Hi Everybody!

JJ here, with a Very Special Edition of my Journal: The Kentucky Derby issue!

We ponies have been hearing lots of buzz about this famous horse race, which is coming up on Saturday, Sept. 5. We’ve learned some interesting facts about horse racing and the Kentucky Derby and the Triple Crown, and we can’t wait to share them with you!

At first we were feeling a little left out, to be honest with you. I mean, we’re Littles and we don’t get invited to run in the Big Horse races. But then our Marnie and some friends took us to the indoor arena and let us run our OWN Lord Stirling Derby. It was so exciting!! Click here to watch us run like the wind!

Inside you’ll find a history of the Kentucky Derby and the traditions that go with it. I even asked my BFF Ebony to be in my cover photo so we could show off our Fancy Derby Hats (we were told that all the best people wear Fancy Hats to the Derby). We’re sure there will be a few ponies in Fancy Hats at the race and we don’t want to be underdressed.

My favorite Mock Mint Julep recipe is easy, delicious, and Derby-approved (by me, of course). Mix up a batch and sip away while you learn about the many common sayings that originated in the horse racing industry; work on the themed crossword puzzle (this one’s a real challenge); and discover our newly invented Pony Measurement System. We’re very proud of that one!

Sooo…find yourself a Fancy Hat, pour some of my special, safe-for-kids-and-ponies Mint Julep, and pick your favorite horses to win, place, and show. Post time is 7:01 PM, and then…

They’re OFF!
While there are many race tracks in the United States, perhaps none are more well known than Churchill Downs, home of the Kentucky Derby. A major force in America’s horse racing industry, the historic race track was named to the National Historic Landmarks roster in 1986.

The track was the inspiration of Meriwether Lewis Clark – grandson of explorer William Clark. Meriwether was a horse racing enthusiast who frequented the European race tracks. He wanted the United States to have a spectacular horse race equivalent to England’s Epsom Derby. His uncles Henry and John Churchill donated the land that was to become the track’s home in Louisville, Kentucky. Built with the financial support of the Louisville Jockey Club and local businesses, the first Kentucky Derby was run on May 17, 1875 and was won by Aristides. As a result of the success and popularity of horse racing in Kentucky, the grandstand at Churchill Downs known for its “twin spires” was built in 1894-1895.

The Kentucky Derby is the most important and prestigious horse race in the United States, with a purse (prize money) of two million dollars! It is the first leg of what is known as horse racing’s Triple Crown. This is the most coveted award that can be won by a Thoroughbred race horse. Comprised of three races - the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness (held in Maryland) and the Belmont Stakes (held in New York) - a horse must win all three races in order to claim the “Triple Crown.” The first horse to win the Triple Crown was Sir Barton in 1919.

The Derby has traditionally been held the first Saturday in May. For the first time in its 146 year history, the race was postponed in 2020 until the first Saturday in September due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 170,000 spectators attend the race annually to cheer on their favorites. This year only 14% of the track’s spectator capacity (23,000 people) will be allowed to attend the race due to pandemic related safety measures.

The race, run over the distance of a mile and a quarter, is only open to three-year-old horses. Both colts and fillies are eligible to run. The Derby has only been won by three fillies: Regret, Genuine Risk, and Winning Colors. The first woman jockey to ride in the Derby was Diane Crump in 1970. Although she was not riding the winning horse, Diane opened the door for other female jockeys in the future.

The entire race only takes approximately two minutes! The great race horse Secretariat holds the track record, winning the Derby in a time of 1:59:40. His stride length during the race was an amazing 24’11”. A stride length is the distance measured from the place where one foot touches the ground to where it touches the ground again. When Secretariat won the Triple Crown in 1973 he was the first horse to win the award since 1948. Check out the separate article pertaining to stride length for some extra special fun!
Tradition runs deep with the Kentucky Derby. Did you know that the race has its own moniker; official song, flower, and drink; and fashion statement?

Originally, the owner of the winning horse was presented with a silver julep cup trophy and a bouquet of red roses, the official flower of the Kentucky Derby. Similarly, the Preakness uses black-eyed susans and the Belmont States, white carnations. In 1925, New York sports columnist Bill Corum referred to the Kentucky Derby as the “Run for the Roses” and the moniker has stuck ever since. In 1932, in addition to the bouquet of roses, a 40lb. blanket of red roses placed over the horse’s shoulders became tradition.

In 1930 the Stephen Foster song, “My Old Kentucky Home,” became the official song of the Kentucky Derby, setting another Derby tradition. Spectators at the race stand and sing the song as the horses come out onto the track and are led to the post (starting gate). Starting in 1938, the University of Louisville Marching Band accompanied the singing fans, and continues to do so today.

