

COUNTDOWN TO THE CROWN

SEASON 9 WEEK 13 – March 28, 2014

By Jeremy Plonk
Exclusive to
Countdowntothecrown.com

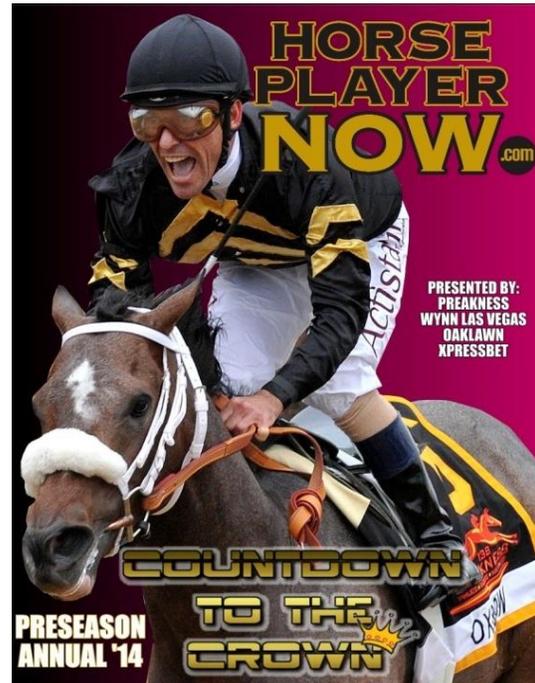


Editor's Note: The ninth season of Countdown to the Crown offers the most comprehensive scouting report of the 3-year-old scene. Countdowntothecrown.com is the home each Friday from Jan. 3 through the Belmont Stakes, and Countdown keeps you apprised of the rising stars of the sophomore class from the maiden ranks through the Grade 1 stakes.

Three Things You Won't Read Anywhere Else

Opinions are like watching a Johnny Football pro-day workout. It pays to be presidential.

1. The fact that only three American-based horses made the trip to Dubai for Saturday's World Cup night program underscores two things: US horsemen's disdain for synthetic surfaces has reached its threshold, and just how bad those same trainers admit our turf ranks have become. When is the last time you saw US horsemen walk away from THAT kind of money?
2. Agent Matt Muzikar has to be feeling some pressure with reigning Eclipse Award-winning jockey Javier Castellano and his Kentucky Derby dance bill. Castellano has departed the likes of We Miss Artie, General A Rod and Wildcat Red this season, and has yet to win a major route prep. CONSTITUTION (Todd Pletcher) winds up his Florida Derby mount on the final week of March yet having tried a stakes. We've seen great riders land 11th hour Derby winners in recent years; the Castellano camp has to be hoping it's their turn.
3. And speaking of tough riding propositions, Gary Stevens has to be hoping that trainer Bob Baffert sends unbeaten BAYERN to the Arkansas Derby. Why? Stevens has been piloting Countdown No. 1 CANDY BOY (John Sadler), already penciled in for the Santa Anita Derby. If Baffert waits a week for BAYERN to run, it allows Stevens to ride both...for now. Often these situations take care of themselves if you let the horses do the talking long enough.



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This Week's Fearless Forecast

This section previews the coming attractions in 3-year-old stakes and undercard races.

As is custom in *Countdown* each season, once the calendar flips to March, we focus exclusively on stakes races and only touch on undercard races in exceptional circumstances.

Saturday's Florida Derby and Louisiana Derby will be telecast live on NBC Sports Network (6:30-7:30 pm ET), while a report from the UAE Derby in Dubai will be included in Fox Sports 1's coverage of the Dubai World Cup (1-2:30 p.m. ET).

The UAE Derby features Triple Crown nominee GIOVANNI BOLDINI (Aidan O'Brien) in his 3YO debut. The Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf runner-up is a West Virginia-bred by War Front with plenty of American pedigree to try the roses if the Coolmore clan once again is successful in this Tapeta surface showcase. A strong effort Saturday likely sends GIOVANNI BOLDINI back to his native land for a run at our Derby.

