



KY DERBY

140

STORY & PHOTOS BY: STEVE HEUERTZ



KENTUCKY DERBY 140

First there was Aristides, next Vagrant. Not far after came Hindoo and Apollo. Donerail would eventually shock the world at tremendous odds and Regret became the first girl. Exterminator used it to catapult his illustrious career. Sir Barton took a step toward wearing the first crown and eventually Gallant Fox would become his worthy successor. There was also Omaha and War Admiral, Whirlaway and Count Fleet, Assault and the iron horse, Citation. Northern Dancer would later set the record, only to be broken by the incomparable, Secretariat. Seattle Slew, Affirmed and Spectacular Bid would round out a decade for the ages before Genuine Risk and Winning Colors gave two more wins for the ladies. Then came Go For Gin, Thunder Gulch, Silver Charm, Real Quiet and Charismatic. More recently, Monarchos almost equalled Secretariat, Funny Cide carried the hopes of his unlikely owners and Smarty Jones followed in the steps of Seattle Slew. Barbaro demolished his rivals and Street Sense became the first to complete the Breeders' Cup Juvenile double. Big Brown would make his bid for a crown and Mine That Bird did his best impression of Donerail. Since then, there has been Super Saver, Animal Kingdom, I'll Have Another and most recently, Orb. All together, there are 139 of them, each different from the next but bound together by the title, Kentucky Derby winner.



L to R from Top: Trainer Billy Gowan and his Derby entry, Ride On Curlin, survey another morning at the Downs; Jockey Rosie Napravnik watches morning workouts; Observing another Derby schooling session; : Trainer Steve Asmusen walks Tapiture around the paddock ; Untapable schools in the paddock.



In the spring of 1955, a horse and boy boarded a train in California and traveled two thirds across the country. The boy, 18-year-old Art Sherman, slept in the same boxcar as his three-year-old companion, a thoroughbred racehorse named Swaps. Sherman was the exercise rider for the colt, and together they ventured toward Churchill Downs and a start in the Kentucky Derby.

Awaiting their arrival was the race favorite, Nashua. While the Derby shaped as a matchup between the best from the East, Nashua, versus the best from the West, Swaps, many discounted the chances of Swaps believing the racing in California was lesser than that of the East.



Nonetheless, Nashua and Swaps entered the Derby and were sent off as the first and second betting choices respectively. While Nashua broke best from the gate, Swaps and jockey Bill Shoemaker grabbed the lead in the first half mile. Jockey Eddie Arcaro guided Nashua a length off the pace before eventually closing the gap to 1/2 length behind Swaps. Still, they couldn't catch their West coast rival and Swaps crossed the finish line 1 1/2 lengths in front of Nashua.

Swaps became the 81st to etch his name on the list of Kentucky Derby winners. His young exercise rider, Art Sherman, had watched the race from the backstretch.

Sherman would return to the Kentucky Derby the following year with the horse, Terrang. However, unlike Swaps, Terrang finished twelfth in the Derby. Shortly thereafter Sherman began a career as a jockey and continued riding until 1976, when he transitioned to training racehorses. 38 years later and now at the age of 77, Sherman continues to train Thoroughbred racehorses in southern California, with a home base at Los Alamitos Race Course.

L to R from Top: The field is set for the 140th Kentucky Derby; Derby bling; Exercise rider Willie Delgado and California Chrome get a glimpse of the Twin Spires; Willie Delgado and California Chrome watch the morning workouts prior to galloping around the track; The iconic Twin Spires watch over another morning before the Derby; California Chrome continues his preparations to run for the roses; Arkansas Derby winner, Danza, muscles around the track; Commanding Curve jogs off the track; Watch out! Ride on Curlin can be a little mouthy.





L to R from Top: Lilies on Oaks day; Untapable dominates the 140th Kentucky Oaks with Rosie Napravnik aboard; Rosie Napravnik celebrates her second win in the Oaks.



In 2008, friends Steve Coburn and Perry Martin purchased a lightly raced mare for \$8,000. Her name was Love the Chase and she won only one of six lifetime starts. Near the time of her purchase by Coburn and Martin, someone mentioned that only a “dumbass” would buy her for that amount of money. In jest to the comment, Coburn and Martin named their racing stable “Dumbass Partners” or “DAP” for short. They further embraced the comment by branding their purple silks with a green, bucktoothed donkey on the back and “DAP” on the front.

The two apparent “dumbasses” then bred Love the Chase for a mere \$2,500 to an undistinguished California sire, Lucky Pulpit. Lucky Pulpit raced a total of 22 times, winning three. The union between he and Love the Chase yielded a combined record of four wins from 28 starts, costing a grand total of \$10,500.