Kentucky is known for its production of fine bourbon. A common southern drink incorporating bourbon, sugar or honey, mint, and crushed ice, the Mint Julep became the traditional drink of the Kentucky Derby. Since julep cups were prized trophies among the racing set, in the late 1930’s souvenir julep cups were produced and sold to fans complete with a tasty Mint Julep inside. The cups were printed with the race logo and often listed the winners of previous year’s Derbies. The cups are highly collectible among horse racing enthusiasts. In this issue’s “Recipes from the Stable Kitchen”, JJ is sharing his favorite recipe for a non-alcoholic Mint Julep. Check it out.

Perhaps the most fun tradition of the Kentucky Derby is the fun, fabulous hats that people wear on race day to make a fashion statement. Both women and men don their finest apparel to celebrate the race with flair. There are no rules; hats can be stylish or themed, often being a “statement piece,” and considered by many to be a “good luck charm” when placing their wagers. Meriwether Clark started the tradition, modeling the attire after the hats worn by European society at prestigious races in Great Britain and France. In 1875, the Kentucky Derby Hat Parade began. It continues to be one of the high-lights on racing day.

Now that you are an expert about the Kentucky Derby, sit back and enjoy the race on September 5th. Wear your fancy hat, sip your Mint Julep and cheer on your favorites! JJ is disappointed that there are no fillies running this year, so he is betting his carrots on Tiz the Law to win and his peppermints on Authentic to place.
How Many Ponies Does It Take To Equal Secretariat’s Stride?

**Question from Penelope:** JJ, we just read that the great race horse, Secretariat, had a stride nearly 25 feet long! How many ponies could fit into that space?

**JJ:** That is a question that has us ponies pondering. When we heard that Secretariat had a stride length of 24’11”, none of us could believe it. We took on the challenge to see just how far that really was. With help from the barn staff, the distance was measured out on the wall of the indoor arena. We were really careful because the indoor has been cleaned and newly painted by staff and some of our boarders.

We found out that the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky has an interactive display about stride length. Amazingly, Secretariat does not have the longest recorded stride. Two other race horses have longer strides: John Henry with a stride length of 25’6” and the greatest race horse of all time, Man O’ War, who had an astonishing stride of 28 feet!

Looking at the photo below from the Kentucky Horse Park, you can see where the stride measurement starts. The subsequent markers represent Secretariat, John Henry, and Man O’ War. Can you imagine covering that much ground in just one stride? Why, our little legs can barely cover the distance between Secretariat and Man O’ War! Try marking out the distances on your driveway or sidewalk with chalk and see how many “giant” steps it takes you to travel that distance.

![Secretariat in 1973](image)

The answer is four JJ’s head to tail!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horse</th>
<th>Stride Length</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td>24’11”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Henry</td>
<td>25’6”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man O’ War</td>
<td>28’</td>
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</tbody>
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So, the question still remains, how many ponies does it take to cover the length of Secretariat’s stride?
Tiz the Law is the likely frontrunner in this year’s Kentucky Derby but a packed field of top thoroughbreds will be champing at the bit to give him a run for his money. Top trainers are sending their best horses to “run for the roses.” High-profile trainers Bob Baffert, Ted Pletcher, and Steve Asmussen will each campaign two horses as running mates. Will one of those famous horsemen make it to the winner’s circle, or will a dark horse come along and win the race hands down? As the horses thunder down the home stretch, who will finish on the board– and who will be the also-rans?

We won’t know the answers to those questions until after the race. Meanwhile, let’s have some fun talking about all the idioms you just read. Did you know that all of them originated with horse racing?

Let’s start with **frontrunner**. Often used to describe a leading candidate in a contest or competition today, it originated as a racing term for a horse that runs best from the lead position. **Running mate** is another expression that started with horses but found its way into politics. In racing, a running mate is “a horse used to set the pace in a race for another horse,” according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

Horses **may champ at the bit** anticipating the moment when the starting gate flies open and “They’re OFF!” This expression for impatience has a fairly obvious connection to equines. These days it also refers to behavior by anyone who is excited and eager to begin something: “The children were champing at the bit to start summer vacation.”

If a **dark horse** surprises the experts with an unexpected win, will it mean that the winner is a black or a bay? Not at all. Dark, in addition to meaning “absence of light,” also means concealed, secret, or mysterious. A **dark horse** is simply one whose racing talent is not well known. The expression has expanded to include anyone having unexpected success in a contest or venture.

“A **run for the money**” is a phrase that originated in the 1830’s. It referred to getting a successful race from a horse one has wagered on - especially if the horse appeared likely to be withdrawn from the race (“scratched”). These days, to give someone a **run for their money** means to challenge or compete very well against them.
Jockeys generally keep a firm contact on the reins to encourage their horse to run. If they have a comfortable lead approaching the finish line, they might relax their grip and lower their hands - thus winning the race “hands down.” The term now signifies something achieved almost effortlessly or without any doubt: “Laura’s peach pie was the best, hands down.”

