

# Belmont Stakes will create more questions than answers

The final leg of the 2026 Triple Crown will be run this Saturday at venerable Saratoga Race Course. It will be the final year that the New York Racing Association (NYRA) will ask Saratoga to pinch hit due to almost a total rebuild of Belmont Park. Once again, the makeshift Belmont distance will be 1 ¼ miles instead of the traditional 1 ½ mile test of champions.



CHUCK HARPER

The configuration of Saratoga makes it impossible to run it at its normal distance. It's certainly been a strange year. The Preakness had to be run at Laurel due to the same issues with Pimlico's rebuild. It will be good to get the real Triple Crown back next year.

Sovereignty took care of business last year after winning the Kentucky Derby and skipping the Preakness, something that Cherie Devaux will try to accomplish with Derby Champ Golden Tempo. The Belmont Stakes is known as the Test of Champions. It will be hard to put that label on this

year's winner unless Golden Tempo can overcome his penchant for being a pace dependent deep closer, a running style that's usually compromised in this race. To compound Golden Tempo's problems, there is not going to be the kind of early gas he took advantage of in the Derby that will allow him to make a big late run. By the time he gets rolling, it may be too late.

A stalker who gets first run on the turn will be the optimum way that you'll pass this test.

The probable field is still shaping up at this writing, but what we do know is that Preakness winner Napoleon Solo will not enter and prep instead for the Haskell at Monmouth on July 18th. Derby 3rd place and Preakness 4th place finisher Ocelli will opt for the Ohio Derby at JACK Thistle-down in North Randall, Ohio on June 20th. He's still eligible for a maiden race. Maybe he'll enjoy the class relief he'll find in Ohio. Further Ado, 11th in the

Derby, will try a weaker bunch of three-year-olds at Churchill in the Matt Winn Stakes on June 7th at the shorter distance of 1 1/16th, which is a clue as to how far he may want to go. Potente, 12th in the Derby, is likely for Matt Winn as well. Right now, it looks like these ten will hook up in the Belatoga.

**EMERGING MARKET** for Chad Brown lost a shoe in his 10th place finish in the Derby. He made a nice middle move in only his third lifetime start with Flavien Prat aboard. Horse Racing Nation has his fair odds at 9-1. If he's able to set a nice comfortable early pace, he could be dangerous.

**COMMANDMENT** for Brad Cox was off a step slow in the Derby. Rallied up for 4th before flattening out after being very wide, expect him to return to his Florida Derby winning form. His fair odds are 5-1 and he will be one of the main contenders. He'll be on my tickets.

**CHIEF WALLABEE** for Bill Mott had all kinds of issues in the Derby and fought through them to finish a closing 4th. He could have been much

closer. His problem is just a lack of experience. He got plenty of that in the Derby. He's done nothing to make me change my mind as my pick in the Derby. If he takes a small step forward, he'll give Bill Mott his second straight Belmont win. He's at 9/2. I will have him on all of my tickets.

**GOLDEN TEMPO** for Cherie Devaux. She's still on cloud 9 from being crowned the first female trainer to win the Derby. It's a wonderful story, but unfortunately, Golden Tempo will not get that perfect storm gift he received in the Derby. The pace collapsed, but there's not going to be that kind of pace in the Belmont. He's a candidate for 3rd or 4th at a generous 8-1. No way he goes off that high. Let's see if he can win a paceless race. He'll be on most of my tickets underneath.

**GROWTH EQUITY** one of three for Chad Brown. Winner of the Peter Pan, a historically good prep for the Belmont. In the Peter Pan, he stalked the pace and took command at the head of the stretch. The question here is if he's good

enough. He's at 6-1, which is way too low.

**RENEGADE** for Todd Pletcher, will be your race favorite. He's at 4-1, but I think you won't get that just because of the Pletcher and Repole roots in New York. He's the horse to beat, and if there's a champion to be crowned, he's the man. He'll be putting in his usual run from off the pace but look for him to be much closer before firing his big late kick and get the jump on Golden Tempo. He's in the exacta.

