



# CLASSIC

by Jon White

## ABOUT THE RACE

With a purse of \$5,000,000, the Breeders' Cup Classic is the richest race in North America. Perhaps even more noteworthy, it is the most lucrative race on the planet that is run on dirt.

In 2010, the only races in the world worth more than \$5,000,000 were these four events: the \$10,000,000 Dubai World Cup (G1) on synthetic footing; the \$5,914,800 Melbourne Cup (G1) on grass in Australia; the \$5,659,640 Japan Cup (G1) on grass; and the \$5,512,000 Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe (G1) on grass in France.

The second-richest non-grass race in the world last year was the \$2,998,330 Japan Cup Dirt (G1).

The second-richest non-grass race in North America in 2010 was the \$2,185,200 Kentucky Derby (G1).

While \$5,000,000 is up for grabs for the participants in the 2011 Breeders' Cup Classic at Churchill Downs, horseplayers certainly are hoping to make some money off the race, too. One angle for bettors to keep in mind concerning this year's Classic is that each of the seven previous winners of the race at Churchill Downs was coming off a victory or a second-place finish. This is how the seven Classic winners have fared at Churchill in their previous race:

1988: Alysheba	1st at Meadowlands
1991: Black Tie Affair	1st at Arlington Park
1994: Concern	2nd at Louisiana Downs
1998: Awesome Again	1st at Hawthorne
2000: Tiznow	1st at Santa Anita
2006: Invador	1st at Saratoga
2010: Blame	2nd at Belmont Park

Evidently, it does not matter which American track a horse uses as a springboard to the Breeders' Cup at Churchill, since each of the seven horses listed above employed a different path to their Classic triumph in Louisville.



LAST YEAR'S CLASSIC WAS A THRILLING SHOWDOWN BETWEEN ZENYATTA (LEFT) AND BLAME (RIGHT).

When Alysheba won the Classic in 1988, he was the favorite. Since then, six-straight betting choices have lost at Churchill. Interestingly, each one of those six beaten favorites finished either second or sixth. Here is how the Classic favorites fared at Churchill:

1988: Alysheba	Won
1991: Festin	Finished 6th
1994: Tabasco Cat	Finished 2nd
1998: Skip Away	Finished 6th
2000: Fusaichi Pegasus	Finished 6th
2006: Bernardini	Finished 2nd
2010: Zenyatta	Finished 2nd

Other than Alysheba, the Classic winners at Churchill have, rather remarkably, been in the same general price range:

1988: Alysheba	\$5.00
1991: Black Tie Affair	\$10.00
1994: Concern	\$17.00
1998: Awesome Again	\$11.40
2000: Tiznow	\$20.40
2006: Invador	\$15.40
2010: Blame	\$12.40

Something else horseplayers might want to do vis-à-vis this year's Classic is discount the chances of any runner that has not already been successful at the Grade One level. Seven-straight Classic winners previously had won at least one Grade One race. The last Classic winner that did not already have at least one Grade One victory on his or her résumé was Pleasantly Perfect in 2003.

Meanwhile, inasmuch as this year's Breeders' Cup Classic is a 1-1/4 mile race run at the same distance and on the same track as the Kentucky Derby (G1), can a horseplayer possibly take any Derby angles and apply them to the Classic?

One Kentucky Derby angle I frequently have addressed in my weekly XpressBet.com column and HRTV.com blog is what I have characterized as the "eighth pole factor." Because of the 1-1/4 mile distance and Churchill Downs' unusually long stretch (1,234.5 feet), many people have the perception that the Derby often is won with a late charge. But the cold hard facts prove that this is a misconception.

PHOTO CREDIT: ZENYATTA AND BLAME PHOTO © DWAYNE LOO

Forty-six out of the last forty-nine Kentucky Derby winners were first or second with an eighth of a mile to go. Animal Kingdom was third at that point this year (and he was just a half-length from being second). Giacomo was sixth with a furlong to run in 2005. Grindstone was fourth with a furlong remaining in 1996.

