

BIG BROWN

Freak or no freak? Superstar or shooting star? We won't know until May 3, when Big Brown attempts to culminate his meteoric rise with a victory in the Run for the Roses.

Nothing the son of Boundary has done so far has been ordinary, from winning his career debut on the grass at Saratoga last September by 11¼ lengths to winning an off-the-turf-allowance race at Gulfstream March 5, despite having only three published works all year after being sidelined on two occasions with quarter cracks in each foot. To then overcome the sure-defeat 12-post in the Florida Derby (gr. I) and setting brutal fractions of :45.83 and 1:10.08, and go on to romp by five lengths, proves that this colt is unlike anything we've seen in a while.

Whether that equates to winning the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I) in only his fourth career start is another matter.

Big Brown, originally trained by Pat Reynolds, was so impressive in his career debut that although it was on the grass, offers came pouring in for the colt immediately after the race. Owner Paul Pompa Jr. ultimately sold majority interest to IEAH Stables, who turned the horse over to Rick Dutrow. Right off the bat, Dutrow had to deal with a quarter crack suffered while preparing for the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf, and then another after arriving at Palm Meadows training center.

Dutrow was reluctant to run Big Brown in March with so little training, but the horse worked so well over the Oklahoma training track at Saratoga, the trainer felt he had to get a race in him. Had the race stayed on the turf, this space likely would be devoted to a different horse. But when it was switched to the dirt, it turned the Derby trail upside down. A star was born that day. We'll find out how bright May 3. 🐾

BIG BROWN
 Bay colt, foaled April 10, 2005;
 Bred by Monticule in Kentucky

Boundary	Danzig
	Edge
Mien	Nureyev
	Miasma

Question: How does a colt go from being an unraced maiden to being the probable favorite for the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I) in just three starts? Answer: In Big Brown's case, by winning all three races, including a romp in the Florida Derby (gr. I).

Question: Where does a colt by a sprinter and sire of sprinters get the stamina to win laughing at nine furlongs? Answer: There's a little more here than meets the eye.

For starters, while it is true that Big Brown's sire, Boundary, never won beyond sprint distances, it is also true that he was never tried farther. A son of Danzig, Boundary had offset knees that limited his durability. He won six of eight starts, including the grade III A Phenomenon and Roseben Handicaps, and might perhaps have stayed farther had he been better able to withstand training.

Big Brown is the second foal of his dam, Mien, a winner at 8.5 furlongs. She is by Nureyev out of Miasma, a winner at nine furlongs. Miasma, in turn, is by Lear Fan, whose progeny included some good stayers, out of Syrian Circle, a Damascus half-sister to 1997 champion older female Hidden Lake.

Boundary and Mien are closely related, for Boundary is by a son of Northern Dancer out of a mare bred on a Damascus/Round Table cross, while Mien is by a son of Northern Dancer out of the daughter of a mare bred on a Damascus/Round Table cross. Neither Damascus nor Round Table require much introduction as stayers or sources of stamina, and this inbreeding in Big Brown's pedigree may be the key to his staying ability.

Big Brown still has several tests to face. He has a history of quarter cracks; further, he is still inexperienced, and there is no telling how he will respond to the barely-controlled chaos that often marks both the lead-up to the Derby and the running of the race itself. And he must still run a furlong farther than he has ever been asked to go. But the potential for stardom is clearly there. 🐾

