



Keeneland

Tips and Trends for Betting Keeneland's Fall 2025 Meet

by Noel Michaels

Fall racing returns to Keeneland Race Course as the annual October season opens for its 17-raceday meet running from Friday, Oct. 3 to Saturday, Oct. 25. Keeneland will attract big fields and quality horses offering something for every kind of horseplayer including top 2-year-old racing, great turf racing, and top-rung competition at all levels, and good-value wagering coming from the heart of bluegrass country in Lexington, Ky.

Keeneland's 22 fall stakes races will offer combined purses of \$10.85 million, making it the most lucrative meet in Keeneland's history. The meet will include six Grade 1 races – five of which are run on opening Fall Stars Weekend, Oct. 3-5. The Keeneland fall meet also will be extremely important in terms of the Breeders' Cup with Fall Stars Weekend hosting eight Breeders' Cup Challenge Series "Win and You're In" races. As good as Keeneland's opening weekend will be, there will be an entire meet of incredible racing and wagering for fans and handicappers to enjoy throughout the entire meet. Let's take a look at some factors that can help you make winning bets at Keeneland this fall.

Keeneland Fall Meet Jockeys to Watch

The big news in the Keeneland jock's room this fall is that Irad Ortiz Jr. has moved his tack to Kentucky for the fall season. He rode at the Churchill Downs September meet and racked-up 23 wins (27%) to finish second in the Churchill standings. Expect more of the same this season at Keeneland with a potentially big shake-up atop the leaderboard.

The jockey title at last year's corresponding 2024 Keeneland fall meet was won by Tyler Gaffalione, who just won the Churchill September jockey title with 26 wins (25%). Gaffalione beat Luis Saez atop the 2024 Keeneland leaderboard for the second straight fall season with 24 wins with Saez not far behind tallying 20 wins. Those results were very similar to the top of the 2023 standings when Gaffalione won that year's riding title with 25 winners to 20 wins for Saez. Saez won the 2022 Keeneland fall meet title, 21 wins to 20, over Gaffalione.

Other leading jockeys at last year's fall meet all will be riding at Keeneland to varying degrees in fall 2025 except when they have stakes assignments out of town. Jose Ortiz will mostly be concentrating his efforts at Keeneland this season and will have a good chance to add to his 17-win total from last fall. Flavien Prat finished in a tie for fourth with Irad Ortiz at Keeneland in the fall of 2024, but Prat mainly will race in New York this fall. More jockeys that will win a bunch of races at Keeneland this season will include Florent Geroux (eight wins in 2024, six wins in 2023, 12 wins in 2022), Frankie Dettori (eight-for-44, 18% in fall 2024), and Corey Lanerie (seven-for-39, 18%). Brian Hernandez Jr. is injured and will miss the entire meet.

Keeneland Fall Leading Trainer Trends

Brad Cox ran away with the training title at last year's corresponding Keeneland fall meet with 14 winners from 37 starters for 38%. His monster 2024 season marked an improvement even from Cox's 2023 fall meet where he won the title with 13 winners. He also took the title in 2022 with 11 wins. Chad Brown was much quieter at Keeneland last fall with a record of just 3-for-27 (11%) after a lot of success at Keeneland in the fall of 2023 when he posted seven winners from 23 starters. Most of his top horses are sent to Belmont at the Big A but he's still dangerous at the times when his horses do appear at Keeneland. Also backing away from Keeneland's fall meet last year was Todd Pletcher, who had six wins at this meet in 2023 and 10 wins in 2022 but was just 1-for-12 at Keeneland's fall meet last year.

If it's not going to be Pletcher or Brown, who will be the next winningest trainers behind Cox at Keeneland this season? There are several contenders. Wesley Ward finished fifth last fall with seven winners from 30 starters (23%). Rodolphe Brisset had a dynamite fall season in 2024 when he won nine races from 20 starters for a huge 45%, so he's one trainer in particular who probably has geared up for a big season in 2025. Brendan Walsh and Rusty Arnold were tied for third on the 2024 Keeneland fall leaderboard with eight wins each. For Arnold, last season marked a remarkable positive turnaround from the previous two fall meets when his records were 0-for-22 in 2023 and 1-for-26 in 2022. Some of the other trainers who earned high win percentages at last year's Keeneland fall meet included Cherie DeVaux (5-for-18, 28%), Eddie Kenneally (5-for-22, 23%), Brian Lynch (4-for-15, 27%), and Christopher Davis (4-for-10, 40%). Also note that David Jacobson is coming off an excellent September meet at Churchill where he won eight races from 30 starters (27%) to place second in the standings.

Handicappers also might be interested to know something about the barns who had highly disappointing Keeneland seasons in fall 2024. That group included a lot of trainers you'd be surprised to find on this list such as Ian Wilkes (0-for-24), Bill Mott (0-for-16), Robert Medina (0-for-15), Mark Casse (0-for-10), and Kelsey Danner (0-for-15).

Keeneland Main Track Winning Trends

Let's start by looking at sprints in order to find the preferred Keeneland main track running styles. In dirt sprints, Keeneland is definitely one of the tracks where you don't want to bet on horses trying to come from too far off the pace. Horses benefit by staying within four lengths of the front, and speed horses on the lead or within a length of the pace have the best chances to win.

In 136 dirt sprints run at the last two Keeneland meets (2024 fall meet and 2025 spring meet), 71 were won by horses on or close to the pace accounting for 52% of the winners. Stalkers won 43 times accounting for 32% of the dirt sprint wins. Late runners closing from four or more lengths off the pace won only 22 races accounting for 16%. With an average dirt sprint field size of 8.61 runners per race, there was little or no favoritism in terms of inside, middle, or outside post positions.

Dirt routes at Keeneland over the course of the last year have also been fair in terms of post positions with an average field size of 8.19 runners per race. As with sprints, an analysis of the preferred running styles in dirt routes also shows heavy front-end favoritism with the main difference between routes and sprints being that closers have better chances in routes. Horses on or close to the lead won 40 of the 70 dirt routes run the last year to account for 57%. Stalkers won 17 races accounting for 24% of the wins, and closers won 14 times to account for 20% (percentages don't add up to 100% due to one head heat for win). Based on the above stats in both main track sprints and routes, a horse's chances of winning on the Keeneland main track decrease based on how far it will be off the pace.

Keeneland Fall Turf Tips

One of the staples of the quality day-to-day racing at Keeneland is high-quality turf racing featuring full, competitive fields. The winning track profile in Keeneland turf routes generally gives a running style preference to off-the-pace horses. In 71 turf routes run at the 2024 fall and 2025 spring meets, speedy horses racing on or close to the pace won only 17 times to account for 24% of the races. Stalkers racing between one to four lengths off the pace and closers coming from four or more lengths off the pace all did well. Stalkers won 28 of the 71 races to account for 39%, and late runners won 26 times to account for 37% of the races. Turf routes had an average field size of 11 horses per race. In terms of post positions, the course has mainly played fair in turf routes for inside, middle, and outside posts over the course of the last three years combined. However, at the last two meets dating back to last fall, horses from the inside posts 1-3 did the best with 30 wins in the 71 races to account for 42% of the winners. Keeneland doesn't card as many turf sprints as most other tracks and there were only a total of 26 turf sprints run at the 2024 fall and 2025 spring meets combined. The course tended to favor outside posts in 2022 and 2023, but the more recent meets have been different with inside posts 1-3 winning 12 of the last 26 turf sprints to account for 46% of the races. Early speed horses from the inside posts, in particular, showed the best results. Hopefully these tips and trends from Keeneland can help you have a successful fall season in 2025. Enjoy the meet and best of luck.