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- Florida Derby - (Saturday/Gulfstream Park)



Since Barbaro's ascension to Derby glory in 2006, Gulfstream Park has been the place to be for the Florida Derby. A training colony already shifting toward more time between races – but with a fear of doing so for the grueling demands of the Kentucky Derby – took the Barbaro "example" and embraced its agenda. Now, five weeks out from Derby Day has a preferred circle on the calendar.

Triple Crown hits continued after Barbaro for the Florida Derby with Big Brown and Da'Tara sweeping 2008, as well as three straight seasons of "crowning" alumni like Shackelford (2011 Preakness), Union Rags (2012 Belmont) and Orb (2013 Kentucky Derby).

This year's royalty, pun intended, includes CAIRO PRINCE (Kiaran McLaughlin), a legitimate pre-race favorite who is a nose away from perfection. His G2 Holy Bull win on Jan. 25 checked all the boxes you're looking for and even got some subsequent boost when third-place finisher INTENSE HOLIDAY (Todd Pletcher) returned to win the G2 Risen Star at Fair Grounds. {More on that rival later in the Louisiana Derby preview.}

McLaughlin's goal sits on the first Saturday in May and he quickly patterned CAIRO PRINCE's season to land on that date. He's won a Belmont with Jazil and was second in the '05 Derby with Closing Argument, so McLaughlin has a sense of what may or may not drain the lemon of a 3YO. He's been judicious in his planning of CAIRO PRINCE, not because he's had to, but because he feels this could be his "one." The points race for a Derby starting bid is kind of moot in my opinion, as a top three finish likely secures you a place in the starting gate at Churchill – and if you're not in the top three here, no one should feel jipped.

On the off chance a troubled trip keeps a horse like CAIRO PRINCE out of the top 2-3 on Saturday, and thus he misses the Kentucky Derby due to points, anyone with a sense of reason can point to bypassing the Fountain of Youth as a legitimate reason for why you

missed the big Derby. Even if a trainer demands fewer races, then why wouldn't you have started your season in the Fountain of Youth where running 3rd was akin to 1st the Holy Bull (10 points)? Everyone knew the schedule.

Anticipating trainer intent, I do not think CAIRO PRINCE will be 100 percent knuckled-down on for the Florida Derby. He recently was purchased (majority interest) by Godolphin to win the Kentucky Derby, not the Florida Derby, although it's certainly not an afterthought race in prestige or purse. McLaughlin has had a steadfast plan all year even before the sale. The handicapping question you must assess for Saturday is this: Does CAIRO PRINCE win this race giving 80-90% of his best? If you answer "yes," he is your Florida Derby choice.

CAIRO PRINCE at 80-90% has every chance and right to win Saturday at 1 1/8 miles. He's got a bit more finish to him than principal rivals WILDCAT RED (Jose Garoffalo) and GENERAL A ROD (Mike Maker). The latter strikes me much more appealing at greater distances than the Fountain of Youth, and if WILDCAT RED were to continue succeeding at longer distances, he will do so without my money on the win end. I respect his abilities, but we are separating high-quality horses who have had scant margins between them in exchanging victories. I don't see how you could adamantly prefer WILDCAT RED to GENERAL A ROD at any distance given their past match-ups. But at extended distances, I truly have GENERAL A ROD projected solidly ahead of the two.

The eight-horse field includes unbeaten CONSTITUTION (Todd Pletcher) trying to go the Big Brown route of maiden-allowance-Florida Derby in three starts. His allowance win on the Fountain of Youth undercard stacked up comparatively well in both time and level of competition as several stakes-caliber foes were in that heat. His three works since the Feb. 22 allowance are considerably slower than those he had before that last victory, and there's some handicapper's intuition here that perhaps he didn't come out of the race blossoming. Fair odds against three proven stakes horses on the circuit make him about 6-1 in my eyes for the Florida Derby, so adjust accordingly.

Outside of those already mentioned, I would be surprised to see any of the remaining quartet in the exacta on Saturday. SPOT (Nick Zito) has the distance pedigree, but lacks distance

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experience and it's hard to embrace his Swale win four weeks ago the way heavily favored NO NAY NEVER (Wesley Ward) failed to show fight. MATADOR (Mark Casse) adds blinkers, but still may need the more brilliant types to duel each other into submission in order to chug by them late. EAST HALL (Bill Kaplan) falls into a similar scenario, while ALLSTAR (Marcus Vitali) offers nothing on his resume predicting success against this line-up.