Haskin's Derby Dozen

	HORSE/TRAINER	PEDIGREE	COMMENT
1	MONBA Todd Pletcher	Maria's Mon—Hamba, by Easy Goer	Had him ranked No. 2 on first Derby Watch back in January when he hadn't done much, so, in a wacky year like this, decided to start again from the beginning. Lacks experience, but he's got the pedigree, he's a fighter, and he comes home fast.
2	BIG BROWN Rick Dutrow	Boundary—Mien, by Nureyev	If there is a horse who can defy history and logic, this is the one with superstar potential. If anyone can blow the Derby wide open, it's him; he may be that good. Foot problems are always a concern, but Dutrow says they're behind him.
3	COLONEL JOHN Eoin Harty	Tiznow—Sweet Damsel, by Turkoman	He'll head most Top 10 lists after what his fellow Californians did at Oaklawn. Unless Big Brown is the proverbial freak, he is the horse to beat May 3. But is he quick enough to handle traffic in a 20-horse field?
4	SMOOTH AIR Bennie Stutts	Smooth Jazz—Air France, by French Deputy	Back doing his thing with those mile works. His 1:41 was strong, as Stutts keeps putting more and more bottom into him. If you believe Big Brown is a superhorse, then there is no reason to think he can't run second to him again.
5	VISIONAIRE Michael Matz	Grand Slam—Scarlet Tango, by French Deputy	Not many noticed, but he ran a terrific race in the Blue Grass, breaking from the 12-post, showing too much early speed, getting hung wide on the turn, dropping back to last on a slow pace, and then flying home in :35½.
6	TALE OF EKATI Barclay Tagg	Tale of the Cat—Silence Beauty, by Sunday Silence	Although the final fractions of the Wood set it up for someone to catch War Pass, he did make an early move into a strong second quarter, and then pursued relentlessly until War Pass began slowing down in the final furlong.
7	ADRIANO Graham Motion	A.P. Indy—Gold Canyon, by Mr. Prospector	No, this is not your typical Derby list. Looking for new faces and his is looking brighter, as long as he behaves before the Derby. His turf allowance score was breathtaking, and he's bred for the dirt. Worth the gamble at a big price.
8	Z FORTUNE Steve Asmussen	Siphon—Fortunate Faith, by Fortunate Prospect	Turned in the quintessential losing Derby prep that you like to take to Churchill Downs. He got his bad race out of the way early and is now looking to move forward with each start. Could be a Lil E. Tee type; dangerous longshot.
9	COURT VISION Bill Mott	Gulch—Weekend Storm, by Storm Bird	The more preps that are run, the better his chances look to pick up most of the pieces. Yes, he's slow on paper, but who's that fast? He does have classy 2-year-old form, he'll get the distance, and he'll be coming late.
10	WAR PASS Nick Zito	Cherokee Run—Vue, by Mr. Prospector	As if it wasn't going to be hard enough for him to win the Derby on the front end, he keeps getting more and more pace competition—all fast and classy. He should improve off the Wood and will take them as far as he can.
11	PYRO Steve Asmussen	Pulpit—Wild Vision, by Wild Again	The most asked question of 2008: was it a fluke? Unlike all the other horses who have run up the track this year, he has to bounce back in the Kentucky Derby. Last winner to finish worse than 4th in final prep was in 1957.
12	GAYEGO Paulo Lobo	Gilded Time—Devils Lake, by Lost Code	Lobo has done a masterful job with him. Gilded Time says sprinter/miler, but he's now won at nine furlongs, and his pedigree includes speed horses who could carry their speed—Count Fleet, Bold Ruler, Ack Ack, and Lost Code.

For more horses on the Triple Crown Trail, go to tcm.BloodHorse.com

BIG BROWN

The date was Sept. 16, 2007. Paul Pompa Jr. was standing track-side at Belmont Park, watching his talented 2-year-old, Big Brown, turn in a work on the turf. Less than two weeks before, the Boundary colt had demolished a field of maidens by 11¼ lengths on the grass at Saratoga.

Pompa remembers the day vividly, as it was the first time he realized just how special Big Brown really was.

"It was me, my cousin Jerry, my trainer Patrick Reynolds, and Christophe Clement, who just happened to be standing there waiting for one of his horses to work," Pompa recalled. "We watched him go :44.3 around the dogs. We all looked at each other in amazement. Nobody could believe it, but the two people who had stop-watches both had the same time.

"After seeing that, I really believed that this horse was going to win the Breeders' Cup (Juvenile) Turf."

Only a few days later, Pompa sold a 75% interest in Big Brown to IEAH Stables. How could he not? Millions had been thrown his way, and as he put it, "You have to sell in this business sometimes if you want to stay in it. I had mind-boggling offers within hours of his maiden win. This worked out nicely because I got to keep a piece of him."

The meteoric rise of Big Brown is well known by now—a pair of quarter crack injuries taking him out of action for six months, an eye-popping allowance victory at Gulfstream Park March 5 propelling him to almost instant



ADAM COGLIANESE PHOTOS

Paul Pompa Jr. had numerous offers for Big Brown (left) following the colt's impressive maiden win

Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I) contender, and his five-length Florida Derby (gr. I) romp solidifying him as the horse to beat come the first Saturday in May.

For Pompa, it has been a whirlwind ride over the past five weeks, but he has taken all of it in stride.

"The excitement has changed my life a little bit, and the ability to be able to go to the Kentucky Derby with a great horse, a bunch of people from IEAH that I respect, and a Class A trainer (Rick Dutrow) is certainly a very nice thing to have happen," he said. "But I have had different levels of success in this sport and in my personal life, so this isn't going to change me."

Pompa, 49, began delving into Thoroughbred racing in 2000 because, as he said, "I hit a level of success in business and needed another outlet for action." A New Jersey resident, Pompa is president of a Brooklyn-based trucking business, Truck-Rite Distribution, which he shares with his brothers. Pompa graduated from King's College, near Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Prior to Big Brown, some of Pompa's best horses included 2005 Jamaica Handicap (gr. III) winner Watchmon and multiple graded stakes winner Zakocity. Pompa has also had a good deal of success at the sales, most recently selling the sale topper, a son of Street Cry, to Sheikh Mohammed for \$2.1 million at the Fasig-Tipton Calder select sale of 2-year-olds in training in February.