Three weeks prior to the birth of their modestly priced foal, Coburn dreamed Love the Chase would produce a chestnut colt with four white socks and a white blaze. Further, he dreamed the horse would win the Kentucky Derby. On February 18, 2011, Love the Chase gave birth to a chestnut colt...with four white socks and a white blaze. The colt was named California Chrome.

With their homebred, happy, healthy and growing, Martin wrote a letter to Art Sherman, outlining a road to the Kentucky Derby and explaining DAP’s belief that Sherman and his “old school” training methods would be the right fit to continue their colt’s development. Sherman accepted. California Chrome was now stabled under the watchful eye of Swaps’ long past exercise rider and boxcar mate.

On April 26, 2013, California Chrome made his first start, a baby race of just 4 1/2 furlongs over the synthetic track at Betfair Hollywood Park. He would rally late to finish second by 1 length. On May 17, 2013, he made his second start under the same conditions and broke his maiden with a 2 3/4 length victory. He raced four more times, all in stakes competition, finishing fifth in his next, followed by his second win before a pair of disappointing sixth place efforts. Art Sherman decided to make a change.



For California Chrome’s next start in the \$200,000 King Glorious Stakes at Betfair Hollywood Park, Sherman hired jockey Victor Espinoza as the new mount for the struggling colt. An experienced rider, Espinoza’s greatest moments came over 10 years earlier when he guided the front-running, War Emblem, to victory in the 2002 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes. However, Espinoza and War Emblem failed in their bid for the Triple Crown when they finished eighth in the Belmont Stakes after breaking slowly and becoming trapped on the rail. Still, Espinoza brought the experience and ability that Sherman was looking for.

With Espinoza aboard, California Chrome won the 7 furlong King Glorious Stakes by 6 1/4 lengths to finish 2013. Next, the pair stretched out to 1 1/16 miles and won the California Cup Derby at Santa Anita by 5 1/2 lengths. Despite the dominant victories, doubters of California Chrome remained as the previous two races were restricted to California-bred horses. However, Sherman next entered the colt against open company in the San Felipe Stakes (G2) at Santa Anita, a major prep for the prestigious Santa Anita Derby (G1). This time California Chrome

Untapable



proved even more dominant, winning by a spectacular 7 1/4 lengths while stamping himself a legitimate Kentucky Derby hopeful.

With the Santa Anita Derby remaining as his last race prior to a potential start in the Kentucky Derby, Coburn and Martin received an offer of \$6 million to purchase 51% controlling interest in their \$10,500 colt. They declined the offer.

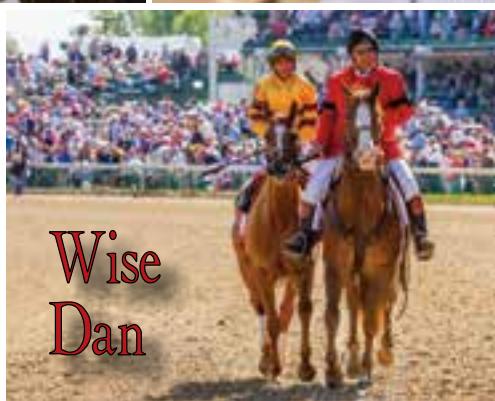
The Santa Anita Derby arrived on April 5, 2014. ‘Chrome, as he had now become affectionately known by his growing fan base entered the gate as the race favorite and took one last step toward Kentucky. After acting up a little in the starting gate and breaking a bit awkwardly, Espinoza settled California Chrome

L to R from Top: Racing around the clubhouse turn; Roses on Derby day; Hats at the Kentucky Derby remain a timeless tradition; The gigantic new display on the Churchill backside was visible to everyone at the track.



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L to R from Top: Sipping on a mint julep; 140 years of Derby run consecutively at this same venue; A couple Derby day pleasures; Reigning two-time Horse of the Year, Wise Dan, fights to the wire to win the Woodford Reserve Turn Classic with John Velazquez up; Wise Dan returns to the winner's circle with a hero's welcome; The garland of roses makes its way to the track; The stars and stripes on display prior to the Derby.



