

Thurby

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May 2 and Kentucky Derby Day, this year on May 3, Thurby has garnered a reputation as a more affordable way to experience the pageantry of the week without the hefty price tag. Fan can still purchased reserved seating for Thurby in the clubhouse boxes for less than \$200, whereas that same seat would likely cost upward of \$1,000 on Kentucky Derby Day.

Drew Servis, of New Jersey, is visiting a friend in Louisville for the 2025 Derby Week. The 25-year-old will be at Churchill Downs for both Thurby and the 151st Run for the Roses. He said he's looking forward to placing bets on the races, which is "the whole beauty of being here" with several races a day, and shared his picks for May 3.

"I'm no horse expert but I think I'm going to bet Rodriguez and Sovereignty, as well," Servis said.

Spectators flooded through the gates the morning of May 1, cautious of possible scattered showers but excited to be in the mix at Churchill Downs. Weather conditions for Thurby followed scattered rain on 502'sDay, a beautiful spring day on Wednesday and forecasted showers and thunderstorms throughout the remainder of Derby Week, according the National Weather Service. Kentucky Oaks has a 70% chance of rain, followed by a 40-60% chance of rain for the running of the Kentucky Derby on May 3.

The NWS says that of 150 Kentucky Derby Days, 72, or 48%, have experienced rain at some point during the day. Similarly, out of 150 Kentucky Oaks, 79, or 53% have had rainy conditions.

Wrapped in clear plastic ponchos, a group of friends and family in shades of purple made their way to the grandstand, but not before being greeted at the paddock with a late-morning shower.

Still, the weather wasn't spoiling their chase for race day winnings on Thurby, which has become a tradition over the last five years.

"I'm excited to see the people, too," said Marcy Jennings, of Louisville. "Seeing the different hats, the fashion, the dresses."

They soon shed their clear coverings and took their seats — coveted covered spots.

"We're under here now," said Nicky Shepard, with visiting sister Marcy from



Trackgoers arrive at Churchill Downs on Thurby, Louisville's day at the racetrack, two days ahead of Kentucky Derby 2025 on May 1. MICHAEL CLEVINGER/COURIER JOURNAL

Ohio. "It can do what it wants to do."

"We're covered, literally!" added friend Timiko Pulliam.

Dark clouds and wet conditions didn't dampen the mood for Jessica and William Marquez, who brought their young niece, Kynlee, and their daughter, Shelby, in twin-like corresponding silk dresses to Thurby. The girls were excited to see the horses, but the Louisville couple was overjoyed to be in the mix during Kentucky Derby Week. They'd been at Churchill Downs for "The Greatest Two Minutes in Sports" before, but never ask spectators. Over the past 12 years, they worked the event in concessions.

"This is our first time actually watching and enjoying the races," William Marquez said. "It's just so exciting."

"It's amazing," Jessica Marquez continued. "You bring people together for one common goal and for some good fun, and we can all just be together."

In the grandstands, a large group of out-of-towners gathered to watch the Thurby races and enjoy a cigar and drinks as they cheered on the horses. Tammy and Ron Woods, from South Car-

olina, were joined by friends who currently reside in various parts of Indiana — Miriam Farrell and Lisa Hargitt.

Tammy, who is originally from the Louisville area, said they first started attending Derby in 1979, when infield tickets were only \$10. They often travel back for Derby Week with friends and family members and started attending races earlier in the week to avoid the high costs of the Kentucky Oaks and Kentucky Derby.

Farrell said she doesn't attend every year but loves the atmosphere and energy at the track.

"For me, not coming every year, I just love the festivities of it, the excitement of it. Everybody seems to be in a good mood," Farrell said. "The people that work here at Churchill Downs are so friendly and it just makes for a really good experience. I mean, this is a mini vacation for me. Nothing like it."

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Case Lehmkuhl was the first to get a mohawk by barber David Melvin for the opportunity to meet Kentucky Derby horse Flying Mohawk. Joining Lehmkuhl is girlfriend Mackenzy McDonald and Flying Mohawk owner Jayson Werth.

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