I feel strongly that GENERAL A ROD turns the tables on WILDCAT RED, and hopeful that it's enough to hold off a much-respected CAIRO PRINCE to the wire. It's a two-horse race for me in multi-race wagers, and the win-end value should certainly be with GENERAL A ROD in the neighborhood of 4-1.

Get more historical trends and significance on the Florida Derby by visiting page 98 of the Countdown to the Crown Preseason Annual simply by [clicking this link](#).

Florida Derby selections:

W) GENERAL A ROD; P) CAIRO PRINCE;
S) WILDCAT RED.

- Louisiana Derby - (Saturday/Fair Grounds)



A nose separated INTENSE HOLIDAY (Todd Pletcher) and ALBANO (Larry Jones) in the G2 Risen Star at Fair Grounds last month, and in Saturday's \$1 million G2 Louisiana Derby, eight rivals literally stand between the two. That's because the principal players in this drama drew the far inside and outside posts in a field of 10, which includes one very important new shooter to the local scene.

IN TROUBLE (Tony Dutrow) will try to emulate last year's Louisiana Derby winner Revolutionary, an Aqueduct winter success story who trained out of Florida and picked the right spot for his final Derby prep. If he's successful, he will have to knock off no less than seven alumni of the Risen Star who have experience over the track.

Five of the last seven Louisiana Derby winners had competed in the Risen Star, so last year's

score by Revolutionary proved more recent exception than norm. Further dissection of the Risen Star makes perfect sense here, given the totality of alumni returning and its historical significance to the Louisiana Derby results.

The Risen Star's quality took a positive push when fourth-place finisher HOPPERTUNITY (Bob Baffert) came back to win a very strong edition of the G2 Rebel at Oaklawn. And since then, Risen Star winner INTENSE HOLIDAY has worked considerably stronger than was his norm going into previous starts. It's a sign of a horse getting really good at the right time. Trainer Pletcher has won 2 of the 4 editions of the Louisiana Derby since this race was moved on the calendar and pin-pointed as a final Derby prep and not a one-off steppingstone.

VICAR'S IN TROUBLE (Mike Maker) flashed brilliance in the Lecomte and then disappointed when third as the Risen Star favorite. Since then, he's dealt with a foot abscess and was moved to trainer Maker's barn in Florida for closer scrutiny. The goal was to make an easier date in the Sunland Derby, but the foot didn't cooperate and he's sent back to Fair Grounds under less-than-you'd-like circumstances. He's a wonderful talent when on his game; I just don't have confidence that the calendar and best health are working together.

Of the three newcomers to the Louisiana Derby, two have early speed – IN TROUBLE and LOUIES FLOWER (Bret Calhoun – meaning the pace dynamic will not get any easier for a wide-drawn ALBANO. Add in the fact that speedy RISE UP (Tom Amoss) is adding blinkers and could be an early missile. The steady tempo ALBANO pounded out in the Risen Star from the rail will be difficult to replay.

The new pace presences should make the task for late-running INTENSE HOLIDAY even more conducive than what he was able to accomplish in the Risen Star. And it's not like INTENSE HOLIDAY needed any additional help.

The pace and his recent progress make INTENSE HOLIDAY the horse to beat, while we will show legitimate respect to the invading IN TROUBLE as well in multi-race wagers. It's a two-deep proposition.

IN TROUBLE could have run in the Florida Derby from his nearby Palm Meadows stall, or awaited a return trip to Aqueduct for next

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Saturday's Wood Memorial. But the shrewd Dutrow looked at this spot as the easier of the three, given the announcement of hot shot SOCIAL INCLUSION (Manny Azpurua) heading to the Wood. Dutrow is a very measured trainer in terms of placement and holds an ownership stake in many of the horses he runs, including IN TROUBLE. His choice to come to Fair Grounds demands attention and respect, and lest we forget his only other foray into this race came in 2010 when A Little Warm led nearly every jump at 6-1 only to be nailed late by Mission Impazible.

Get more historical trends and significance on the Louisiana Derby by visiting page 100 of the Countdown to the Crown Preseason Annual simply by [clicking this link](#).

