

Today's Churchill Downs Hot List fullcard selections

Saturday, May 4, 2024

Kentucky Derby Day

By Bob Ehalt and Matt Shifman

Hot List Key:

A: A preferred horse to watch **B:** Secondary horse to watch

***C:** Went down 2 or more betting notches and finished 1st through 3rd

***D:** Went down 2 or more betting notches and finished 4th or worst

***** - 4 or more betting notches if 11-1 or more.

1st race – (2) **Pure Force** is a firster from Cox who seems ready for a big effort. (1) Evan On Earth has some speed that will be useful from the rail. (7) Culprit may shine on dirt. (6) House United had a useful debut when fourth. Adds blinkers today.

2nd race – (6) **Scylla** disappointed in a stakes but should rebound here. (8) Coppa Girl never recovered from a slow start. Gets a second chance here. (4) Steel Racer could be tough to catch in this field. (11) Victorious is a threat on her best try.

3rd race - (11) **Midframe** looked awesome in a maiden win and gets the nod here. (2) Cornishman is another maiden winner who seems to have a bright future. (9) Invigorated also exits a nice debut win for Pletcher. (6) Nullify is on an upward swing.

4th race – (6) **Best Actor** has been running in graded stakes and has a class edge. (11) Oscar Eclipse can be a threat from the outside post. (8) Strava is a threat on his best try. (7) Kupuna fits in nicely here.

5th race – The Twin Spires Turf Sprint (G2) - (7) **Our Shot** was hurt by a wide trip last time. Can make amends here. (8) Mischief Magic was second in the Shakertown and is the one to fear. (10) Big Invasion may have needed his last start. Cannot be ignored. (12) Arrest Me Red usually brings home a check.

6th race – The Derby City Distaff (G1) - (10) **Vahva** rallied a bit too late in her 2024 debut. Benefits from that effort and prevails here. (7) Alva Star beat the top pick last time and is the one to fear. (9) Red Carpet Ready is undefeated at Churchill and deserves serious respect. (5) Spirit Wind has enough speed to be main contender.

7th race – The Churchill Distaff Turf Mile (G2) - (3) **Chili Flag** was a game winner of the Honey Fox and looks like the one to beat here. (6) Delahaye seeks a fourth straight win and should get a close look. (1) Ag Bullet has the rail and may hang around until the end. (11) Coppice could figure in the outcome in her US debut.

8th race – The Pat Day Mile (G2) - (12) **Nash** should be well-suited by the mile distance. (8) Top Conor will appreciate the shorter distance. (11) Vlahos looked like a future star in a debut win. (9) Frosty Indulgence can take a step forward off his last try.

9th race – The American Turf Stakes (G2) – (5) **Legend of Time** won his last three starts in Dubai and should be difficult to beat here. (12) Abrumar could be tough to catch if he can get away with soft fractions. (11) Cugino missed by a nose and should be battling to the wire here. (9) Noted will welcome a return to turf.

10th race – The Churchill Downs Stakes (G1) - (3) **Bo Cruz** comes off a nice win in the Commonwealth and add another win here. (2) Tejano Twist was second in his last three starts and can complete the exacta again. (10) Gun Pilot is on the upswing after a good second in an Oaklawn stakes. (7) Track Mate is worth a look in his stakes debut.

11th race – The Turf Classic (G1) - (6) **I'm Very Busy** was a powerful winner of the Muniz at Fair Grounds and can handle this group. (11) Naval Power will be a force here if he gets smooth sailing from the outside post. (1) Integration will be helped by a ground-saving trip. (5) Program Trading seems on edge for his 4-year-old debut.

12th race – The Kentucky Derby (G1) - (2) **Sierra Leone** should be able to handle the distance and figures to get a nice pace to soften the early leaders. Looks best if he can avoid getting shuffled back at the start. (17) Fierceness won the Florida Derby by a pole and will be hard to beat off a similar effort. But there's a good chance he may bounce a bit. (11) Forever Young may be the one to finally give Japan a Kentucky Derby win. (6) Just Steel was second best in the Arkansas Derby and seems to be getting good at the right time.

13th race – (2) **Discreet Mischief** romped in a maiden win and should continue his winning ways. (9) General Partner showed great promise at 2 until he flopped in the Breeders' Cup. (13) Pirate can move forward off a helpful 2024 debut. (7) Jefferson Street is a good possibility in this field.

14th race – (1) **Dive Bomber** has been working sharply for her first start since September and can win off the layoff. (10) Military Cruiser has been registering bullet works for his debut. (3) Gun Party belongs in the exotics. (5) Code Word could perk up here.