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THE DERBY

After weeks of drought, it would have to cloud over on Derby Day - but rain or shine, the greatest classic of them all is on! The Queen Mother arrives with Princess Margaret, and other members of the Royal Family - the Queen herself has to miss this year's Derby, because she's on her way to Sweden. Last-minute bets are made with one eye on the weather - odds were lengthening on the favourite, LAVENDIN, when it looked as though the going might be firm, but now they're shortening again. A third of the field of 27 are French or French-trained - so England's going to have to look to its laurels.

There's the Queen's horse ATLAS, with Harry Carr up - followed by Gilles de Metz, and Lord Astor's Hornbeam, ridden by Joe Mercer. And Tenaresse, one of the French hopes. As the horses leave the parade, and center towards the start, it's beginning to rain quite steadily and the umbrellas are going up. They're under starter's orders - not too much temperament. The starter's mounting his platform, and with a lit of luck it won't be long now.

No, there's one out of line - back he goes, this should be it - and they're away. Induna and Idle Rocks are left behind as the field pounds up the stiff climb, against driving rain and a blustering wind. The rest are bunched together, with STONEY-LAY slightly in the lead.

And now it's Monterey leading STONEY LAY and PIRATE KING; as they come up to the bushes - he's a couple of lengths ahead - it's downhill now as they thunder towards Tattenham corner - the spot where so many hopes have been shattered. Can Willy Snaith hold Monterey in front? At the corner it's still Monterey but Pirate King's moved up to second place, with King David third. And back there in the field Lavandin's starting to improve his position.

Into the straight - Monterey's leading by three or four lengths - and Pirate King's beginning to lose ground. This is where the challenges often start, so Snaith's getting everything he can out of Monterey. If he can increase his lead now, he's got a splendid chance.

And now suddenly out of nowhere, Lavandin's overhauling him! Monterey's fighting hard, but inch by inch the favourite's pulling ahead.

And it's Lavandin about a length in front - Monterey's dropping back - and here comes yet another challenge. It's Montaval - but he's left it too late - and Lavandin wins by a neck. The judges call for a photograph, but it's Lavandin all right, with Montaval second and Roistar third. Ras Jehnstens rides proudly in, after his third Derby victory - and owner Pierre Wertheimer's there to congratulate him.

So France has taken first and second places, with Ireland third, and though it may have been the wettest Derby for many years, it was one of the most exciting finishes of them all!