



Iron Maidens Thoroughbreds
Hello Mudder
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April showers can bring sloppy tracks in May, especially around Kentucky Derby time. During the last thirty years, the Derby has been run over an off track only four times and never twice back-to-back. However, there have been a few instances where the track was muddy one year and good the next, the last occasion was in 1989 when Sunday Silence won in the mud and 1990, when Unbridled took the roses over a track labeled "good."



Sunday Silence wins the Derby

This year, a huge cloud is hanging over Louisville and it won't go away. Thunderstorms and a 60% chance of rain are forecast for the present-day Derby afternoon and the track will likely be sealed. A sealed track is a dirt track that has been packed down and not harrowed. When rain is forecast during a meet, the track superintendant will often seal the track so that water runs off of it, reducing the amount of precipitation absorbed into the surface. Wet tracks are sealed to provide a safe and even racing surface.



A lone hold out at the rail - Belmont Park

Even if it is dry in the morning, by the time the fifth race rolls around, the umbrellas will come out or handicappers leave the rail and huddle around the grandstand monitors. Jockeys gather up several sets of goggles and their valets are kept busy cleaning muddy boots. Turf races are switched to the sloppy main track and several horses scratch out of the contests. Often, unexpected longshots happily splash their way to the winners circle.

So, after hours of handicapping the races only to watch the main track become a quagmire, what's a handicapper to do? No one wants to see their analysis washed down the drain and bypassing Derby day is simply not an option when there is money to be made.

Some handicappers rely on the past performances decipher which entry will do best over the off going. Past performance sheets have limited pedigree information for handicapping a mud track. The Daily Racing Form offers Tomlinson Ratings, which suggests the aptitude of the selected horse for wet tracks or turf. The Tomlinson Ratings range from 0 to 480 and rate a horse's potential, not ability. They are based upon the sire and damsire's bloodlines along with a 'meaningful sample' of their offspring and are updated twice a year. The drawback with these ratings are that they are not quantified. They do not give a numeral indication of the 'meaningful sample' or what percentages of the sires' offspring win over a muddy track to determine the number ratings. The Tomlinson numbers can be found in the upper right-hand corner of the career box of the horse's past performances.

Tomlinson Ratings, in career box

Life	25	5	4	6	\$106,207	100	D.Fst	19	3	4	4	\$117,670	96
2000	5	0	1	1	\$14,440	96	Wet (400)	3	2	0	1	\$54,777	100
1999	12	3	1	3	\$125,540	100	Turf (320)	3	0	0	1	\$13,950	89
Bel	3	1	0	1	\$44,700	96	Dist (330)	7	3	1	0	\$55,384	91

Tomlinson Ratings - Photo: DRF

Life:	6	4	-	1	-	0	\$673,560	106	Fst	(110)	6	4	-	1	-	0	\$673,560	106
2010	3	3	-	0	-	0	\$630,000	99	Off	(108)	0	0	-	0	-	0	\$0	
2009	3	1	-	1	-	0	\$43,560	106	Dis	(107?)	0	0	-	0	-	0	\$0	
CD	0	0	-	0	-	0	\$0		Trf	(107)	0	0	-	0	-	0	\$0	
									AW		6	4	-	1	-	0	\$673,560	106
Sire Stats:	AWD	6.8f	23%Mud	77MudSis														2.88spi
Dam's Site:	AWD	7.0f	19%Mud	929MudSis														4.67spi

Sire and Dam's Sire stats in yellow - Photo: BRISNET

BrisNet past performances are statistic oriented. They present the sire and damsire's number of runners and percentage of winners over off going for each horse. This information can be found on the right hand side under the career box. Having statistics available gives the horseplayer an exact figure to determine if the sire and damsire are fair, average or above average producers of mudders.

The above methods are useful accessories, especially at the racetrack or OTB where pedigree information isn't readily available. However, new sires come along every year and horseplayers should acquaint themselves with the bloodlines that contain mud influences. For instance, Roman Ruler's offspring love to splash in the muddy track puddles. His sire Fusaichi Pegasus and damsire Private Account both descended from superior mud influences and their progeny's win rate averages 18% or higher in the mud. Fusaichi Pegasus is descended from Mr. Prospector and Private Account is a son of Damascus, both sire lines with an aptitude for off tracks. When Roman Ruler's maiden progeny are entered to run on an off track, the astute handicapper with some pedigree knowledge will keep that horse under consideration for a bet.

This is where some basic pedigree knowledge kicks in and it can pay respectable dividends. Being familiar with which sire lines get offspring that perform well on an off track ("mudders") can give the handicapper a huge advantage when trying to analyze a field where few of the horses have run over this type of surface. For instance, Kentucky Derby winner Mine That Bird's sire and damsire both produce a high number of winners over the off going. If you enlisted pedigree as one of your handicapping tools, Mine That Bird would have deserved some consideration during your Derby assessment. Of course, not every horse whose sire or damsire have strong mud influences will want to get his hooves dirty. Previous attempts made by horses that have run a few times and failed over a particular surface should be considered before pedigree.



Mine that Bird wins the Derby - Photo: AP

Which sire lines should handicappers keep in mind while handicapping for an off track? Older dominant bloodlines such as Mr. Prospector, Northern Dancer, and Bold Ruler have branched into different directions. Some lines have become predominately turf while others lean towards speed or stamina. Not all stallions from a particular sire line that produces mudders automatically qualify as a mud influence. One must take into account the strength of the stallion's distaff side. For instance, Blushing Groom is a strong mud influence, however, the progeny of his sons Arazi, Candy Stripes and Rainbow Quest, predominately turf sires, are average to poor mud runners and strangely, on the opposite end, Kingmambo is an average sire of mud runners but his dirt oriented sons throw very good off track winners.

While this is not an all inclusive list, following are some popular bloodlines that are known to produce mudders. Related bloodlines like Bold Ruler, Seattle Slew and A.P. Indy are all related so they are listed together under the main sire.

Wet Track Sire List