**OTINHO** another for Chad Brown who'll be running late. He is a serious cut below these at 50-1. He may clunk up late to get a small piece.

**VIRTRUVIAN MAN** for Doug O'Neill. 3rd in the weak Santa Anita Derby. Stamina is his game. O'Neill has a way to make his presence felt in races like this. He's 60-1 plus, but something tells me he'll outrun those odds.

**POWERSHIFT** for Todd Pletcher. Broke his maiden on Derby Day at Churchill and is very talented, just not talented enough for this bunch. He's the early pace setter.

He's at 15-1.

How the race will be run is a challenge, because it's void of any real pace. Someone has to be on the lead so I think Powershift and Emerging Market may inherit that role. It's going to be a huge group that will want to stalk. Those will be Chief Wallabee, Growth Equity, Otinho, Virtruvian Man and Commandment will be just behind those. Renegade and Golden Tempo will be in their usual "see them all" position. The key to the race is who will be in the best position at the head of the stretch to get the first jump and then hold off the closers. It says here that Chief Wallabee will finally put it all together and hold off the charge of both Renegade and Commandment with Golden Tempo 4th. Three different winners of the 2026 Triple Crown will do nothing to settle the score for who's the best of his generation. We'll have to wait for the Haskell and probably the Travers to help us get the answers we need. There are other pretty talented horses who may have a say in that too.

## BELARDO

FROM PAGE B1

putting the Dragons down in order for the second consecutive inning. Motta followed, putting the Pioneers down in order in the top of the fifth.

Layne led off the bottom of the fifth with a single. In the next at bat, Mitchell struck the ball hard towards third base, but junior Jude McDaniel caught the line drive and threw Layne out at first base for a double play. Lawson forced a ground out to end the fifth.

Dennis drew his third walk of the game, and senior Logan Lawson followed with a walk of his own to start the top of the sixth for Simon Kenton. After a sacrifice bunt, senior Charlie Overton came into the game to pinch hit and extended the Pioneer lead to two runs on an RBI single. In the next at bat, Donnelly made a diving catch on a bunt attempt before running to first base for a double play to strand two Pioneer runners. Francis came back into the game to pinch hit and led off the bottom of the sixth with a double and moved to third base on a balk. Dillon drove Francis in with an RBI single. Lawson kept the

