Handicapping Analysis
Sat February 25th, 2023

Emily's Analysis

Oaklawn Park Race 1

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Improvement could land with **#3 UNCLE SHORTY'S GIRL** as she returns to make her second start from a stronger maiden event. The Special Weight sprint on January 28th produced one next out winner, Ms Carroll County, in addition to improvement number wise on that filly and many others returning in their next start; and **UNCLE SHORTYS GIRL** is already on par for this race with her debut effort. **#4 INDIAN IRISH** ran a solid B OptixGRADE effort under today's conditions back in December. That race was over an off-track and did not fare as well in the January race that followed, though has been given recovery time by Morse returning today off the 49-day freshening.

#9 TWINKLING IRISH turned in a BTL effort from her debut with adversity. She takes on a new challenge here as the connections will step up in class where she must improve against this higher level of competition. **#5 SHE BE SHEEHAN** also will race protected a change from her debut, though her debut in for $50k was against open company and a higher race par that could see her move up naturally with this subtle class "drop" and for connections that have sent out some live runners as of late.

A few of their main rivals (higher recorded speed figures) will also be taking that step up the class ladder with **#10 SASSY LASS** and **#6 FINISHWHATUSTARTED** landing here as well as **#1 SOPHIE'S STAR** from the January 14th common race.

Oaklawn Park Race 2

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#6 ICARUS has early speed that can make him tough on the lead though does not require the lead to run his race. This will be his second start back this season and off the long layoff as well as a rider change (intent) to suggest a move forward could be in play.

#3 JOLLY TOMMY might not be the "best" horse in the race, though could land into the "best" trip. There are some challenges as he was claimed just 13-days ago and must hold his form coming back for this event. The race par is similar to the races he has been running in this season where he has held his form and raced competitive. That is noted even with the January 7th race and running line, a race that could have some excuses attached as he was not asked (TACTIC-) for run after a slow (SLOG) start and kept WIDE.

#4 GREATHEART is also on a quick turnaround today and could also look for that same stalking trip. Greatheart figures to be shorter more "obvious" to the public of the two with the place finish and recorded speed figure from the February 11th race. The race timing wheeling back from the win and "peak" effort from **#8 SAQEEL** first off the Diodoro claim could signal some regression here and should be factored at the shorter expected odds.

Oaklawn Park Race 3

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

At first was not even going to write about **#1 FROSTED GRACE** as he looked below in today's group, however, he is listed here as the morning line favorite and now given a mention as he looks soft/vulnerable (should be one of the longer odds runners in this field) should he take up that role in this event.

#2 PERFECT FLIGHT looks to get back on rack as he returns here with subtle progressive form in his third start back off the layoff. His run in the San Pasqual (G2) can be upgraded with the trip (IMPROVE) showing run in spots against the race dynamics. The poor handling last out could also change here with Irad Ortiz, Jr. booked.

#3 TRIDENT HIT also was compromised with the handling (TACTIC-) in his layoff return last month. He returns here with that race under his belt and with prior form and figures here at Oaklawn Park that stack up on par and in line with others in this field.

Class wise #8 MAX PLAYER is respected though has his challenges in this spot, distance and returning from the 231-day layoff in his Oaklawn Park debut. His running style has adjusted at times with some of his more competitive races, pairing graded stakes wins in 2021, racing forwardly placed with Santana aboard. That could change with the distance here and with other runners in this field projected to show early speed: **#4 BACKGROUND**, **#5 CADDO RIVER** and **#6 THOMAS SHELBY** also likely to be more aggressively ridden this afternoon. Current form is also the test for **#7 MYSTIC NIGHT** returning from the January 21st common race where outside of some ground loss (WIDE) did not have much in terms of excuse.

Oaklawn Park Race 4

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Santana shifting to **#7 QUALIFIED** after moving up **#1 TAHOE RUN** to the place (BLANKET/B- OptixGRADE) finish last out and had been aboard **#8 ONTHESTAGE** for his debut is an interesting rider move. Class wise **QUALIFIED** will be tested as he steps up from the HS Indy circuit and noted scratch from a $30k maiden claiming event back in late October at Keeneland while still with Brad Cox. There could be intent not only with that change but racing here protected as well.

#2 KING RUSSELL has proven and progressive races this season that keep him in the mix and tough to knock on that front with perhaps trip and his off-the-pace run style as the prime hurdle.

#4 STORMIN ARMY could have some intent for this race noting the connections were entered under similar conditions (8f) on February 18th drawing post 11 in a full field. Stamina and improvement are the tests still in play though to his credit, he did record a solid speed figure in his debut back in June as a juvenile.

#6 SEEKING UNITY recorded one of the higher figures in this field with his place finish three weeks ago at the Fair Grounds. He will be tested to hold his form with the timing and shift to this circuit which comes with a higher OFR and arguably much stronger group than the maiden event last out.
First time starter **#5 GAME KEEPER** was training at Saratoga last summer and will make his belated debut here. As far as his visuals going back to him as a juvenile he presented as a runner with some size that should have no issues with today's distance from a physical standpoint and no knocks on his visuals as an individual either.