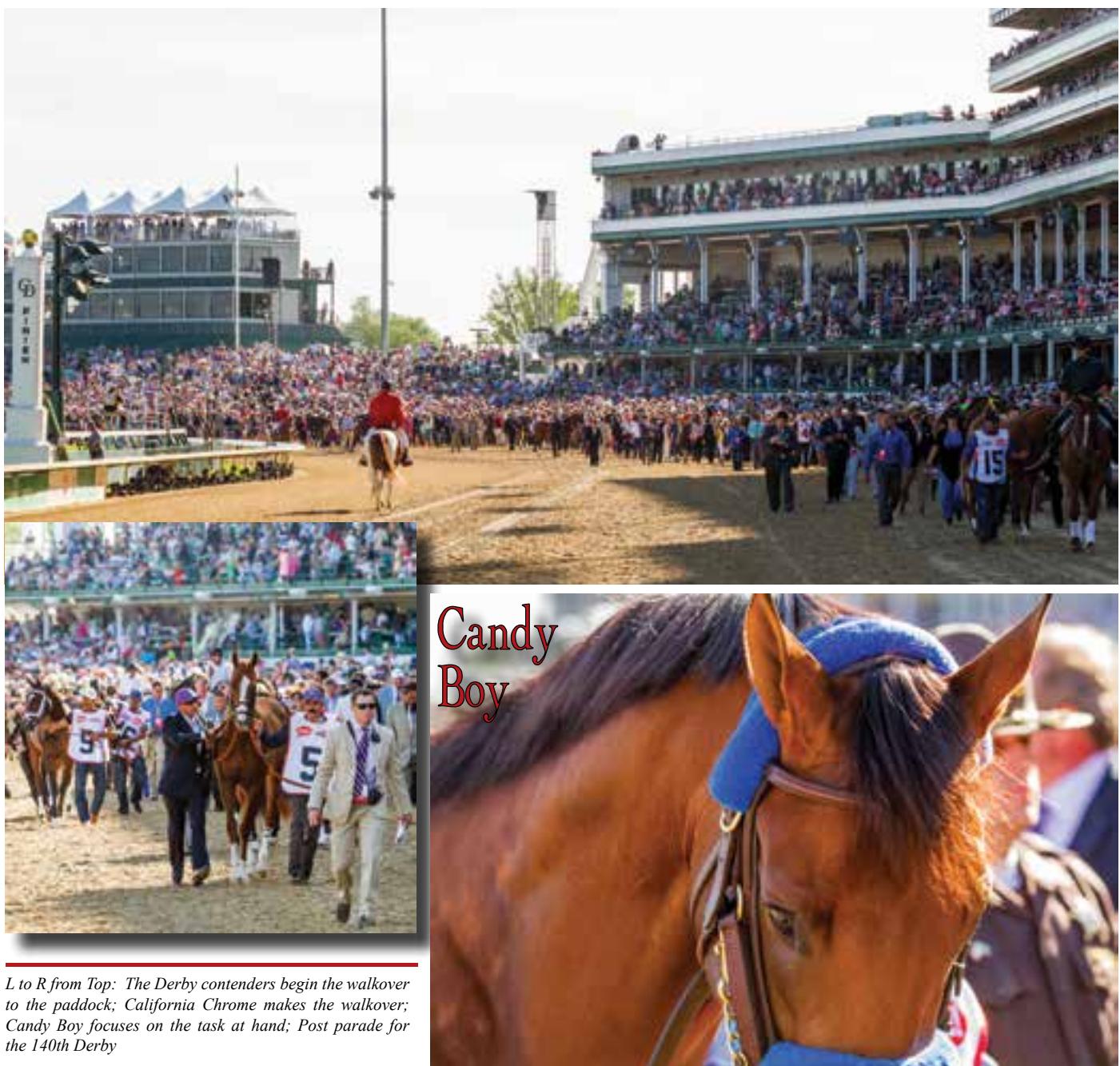
in second and just outside the pace. Around the far turn and entering the stretch, Espinoza asked ‘Chrome for more and the colt exploded to the lead in a move that had now become his signature. There were no challengers to be found. California Chrome hit the wire 5 1/4 lengths ahead of the highly regarded Hoppertunity, with another talented colt, Candy Boy, finishing third. After the dominance of the victory, there was no further question that California Chrome would leave his home state and enter Kentucky as the Derby favorite.

Finishing their major preparations at Los Alamitos, Sherman shipped California Chrome to Kentucky the week leading up to the race. Much

as was the case with Swaps in 1955, Sherman found many people continued to doubt his horse’s ability to win the Derby. Despite winning his previous four starts by a combined 24 1/4 lengths, many cited that ‘Chrome had not won a race outside of California, while others questioned the level of competition he had been running against. Further, there was the other talented Derby contenders including the stretch-running Wood Memorial (G1) victor, Wicked Strong and the up and coming Arkansas Derby (G1) winner, Danza among the California horses including Hoppertunity and Candy Boy, aiming for another crack at ‘Chrome.