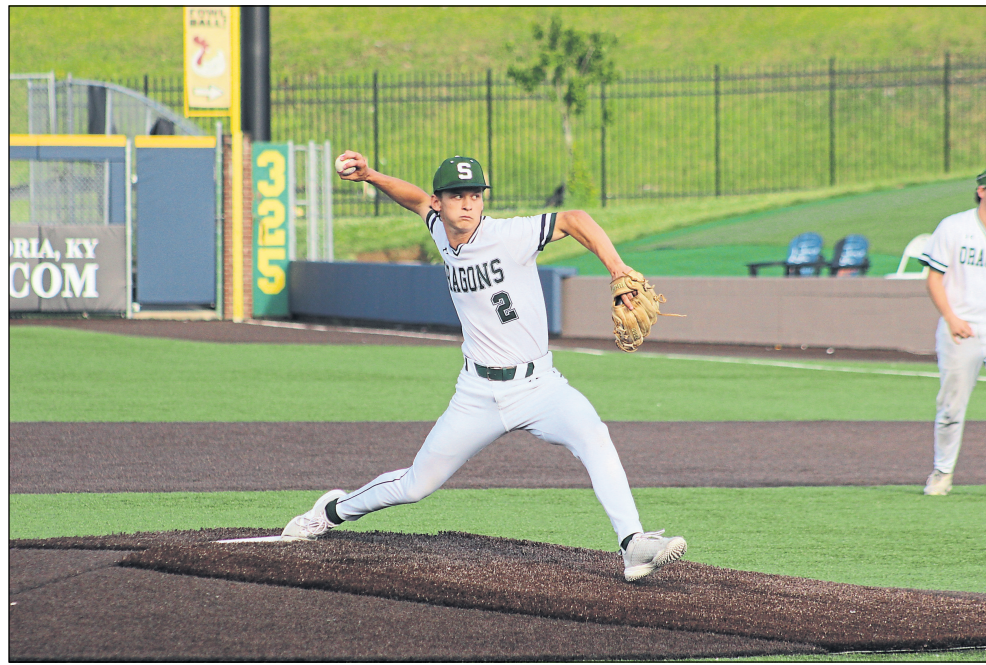


PHOTO BY Wyatt Sparkman

South Oldham senior Colton Motta throws a pitch in a 6-5 win over Simon Kenton in the Eighth Region Semifinals.

Pioneer lead and ended the sixth with consecutive pop ups.

"[Francis] might be one of the most competitive kids I've ever coached," Wheat said. "I've done this a really long time, and even when he's sliding all over the place [on the mound], he didn't really care. He was mad when I took him out of the game. It was one of those situations where it was like we'll trust him in every big game that we play, because he throws strikes, especially when the

mound is not like an ice skating ring. He's an extremely competitive kid. He's tough. He likes those moments."

Donnelly and Russell combined to throw a three up, three down inning in the top of the seventh. Belardo led off the top of the seventh, crushing the ball down the left field line. The ball drilled the foul pole for a solo home run to tie the game.

"The at bat before that, I was a little out in front," Belardo said. "All I was trying

to do is just sit back a little bit more and get my timing better, do anything I can to put the team in a good spot."

Simon Kenton junior Jeffery Young came into the game and immediately gave up a walk. Mitchell hit the ball hard in the next at bat, but the ball fell in play on the warning track and was caught for an out. Young forced extra innings with a ground out and a fly out.

Russell forced a ground ball in the first at bat of extras. Dillon ran over from his

position at second base and scooped the ball and threw it while falling away from first base, earning the first out of the inning. Russell struck out the next two batters to put the Pioneers down in order to begin the eighth.

"I'm going to call out my guy Jake on that play up the middle. That was unbelievable," Russell said. "That's one of the best plays I've seen, ever, but I just went up there. I saw that they were not hitting the breaking ball well at all, so I knew if I landed them, they weren't going to hit me very hard."

With one out in the bottom half of the eighth, Dillon reached second base on an error before senior Jair Funes put runners on the corners with a single. Closurdo laid down a bunt in the next at, allowing Dillon to race home and score on a walk-off bunt to give the Dragons a 6-5 win, advancing them to regional championship.

"I just stayed calm and composed and just know it's just a game, just go up there and do your best," Closurdo said. "You're here for a reason and just go up there and compete and do what you do."

The win means a lot to Russell, Belardo and Closurdo. Russell feels like this game proved that South can

win any type of game, and Closurdo is proud to be able to make it this far with this group of guys.

"It means a ton. I love these guys, love this group," Closurdo said. "[We need to keep] coming out here and keep stacking game by game, be in the moment."

South Oldham will travel back to the Thomas More Stadium to take on the North Oldham Mustangs (23-6) on Thursday night at 5 p.m. in the Eighth Region Championship.

"I think the biggest thing is that we just don't worry about who we play and focus on us and how we do it," Wheat said. "I'm trying to offend anybody or anything, but we can't play another team. We have to do what we do, and we have to focus on us. We have to just go at it."

For Belardo, he knows getting to the region finals is a great achievement, but he knows there is still work to be done heading into the championship game.

"Coach Wheat talked about it, enjoy the moment right now," Belardo said. "When we get home and get to bed, it's kind of over, just wake up tomorrow, a new day and completely forget about it and move on and just go 100% on tomorrow's game."

## NORTH

FROM PAGE B2

him and Grimm to score on an inside the park home run.

