

SLEUTHING THE DERBY



CASE SOLVED.

George's 2013 Prediction

“A long shot, Watson, a very long shot.”

Sherlock Holmes would be challenged. The 2013 Kentucky Derby is deeply contentious. Fortunately, you are in competent hands. And, just as Sherlock Holmes parsed obscure clues to solve crimes - who murdered the horse trainer, and who kidnapped the favorite for a big race - we will together discover Saturday's winner, and no later than Sunday. One hint, if you read *Silver Blaze*, a superior racing tale of A. Conan Doyle: observe the three limping sheep.

“Oh, an old horse faker like him has many a dodge.”

Please Mr. Holmes. I'll admit to missing the mark on occasion, and have the bittersweet pleasure that *Mucho Macho Man*, my third place 2011 prediction, has since won more than a million in Florida, New York and California. Mucho is now recovering from a virus, and will hopefully win more for his backers. He developed into a grand horse, but he's history for this Saturday. A thoroughbred gets only one chance at the Derby, in his three year old year, and then is too old ever to enter again.

“All this is amusing, though rather elementary.”

If you insist, Mr. Holmes. **Overanalyze, a long shot at 15-1, will win.** Like any good mystery, the reasoning and important clues appear at the end. We will stand up to the advice of “experts”, who have studied the horses as if they were little mechanical toys, all wound up to do the same thing, over and over. We will display what they lack -- imagination.

“Were he but gifted with imagination he might rise to great heights....”

So correct, Mr. Holmes. The Inspector you described had assembled all the necessary data, but lacked that most important quality. Imagination. The workmanlike Inspector would have dawdled over these more obvious choices.



Orb. This magnificent colt won the Florida Derby by almost three lengths on March 30, beating the accomplished It's My Lucky Day. Orb will be the favorite. He has created a splendid impression in his Churchill works, has the stamina and pedigree that fit the one and one-quarter miles perfectly, and he is trained by Hall of Famer, Shug (short for Sugar) McGaughey, a 63 year old Kentuckian who has only entered one other time in the Derby and finished 10th. Shug has retained the hottest jockey in the country, Joel Rosario. His owners and longtime clients descend from the owners of US Steel and have bred and raced thoroughbreds for 100 years. What's not to like about Orb? He's not fast enough.



Goldencents. He won the Santa Anita Derby, and not with a loafing gallop at the finish after others contended. Goldencents ran fast all the way, the mark of a good horse. The figures say he may be the swiftest. His trainer, Doug O'Neil, won the Derby and the Preakness last year with I'll Have Another. Kevin Krigger is a charismatic young jockey from the Virgin Islands, who has 4 children and a father who worked in a rum factory. However, Kevin has never ridden in the Derby. His loyal trainer did not replace him with a more famous pilot. Perhaps the racing gods will smile, especially with Coach Rick Pittino owning 5%. But the Derby is a unique race, and experience counts with the 20 horse field and the quirky 1 & ¼ mile distance. Add in the fact that Goldencents gets a bit too keen in the early going, and that a notoriously wrong public handicapper, Andrew Beyer, supports Goldencents, and we will look elsewhere.



Overanalyze, the 2013 winner of the Kentucky Derby

Now, it's time to discuss the winner, and the clues.

First clue, the deceptively slow prep race: This colt won the slowest Arkansas Derby in years. But the way he did it was oh so easy. There is no point in running too fast in a prep race for the Derby. An old saying at the track is not to squeeze the lemon dry. Read carefully the last phrase in Jockey Rafael Bejarano's discussion of the race. Holmes would have been all ears.

"My horse broke really good. I placed him right behind the early speed because I didn't want to rush him. At the half-mile pole, he started to chase the horses on the lead and he kicked clear. I had a beautiful trip. Once we got to the stretch, I felt like I had a lot of horse left and saved something for the next race."

Bejarano's maturity, saving the horse for the next race while winning in what was little more than a public workout, explains the "slow time," and bodes well for this Saturday. As a horse rounds into Derby shape, the third race of the year is often the best, and that will be May 4 for Overanalyze.

Second clue, the improving speed from age two to age three. At the age of two, a thoroughbred is like a senior in high school. Six months later, at three, he is better compared with a senior in college. For the Derby, check how fast a horse was at two, and then *use imagination* to predict his top effort at three.

At the age of two, Overanalyze won three races on the tough New York circuit, and all in very fast times. On November 24, he earned an eye-popping speed figure of 104 from BRIS (Bloodstock Research Information Service). To show how fast this two year old time was, Orb's best BRIS figure, at three, is only a 102. And Goldencents' fast Santa Anita Derby a few weeks ago was a 106. How hard is it to imaging a 110 or more from Overanalyze?

Third clue, remember Mama. The traditional pedigree detectives will be clucking. The sire, Dixie Union, was better at middle distance races. This is too far for his son. I wish I had a shilling for every horse who outran his pedigree in the Derby. Ask any lady. Sires get too much credit. When I looked last, sires only provide one-half of the gene pool. The dam (mother) of Overanalyze has produced 11 stakes winners, and they do well at longer distances. Remember Mama, as we look for the less obvious clues.

Fourth clue, the trainer/jockey/owner connections.



Traditional turf detectives hate trainer **Todd Pletcher** in the Derby. Even though they bet Pletcher horses to favoritism in other races, he has become a bit of a joke for the Derby because he enters many who are not capable, but whose owners insist on the Louisville splash. This year Pletcher has entered 5 horses. That's 20% of the field from a single trainer !! He has won the Derby only once (in 2010) and it was his 24th try. So because of Todd Pletcher, who really is a very good trainer who learned as the assistant of legendary Wayne Lukas, unimaginative detectives will toss Overanalyze. Do not be one of them. Overanalyze deserves to be in this race, and he has been very well cared for by Pletcher.

Jockey **Rafael Bejarano** (from Peru) lacks boisterous star charisma. A real turf detective knows that glib conversation does not win races. Rafael is one of the best in the US, already winning 28% of his 359 races this year. On Friday, he won 4 races at Hollywood Park. Over the weekend, he won 3 of the 4 Stakes races there. He lives now in Louisville, and knows Churchill Downs intimately.

Mike Repole, the owner, is not the typical naive businessman with a checkbook on whom so many thrive in the racing industry. Mike knows his horses, and paid \$380,000 for Overanalyze as a yearling. He has won more money than most owners, and rarely overpays. As for the name:

“I really believe being an entrepreneur is not just about analyzing your business, but you need to overanalyze your business. When you overanalyze everything you do in sales, marketing, finance, operations, you don't miss anything. It's always been a term I've used in business, with people who work for me. I don't even know if it's a real word. But I think it's part of my business success.”

That's it for this year's Derby Post.

The game is afoot, dear friends and colleagues. I hope you do well, and that Saturday's mystery has been solved.

George Chimento
May 4, 2013

“... a man of excellent birth and education, who had squandered a fortune upon the turf, and who lived now by doing a little quiet and genteel bookmaking.”