Sunland Derby selections:

W) INTENSE HOLIDAY; P) IN TROUBLE;
S) ALBANO.

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We keep ourselves honest here all season long with our most recent and cumulative stats for top choices (starts: wins-second-third).

WE MISS ARTIE delivered as a top choice winner in the Spiral Stakes, while top pick COMMISSIONER was a distant third in the Sunland Derby to our second choice CHITU. We'll take it after a slow stakes season.

Last week's selections: 2: 1-0-1
Season selections: 26: 4-6-5.

HPNOW BUZZ

Get Jeremy's best bets on top 3-year-old races – as well as national horses to watch daily from our respected team of handicappers – in the BUZZ report!

Everyone's a Critic

This section reviews the week that was in the 3-year-old ranks. As with our preview section, now that we're in March, it takes an exceptional performance or noteworthy tie to include maiden or allowance races.

Stakes Races



Saturday's G3 \$550,000 Spiral Stakes at Turfway did not venture too far off script. For the sixth time in the last seven years, the winner of this race had exited some winter experience on the Gulfstream Park turf course, as G1-winning Polytrack performer WE MISS ARTIE (Todd Pletcher) scored the second big check of his career over the synthetics.

While the plot sounded plausible enough, the cliffhanger ending hardly was foreshadowed. WE MISS ARTIE looked to be destined for the show dough in deep stretch. HARRY'S HOLIDAY (Mike Maker) and COASTLINE (Mark Casse) appeared to have the winner's share to their personal stretch duel, but Hall of Fame jockey John Velazquez managed a final surge out of WE MISS ARTIE to score by the narrowest of margins as three noses hit the wire as one.

The Spiral featured great theatrics at the end, but won't compete for best picture with most handicappers. Bottom line: it was slow. The final time for 1 1/8 miles of 1:52.26 won't inspire those seeking big numbers, and the splits didn't fly home late like you'd hope to accompany that visual move. The Spiral elapsed in 22.78, 24.43, 25.22, 26.16 and 13.67 – slowing each fraction much like you see on dirt. That 39.83 final three furlongs came with no one firing a big shot from the back of the pack, a concerning factor to the quality of the field.

Obviously the closer most conspicuously absent from factoring was post-time favorite TAMARANDO (Jerry Hollendorfer), winner of the G3 El Camino Real Derby in February. He was lethargic early and offered little late, beaten 11 1/2 lengths in eighth. He's run well on Polytrack and Tapeta out west, so it's hard to

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strictly blame the track – though the powdery kickback didn't invite those in the back of the pack to run through it. Timing-wise, he could run back in the Blue Grass and try to make amends – but it was such a woeful effort Saturday that you'd want to see something of a spark before reinvesting – a sharp workout, a tremendous pre-race look in the paddock, etc.

The solid performance by COASTLINE was a positive nod to the Oaklawn 3YO cast as that runner had been chasing TAPITURE (Steve Asmussen), STRONG MANDATE (D. Wayne Lukas) and RIDE ON CURLIN (Bill Gowan) in the south. While changing surfaces from dirt to Polytrack is not an apples to apples class comparison, per se, the important match-up here is that COASTLINE had been proven on Polytrack in the past, showed similar good form on dirt, and then transitioned back to synthetic while holding his form. He seems to be a pretty true horse and fair-enough measuring stick. Put it this way: You don't like the Oaklawn horses any less after seeing the Spiral. If you liked them before, this didn't dent your appreciation.

The Blue Grass makes perfect sense for HARRY'S HOLIDAY and COASTLINE to wheel back and give it another go. Both ran commendable in defeat for respected barns that support the Keeneland program. The Blue Grass is shaping up to be a tougher test, however. That duo looks eerily similar in terms of resume, pedigree and projection as effective, second-tier stakes performers in Derbies not named Kentucky.

Don't expect to see WE MISS ARTIE in the Blue Grass. With points secure for the Kentucky Derby, and being eligible for the Queen's Plate in Canada on July 6, look for owner Ken Ramsey to make those priorities 1 and 2 on the agenda. Plus, Ramsey would love to get stablemate BOBBY'S KITTEN (Chad Brown) to the Kentucky Derby via the Blue Grass.