What about the "eighth pole angle" as it pertains to the seven editions of the Breeders' Cup Classic at Churchill? Only two of the seven winners were not either first or second with a furlong to go. This is where the seven Classic winners at Churchill were a furlong from the finish:

1988: Alysheba	1st
1991: Black Tie Affair	1st
1994: Concern	3rd
1998: Awesome Again	4th
2000: Tiznow	1st
2006: Invador	2nd
2010: Blame	1st

The evidence shows that a horse has a much better chance of winning the Kentucky Derby or Breeders' Cup Classic at Churchill by being first or second a furlong from the finish.

Even-money favorite Zenyatta was third with a furlong to run in the 2010 Classic. Though she gave it her all in the final furlong, the great mare lost by a head.

### OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD

When John Avello from the Wynn and Encore Race & Sport Books in Las Vegas released their future-book odds for the Classic on October 3, there were nine horses listed at 11/1 and lower. The nine horses were:

Havre de Grace:	3/1
Uncle Mo:	6/1
So You Think:	6/1
Flat Out:	8/1
Tizway:	8/1
Twirling Candy:	8/1
Await the Dawn:	9/1
Game On Dude:	9/1
Stay Thirsty:	11/1

### KEY PREP RACES

Three key prep races—the Kelso Handicap (G2), the Beldame (G1), and



THE 4-YEAR-OLD FILLY HAVRE DE GRACE CRUISED TO VICTORY IN THE BELDAME (G1), SETTING HER UP FOR A HISTORIC RUN IN THE CLASSIC.

Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1)—were contested on the same October 1 card at Belmont Park.

UNCLE MO zipped one mile on a muddy track in 1:33.82 to win the Kelso (G2) by 3-lengths.

HAVRE DE GRACE made 2/5 favoritism look like a gift in the Beldame (G1) at 1-1/8 miles. The 4-year-old daughter of 2005 Breeders' Cup Classic victor Saint Liam won in isolated grandeur by 8-1/4 lengths.

In the 1-1/4 mile Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1)—a Breeders' Cup Challenge "Win and You're In" race—FLAT OUT came home smartly to win by 2-1/4 lengths. DROSSELMAYER finished second, with STAY THIRSTY third.

Also on October 1, GAME ON DUDE won Santa Anita's 1-1/8 mile Goodwood (G1)—another Breeders' Cup Challenge race—by a half-length. The now-injured Awesome Gem (who will miss this race) and COIL finished second and third, respectively.

### MOST LIKELY WINNERS

UNCLE MO (118), FLAT OUT (113), TIZWAY (113, 111), and HAVRE DE GRACE (111) are the four candidates for this year's Classic to have earned a Beyer Speed Figure this year that equals or exceeds the minimum figure earned by the seven previous Classic winners at Churchill. This leads me to conclude that there is an excellent chance that

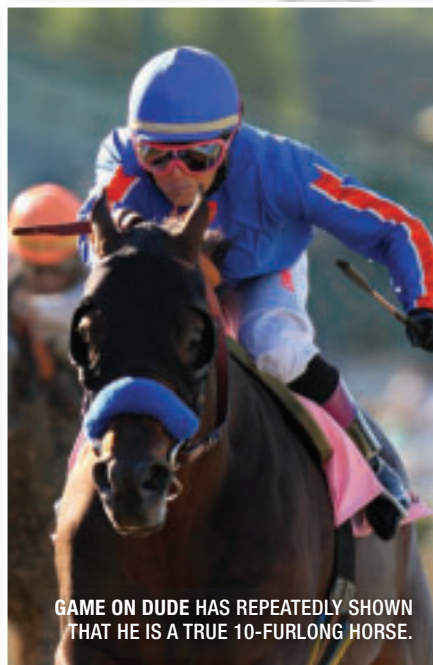
one of these four horses is going to win the 2011 Breeders' Cup Classic.

If UNCLE MO (fair odds: 3/1) comes anywhere close to duplicating his 118 Kelso (G2) figure, he probably will be posing for pictures in the winner's circle after the Classic. What's even scarier is if UNCLE MO runs a 120 or higher in the Classic—not an entirely far-fetched proposition due to the fact that he will be making his third start following a layoff—it's hard to envision anybody beating him.

On the other hand, there is the prospect that after UNCLE MO ran a career-top 118 in the Kelso (G2), he could "bounce" or regress in the Classic. I'm inclined to think that the possibility of that occurring is mitigated to some extent because UNCLE MO'S trainer, Todd Pletcher, is keenly aware that it's important not to have a horse peak in his or her final prep but rather on the big day.

