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### Derby features strong, full field

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in the past couple," said trainer Nick Zito, who will try to win a third Derby with Stephen Got Even and Adonis. "He's been unbelievably great, but he still has to be lucky ..."

"I've been lucky," Baffert said on the morning after a full field of 20 3year-olds was entered for the 125th Derby. "I don't know what it is."

What it is besides hard work and luck is cooperative owners and a staff Baffert calls the best in racing.

Both Pegram and John Mabee, owner of Excellent Meeting, said it was up to Baffert on whether the fillies run in the Oaks or the Derby.

Excellent Meeting was entered in both races, although Mabee, who also owns General Challenge, said he preferred the Oaks. Baffert said he would make a final decision Friday, but appeared to be leaning toward the Derby.

The entry of Excellent Meeting and General Challenge was made the 3-1 early favorite. Aaron Jones' Prime Timber, winner of the San Felipe and runner-up in the Santa Anita Derby, was next at 7-2.

Baffert said he feels no pressure about trying to become the first person to be involved with three straight Derby winners. He is only the sixth to have a shot at it.

"I think about just getting back,"
Baffert said. "I know there's going to
be a year when I don't have anything,
I just try to stay calm and cool and
enjoy the moment. The Derby's
becomes a fun thing for me. It's like a
vacation."

Baffert's barn, as it was in 1997-98, has been a magnet for the media and the curious, who gather to gawk at the horses, ask questions and listen to Baffert's stories.

Like the one about Baffert working as a substitute teacher in his hometown of Nogales, Ariz., in 1977-78.

"I was making \$20 a day, five days a week," he said. "On weekends, I'd go to Tucson and blow my check."

Or how about the advice he gave to a high school history class?

"I don't care what you do, but if that door opens," he told the students, "I want everybody looking down like they're studying."

Besides Baffert's entry, Worldly Manner and Aljabr, owned by members of the ruling Maktoum family of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, are entered.

There will be a five-horse mutuel pool for betting purposes, comprised of Ecton Park, K One King, Kimberlite Pipe, Lemon Drop Kid and Valhol.

The fillies Excellent Meeting and Three Ring each will carry 121 pounds; the others 126 apiece.

The field for the Derby in postposition order is: Adonis, Jorge Chavez; Three Ring, John Velazquez; Ecton Park, Robbie Davis; Stephen Got Even, Chris McCarron; Aljabr, Daragh O'Donahue; Excellent Meeting, Kent Desormeaux; Desert Hero, Corey Nakatani; Answer Lively, Craig Perret; Valhol, Willie Martinez; K One King, Alex Solis; Cat Thief, Mike Smith; Worldly Manner, Jerry Bailey; Kimberlite Pipe, Robby Albarado; Prime Timber, David Flores; General Challenge, Gary Stevens; First American, Eddie Delahoussaye; Charismatic, Chris Antley; Vicar, Shane Sellers; Menifee, Pat Day, and Lemon Drop Kid, Jose Santos.

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