The **home stretch** is the final straight section of the racetrack before the finish. The meaning of the phrase easily expanded to include the end of a task, project, etc.: “The bulk of the work is behind us; we’re in the home stretch.”

The electronic results board, also know as the **tote board**, will post the names of the horses that won, placed, and showed (finished first, second, and third). **Bonus idiom:** these three horses will have finished **in the money**. Horses finishing in fourth place or lower, or not finishing the race, are **also-rans**. The term has broadened to include unsuccessful participants in any type of contest.

Now you’re ready to keep up with the handicappers who will try to predict the outcome of the race! Just remember these words of wisdom:

**Horse sense is the thing a horse has which keeps it from betting on people.**

W.C. Fields
Across
2 Head gear that limits a horse’s field of vision.
3 A horse that is halted before the end of a race.
4 Third race of the Thoroughbred Triple Crown.
5 Three-person panel at a race that enforces the rules.
10 For Standardbreds, the equivalent race to the Kentucky Derby.
11 Where race horses are saddled.
13 Part of the track opposite the finish line.
16 Official flower of the 2nd leg of the Triple Crown.
17 Term for a close race finish.
20 Condition of the racing surface.
21 When a person attempts to pick the first and second place horse in a race.
22 Where a horse race ends.
24 Track that is wet and covered with puddles.
25 Term for an apprentice jockey.
26 Post on the infield rail that indicates two furlongs to the finish.
27 Term for a grass-covered track.
28 When two horses finish the race at the same time and a sole winner cannot be declared.

Down
1 A horse whose chance of winning the race is most unlikely.
2 Easy workout for a race horse.
5 To withdraw a horse from a race before it starts.
6 A distance of 1/8 of a mile.
7 Colorful clothing worn by jockeys – usually in the farm colors.
8 Refers to the 3rd place horse in a race.
9 Location where awards are presented.
12 Type of material racing plates are made from.
14 A roll of sheepskin placed on a nose band to block a horse’s vision of the ground.
15 Horse that has yet to win a race.
17 Refers to the 2nd place in a horse race.
18 Total sum bet on races in a given day.
19 Extra girth on a racing saddle.
22 Third turn on a race track.
23 At the start of a race, the horses are called to what location?

And They’re OFF!
Sipping a Mint Julep is one of the most popular and well-known Kentucky Derby traditions. This classic southern beverage originated in the American South in the 1700’s. The combination of bourbon, mint, sugar, and water was thought to be of medicinal use—an aid to soothe an upset stomach. The tradition of serving the ingredients over ice in a silver cup developed in the late 1700’s. It elevated the cocktail to “elite” status, as not everyone had access to ice. Or silver, for that matter. And by that time, the focus was less on the medicinal angle and more on enjoyment of the drink.

The mint julep was declared the official Kentucky Derby beverage in 1938, though it was served at the race for many years prior to that. Nearly 120,000 cups are served at the Derby each year—always in a commemorative cup, frosted and mounded with crushed ice. Take it away, JJ!

JJ: As everyone knows, that kind of grown-up stuff is not allowed in our parks. Besides, we ponies are too young to drink Adult Beverages. So I got some help and found a recipe that will still be fun and traditional, but with no alcohol so everyone can enjoy it:

Mock Mint Julep Punch
(lovetoknow.com recipe)

INGREDIENTS:
Bunch of fresh mint leaves, stems removed
1 cup simple syrup
1 cup cold water
2 liters ginger ale
Ice

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Add the mint to the bottom of an empty punch bowl.
2. Pour the simple syrup over the leaves and gently muddle with a long handled muddler to release the flavor. This only requires a few gentle muddles to break open the veins in the leaves and release the aroma. Do not over muddle or the mint will become bitter.
3. Pour the cold water over the mint and syrup and stir.
4. Add the ice.
5. Pour the ginger ale over the top of the ice.
6. Stir slowly to mix the ingredients and allow to chill for a few more moments before serving.

Once you’ve given this recipe a try, you can adjust the amount of any particular ingredient to make the punch more to your own taste.

Sweet and minty—we ponies love that kind of stuff, you know. We hope we get to taste some! —JJ
Joke of the Month

Q: “Will I ever be able to race my horse again?” the owner asked the Veterinarian.

A: The Vet replied, “Of course, you will, and you’ll probably beat him too!”
A Final Whinny...

THIS IS NOT ABOUT GOING BACK. THIS IS ABOUT LIFE BEING AHEAD OF YOU AND YOU RUN AT IT! BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW HOW FAR YOU CAN RUN UNLESS YOU RUN.

-PENNY CHENERY

The above graphic was taken from the DVD cover of Walt Disney Pictures 2010 release of Secretariat. Rated PG, the story was written by Mick Rich and Sheldon Turner. The movie portrays the life of the legendary racehorse Secretariat and the road to his Triple Crown win. A great summer movie for the family.

JJ gives it four golden horseshoes.