Another concern for UNCLE MO in the Classic is the distance. Does he have sufficient stamina to win a Grade One race at 1-1/4 miles? The jury is out on that, especially considering he has never raced farther than 1-1/8 miles, and he has never won going farther than 1-1/16 miles. Also, the one time his sire, Indian Charlie, raced farther than 1-1/8 miles, he suffered the only defeat of his career, finishing third as the favorite in the 1998 Kentucky Derby at 1-1/4 miles.





GAME ON DUDE HAS REPEATEDLY SHOWN THAT HE IS A TRUE 10-FURLONG HORSE.

What could help **UNCLE MO** from a stamina standpoint is that his dam is a daughter of Arch. The 2010 Breeders' Cup Classic was won by Blame, a son of Arch.

**HAVRE DE GRACE** (fair odds: 5/2) is, without question, an exceptional 4-year-old filly. Her only defeat in six starts this year came when Blind Luck nosed her out in a stretch battle for the ages in the July 16 Delaware Handicap (G2)—and keep in mind that **HAVRE DE GRACE** spotted Blind Luck two pounds in that 1-1/4 mile affair.

After **HAVRE DE GRACE**'s narrow loss in the Delaware Handicap (G2), she joined Rachel Alexandra as the only females to have ever won the Woodward (G1). The belief here is that Rachel Alexandra had to run so hard to win the 2009 Woodward (G1) that it took quite a physical and mental toll on her. She never seemed to be as good after that.

By contrast, while **HAVRE DE GRACE**'s Woodward (G1) victory was by no means a walk in the park, it did not appear to be anywhere near as taxing as Rachel's effort. Indeed, whereas Rachel Alexandra did not race again during the remainder of 2009, **HAVRE DE GRACE** returned to score a stylish 8-1/4 length win in the Beldame (G1).

**FLAT OUT** (fair odds: 9/2) is, flat out, a horse that should be taken very seriously in this year's Classic. Plagued through the early part of his career by problems with his feet, he heads into this year's Classic having put together four-straight very good performances. He won the Suburban Handicap (G2) by 6-1/4 lengths in July, ran second in the Whitney Handicap (G1) in August, finished second in the Woodward (G1) in September, and won the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) by a little more than 2-lengths in October.

What's particularly appealing about **FLAT OUT** is his strong showing in the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) at 1-1/4 miles. So, unlike **UNCLE MO**, the distance of the Classic is not an issue for **FLAT OUT**.

**FLAT OUT** does have a couple of negatives, though. In the Stephen Foster Handicap (G1) at Churchill in June, he finished sixth in his worst performance of the year. The only other time **FLAT OUT** ran on Churchill's main track, he finished sixth in a sprint while making his career debut in the fall of 2008.

Perhaps **FLAT OUT** is just one of those runners that doesn't care for Churchill's main track—unlike last year's winner, Blame, who thrived on that surface. **UNCLE MO** also seems to like Churchill's main track, though that's not a certainty since he's had only one race over it. But the one time **UNCLE MO** competed on the main track at Churchill, he won the 2010 Breeders' Cup Juvenile by a little more than 4-lengths in fast time.

Another negative regarding **FLAT OUT**'s chances to win the Classic are his losses this year to **TIZWAY** in the Whitney Handicap (G1) and **HAVRE DE GRACE** in the Woodward (G1).

While **UNCLE MO**'s career-top 118 Beyer in the Kelso Handicap (G2) raises the possibility that he will regress in the Classic, both **HAVRE DE GRACE** and **FLAT OUT** have appealing Beyer patterns going into the Classic.

**HAVRE DE GRACE** recorded a career-top 111 in the Woodward (G1), then earned a 105 while just cruising in the Beldame (G1), setting her up nicely for this race.

Somewhat similarly, after **FLAT OUT** posted a 109 in the Woodward (G1), which was the second-highest Beyer of his career, he recorded a 107 in the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1). He also seemed to win the Gold Cup (G1) in a manner that shouldn't have taken too much out of him heading into the Classic.

