

ANGLES, POINTERS & CLUES - EPSOM'S DERBY MEETING
2024....

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a Special Research Report....

by Nick Pullen....

**(Races to be run Friday 31st May & Saturday
1st June)**

A cracking meeting on the Epsom Downs....

The Derby meeting at Epsom may only be a two-day affair....

... but it's an absolute crackerjack of a Festival....

... boasting three G1s – the *Derby*, the *Oaks*, and the *Coronation Cup*....

... a brace of G2s, a Listed contest, and a C2 conditions race....

... PLUS eight quality handicaps across a range of trips....

... the best of which is the *Dash* up the fastest 5f strip in the country....

I'll cover both days of the meeting on my *ATC* service....

I'll be having a bet in most – if not all – the handicap events....

... and I'll also swing the bat in the *Derby* – and probably the *Oaks*....

This Special Research Report is a prelude to the meeting....

Its purpose is to arm you with angles, pointers, and clues that will help you find decent bets in the biggest races run at the meeting....

... angles, pointers, and clues that the wider market – the people you're betting against – are completely unaware of....

Inside you will discover....

... how to use the Dosage Index to narrow down the *Derby* field....

... key stats that reveal what a *Derby* winner looks like before the race....

... a data-based approach for longshot bets in the *Derby* & the *Oaks*....

... PLUS an angle that will give you an edge in Saturday's big-field *Dash*....

I think you'll find something to like – something to base a good bet on....

Happy hunting!

Nick

Nick Pullen - May 2024

A less-travelled route into the Derby....

The *Derby* is run at Epsom on Saturday 1st June....

The trial-based evidence is in....

.... and this year's renewal looks wide-open....

City Of Troy was the pre-season hotpot – but fluffed his lines in the *2000 Guineas* at Newmarket and now has questions to answer....

.... whilst **Economics** – an impressive 6-length winner of the *Dante* at York for William Haggas – needs to be supplemented in order to run (at the time of writing)....

Right now, the ante-post market is in a state of cautious indecision....

James Fanshawe's **Ambiente Friendly** has his supporters....

.... so too Aidan O'Brien's **Los Angeles**....

And we mustn't forget that all these 3yo horses are – of course – improving week by week at this early stage of the season....

.... or that the horses that turned out in recent trials might well be different propositions at Epsom....

On a betting level – it's a proper conundrum....

Qualified horses....

With so many opinions yet to find expression in the market....

.... and prices liable to shift as race day nears....

.... my inclination is to dig about and see what the market hasn't priced in....

There's an interesting angle to come at it from – breeding stats. More specifically – the Dosage Index....

Breeding stats offer significant clues as to how individual horses might cope with the challenge presented by a *Derby* – a real test of stamina for a 3yo horse in early June....

Many runners will turn out having never previously attempted the 12f trip. And whether or not an individual horse will stay is impossible to call with certainty....

Some will; some won't; others will need further still....

Figuring out ahead of time which horses are most likely to fall into which category is a useful exercise. And the Dosage Index helps us do just that....

You can get all the relevant Dosage Index figures for any horse – past or present – at **pedigreequery.com**....

Understanding Dosage Figures....

Working with Dosage profiles of horses is not second nature to everybody....

So, we'll use the Dosage Profile of the 2015 *Derby* winner, **Golden Horn**, to highlight what's what:

Horse	B	I	C	S	P	Tot	DI	CD
Golden Horn	5	3	28	2	0	38	1.38	0.29

Every horse has different influences in its pedigree – ranging from outright speed to outright stamina....

Dosage narrows down influences in a pedigree to just a relatively few stallions....

These are called chefs-de-race and they are categorized according to the type of horses they tend to produce....

These chef-de-race stallions fall into 5 distinct categories: **B**rilliant, **I**ntermediate, **C**lassic, **S**olid & **P**rofessional....

I don't want to get into the mind-numbing detail of how the points in any horse's Dosage Profile are awarded. It's not necessary....

For our agricultural purposes, it is enough to know that **Golden Horn** has **5** Brilliant points, **3** Intermediate, **28** Classic, **2** Solid and **0** Professional points.

That's **38** Dosage Points in total. His Dosage Index figure is **1.38** and his Centre of Distribution figure is **0.29**.

The key considerations....

I've looked at the **Derby** winners over the last **40** years to determine any significant commonalities in their Dosage Profiles....

... an analysis that might give us some clear indications of what we should look for in this year's runners....