However, the potential biggest question of all centered on his pedigree. Many discussed his modest bloodlines and meager \$10,500 price tag, but even further, it was significant to note that no California-bred had won the Kentucky Derby since Decidedly in 1962.

If that wasn’t enough, there remained the realities facing all Derby entrants. In a 20-horse field, traffic is inevitable and much of the race is decided by the trip afforded to any horse. Part of that trip is dependent on the post position draw. Albeit, not ideal, California Chrome drew



L to R from Top: The Derby contenders begin the walkover to the paddock; California Chrome makes the walkover; Candy Boy focuses on the task at hand; Post parade for the 140th Derby



post position 5 and was installed as the 5-2 morning line favorite. Hoppertunity drew post 11 and was listed as the second choice at 6-1, but had to unfortunately scratch before the race. Wicked Strong was the third choice at 8-1 in post 20, while Danza was the fourth choice at 10-1 from post 4.

20 horses entered the Derby and 19 moved into the starting gate. While many doubters of California Chrome remained, others refused to ignore what was directly in front of them. ‘Chrome had dominated his rivals to this point and pending a clean break and good trip, he could do it again.

The gates flew open and California Chrome broke sharply, however Uncle Sigh (3) flashed from the inside and Chitu (13) from the outside to take the lead and set the pace. California Chrome settled in third and was closed in from the outside by Samraat (6). The field moved under the wire for the first time

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L to R from Top: The calvary charge races under the spires the first time; Approaching the finish line, Victor Espinoza looks back and sees no trouble for 'Chrome'; Victor Espinoza celebrates as California Chrome crosses the finish line first and wins the 140th running of the Kentucky Derby

and into the clubhouse turn. Uncle Sigh held his nose in front of Chitu to his outside and set a moderate opening fraction of 47.37 for the first 1/2 mile. The field held position along the backstretch with California Chrome clear and three wide of Uncle Sigh and Chitu with Samraat to his outside in fourth and Intense Holiday one path further out in fifth. Uncle Sigh moved through 3/4 of a mile in 1:11.80 and the field began to round the far turn. California Chrome moved for lead and challenged Uncle Sigh and Chitu from the outside. Samraat moved with him and they went four-wide exiting the turn. Victor Espinoza asked 'Chrome for his signature move at the top of the stretch and the colt responded in push-button fashion. California Chrome exploded to the lead and opened up five lengths in-between him and the tiring Chitu and Samraat. Uncle Sigh faded further back. Danza moved up from the inside before swerving out and around Samraat while Commanding Curve moved from second to last earlier in the race and set sights on California Chrome.



However, his valiant run was too late and California Chrome crossed the wire, throttling down and 1 3/4 lengths ahead of Commanding Curve. Danza was third, followed by a photo for fourth with Wicked Strong just edging out the fighting Samraat.

California Chrome completed the 1 1/4 miles in a final time of 2:03.66. While many doubters remained and pointed out the slow winning



time, it is of note that 'Chrome and the Derby field ran into a significant head wind and that this wind may have aided in drying the track prematurely, thus making it loose and more difficult to run on.

Despite the doubt, California Chrome accomplished the unthinkable. The \$10,500 home-bred colt for Dumbass Partners became the first California-bred to win the Derby since Decidedly 52 years earlier. Further, Art Sherman's career came full circle as he became the oldest winning Derby trainer at age 77, 59 years after he rode in a boxcar across the country with a horse named Swaps.

Potentially even more significant though, 'Chrome had entirely validated the dream Steve Coburn had three weeks prior to



the colt's birth. After the race, a tearful Coburn said, "I said when this horse wins the Kentucky Derby, I believe this horse will win the Triple Crown." He later continued, "this Colt, was born on my sister Brenda's birthday, February 18th. She died of cancer at age 36. It will be 36 years, this year, since there's been a Triple Crown winner, and I told people, I said this colt would go down in history, and if this colt, when he wins the Triple Crown, he will be the first California-bred to ever win a Triple Crown, and that's where we're going."

Triple Crown or not, Coburn, Sherman, Espinoza and 'Chrome will all move onto to Pimlico and the Preakness Stakes in two weeks, while leaving behind a 140th name added to that illustrious list of Kentucky Derby winners.

L to R from Top: Adorned in roses; The roses were meant for 'Chrome'; Heading back to the barn after a good day's work; Trainer Art Sherman, jockey Victor Espinoza and co-owner Steve Coburn discuss their Derby victory with California Chrome.