Although IEAH and Dutrow now make all of the decisions when it comes to Big Brown, Pompa can take pride in knowing that he was the first to see the raw talent of a horse who will likely be the favorite for the Kentucky Derby. Pompa and his team purchased the colt for \$190,000 at the 2007 Keeneland April 2-year-olds in training sale, in part because he also raced Big Brown's half-brother, Snake River Canyon.

"Everyone is really pumped up," Pompa said. "We have a horse that nobody knows how good he can be. The sky is the limit. He ran a 106 Beyer Speed Figure in the Florida Derby and he was still green. He has the tactical speed where he doesn't have to be on the lead. There are some pretty good horses he'll have to beat, but if he runs his race, he'll be awfully tough to catch." 🐾

Triple Crown Preps

RACE	DATE	TRACK	PURSE	DIST.	TIME	FIRST THREE FINISHERS
Rebel Stakes (gr. II)	3-15	OP	\$300g	8.5	1:43.88	Sierra Sunset, King's Silver Son, Isabull
San Felipe Stakes (gr. II)	3-15	SA	\$200g	8.5	1:42.35	Georgie Boy, Gayego, Bob Black Jack
Tampa Bay Derby (gr. III)	3-15	Tam	\$300g	8.5	1:44.25	Big Truck, Atoned, Dynamic Wayne
Pasadena Stakes	3-15	SA	\$75a	8T	1:34.12	Polonius, Ez Dreamer, Afleet Ruler
New Mexico Breeders' Derby	3-15	Sun	\$100g	8	1:37.58	Run Like Fire, Brax, Move Moves
WinStar Derby	3-16	Sun	\$600g	9	1:49.82	Liberty Bull, Screen to Screen, Ablaze With Spirit
Lane's End Stakes (gr. II)	3-22	TP	\$500g	9	1:50.20	Adriano, Halo Najib, Medjool
Private Terms Stakes	3-22	Lrl	\$80g	8	1:38.66	Double Or Nothing, Regal Solo, Vanderkaay
Rushaway Stakes	3-22	TP	\$100g	8.5	1:44.55	Big Glen, Miner's Claim, Icabad Crane
Florida Derby (gr. I)	3-29	GP	\$1000g	9	1:48.16	Big Brown, Smooth Air, Tomcito
Palm Beach Stakes (gr. IIIT)	3-29	GP	\$150g	9T	1:45.98	Sporting Art, Flying Dismount, Moral Compass
Transylvania Stakes (gr. III)	4-4	Kee	\$150g	8.5	1:44.43	Boss Lafitte, Riley Tucker, Budge Man
Santa Anita Derby (gr. I)	4-5	SA	\$750g	9	1:48.16	Colonel John, Bob Black Jack, Coast Guard
Wood Memorial Stakes (gr. I)	4-5	Aqu	\$750g	9	1:52.35	Tale of Ekati, War Pass, Court Vision
Illinois Derby (gr. II)	4-5	Haw	\$500g	9	1:49.01	Recapturetheglorry, Golden Spikes, Z Humor
Bay Shore Stakes (gr. III)	4-5	Aqu	\$150g	7	1:23.67	J Be K, Gattopardo, Jockey Ridge
OBS Sophomore Turf Stakes	4-5	Tam	\$85g	9	1:43.45	El Sultry Sun, Gibber's Gold, Waywardwillie
Toyota Blue Grass Stakes (gr. I)	4-12	Kee	\$750g	9	1:49.71	Monba, Cowboy Cal, Kentucky Bear
Arkansas Derby (gr. II)	4-12	OP	\$1,000g	9	1:49.63	Gayego, Z Fortune, Tres Borrachos
Holy Bull Stakes (gr. III)	4-12	GP	\$150g	9.5	1:58.14	Hey Byrn, Dream Maestro, Famous Patriot
Coolmore Lexington Stakes (gr. II)	4-19	Kee	\$325g	8.5		
Withers Stakes (gr. III)	4-26	Aqu	\$150g	8		
Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I)	5-3	CD	\$2,000g	10		
Peter Pan Stakes (gr. II)	5-10	Bel	\$200g	9		
Lone Star Derby (gr. III)	5-10	LS	\$400g	8.5		
Preknex Stakes (gr. I)	5-17	Pim	\$1,000g	9.75		
Arlington Classic	5-24	AP	\$150g	8.5T		
Ohio Derby (gr. II)	5-31	Tdn	\$300g	9		
Belmont Stakes (gr. I)	6-9	Bel	\$1,000g	12		

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