday, February 3 & Sunday, February 4 - [more info](#)
- Manitoba Tattoo Expo - Friday, February 9 to Sunday, February 11 - [more info](#)
- Valentine's Dinner & Dance - Wednesday, February 14 - [more info](#)
- Player's Choice Handicapping Tournament - Saturday, February 17 - [more info](#)

Feedback

We would love to hear from you! Email your comments and/or suggestions to theinsidetrack@ASDowns.com.

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Four Kentucky Derby Preps. Condolences for David Blake.

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