

SANTA ANITA ANALYSIS



BY BRAD FREE

BEST BET: RACE 7, SELCOURT

FIRST RACE

Runner-up both recent starts at this N2X level, **KENJISSTORM** benefits from an easy pace scenario in a turf route void of speed. KENJISSTORM could make the lead by default, and coast wire to wire. He actually ran a winning race his last two starts. **EXCESSIVE KID**, a lightly raced 6yo with only eight starts in his career, bumps up in class to optional \$62.5k claiming after showing signs of life finishing second last out for a \$32k claim tag. His closing style is potentially compromised by the lack of pace, but his current form is going up. Graded stakes-placed **ROYAL ALBERT HALL** had trouble in his comeback last month; he switches to a top grass rider in Corey Nakatani. BELISARIUS has not been out since August at Del Mar. First start back, he could be forwardly placed, and he ran races in 2015-16 fast enough to win this condition on this circuit.

SECOND RACE

MONTEREY SHALE found two turns slightly out of reach last out, and finished second after opening up a two-length lead into the lane. It was a missed opportunity by the 12-start maiden, but he ran well in defeat and benefits from a cutback to seven furlongs. He is likely to be positioned in front of his main rivals in this maiden-20. Those are **SPECIMEN**, an upset candidate second start back from a layoff, and **PICTURE TUBE**, a 13-start maiden whose three tries at this class level produced three in-the-money finishes.

THIRD RACE

The third-place debut by **MY PARTY GIRL** stamps her the one to beat in this special-weight sprint. The 3yo filly has speed to be on or near the lead; she worked fast since raced. Improvement likely. A similar comment applies to **VEGASTRUCK**, a 5yo mare whose midpack debut last month was okay. She chased a fast pace, and maintained position through the lane. She also should do better second time out. The top pair are key factors in analyzing the Angel's Flight Stakes later on this card (race 7). A good performance by MY PARTY GIRL and/or VEGASTRUCK would flatter the last-out maiden winners Queen Laila and Faypien, who entered the stake. **TIZ THE LIGHT** is a sibling to G1 winner By the Moon. Six furlongs might be shorter than the daughter of Tiznow prefers, but she will be rolling late and Ron Ellis-trained debut maidens have been running well. Ellis is 4-for-7 with first-time starters since last summer, although all four debut winners were in the maiden-claiming ranks.

FOURTH RACE

A stakes winner on synthetic, and stakes placed on turf, **TAP IT ALL** returns from a two-month freshening with a pair of sharp recent workouts that suggest she is ready to fire in this downhill allowance sprint for 3yo fillies. She does have speed, and there is not a whole lot of that in this field. **AUNTJENN** wheels back in 10 days after finding two turns too far. Her third-place finish two back behind G1 winner Union Strike and Angel's Flight favorite Selcourt earned an 80 Beyer that is the highest in the field. **DREAMY GAL** showed speed and tired in her U.S. debut. She has a right to improve second time out, while stablemate KENDA is gradually improving and put it all together winning a maiden race last out.

FIFTH RACE

ANKENY HILL clearly is headed the wrong way. Claimed for \$32k in January, he dropped to \$8k last out and won. He was claimed, but the claim was voided after a post-race veterinary exam. Now he is entered for \$6,250. Not a good pattern. And yet, the 7yo gelding is the one to beat. The race he won last out was flattered when the second- and sixth-place finishers came back to win. His main rivals in this bottom-level claiming sprint are two he beat last out. Those are **MOMENTS NOTIZ** and **LONDON LEGACY**. The off-the-pace style of MOMENTS NOTIZ could play well if the favorite gets caught in a duel with Los Al speedster ADRIATIC SON. As for LONDON LEGACY, he also has a closing style that would benefit from a pace duel.

SIXTH RACE

SCATTERLING drops to \$25k claiming N2L, after finishing off the board her first four U.S. starts vs. allowance company. She is quick enough to make the lead from the inside post in this mile turf race, and could get brave. Trust her? Nope. **YAFFE** also shows up for the first time at the lowest claiming level on turf. This is only her second start since transferring to trainer Jeff Mullins. **BLONDY'S REWARD** finished second last out at this level. Trouble is, she is a 6yo with one career win, and moves from the inside post to the outside in this field of eight. Weak race.

SEVENTH RACE

It will take a good horse to defeat **SELCOURT** in this sprint stakes. The lightly raced filly followed her debut romp with a super runner-up finish last out in a hotly contested sprint stake. Hounded through a blazing 44.65-second half-mile, SELCOURT shook off her pace rival, only to get collared late by deep-closing G1 winner Union Strike. Super effort by SELCOURT, who finished more than three lengths clear of third. The race turned out productive. The filly SELCOURT duelled with (Chalon) came back to win an allowance; Union Strike came back to finish second in a graded stake at Churchill Downs. **NOTED AND QUOTED** was eased as the favorite in a \$200k route stakes at Sunland Park, but returned to train well over her Santa Anita home track. A G1 winner last year, NOTED AND QUOTED is the "class" of the field and may benefit from a return to one turn. **PRINCESS KAREN** wanted no part of two turns or Paradise Woods in the SA Oaks. She drops in class, and shortens back to a sprint. Her N1X win two starts back puts her in the hunt. Debut winner **QUEEN LAILA** should get a good trip just off the speed. The third-place finisher from her debut (My Party Girl) is the pick to win the third race. FAYPIEN has the co-highest last-out figure in the lineup, 87 in a maiden romp. The fifth-place finisher from her debut is a contender in the third race.

EIGHTH RACE

HAY DUDE has a history of firing first start off the bench; the pattern is likely to continue in this \$25k claiming turf sprint. The veteran was claimed for this price last fall, finished last his next start, then was sidelined. He returns at the same level, but entered "not to be claimed" via CHRB rule 1634. That typically signals optimism. HAY DUDE has won on the hill, he has speed but also is versatile, and his figures are tops in the field. Ready to fire, first start back. **SKELTON PASS** is worth consideration, second start back from a long layoff. He completely misfired eight days ago in a N2X that was moved from turf to dirt, but wheels back on short notice. His highly rated N1X turf mile here last June puts him equal to the top choice based on speed figures. **SUCCESS RATE** ran super two starts back, winning a similar turf sprint at 23-1, but then flopped his next start at the same level. He fits if he fires. UNUSUAL FLEET will be rolling late in a race that could set up for his closing style. He defeated the top choice last fall.

NINTH RACE

The racing week ends with a maiden-20 sprint for fillies and mares, which is among the most predictable class levels on this circuit. **LEA'S REWARDS** is the one to beat, first start since September. She broke slowly both starts last summer, rallied to finish third both times, and earned figures fast enough to defeat this bleak cast. Perhaps she will break alertly with a rider switch to Tyler Baze. **PATIENCE LADY** is another that has not raced since September. She is a 10-start maiden, but hit the board half those starts and does have some speed. Her jockey-trainer combo (Vinnie Bednar-Jaime Gomez) has been productive lately with comebacks. First-time starter **DOLCE TEMPESTA** has decent works that suggest she has more ability than her half-sibling that is currently racing at Charles Town. His name is Silectico, a 7yo gelding (by Sillic) that is still a maiden after 40 starts. ADAPTABILITY is a 14-start maiden that finished in the money eight times.