WE MISS ARTIE's dirt resume leaves serious questions and almost assures he will be a large price in Louisville...even with Ramsey's sizeable win wager likely to come. His Breeders' Cup Juvenile effort was better than it looks on paper. He was a looming large third with 200 yards to run after chasing a fast dirt pace and certainly did not lose because he failed to handle the track. In the Fountain of Youth, he chased a fast pace and ran the fastest third-quarter internal split of any horse in the

race before fading late. WE MISS ARTIE's problem may not be the dirt, but rather a dirt-like pace. He's just not super-fast to keep up and that compromises him late against top dirt horses. In the Spiral, where the pace already had started slowing on the backstretch, he gets invited to the party. As a Kentucky Derby prospect, he would have to be ridden from farther back than his usual pace placement and try to make one run. His history shows to me he can handle the footing, but not if he's running 46-:47 to keep in contention. The likelihood of getting that kind of trip in the Derby and him grinding by is a long shot for this maternal grandson of 2000 winner Fusaichi Pegasus. But he's earned the chance and belongs among the 20-best still assembled May 3.

Among the others, ASSERTING BEAR (Reade Baker) appears a solid Queen's Plate contender who is rounding nicely into his form cycle after a winter break. BIG BAZINGA (Katerina Vassilieva) would do best to find a comfortable running style and stick with it. He was an even fifth in the Spiral and appears to be a cut below the better 3YOs. ALMOST FAMOUS (Patrick Byrne) outran his sprint mama's genes – Wild Gams – at 2, but that's clearly caught up with him now. He can be an effective sprinter on the turn-back this spring-summer.

Get more historical trends and significance on the Spiral Stakes by visiting page 96 of the Countdown to the Crown Preseason Annual simply by [clicking this link](#).



Sunday's G3 \$800,000 Sunland Derby provided a huge payday for Bob Baffert as his stablemates CHITU and MIDNIGHT HAWK duked it out through the stretch. The California couple ran well clear of the rest, stopped the clock in a fast time and were the top two wagering choices from the public.

Yet, still, I didn't care all that much for it.

Sunland produces fast times and it takes some discipline to divorce yourself from that fact. Whether we're talking speed figures for

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Thoroughbreds, or figs and/or Speed Indices for Quarter Horses, I've always had a hard time accepting the numbers that come from this circuit. They're simply just too fast for what the eyeballs and commonsense argue.

Pacemaker GAREN (Peter Miller) folded just beyond six furlongs and the race belonged to CHITU and MIDNIGHT HAWK. The splits were 23.24, 23.22, 23.14, 24.98 and 13.30 for 1 1/8 miles in a rapid 1:47.88. The final three furlongs were 38.28, borderline okay for as quick as the track plays, but visually these two were all over each other and void of any leg reach-out. The up-and-down action did not impress, nor an inability to run straight. They were tired hombres. MIDNIGHT HAWK continues to show me that he wants no part of a classic distance. He's a sharp middle-distance runner, but not for the Triple Crown.

CHITU might be as physically imposing as any horse on the trail. He's a brick house with a big back engine. By sprinter Henny Hughes, he gets stamina on the damside so I do think he can outrun some of those concerns. He's a promising horse coming along at the right time, but maybe not quite ready for the prime time of the big Derby. He's earned the chance and one I'd love to see train up to the Derby and how he's doing.

COMMISSIONER (Todd Pletcher) was a distant third and continued a cold hand of Sunland Derby shippers for the barn. WinStar Farm once sponsored the Sunland Derby, so I appreciate the venture and felt he could win this race on talent if the pace came back to him. It did slow, and yet he still couldn't really make up any significant ground. COMMISSIONER had a rough start and probably was farther back than expected, but he's a grinder and would not keep pace with these west coasters on the front end and punch with anything late regardless. He's a one-gear type who fits better in the Triple Crown than he does on the trail, but he's in danger of missing the Kentucky Derby on points.

We will see COMMISSIONER back on 3 weeks' rest for the Arkansas Derby in a Palace Malice-type of attempt from a year ago. Surely WinStar wants to make the Derby field, and the Belmont Stakes figures to be the real, eye-balled goal. Mike Smith, rider of Palace Malice, has been booked for the Arkansas Derby.

