

SANTA ANITA ANALYSIS



BY BRAD FREE

BEST BET: RACE 3, BOBBY ABU DHABI

FIRST RACE

NO PROBLEM fits perfect at this \$16k claiming level; the field has sufficient speed to flatter his closing rally. He was in tough for \$40k last out; his most recent win (career-best figure) was on this track vs. N3L claiming foes. Freshened almost two months, dropping in class, he can win it from slightly off the pace. Surprisingly, most five and one-half furlong races this winter have been won from off the pace. **JUANSAGAIN** has not started since a blowout romp here last February, but recent works are sharp and he returns in a claiming race while employing the "no-claim" waiver via CHR rule 1634. That is generally perceived as a sign of optimism. **LAST ONE STANDING** had trouble and misfired last out vs. tougher. Claimed for \$25k, he drops immediately to the level at which he won two back. **ROYAL F J** is a 10-year-old pro, up a notch from a rail-skimming win for \$12.5k.

SECOND RACE

CUPID'S BEAU and **ATOMIC ACTION** are drawn side by side, with similar front-running styles that might conflict in this Cal-bred maiden-50 sprint. Or maybe, **CUPID'S BEAU** is a better horse. Runner-up his last three on "fast," he was more than six lengths clear of third last time out at this level. He has run well dueling on fast fractions, and gets the call even while stretching out from five and a half to six and a half, and with a scratch since raced (March 4, reported as vet scratch). Several questions, but the front-runner remains the top choice. **ATOMIC ACTION** is drawn outside his main foe, giving him an instant advantage. In the money all three starts, each at this level, he returns from a six-month level while entered with the "no-claim" waiver for a stable having a big meet. Trainer Jeff Bonde entered the week 7-for-22. **EMPIRE RULER** might be the best late threat. He was claimed from a third-place finish in an open maiden-40, and will roll late. **MONTEREY SHALE** drops into a maiden-claiming race for the first time in career start No. 10.

THIRD RACE

BOBBY ABU DHABI returns from a three-month layoff as the most likely winner of this N1X sprint for 3yos. This is the ideal spot for the colt, sharp debut winner before overmatched in the G1 Los Alamitos Futurity won by Mastery. Two turns was too much too soon for **BOBBY ABU DHABI**. His recent works at San Luis Rey Downs look sharp; he has tactical speed for a pressing trip and an outside post. He should fire first start back. **AQUAMARINE** will be well-backed after a creditable fourth in the G2 San Vicente. The winner Iliad returned to finish second in a G2 and is expected to be among the favorites in the Santa Anita Derby; third place Battle of Midway won a N1X next out and also is headed to the SA Derby. The point is, **AQUAMARINE** faced top colts last out. Big drop in class, worlds of speed, he might be the one to catch. **MIDNIGHT PLEASURE**, third in the G1 Del Mar Futurity after a debut win, returns from a layoff of more than five months. He runs well fresh and has the proper closing style for this speed-filled race.

FOURTH RACE

Highly regarded older maiden **LANGHAM** showed promise his only start last summer, runner-up in his debut at this same mile distance. Sidelined since, working well for his comeback for trainer John Sadler, the son of Fastnet Rock figures to fire first start back. If he reproduces his debut, it will take a good horse to beat him. **CONQUEST SABRE CAT**, a nine-start maiden with five in-the-money finishes, ran well finishing second last month in his comeback. He raced greenly under apprentice Evin Roman, who was riding his first turf race, lost ground, and finished more than five lengths clear of third. He gets blinkers and a journeyman rider second start back, and has a tactical edge over the top choice because he has more speed. He also has had more chances. **ZICONIC**, by Tapit and produced by Zenyatta, returns from a nine-month layoff while switching to grass for the first time. He will be rolling late. Also-eligible **PARTICLEACCELERATOR** is racing into shape, and likely to set the pace if he draws in.

FIFTH RACE

LORD SIMBA ran too good to lose his most recent start, runner-up after pressing a blazing pace and finishing more than 12 lengths clear of third while earning a 92 Beyer that should be fast enough for the 4yo to handle the 3yos drawn to his inside. Those include **UNCLE BILLY**, an Uncle Mo gelding reported as a vet scratch Feb. 25. He posted two good works since, and should come out firing. **WHO'S HOT** reared and lost all chance at the break in his debut. He also worked well since, adds blinkers, and figures with a clean takeoff. **RAFTER ONE** has enough speed to make himself a pest part way at least.

SIXTH RACE

A creditable runner-up comeback by **NICKNAME** under the same N2X turf sprint conditions stamps her the most likely winner. She won the G1 Frizette as a 2yo in 2015; her recent comeback was her first in California, first on turf and first for trainer Richard Mandella. She raced inside and between horses, surged late, and missed by only a half-length. Good comeback, good works since. **LAJATICO** finished third in the same race; her speed makes her a threat on the front end. This turf sprint came up light on pace; she could get brave. **SYMPOSIUM** broke last in her U.S. debut at one mile, and had no shot thereafter due to the slow pace. She still made it respectable, missing by less than five lengths in a better-than-looked effort. Her three wins in England were sprints, so the cutback in distance may be in her favor. **CORPS DE BALLETT**, a two-time winner on the hill, makes her comeback with a new trainer, Richard Baltas.

SEVENTH RACE

Although his efforts on "fast" are short of her wet-track efforts, the maiden romp by **SLY HUMOR** last out on "good" nonetheless makes her the one to beat first against winners. She was claimed for \$40k two back by Jerry Hollendorfer; in her first start for the trainer she won by more than six after setting a fast pace. She stretches from five and a half furlongs to six and a half, will race on dry land, but certainly seems to have improved for Hollendorfer. Make her the one to catch. **AURA ROSE** also romped last time, by nine lengths at this distance. Claimed by Richard Baltas, drawn outside her main rival, she could get a great trip positioned second while racing in the clear. **FALLOUT** has speed. She was a listed as a vet scratch Feb. 20, but posted three works this month to suggest she is ready to roll. **YOU'RE THE REASON** will roll from the back of the pack.

EIGHTH RACE

CONQUEST FARENHEIT returned to turf and scored a visually impressive fast-pace win in a downhill stakes last out. G2-placed at Woodbine last year, the lightly raced colt is on his way to becoming one of the top 3yo turf runners in California for trainer Peter Miller. He looks like the speed of the field, and deserving choice to lead gate to wire. However, this is no walkover. His rivals include **CISTRON**, who improved since switching to turf. He has two wins and a third in a stakes. Although he set the pace all recent, he might have the option to sit second behind the favorite. Either way, the consistent colt is training will be forwardly placed. **RITZY A. P.** followed his runner-up debut with a stretch-out win vs. maidens that might be better than it looks. The race was scheduled for six and a half furlongs, but was a late change to one mile on the oval due to wet weather. **RITZY A. P.** had been trained for a sprint, but he stretched out and won anyway. A good horse getting better, he aimed specifically to this mile stakes and will roll late. **KY. COLONEL** finished only a head behind the top choice last time. **TAXMAN'S QUEST** won both starts at Remington Park; **TACO** won all four starts at Gulfstream, Fair Grounds and Sam Houston. This is a class test for both.

NINTH RACE

An inscrutable maiden-30 ends the card. **LIBERTY JACK** is the default selection based on an okay third last out from which he was claimed. No published workouts since that race nearly a month ago. **MY MAN CHUCKLES** drops from maiden-100k and has enough speed to be forwardly placed. **AUTISM IS HERE** was gelded since raced, and drops from special-weight. **HIGH CLASS TASTE** should be forwardly placed. This is a tough way to end the card.