Oaklawn Park Race 5

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Brad Cox will wheel right back with **#10 KNOCKER DOWN** from the February 11th race where they were just unable to get into the running over the off-track and following a poor (TROUBLE_S) the timing and return with a rider change could make the difference here.

#5 SKELLY also was compromised with a poor start and forced to RUSH up into a Fast early pace staying on better (BOS) of the pacesetting runners. His race yet to show the same efforts number wise as his Kentucky form though could be moving forward in the right direction and back to a peak effort here.

#10 GO WEST was dominant over their rivals earlier this month at Sam Houston though finds a tougher test today on this circuit, field and race shape.

Class will again be a test for **#2 MUMAYAZ**, **#4 UNCLE BUDDY** and **#7 AMERICAN PURE** on the win end as runners that have participated at this allowance condition with their top efforts resulting in minor awards. **#9 SEA TO SUCCESS** is still looking to find where they fit as a contender in their second start of the meet. **#3 GINSBURNED** and **#6 ABSOLUTE CHAOS** are also tougher to make that "contender" case for though based on their run style find an underneath share at a price.

Oaklawn Park Race 6

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

This race is open to a first time starter as those with experience have come up short without excuse and visually left something to be desired at this level for the "on top" endorsement.

Looking at the debut runners: **#3 GROVE** was scheduled to debut last July in a Special Weight sprint at Churchill Downs. She had a setback (gap in works) that followed and ships in from the Fair Grounds where she has been stabled and training to make this debut for Norm Casse, a barn that has a strong win strike rate this meet. **#6 AFTERNOON TEA** picks up a live rider Prat for her debut and has a steady series of local works suggesting they have been pointed to this meet and could be some intent on the Rebel stakes day. **#8 BEAUTIFUL BOLT** also has some local works, though not the most complete consistent series with gaps in the training pattern.

Oaklawn Park Race 7

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

The pace does project to have some Contention (Fire) though a lower SpeedRate that could assist **#5 YUUGIRI** with her run style in today's race. She has the class to race forwardly placed and on the lead though does not "need the lead" to win giving Santana some options if needed. That is noted with **#7 PRETTY BIRDIE** in the field, one that tends to do her better running when on the lead and with softer, less contentious/faster early paced races.

#4 PORTILLA recorded a BTL effort in the Pan Zareta stakes and hit TRAFFIC in the January 14th local allowance. The return to stakes company and freshening could see her back to a peak effort and find a trip with that noted contention.

Miller also shows up with a pair in this race to be considered. Class wise **#2 AMERICAN LILY** will be tested today though does have some early speed with the inside to assist with trip. Trip should be noted as she did come from just off the pace to win on January 11th, though that trip was in part to a stumble at the start (TROUBLE_S) and a Fast (F O4S) pace she was able to rally into. **#11 SAMURAI CHARM** has "class" on her side and could be cycling into a trip effort with some intent to run in this stakes race where she is able to race on Lasix.

#8 NOVEL SQUALL looked to require the start returning from the layoff in the Poinsettia stakes back in December. She has struggled in limited stakes races to put forth that "winning" type effort though did pick up the pieces for show in this stakes race last year. **#3 TAKE CHARGE LORIN** could also step up in her second start back from the layoff and has some back numbers that make her competitive. It is interesting with the distance change as she will be doing something new today making her first career start at the one-turn distance.

#10 MERCY WARREN recorded a solid speed figure and strong (B+ OptixGRADE) effort with the Fair Grounds January N1X allowance win, though will find a much, much tougher test today. **#9 I'M THE BOSS OF ME** could get caught up in the Contention as well as class and form tested pairing tops this season and could be peaked in her form cycle. **#1 HAZY COMMAND** will be tested here and seemed the intent was to run at the Fair Grounds since her Oaklawn wins where she had been entered in two turf stakes as a MTO hoping to sneak in with a surface switch.

Oaklawn Park Race 8

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

This is one of the more contentious races on the card and a spot to consider for value. That comes from assessing the morning line favorites starting with **#1 FLAP JACK**, a runner that has been freshened off a pair of strong efforts this season and could fit with his run style, though must step up in class. Trip from the opposite end could make things tougher on **#8 ALBIZU** (gate issues) trying to run on from off the pace.

#6 SPANKSTER should not have an issue in terms of trip and should be competitive given his current form, however has had similar trips and setups and come up short on the win end where that should be considered as far as odds compensation.

There is a scenario for **#5 IMPROBABLE JOURNEY** to fall into the lead for Saez and make his own trip in this race. **#7 MUCHO** will race for a tag today and reuniting with Geroux, a rider that has been aboard and aggressive in the past keying off the 5th Season stakes run and settling for place in the three horse BLANKET finish last year.

#4 CHIPOFFTHEOLDBLOCK projects to be a longshot in this race and must find his top form to compete. With that said, he is given some consideration in that role and does have competitive races over this course, distance and even a win under today's N2X allowance condition from last year with Court aboard.

#2 NO SHIRT NO SHOES, **#3 SENOR JOBIN** and **#9 FITZGERALD** are softer all around and while not "impossible" would require a lot of racing luck along with a top effort to win.