The other takeaway from the Sunland Derby could be the regional debate leaning toward California. The west coast ran 1-2 here over the Pletcher raider from Florida as well as a pair of Oaklawn shippers. And with HOPPERTUNITY (Bob Baffert) already having shipped to win Oaklawn's G2 Rebel, the west appears to be holding a pretty decent hand – especially at the top with CANDY BOY (John Sadler) and CALIFORNIA CHROME (Art Sherman).

Get more historical trends and significance on the Sunland Derby by visiting page 97 of the Countdown to the Crown Preseason Annual simply by [clicking this link](#).

Minor Stakes

BREWING (D. Wayne Lukas) likely earned a shot in a graded stakes sprint next by thrashing a decent field in Saturday's six-furlong Gazebo Stakes at Oaklawn. He would make a lot of sense in the G3 Derby Trial at a mile and/or the Chick Lang Stakes on the Preakness undercard, eyeing the G2 \$500,000 Woody Stephens at Belmont.

Allowance Races

Another big-time stakes sprinter to watch from the south, GLACKEN TOO (Bret Calhoun), notched his second straight win when wiring Oaklawn ALW foes Sunday. The Fair Grounds invader had chased serious company in New Orleans before a breakout win preceded this road trip. And Monday's 1-9 Parx obliteration by FAVORITE TALE (Lupe Preciado) continued a dominant sprint season for one of *Countdown's* favorite 3YO dashers. I'm hoping to see him on the Preakness undercard.

Maiden Races

Unbeaten Wood Memorial hopeful SOCIAL INCLUSION (Manny Azpurua) saw his limited form flattered a bit Saturday when 1-5 favorite TIGER TANK (Tony Dutrow) returned to dispatch a soft cast of MSW sprinters at Aqueduct by 4 lengths.

If you're hoping BIG TIRE (MARK GLATT) is the new shooter to watch in the G1 Santa Anita Derby, you could not have liked the results of Sunday's opener at Santa Anita. The MSW route saw short-priced alumni of BIG TIRE'S maiden win come back to fail in RPRETTYBOYFLOYD (Denise Breuer) and PARTY TIME (Bob Baffert).

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Where Are They Headed?

This section projects the fields for upcoming key 3YO preps. The lists are a mixture of announced intentions and projected fits of races that would/could work well for particular runners – and is not intended to be a definitive resource from track racing offices, though in some cases racing departments are consulted.

SANTA ANITA DERBY (SA, 4/5): CANDY BOY, CALIFORNIA CHROME, HOPPERTUNITY, DUBLIN UP, BIG TIRE, FRIENDS WITH KMILL, THE ADMIRAL, SCHOOLOFHARDROCKS (possible), BAYERN (or likely Ark Derby).

WOOD (AQU, 4/5): SAMRAAT, UNCLE SIGH, IN, NOBLE MOON, SOCIAL INCLUSION, TONALIST, KRISTO, EFFINEX, FINANCIAL MOGUL (or Blue Grass), VINCEREMOS, KID CRUZ, HARPOON (possible).

BLUE GRASS (KEE, 4/12): GALA AWARD, BOBBY'S KITTEN, MEDAL COUNT, CONQUEST TITAN (or Arkansas Derby), MR SPEAKER, STORMING INTI, FINANCIAL MOGUL (or Wood), DANCE WITH FATE, GLOBAL VIEW, CAN'THELPBELIEVING, DIVINE OATH.

ARKANSAS DERBY (OP, 4/12): TAPITURE, STRONG MANDATE, RIDE ON CURLIN, CLASS LEADER, CONQUEST TITAN (or Blue Grass), BAYERN (or SA Derby), COMMISSIONER

Just Wynn, Baby



Full Wynn Las Vegas Derby odds here.

With the fourth and final pari-mutuel Kentucky Derby Future Wager offered by Churchill Downs this weekend, smart shoppers with access to Vegas will be looking to compare prices with the Wynn odds.

CAIRO PRINCE (7-1) and CALIFORNIA CHROME (8-1) continue as updated favorites at Wynn this week. Interesting to see HOPPERTUNITY (14-1) as solidly bet as he is, but TAPITURE (12-1) still a shade lower after their Rebel dust-up.

