Handicapping Analysis
Sat May 3rd, 2025

Jim's Picks

Churchill Downs Race 12

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Analysis by Jim Miller

17 Sandman - 6-1 **19** Chunk of Gold - 30-1 **8** Journalism - 3-1 **18** Sovereignty - 5-1 **9** Burnham Square - 12-1

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I see this year's Derby as a race that has so much pace, with the potential of 6-7 horses being sent early. In all honesty, you only need two to go to ensure a hot pace upfront.

I think the pace is very quick and falls apart, leaving whomever can get the best trip from off the pace to pick up the pieces.

Giving the nod on top to 17-SANDMAN as the gray has continued to progress and could be poised for a dream trip. He got the pace that I would expect to see in the Derby during his Arkansas Derby run and took full advantage. He settled near the back early and swooped the field in the stretch. An added eighth shouldn't be an issue for him on Saturday.

The longshot play with a legit shot to contend is 19-CHUNK OF GOLD for trainer Ethan West. He has flown under the radar and will be a monster price. He has only the debut maiden score, but his last two races are even better than looks on paper. Jareth Loveberry won't be afraid of the Derby spotlight either, finishing second two years ago aboard Two Phils. The last three drills for Chunk are solid and he's going to be 50-1.

8-JOURNALISM will be the Derby favorite and should be based off the massive speed figures in his last couple. The concern is this, he has found traffic troubles in his last couple that he was able to overcome solely because of short fields. What happens if the favorite runs into traffic here and is left with 15 to catch in the lane?

18-SOVEREIGNTY will be one of the biggest beneficiaries of a quick pace. He didn't get that pace in the Florida Derby and still almost overcame it for a win. His Fountain of Youth effort was big, considering he had to close in the short stretch. Alvarado back aboard is a plus.

9-BURNHAM SQUARE looks to be a factor as well. My only real concern with him is the quicker turnaround from the delayed Bluegrass score. He's another who is steadily improving and the price should be right.

The way I would play the Derby if betting is to play both Sandman and Chunk of Gold across the board.

I would box the top five in an Exacta and trifecta. This is the one race where you don't need to spend a ton to score big. Good luck!