With one out, the Mustangs loaded the bases on a single by senior Kaden Dickhaut, a hit by pitch by Kuerzi and a walk by Labar. Yarka scored Dickhaut on a sacrifice fly before Seely pushed Kuerzi across home plate on an RBI single to give North Oldham a five-run advantage going into the fifth inning.

"We try to play a really tough schedule," Phelps said.

"When you play a tough schedule, you're not going to typically throw up 14 runs or 20 runs, so we really had to grind and work on making sure that we controlled the pieces that we could. Hitting

is contagious, and it's about confidence. When you have three knocks on the day, you go up there with a little swagger, and you feel good. Hopefully, the schedule that we play is highly competitive, and it prepares our guys for this postseason type of run."

Senior Issac Abney nabbed a single on Barnett to lead off the sixth. However, Barnett continued his strong performance with back-to-back strikeouts and a pop up to strand him at first base. Bowen drew a walk but was thrown out on a fielder's choice to start the bottom half of the inning.

Dickhaut smashed the ball into the right field gap for an RBI triple. After Kuerzi drew a walk, Labar hit a two-run single to give North Oldham an eight-run lead to end the fifth inning. Barnett

tossed another three up, three down inning in the top of the sixth.

"All of [my teammates] have a bunch of confidence in me, so I have all the confidence in the world in them," Barnett said. "I know if a ball's in play, they're going to do everything they can to get to it, and we just make a lot of good plays on this team."

Seely led off the bottom of the sixth with a single before scoring on an RBI double by Bowen. After a single by Cox, Dickhaut gave North Oldham an 11-1 run-rule win with an RBI single, advancing the Mustangs to their second consecutive region finals.

"All of us have just bought into our program," Barnett said. "We dealt with injuries early, and we've all just fought

back. We have a strong brotherhood in this program, and we just keep fighting and keep finding a way to win."

North Oldham will travel to play the South Oldham Dragons (26-8) in the Eighth

Region Finals on Thursday night at Thomas More Stadium at 5 p.m.

"Honestly, I don't have to say anything," Phelps said. "The kids are going to be pumped up, and it's one of

those things where it's North versus South and for a chance to go to the state championship. You go let him play, and we want to have fun. We want to be aggressive, all gas, no breaks."

## SOUTH

FROM PAGE B2

Bearcat deficit to one going into the bottom half of the inning.

Dickerson forced a pop up to begin the bottom half before Toll singled. Dickerson powered her way to a strikeout for the second out. She forced a pop up to left field, and Pasley twisted and turned, catching

the final out and sending South Oldham to the region finals with a 7-6 win.

"I'm just really happy for Addi's senior year," Turner said. "This year, I just feel like as a team we bond really well together, and we're all so happy for each other, whenever everybody plays well."

South will play the Oldham County Lady Colonels (26-10) on Friday night for the Eighth Region Championship. The Lady Dragons are looking for

their first state tournament appearance since 2000.

"Now, we have the confidence that we can hang with them, and we can even beat them," Schrecker said. "The monkey's off our back by beating them for the first time in [16] years. It's going to be a great matchup. It's going to be a great game. It's going to be two teams that want to beat each other, and they're rivals. It's going to be an awesome game."

# LEGAL NOTICE

PROBATE NOTICE

ADMINISTRATION has been granted to the following:

Rodney Hinkle 126 Holly Hill Drive Richmond KY 40475 having been appointed Administrator on May 5, 2026, in the estate of Ruth R Hinkle 9011 Bartlett Avenue Pewee Valley KY 40056. Deceased. Attorney Phillip A Pearson 500 West Jefferson Street Suite 2400 Louisville KY 40202.

Shiela Rhoads 5613 Harrods Glen Dr Prospect KY 40059 having been appointed Administratrix on May 5, 2026, in the estate of Sosamma Isaac 7220 Michael Benjamin Circle Crestwood KY 40014. Deceased. Attorney Valerie L Shannon 401 W Jefferson St LaGrange KY 40031.