While **TIZWAY** (fair odds: 4/1) has the talent to win the Classic, the enthusiasm for him by many horseplayers will be tempered by his absence from the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) due to a temperature. This means **TIZWAY** will be running in the Classic without having raced since his Whitney Handicap (G1) on August 6. At least it's encouraging for **TIZWAY** that winning the Classic off such a layoff would not be unprecedented. In 2006, Invasor captured the Classic without having competed since winning the Whitney Handicap (G1) on August 5.

Still, while Invasor showed it could be done, this certainly is not what trainer James Bond would have preferred in terms of **TIZWAY**'s race schedule before this year's Classic.

As is the case with **UNCLE MO**, **TIZWAY** has yet to prove he can win a Grade One race at 1-1/4 miles. While **TIZWAY** has the look to some of possibly being at his best from one-mile to 1-1/8 miles, it also is quite possible he will do just fine at 1-1/4 miles because of his sire. **TIZWAY** is by Tiznow, the only horse to ever win the 1-1/4 mile Breeders' Cup Classic twice, including the 2000 renewal at Churchill. Tiznow also won the 1-1/4 mile Super Derby (G2) and 1-1/4 mile Santa Anita Handicap (G1). So assume **TIZWAY** can't possibly win a race at 1-1/4 miles at your own peril.

## OTHER CONTENDERS

**SO YOU THINK** (fair odds: 4/1), a multiple Group One winner in Australia and Europe deserves much respect after finishing fourth in the Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe (G1) in France.

**STAY THIRSTY** (fair odds: 8/1) was the 6/5 favorite in the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1). Though he finished third, it's not as if he disgraced himself. That makes him dangerous in the Classic.

AWAIT THE DAWN (fair odds: 8/1), who won six of his first seven starts in Europe, could prove a tough customer should he start in the Classic. His sire, Giant's Causeway, finished second, a neck behind Tiznow, in the 2000 Classic at Churchill.

GAME ON DUDE (fair odds: 10/1) has won the Santa Anita Handicap (G1) and Goodwood (G1) this year. Both of those victories came at Santa Anita Park. It's too bad for him that this is 2011 and not 2012—that's because the Breeders' Cup is to be held at Santa Anita in 2012.

#### LIVE LONG SHOTS

TO HONOR AND SERVE (fair odds: 15/1) is a 3-year-old trained by Bill Mott that has looked like a new horse since being freshened after a failed Kentucky Derby trail campaign. His comeback race in the 6.5-furlong Amsterdam (G2) on August 1 wasn't pretty, but it served as a useful prep for his next two starts—dominating 1-1/8 mile victories in a Saratoga allowance race in late August and the \$1 million Pennsylvania Derby (G2) in late September.

DROSSELMAYER (fair odds: 15/1), another Mott trainee, likewise has the look of a runner that could perhaps finish first, second, or third at a nice price. He was 13/1 when he won the 2010 Belmont (G1) and 9/1 when second in this year's Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1).

#### SPECIAL WAGERING THOUGHTS

As stated earlier, I think the winner will likely be UNCLE MO, HAVRE DE GRACE, FLAT OUT, or TIZWAY. And of the four, I like TIZWAY the least because he missed the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1).

I'm going with UNCLE MO to win with the thought that if he runs anything close to the 118 Beyer he earned in the Kelso Handicap (G2), they are not going to beat him in the Classic. I'll cross my fingers that Pletcher can keep the Eclipse Award-winning 2-year-old male of 2010 from regressing off that 118 figure, and that UNCLE MO will have the stamina to win a 1-1/4 mile race.

Exotically speaking, I think a good battle plan is to put UNCLE MO over HAVRE DE GRACE in a rather large exacta wager, then also put UNCLE MO over FLAT OUT and DROSSELMAYER in smaller exacta wagers.

If you're willing (and able in this economy) to spend a fair amount of money, a wager to consider is to play trifectas with UNCLE MO with HAVRE DE GRACE, FLAT OUT, and DROSSELMAYER with "ALL."

And if you don't object to spending more, you also might consider playing trifectas with UNCLE MO with "ALL" with HAVRE DE GRACE, FLAT OUT, and DROSSELMAYER. **HP**

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JON WHITE, a commentator for HRTV and the morning-line maker at Santa Anita, made the official morning line for all of the 2009 Breeders' Cup races. He also has worked as a steward in California, Washington, and Idaho.

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