IN TROUBLE (40-1) might be a good time to buy before the Louisiana Derby if you like him. CHITU (20-1) dropped after his Sunland Derby score.

When visiting Vegas, no one takes better care of players than John Avello and staff at Wynn. Stop by and tell them *Countdown* sent you!

High Fives

Jeremy Plonk's Top-5 rated performances by class so far this season (Dec. 26-present).

NOTE: *Maidens & Allowances no longer being updated for the season.*

Stakes Race

1. CALIFORNIA CHROME (San Felipe, 3/8)
2. CANDY BOY (Lewis Memorial, SA, 2/8)
3. CAIRO PRINCE (Holy Bull, GP, 1/25)
4. HOPPERTUNITY (Rebel, OP 3/14)
5. TAPITURE (Southwest, OP, 2/17)

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Jeremy Plonk's Top 20

Each horse name links to his Equibase.com biography and stats page.

1	<u>CANDY BOY</u> Trainer: John Sadler Winter Home: Santa Anita (Cal.) 6F work 1:12.80 Saturday for SA Derby.	11	<u>IN TROUBLE</u> Trainer: Tony Dutrow Winter Home: Palm Meadows (Fla.) Like the placement for La Derby roadie.
2	<u>CAIRO PRINCE</u> Trainer: Kiaran McLaughlin Winter Home: Palm Meadows (Fla.) Even if not cranked, strong run likely Sat.	12	<u>CHITU</u> Trainer: Bob Baffert Winter Home: Santa Anita (CA) Labeled bit in Sun Derby, but a specimen.
3	<u>CALIFORNIA CHROME</u> Trainer: Art Sherman Winter Home: Los Alamitos (Cal.) 4F in 47.40 at Los Al this past Saturday.	13	<u>COMMISSIONER</u> Trainer: Todd Pletcher Winter Home: Palm Meadows (Fla.) Grinder earns way in via Ark Derby top 3.
4	<u>HOPPERTUNITY</u> Trainer: Bob Baffert Winter Home: Santa Anita (Cal.) Staying home for SA Derby w/ points set.	14	<u>RING WEEKEND</u> Trainer: Graham Motion Winter Home: Palm Meadows (Fla.) Calder Derby keeps him fit without taxing.
5	<u>TAPITURE</u> Trainer: Steve Asmussen Winter Home: now based Oaklawn (Ark.) Pressure gets very intense on this barn.	15	<u>SOCIAL INCLUSION</u> Trainer: Manny Azpurua Winter Home: Gulfstream Park (Fla.) Sale drama, but real story is Wood result.
6	<u>GENERAL A ROD</u> Trainer: Mike Maker Winter Home: Gulfstream Park (Fla.) Set on "go" for a possible breakout Sat.	16	<u>UNCLE SIGH</u> Trainer: Gary Contessa Winter Home: Belmont Park (NY) 6F in 1:15.20 on Tues; hotter Wood pace.
7	<u>INTENSE HOLIDAY</u> Trainer: Todd Pletcher Winter Home: Palm Meadows Unless In Trouble freaks, La Derby is his.	17	<u>WE MISS ARTIE</u> Trainer: Todd Pletcher Winter Home: Palm Meadows (Fla.) Well-managed campaign; earned his way.
8	<u>STRONG MANDATE</u> Trainer: D. Wayne Lukas Winter Home: Oaklawn Park (Ark.) Top 3 in Ark Derby keeps him on target.	18	<u>WILDCAT RED</u> Trainer: Jose Garoffalo Winter Home: Gulfstream Park (Fla.) Speedball doesn't need to win Fla Derby.
9	<u>BOBBY'S KITTEN</u> Trainer: Chad Brown Winter Home: Palm Meadows (Fla.) Looking like a heavy Blue Grass favorite.	19	<u>DIVINE OATH</u> Trainer: Todd Pletcher Winter Home: Palm Meadows (Fla.) Serious late player in Blue Grass to watch.
10	<u>SAMRAAT</u> Trainer: Rick Violette Winter Home: Palm Meadows (Fla.) Stamina 1M drill last Sat awaiting Wood.	20	<u>BAYERN</u> Trainer: Bob Baffert Winter Home: Santa Anita (CA) Great dilemma of talent vs. circumstances.