Pamela Wilder 4401 Evergreen Rd Crestwood KY 40014 having been appointed Executrix on May 5, 2026, in the estate of Vivian L Harris 6243 W Hwy 146 Crestwood KY 40014. Deceased. Attorney Valerie Shannon 401 W Jefferson St LaGrange KY 40031.

Jennifer Stomberger 8109 Speer Lane Crestwood KY 40014 having been appointed Guardian on May 12, 2026, in the estate of Nicholas Merritt Stomberger 8109 Speer Lane Crestwood KY 40014, a minor. Attorney John K Spalding 9720 Bunsen Pkwy Louisville KY 40299.

Jennifer Stomberger 8109 Speer Lane Crestwood KY 40014, a minor. Attorney John K Spalding 9720 Bunsen Pkwy Louisville KY 40299.

John and Marilyn Hoffman 14774 Silverset Street Poway CA 92064 having been appointed Administrators on May 12, 2026, in the estate of Robert J Hoffman 3907 Hayfield Way Prospect KY 40059. Deceased. Attorney Edward C Airhart 1039 East Burnett Avenue Louisville KY 40217.

David M Carey 5712 Magnolia Ridge Place Sarasota FL 34243 having been appointed Administrator on May 19, 2026, in the estate of Christopher Alan Carey 12731 Crestmoor Cr Prospect KY 40059. Deceased. Attorney Valerie L Shannon 401 W Jefferson St LaGrange KY 40031.

Steven W Allert 600 S Chapelgate Lane Baltimore MD 21229 having been appointed Executor on May 26, 2026, in the estate of Barbara L Patterson 209 Maple Court LaGrange KY 40031. Deceased. Attorney Ray H Stoess Jr 600 W Main Street Suite 100 Louisville KY 40202.

Lee Colleen Klusmeier 4911 Sycamore Run Drive LaGrange KY 40031 having been appointed Executrix on May 26, 2026, in the estate of Gene Klusmeier 4911 Sycamore Run Drive LaGrange KY 40031. Deceased. Attorney Sean P Paris 306 West Jefferson Street LaGrange KY 40031.

Rachel K Elliott 720 Moriah Church Rd Casar NC 28020 having been appointed Executrix on May 26, 2026, in the estate of Ashley Bennett Kountz 1004 Cedar Cove LaGrange KY 40031. Deceased. Attorney Gavin Weinrich 9625 Ormsby Station Road Louisville KY 40223.

Arthur E White III 6506 W Hwy 22 PO Box 12 Crestwood KY 40014 having been appointed Administrator on May 26, 2026, in the estate of Dorothy G Edeburn The Springs at Oldham Reserve 2000 East Peak Road LaGrange KY 40031. Deceased. Attorney Arthur E White III PO Box 12 Crestwood KY 40014.

**CLAIMS AGAINST ESTATES MUST BE FILED BY CREDITORS WITHIN SIX (6) MONTHS AFTER THE DATE OF APPOINTMENT OF FIDUCIARY.**

Settlements in the following matters having been filed and approved are scheduled for hearing on April 23, 2026, Oldham District Court. Exceptions to the following settlements must be filed with Oldham District Court, 100 W Main Street LaGrange KY 40031.

Estate of: Sally Ann Braham

Estate of: Alva Ray Sullivan

Estate of: Joan K Adter

Estate of: Ted Dittus

Estate of: John Parker Stodghill

Estate of: Carl Lamont Williams

Estate of: Ronald Wayne Barr

Estate of: Frank P Strickler IV

Estate of: Kaitlyn Elizabeth Powell

Estate of: Emery Peyton Wernert

Estate of: Ronald Wayne Meurer

Estate of: Mary Lou Meurer

Estate of: John E Meurer

Estate of: Jerry Randall Weakly

Estate of: Shirley Joyce Ragan

Estate of: Stacey Nicole Barta

Estate of: Mallory Lynn Kolb

Estate of: Beverly Bowen

Estate of: Amanda B Husband

Estate of: Miguel Quiles Acevedo