# SANTA ANITA ANALYSIS

## BY BRAD FREE

**BEST BET: RACE 4, KENJISSTORM**

### FIRST RACE

A turf route for Cal-bred maidens, this is the stronger split of race 10. **HIGHLIGHT SHOW** is positioned for a mild upset returning to state-bred company after pressing a hot pace and fading against open company. The improving colt showed two back he can rally from behind when fifth against state-breds; his most recent start was an improved effort even though he finished next to last. Scratched Feb. 18 (off turf), HIGHLIGHT SHOW can score at a price. The familiar faces are only okay, so far. **CHEEKABOOMBOOM** and **I CAN DO THIS** finished three-two last out in the off-turf race from which the top choice scratched. 'BOOMBOOM finished in the money in back-to-back off-turf races; his career debut Nov. 25 was a better-than-looked fourth on grass that hints he may prefer grass. Tough outside post, he will be running late.

### SECOND RACE

Small field, led by tough campaigners **TRIBAL JEWEL** (11-for-45) and **CITY STEEL** (10-for-35). Both have run well recently vs. company similar to this $40k claiming field. TRIBAL JEWEL's only start this meet was third vs. better; he returns from a brief layoff for 10-for-28 trainer Bill Spawr, who has always done well with fresh stock. He was claimed for $40k last out, but the claim was voided. No matter, the "best horse" in the right spot, with tactical speed for a pressing trip under Martin Pedroza, 'JEWEL is the one to beat. CITY STEEL is having a good winter, in the money all three starts including a sharp win vs. lesser. He is a 7-year-old, the highest level at which he won is $25k claiming; this is $40k. Still, he belongs off solid recent form and the winning habit. **LUCKY J LANE** was re-claimed last out by Ron Ellis, who had success with the gelding last summer. 'LANE turned in a series of solid efforts for Ellis. 'JANE has won two of his last five, handles all surfaces, and enters off a $25k claiming win at Golden Gate Fields over an ordinary foe (Royal Banker).

### THIRD RACE

**DALSAROS** was a well-bet disappointment in his debut, seventh at even-money in a downhill turf sprint. If she had an alibi, it was not apparent. Willing to beat the well-bred filly another chance on the stretch-out. She should like two turns, and ran like a first-time starter with a whole lot of improvement forthcoming second time out. By Unbridled's Song, she is the first foal produced by G1 winner Ask the Moon. **YELLOW BONNET** got bumped leaving the gate, and then misfired two weeks ago on turf. Disappointing, to say the least. But her dirt race two back was an okay second (on a slow pace), so maybe she prefers the main track. **ROAD TEST** is improving rapidly. Runner-up when she stretched to a route two back vs. maiden-claiming company, then runner-up last time against winners, now she is back with maidens on an upward pattern of improvement and figures. MALIBU ROYALTY has a good comeback under her belt, blinkers on for her second start back. No reason she won't be one of the contenders.

### FOURTH RACE

Taking a shot with front-runner/presser **KENJISSTORM** in this N2X turf route. His comeback was solid, beaten less than three lengths after chasing a fast pace at one mile. Now he stretches to a mile and an eighth; the race is certain to unfold at an easier tempo. On or near the lead, second start back, upset chance with an up-front trip. The amazingly consistent **RYE** will come from the clouds. He has won 6 of his last 10 starts, all the same way, with a rally from far back. Like the top choice, he is trying to win this class for the first time. It can be a tough jump from N1X/claiming starter to N2X. Respect this guy's closing rally. **STRINGENT** improved a ton last out, third with the race-shape in his favor, closing from the back. Lightly raced gelding by Lemon Drop Kid, making just his fifth career start, should love the distance. VIGILANTE was a promising prospect when last seen, third in a G2 more than 15 months ago. He was a vet scratch March 2, returns for top connections.

### FIFTH RACE

**REBEL WAR** raced good maidens last summer, chased fast fractions, and returns for a $100k claim tag with sharp works. He was fast at 2, expected to be faster at 3, and is spotted for a top effort first try back. **SAGITTARI** finished seventh in his debut. He raced greenly in that race, and should improve second time out. His ability is unknown. **ANECHOIC** pressed a fast pace and faded in his debut at this level. He is likely to improve second time out. Blinkers on. EXCAVATION drops for the first time into a maiden-claiming race. He was supposed to be better than this, maybe he will improve vs. easier company. Like the top choice, EXCAVATION has faced good company.

