

A royal race to impress

Queen's next stop: Formal state dinner

By Maria Puente
USA TODAY

After her weekend of sport at the Kentucky Derby, where her famed hats were right at home, Queen Elizabeth II will be back in Washington for a full day of ceremony and socializing.

The Yanks will endeavor to impress the Brits, the true sultans of ceremony, beginning with an arrival extravaganza on the South Lawn of the White House featuring 7,000 guests, a military band, a 21-gun salute and a review of troops. Then President Bush will host a private lunch for the queen and her husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Then this evening: A white-tie state dinner — Bush's first white-tie affair. White-tie, or full evening dress, is the most formal dress code, favored by the British, and means ball gowns and tiaras for the women, tailcoats, white waistcoats and bow ties for the men. Americans are more familiar with slightly less formal black-tie, the dress code for most state dinners.

Bush is famous for his opposition to formality and staying up late, but he is nevertheless going all out for the queen, who is equally famous for her formality and, at 81, her remarkable endurance at state affairs.

The state dinner will be held in the State Dining Room for 134 guests seated at 13 tables. Neither the five-course menu nor the full guest list has been released, but known attendees include Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chief of Staff Chairman Gen. Peter Pace.

According to first lady Laura Bush's office, the most recent white-tie state dinner at the White House was in 2000, when President Clinton hosted one for King Juan Carlos of Spain. Republicans look back to President Reagan for a true enthusiast of the ultimate in formality: He wore morning dress (the daytime equivalent) at his 1981 inauguration, and his inauguration balls were white-tie.

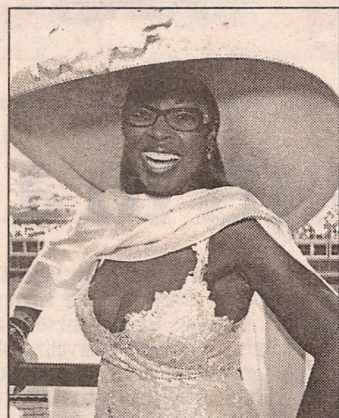


By Matthew Stockman, Getty Images

Kentucky Derby is saddled with celebs

Regal in green: Queen Elizabeth II checks out Street Sense's win in the Kentucky Derby with her husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. Their next stop is Washington, D.C.

At Churchill Downs on Saturday, security was tight around the Turf Club, where Queen Elizabeth II watched the Kentucky Derby with her husband, Prince Philip. Her majesty, in a green suit and matching green hat with a fuchsia ribbon, didn't mingle with the crowd. But plenty of other celebs did, at the race and related parties. **Kelly Carter hits a few highlights:**



By Jeff Gentner, Getty Images

To top it all off: Star Jones had a custom-made Angie Schultz hat.

Star picks

When it comes to the Kentucky Derby, picking hats ranks right up there with picking winners. Star Jones did both well. "I picked the winner this year, and I picked the winner last year," said Jones, one of many VIPs to watch Street Sense win the 133rd Run for the Roses from inside the Grand Gala's suite. "I'm on a roll." She sported a show-stopping Attitudes by Angie hat made especially for her by Louisville hat designer Angie Schultz. "I think I chose wisely because I walked through Churchill Downs today, and I got oohs and aahs. For Kentucky Derby day, that's all you want to hear."

Newfound fame

Louisville native Larry Birkhead, father of Anna Nicole Smith's daughter, Dannielynn, was greeted this year as a celebrity rather than a freelance journalist. He said his family is trying to persuade him to stay in Louisville rather than return to Los Angeles, but he hasn't quite decided what his next move is. "Dannielynn is here with me," he said. "I'm just happy to be a dad. I've been punched, kicked, scratched and spit on, and for the first time, it feels good. It's part of my journey as a father, and I'm just loving every minute of it. I have two cellphones, in case one battery goes dead, to check with the nanny."



By Jeff Gentner, Getty Images

"Just happy to be a dad": Larry Birkhead arrives with Patricia Barnstable Brown.



For more on celebs at the Derby and more photos of Queen Elizabeth's visit, visit life.usatoday.com.