Here's what I found:

- **33** of the last 40 winners had a total of 20+ points in the Dosage Profile
- **27** had a total of 30+ points
- **33** had 4 or more **B** points
- **29** had 10 or more **C** points
- **27** had 5 or more **S** points
- **33** (including 25 of the last 26 winners) had 2 or fewer **P** points
- Only **3** of the last 40 winners had no **S** or **P** points in their Dosage Profiles
- **23** of the last 29 *Derby* winners had a DI figure of 1.15 or lower
- **30** of the last 40 winners had a CD figure that fell between -0.14 to 0.57

Optimums, average DI, and median CD....

The optimum blend of speed and stamina required to win a *Derby* is generally expressed as a DI figure of 1.00 and a CD figure of 0.00....

The table below displays the DI and CD figures of the last **24** *Derby* winners....

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2024....

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Year	Winner	DI	CD
2023	Auguste Rodin	0.94	0.07
2022	Desert Crown	1.00	0.13
2021	Adayar	0.58	-0.30
2020	Serpentine	0.71	-0.03
2019	Anthony Van Dyck	0.77	-0.03
2018	Masar	0.79	-0.04
2017	Wings of Eagles	0.42	-0.36
2016	Harzand	0.91	-0.05
2015	Golden Horn	1.38	0.29
2014	Australia	0.67	-0.13
2013	Ruler of the World	0.77	0.04
2012	Camelot	0.68	-0.06
2011	Pour Moi	0.43	-0.35
2010	Workforce	1.00	0.23
2009	Sea the Stars	1.67	0.41
2008	New Approach	0.58	-0.12
2007	Authorized	0.62	-0.14
2006	Sir Percy	0.24	-0.72
2005	Motivator	1.04	0.17
2004	North Light	1.13	0.15
2003	Kris Kin	1.05	0.12
2002	High Chaparral	0.60	-0.17
2001	Galileo	1.11	0.28
2000	Sinndar	1.56	0.41

Over that 24-year period the average DI of a *Derby* winner stands at 0.86....

The median CD figure over the same period amounts to just about -0.03....

It's quick and dirty but horses closest to those averages would be of more interest – on the figures – than the horses furthest away....

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A word on the CD figure: the lower the figure the more stamina the horse possesses. The higher the figure, the more speed....

If -0.03 is the median CD of a *Derby* winner, a horse going into the race with a figure significantly bigger may have staying issues....

One going in with a significantly lower figure may need further than the *Derby* trip. That's the general theory....

What the stats tell us about next week's Derby winner....

Right now – as I write – there are still almost **40** horses in with a chance of a run in this year's *Derby* at Epsom....

.... and statistical elements of the historic record can help us form a view on which to consider backing and which to swerve....

The historic record provides us with some very strong clues, yardsticks, and trends....

.... which enable us to take a view on which of this year's runners might be the best-fit for the race....

Be warned: not all the horses the stats draw attention to will be fancied horses....

And that's the upside of testing the market's assumptions and beliefs....

.... sometimes, they can turn out to be wrong-headed....

My records go back 30 years. Here's what that record reveals....

There are some strong experience-based pointers to consider....

- **29** of those 30 winners had raced at least twice
- **28** had raced no more than twice during the current season
- **27** had raced within the previous 5 weeks
- **26** had not raced below Listed class during the current season
- **25** had raced no more than 5 times (**15** no more than 3 times)

And there are some specific form-related yardsticks to bear in mind....

- **25** of the last 30 winners had not been outside first 2 that season
- **24** had scored a career best RPR last time out
- In **20** of the last **25** years, the winner of the *Derby* had already produced a performance on the track worth a Racing Post rating of at least 118
- **24** had a winning strike rate of 50%+
- **24** had won last time out

And what happened to the *Derby* winners as juveniles also has a bearing on how you might assess the chances of the individual runners in this season's *Derby* renewal....

- **27** of the last 30 winners had won at 7f+ as juveniles
- **26** had made their racing debut at the 7f trip or a mile
- **21** were good enough to produce a Racing Post rating of 82+ on debut

And there are a couple of class-related stats to think about....

- **17** of the last 22 winners had already appeared at G1 or G2 level (**13** registering a win)
- **14** of the last 20 winners had contested a G1 or G2 last time out

Assess the runners in this season's field against each of those yardsticks and you'll have the beginnings of an informed and in-the-round view of which runners look most like a traditional *Derby* winner pre-race....

That's a lot more than most of the people you will be betting against are working with at this stage of proceedings....