### SIXTH RACE

**RANGI** ran fast winning two straight blowouts including a smasher last out at this $32k claiming level. Seems like the obvious choice at low odds. **TOO FAST TO PASS** is a 13-time winner, able to rally from just off the pace. If the top choice falters on the lead, 'PASS is the most likely beneficiary over this longer trip. **BOLDLY TRUE** has been facing much better company, big drop from N2X third start back.

### SEVENTH RACE

Lots of speed in this turf sprint stakes for Cal-bred fillies and mares, a scenario that does not benefit favorite **ENOLA GRAY**. A two-time stakes winner on the downhill, her front-running style will be tested by five others with front-running or pace-pressing styles. However, ENOLA GRAY has shown she can take heat and still kick away. She did it two months ago, when she pressed a blazing half in :43.04 (second-fastest of meet) and won clear. Fastest in the field, able to cope with pace, the one to beat. **DESERT STEEL** finished behind the top choice both recent turf sprints, but no surprise if she turns the tables. 'STEEL has speed, but has been versatile, rallying from off the pace. Furthermore, the best effort of her career was the only time she was ridden by Flavien Prat. He is back aboard, DESERT STEEL could tuck into a cozy trip positioned just off the speed. **LILY KAI** is the come-from-behind bomb, at a distance probably too short. But the possibility of a pace meltdown gives her an upset look. Recent works are sharp; she is likely to be outrun early but will be rolling from the back of the field at a price. ROO' VALENTINE popped at 24-1 last out in her first try on the hill. She figures for a share. BERT'S MELODY and CHAULK O LATTEY have run races that figure, but they are returning from layoffs of 10 months and 12 months, respectively.

### EIGHTH RACE

**VODKA TEXTED YOU** has excuses for recent losses. He was forced to duel from the rail both recent tries at this $12.5k claiming N2L level; last out he was overmatched vs. open claiming company. Back at the N2L level, drawn outside, pressing trip forthcoming. **KENJI'S SAVIOR** trounced maiden-20s pressing a slow pace. The splits are likely to be quicker here, he shortens from seven furlongs to six and is a logical threat if he can rally from behind. **TRUE RANGER** finished second at this level last out, but moves down to the rail and probably must cope with fractions a little quicker than recent. SOLAR ZONE is a last-out maiden-claiming winner, and therefore that makes him an automatic "light-bulb" play.

### NINTH RACE

**FINEST CITY** and **VALE DORI** are tough to separate in this G1 route. Although FINEST CITY is known as a sprinter (Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint winner), she actually ran well all three routes, two on turf and one on dirt. In her only dirt race, she finished two and one-half lengths behind winner Beholder and Stellar Wind; when VALE DORI faced Beholder and Stellar Wind, she finished behind by more than 11 lengths. FINEST CITY stretches out following an impressive G2 win at seven furlongs, and gets top billing. However, no knocks on VALE DORI, who has won four straight including three graded races, all around two turns. She has a potential advantage due to distance. This is a tougher group for VALE DORI than she has been facing. **PERFECT PIC** has an upset chance. Two-for-two against allowance since stretching out, flattered by slow fractions both times, she is making just her seventh start and is rounding up to a career-best effort. LADY TAPIT also is lightly raced. She will be running late at a price.

### TENTH RACE

This turf route for Cal-bred maidens is the weaker split of race 1. **MARCKIE'S WATER** finished an okay fourth last out in an off-turf race; his fourth-place finish two starts back on turf was better. A full brother to consistent Cal-bred allowance turf filly Sea Smoke, MARCKIE'S WATER should appreciate a return to grass. **CATFISH HUNTER** ran a lot better than the line indicates in his career debut, albeit in a maiden-40 dirt sprint. He was hard-held early, pulled while unrelaxed behind rivals, steadied at the half and again at the three-eighths, raced greenly in the lane while pinned inside and still close. He finished third by two lengths. Although it is tough to stretch to a route from just a single sprint prep, he is by the good turf sire Grazen, whose progeny have won 23 percent first-time turf, 20 percent overall turf. Expect the colt to be forwardly placed on the stretch-out, possibly the one to catch. **BURNT COGNAC** ran well both previous turf sprints, third at Del Mar and Golden Gate. He scratched Feb. 18 (off turf), and returns on his preferred footing.