



# WHAT HAPPENED TO CALIFORNIA CHROME: REMEMBERING THE STATE'S KENTUCKY DERBY CHAMPION

Posted on February 24, 2025 by Horrace Racler



Image Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=32884774>

There are few more successful racehorses in the history of the state of California than Californian Chrome.

The dominant runner had the power to transcend the entire state when he was at his best, which enabled all those within the state to feel a special connection to the equine superstar every time that he made history on the track.

California Chrome would shape much of the recent history of the sport, winning more money than any other runner on track, and landing victories in two of the prestigious legs of the Triple Crown.

## Californian Bred Star

California Chrome was bred in California and foaled in February 2011. The chestnut-coloured horse was named after his trademark white markings, and was quickly nicknamed Chrome by those that adored the horse.

Such was his growing fan base from an each age, they were given the nickname 'Chromies', and he would enjoy a loved reputation among fans, leading to those closest to the star referring to Chrome as the 'people's horse'.

Perry Martin owned and bred the horse in Tuba City alongside [Steve Coburn](#). The two formed the partnership known as DAP Racing, which was a tongue-in-cheek response to those who doubted the horse's ability as a dam of Love the Chase.

## Early Racing Career

One of the most heartwarming factors surrounding the story of Chrome is that the equine superstar was in one of the lesser-known yards in the United States, as he was trained by the father-son team of Art and Alan Sherman.

However, his potential superstardom wasn't clear to see from his early runs, as he was largely inconsistent as a two-year-old. That was up

until Chrome was partnered with Victor Espinoza.



The new partnership between the stars led to a period of success on the track, beginning with a victory in the King Glorious Stakes at Hollywood Park in December 2023. It was after this win that connections began to dream that a run in the Derby could be possible.

Chrome started his three-year-old campaign with a victory in the California Cup Derby, before stepping up into graded company with a dominant win in the San Felipe Stakes.

Dreams of Derby success were then accelerated in April, as Chrome showed a dominant turn of foot to stretch clear of the field to land the G1 Santa Anita Derby. A Beyer Speed Figure of 107 was recorded, which was the highest of any horse in the field for the 2014 Derby.

## Derby Success

The historical trends went against Chrome before the Derby in 2014, as only three Californian-bred runners has won the Kentucky Derby, with Decidedly becoming the latest winner in 1962. However, the Santa Anita Derby had long been seen as one of the most important prep races on the calendar.

Many trainers regarded Chrome as the leading chance to win the Derby, with D. Wayne Lukas admitting that if he were betting in the race, his wager would be going on the Sherman-trained runner. Sherman also faced questions of his training methods, with many reporters questioning his decision to fly in Chrome so late before the Derby.

However, he would still be sent off as the 5/2 favorite for the Derby, with many believing that his chances were enhanced after being drawn in stall five. Espinoza opted to keep Chrome off the pace in the Derby itself, before asking for his effort in the closing stages, with the horse's turn of foot putting five lengths between himself and the field.

You can find more information about Kentucky Derby here: <https://www.twinspires.com/kentuckyderby/handicapping/>

## Preakness Glory

After winning the Derby, connections immediately set their sights on further Triple Crown success, as the aim was to run in the Preakness Stakes. Reporters were quick to question his chances of success after a cough issue was pointed out following Chrome's workouts. However, once again, he made easy work of the field, finishing clear of Ride On Curlin to become the [first Californian-bred horse](#) to win both the Derby and Preakness.

Triple Crown success would unfortunately not follow after finishing fourth in the Belmont Stakes but Sherman and Coburn both were allowed to dream after having a horse of a lifetime to compete in the biggest races.

## Post Triple Crown Runs

After the Belmont Stakes, Chrome returned to take a respectable third in the Breeders' Cup Classic, before his 2015 season was cut short due to injury.

However, his form was regained in 2016, winning the Awesome Again Stakes, San Diego Handicap, and Dubai World Cup. Such was his achievements on track, it was little surprise when he was inducted into the National Museum of racing and Hall of Fame in 2023.

Since retiring, Chrome has enjoyed a decent career as a stallion. His most successful offspring was California Angel, who won the

Jessamine Stakes in 2021. Most recently, he recorded his first Grade One progeny when Kabirkham won the G1 Al Maktoum Challenge in 2024.