The uncrowned king of Epsom Downs....

When you've been into racing for decades, the passing year is understood via the fixed points of the racing programme....

March means Cheltenham.... April means Aintree....

May means the Guineas meeting, Chester & York....

.... and the first weekend in June – well that's Epsom – the *Oaks* and the *Derby*....

Impressive numbers....

There's no doubt whose been the kingpin in those two 3yo classics over the last 20-years or so....

... that man is **Aidan O'Brien**....

He's won **9** editions of the *Oaks* and placed with **16** more fillies – from 74 runners over the period....

... a win strike rate of **12.1%** and a total place strike rate of **33.7%**....

And he's won **9** editions of the *Derby* – placing with **14** more colts – from 94 runners....

... a win strike rate of **9.5%** and a total place strike of **24.4%**....

Perhaps these last numbers wouldn't represent a stellar outcome in another context....

... but given that we're talking about a totally unique race for blue bloods at the pinnacle of the sport....

... a race with a 200+ year history....

... a race every top breeder wants to produce one for....

... a race every top trainer longs to have on his CV....

... then the numbers are impressive – to say the least....

... even when you consider that O'Brien's had more bullets to fire at the race than any trainer in history....

A key contributor to the record....

But it isn't just Aidan O'Brien's name that stands out in the Roll of Honour when it comes to the two Epsom classics....

His success is largely based on the potency of **Galileo** – the uncrowned king of Epsom Downs....

... the horse that won the **2001 edition** of the *Derby* for O'Brien – under Mick Kinane....

... the stallion responsible for producing progeny that have won so many more classics for O'Brien across the intervening years....

Focus solely on his output as a sire for O'Brien's runners in the Epsom classics – and the O'Brien record reads just that bit better....

In the *Oaks* old **Galileo** has produced **5** winners and **5** additional placers from 31 runners @ **16.1%** & **32.2%**....

In the *Derby* his record reads **4** winners and **8** additional placers from 45 runners @ **8.8%** & **26.6%**....

Perhaps the key inference we can make from those figures is that the O'Brien & **Galileo** combo have found it easier to win the *Oaks* than the *Derby*....

... and that's certainly worth bearing in mind....

But my focus primary focus today is the volume of success enjoyed by the combo across both races....

... we're talking **9** winners and **13** placers from **76** runners in total – across the *Oaks* and the *Derby*....

... an aggregate win strike rate of **11.8%** and a total place strike rate of **28.9%**....

Not all fancied....

But what interests me more than those bare strike rate figures is the fact that multiple winners and placers....

... horses sired by **Galileo** and trained by O'Brien....

... weren't fancied going into their races....

Some that went well were – quite literally – given no chance at all by the market ahead of the off....

Was – winner of the *Oaks* in 2012 – was sent off at **20s**....

Serpentine – winner of the *Derby* in 2020 – was sent at **25s**....

You might recall that **At First Sight** was sent off at **100s** in the 2010 *Derby*....

... he ended up finishing 2nd to **Workforce** – but for a long way it looked like he might just nick it from the front under an enterprising Seamie Heffernan ride....

Treasure Beach (25s), **Idaho (14s)**, **Japan (20s)**, and **Amhran Na Bhfiann (66s)** all managed to confound punters in the *Derby* with placings that bore little or no resemblance to market position....

Divinely (20s) did the same thing in the *Oaks* in 2021....

My point is this – price is not always a guide to race suitability when it comes to a **Galileo & O'Brien** combo in these races....

... the ones that are overlooked in the betting can outperform expectation on the day....

Not done yet....

Of course, **Galileo** died in 2021 at the age of 23....

... and the era of his dominance from the Coolmore breeding sheds is drawing to a close....

... but the curtain hasn't quite come down yet on his career as a stallion....

... because he still has progeny that can add more polish to an already glittering record generally....

... and in the *Epsom* classics specifically....

Forty horses still have entries in the *Derby* as it stands this morning....

... O'Brien has thirteen entered up....

... two – **Grosvenor Square (40s)** & **Illinois (25s)** – are sired by Galileo....

In the *Oaks*....

... the race that O'Brien and **Galileo** have found easier to win when operating in combination....

... offers two options as of this morning – **Content (33s)** & **Rubies Are Red (4s)**....

Of course, the stats are there to be confounded and turned over....

... races are run out on the track and contested by flesh and blood animals rather than by historic data points in my database....

... but might one or more of these horses go out and prove **Galileo's** potency in the Epsom classics one last time....

