

Sports

Some people do plan to attend both the Kentucky Derby and the Pacquiao-Mayweather

By **Chuck Culpepper** May 2

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Yes. In the aeronautical wonderland of 2015, a person might attend both the Kentucky Derby in Louisville on Saturday evening and the Pacquiao-Mayweather fight 1,618 miles away in Las Vegas on Saturday night. Yes. It could get dicey.

In fact, a seasoned Louisvillian might deploy a grand strategy with a quirky twist. He might start walking out of Churchill Downs to a waiting car *while the horses still churn around the track*. He might even factor in that Pacquiao vs. Mayweather will require two national anthems, lending a small extra cushion of time.

“If I have the (Derby) winner, I’m not cashing the ticket that day,” said Jonathan Blue, the chairman and managing director of Blue Equity. “I have to go back next week. Can’t wait in line to cash the ticket.”

He and others who attempt this EDT-PDT double face a fussy window of only roughly 5 1/2 hours. The Kentucky Derby will begin at 6:24 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time. That means the Kentucky Derby will end at 6:26 EDT. The fight will begin at an unknowable time near midnight EDT, depending on various factors such as the duration of undercard bouts and the whims of the pampered contestants.

Upon previous private jets to Las Vegas, Blue has clocked flight times ranging from about 3 1/2 to four hours. He knows about the maddening exodus of 160,000 Derby attendees, and he knows about the queue of jets at the Louisville airport. “It should work out,” he said.

DJ Irie, the peripatetic entrepreneur and disc jockey for the Miami Heat plus a smorgasbord of other events, played a party in Louisville on Friday night and woke on Saturday aiming for the double. “It’s a very tight window, but one that we did VERY meticulous planning for,” he wrote in an email (capitals his). That includes, he wrote, “a police escort from Churchill Downs to the airport,” and “a guaranteed time slot for departure.”

He plans to sit down in the MGM Grand Garden Arena by the first undercard fight, and he revels in the whole exercise as “almost like doing two New Year’s Eve celebrations, one in Sydney and then jetting off to Vegas for another one.”

He's a man who knows about jetting off, and he refuses to try the timid tack: leaving before the Derby. As the uninitiated generally learn, Derby day does not entail just one race. The Derby itself will be the 11th of 13. "Yes! I'm going to stay and watch the race," DJ Irie wrote. "That's the whole purpose and what's really going to make this exciting."

A Churchill Downs veteran, Blue tried to pare down the iffiness. When the chatter built months ago that Pacquiao and Mayweather might agree to fight, he went ahead and booked a Southwest Airlines flight at 4:30 p.m., just in case the weather threatened to intrude. (It does not, with an ideal sky forecast: partly cloudy and the 70s.) As of Saturday morning, that nonstop flight had seats available for \$563 or more. Yet that would entail missing the Derby, and he did not want to miss the Derby.

His few uncertainties included the slotting of the flights departing Louisville, a process under the purview of the FAA and Atlantic Aviation, which manages the jets for the Louisville airport (and which did not return a call from the Post seeking edification). Blue made sure to do all he could. For one thing, he shipped his suitcase to the Bellagio in Las Vegas last Monday, because he did not want to fuss with such things on the Derby-fight path. When he leaves with his party to the waiting car at Churchill Downs, he will carry his "wallet, credit cards, ID," as he put it. "I am not changing clothes. I'm just going to keep my Derby clothes on."

In wait for him at the MGM will be University of Louisville basketball coach Rick Pitino, a bold man and Derby regular who yet chose the relative calm of the one-off fight over the double. Said Blue, thinking down to the minute: "You've got two national anthems, let's not forget that, so that's going to be a spectacle."

Chuck Culpepper covers national college sports for the Washington Post.

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