Who knows.... we'll see....

Where the advantage lies in Saturday's Dash at Epsom....

If you were to study the median winning times at 5f racing strips up and down the country....

... what you'd discover is that the 5f strip at Epsom is the fastest in the country – no competition....

The median finishing time in a 5f sprint at Epsom over the last 12-years is 53.6 seconds....

That's a full 2 seconds quicker than the median winning time over 5f at Lingfield....

... which is another of the country's fastest strips....

... and where they don't even travel a full 5 furlongs....

Bottom line: Epsom is a strip for the real out-and-out fireballs....

... but – like everything else in racing (and life) – it's not entirely straightforward....

Not straightforward....

It's a downhill strip – dropping 20-odd yards in height across the entire 5f....

As such, it's one of those strips that some horses take a real dislike to....

... and it's a strip on which others horses appear to excel....

The now retired **Caspian Prince**, for example....

He won three renewals of the *Dash*....

... for three different trainers – Tony Carrol, Dean Ivory & Tony Coyle....

... off marks of 97, 104 and 107....

The place was clearly an advantage to him....

Perhaps he had freakish balance when hurtling along at great speed....

Perhaps he had one leg longer than the others...

Who knows how these things work?

Whatever the explanation, **Caspian Prince** was a genuine force over 5f at Epsom....

... and running at the track was probably worth 10lbs or more to the horse....

Captain Dunne, Caribbean Coral, Dark Shot, Desert Law, Duke Of Firenze, Hogmaneigh, Holbeck Ghyll, Mokaatil, Repertory and **Steps** are other of horses that produced in the 'Dash' on multiple occasions....

So, be sure to respect form in previous editions of the race....

... because horses that have already proved they can act smartly at speed on the unique downhill stretch are strong candidates to go well again on Saturday afternoon....

Highs and lows....

Stall 1 has sometimes been used to good advantage....

... **Caspian Prince** won the 2017 renewal from that berth....

... **Desert Law** emerged victorious from the lowest stall in 2015.

... and before that **Rudi's Pet** won from stall 1 in 2002....

Stall 2 has had successes too....

In 2012 **Stone Of Folca** sprang a shock at **50s**....

... and in 2019 **Ornate** won the race from stall 2 sent off at **33s**....

As with most races, the *Dash* can be won from anywhere....

... but it should be noted that 15 of the last 21 winners of the '*Dash*' started the race from stall 8 or higher....

Also, that 46 of the 69 horses to place in the race over the period (almost 70%) started the race in stall 8 or higher....

Editor's note: In fields of 20+ runners, I consider the 5th horse home a placed finisher given that multiple bookies will be paying out on more than the standard 4 places....

Of the 24 horses that did manage to place from a stall lower than stall 8, six finished 2nd, seven finished 3rd and seven finished 4th, and three finished 5th....

In other words, almost half of that group could only finish in the lowest frame places....

It's not conclusive evidence, but it suggests that – on balance – the lower stalls make life just that bit tougher for horses over the fast 5f in the '*Dash*'....

The horses drawn lowest often angle across towards the opposite rail early doors. The burst of energy required to do that can tell later in the race....

And even when they get across, they're not guaranteed a good racing position or cover....

Some end up running on the wing of the main group and seeing more daylight than ideal....

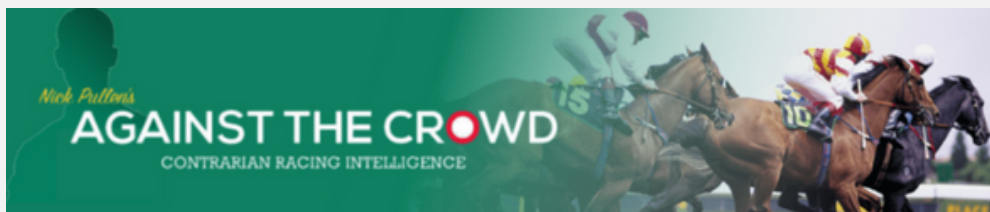
There will be occasions when horses drawn low overcome the adversity of their start position....

.... just as they did in the 2023 renewal....

.... but heading into Epsom this year – when you're getting started with your deliberations....

... it's worth knowing that the high numbers have enjoyed the edge over the last two decades...

It's something large sections of the market you'll be betting against don't know....



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I also provide.... unique insight & original analysis.... stats & data you won't find in the mainstream horses to follow.... deep-dive statistical research.... and a colourful racing commentary.... all year round....

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