Oaklawn Park Race 9

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

This appears a split division of Race 8 and follows a similar trend and approach assessing **#4 OSBOURNE** (morning line favorite) a capable type though is staking a step up in class with the higher OFR coming back from the win first off the layoff last month. **#9 LIFE IS HARD** recorded a strong figure in his return earlier this month and will look to pair efforts and find a slightly different tactical approach from Arrieta today.

The tactical change on **LIFE IS HARD** as well as some others in this field such as **#1 WAYAKIN** likely to be more assertive today (SLOG on 1/28) with the rail draw could see more pace pressure on **#2 GOLDEN HORNET** as he returns from the January BOS win with today's class rise.

#3 CHASING TIME is still out to prove where he fits and where he belongs though a move forward can be projected as he wheels back from a subtle trip just 20-days ago when making his first start back off the layoff. The rider change to Rosario could also suggest intent noting they paired up for an allowance win here last season.

#5 MOWINS should appreciate the change in distance cutting back to ONE_TURN though placement still could see him an outsider with his more competitive races in statebred (IN) or age restricted company -- similar for AR-bred **#6 WHELEN SPRINGS**.

Oaklawn Park Race 10

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#8 DEFINING PURPOSE recorded a competitive effort (B- OptixGRADE) in the Golden Rod (G2) and showed her class with the B+ OptixGRADE win in the Years End stakes. She could have "peaked" in that part of her form cycle and with the tactical change (and long WARM_UP) before the Martha Washington stakes. She is unlikely to be involved in the early pace given the complexion of this field and likely to return to a preferred stalking style. Those factors could see her look to turn the tables on **#7 WET PAINT**, one that could have found the pace, ride, trip and track conditions in her favor last month.

#1 EFFORTLESSLYELGANT built off her BTL run on debut with a dominant (B+ OptixGRADE) and figure breaking her maiden on January 29th. The field quality of that race is still yet to be determined and that is the test here as she steps up all around.

Positive intent looks in play for **#3 GRAND LOVE** as she makes her seasonal debut and looking to get back on track following the Breeders' Cup into the Oaks season. Her early speed could be the key in this race upgraded from both graded stakes route races (X_FLOW) last year. With that said, she still must improve and show stamina while there is the upside and even that noted intent.

The race flow and perhaps some track conditions could have also upgraded **#4 GAMBLING GIRL** in her recent stakes appearances and still out in search of the stakes win and winning effort as she ships in for Pletcher.

Number wise **#5 TAKE CHARGE BRIANA** has yet to show that big step forward from her juvenile form. With that said, she has shown some run in spots and has the foundation over this course and distance on her side.

Oaklawn Park Race 11

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#3 RED ROUTE ROAD brings the edge on class with a competitive run back in the KY JC (G2) and with a BTL effort in the Southwest (G3) perhaps one of the stronger Derby prep races to date. With that noted, Santana his rider last out will stick with the stablemate, the front running, **#4 GUN PILOT** for Asmussen. Santana has been aboard Gun Pilot in each start and the decision to stay there is not overly concerning. Gun Pilot has shown some progression though has benefit from some favorable trips and will be class tested along with pace in today's race shape.

A lot of that early pace contention could come from his Asmussen stablemate **#2 POWERFUL** stretching out in distance as he makes his sophomore debut as well as **#6 REINCARNATE** shipping in from California. As far as REINCARNATE he was able to save ground and hold with pace pressure (BOS) to win the Sham (G3) a race where he really only had to compete against his stablemates (those runners finishing 1-2-3) and will be tested against outside company here.

#1 VERIFYING was flattered with GUN PILOT (and Two Eagles River on 2/19) coming back from the January 14th allowance to win in their following start. The intention was likely looking ahead to this race by Cox, given the graded stakes placement last year and the timing of his return for the sophomore debut. All of that in play should have him well meant today, though still must prove himself on the track and at the graded stakes level and in a spot where he is projected to go off favored.

Stablemate **#5 GIANT MISCHIEF** will also find his class test on this circuit. His effort in the Springboard Mile is tough to knock as the pattern of breaking slow had him off the pace before making a WIDE BURST and some less than ideal TACTIC- decisions also in play for that place finish. The strong connections on his side can be seen as a positive, though also factors that should be found in his odds and public attention in this race -- similar for REINCARNATE.

#7 CONFIDENCE GAME could be the "forgotten" horse in this field. He recorded one of the stronger figures (96 OptixFIG) with his allowance win last November at Churchill Downs. His effort last month in the Lecomte (G3) can be upgraded racing WIDE and X_FLOW up close to a solid pace.

#11 FROSTED DEPARTURE will also return from the Southwest (G3) and show finish. While he was able to hold for that minor, he was losing ground late and still has the stamina, class and added pace/trip test with the projected race shape and outside draw.

Recent maiden winner **#8 TALLADEGA** must find more to compete in this field stepping up to take on winners and from a new recorded top on January 28th, a number that sits below par. **#9 EVENT DETAIL** has run well in both starts this season though another tested for class, stamina and improvement with pace and trip also something to consider with today's race shape and surface switch. **#10 BOURBON BASH** has a similar distance/pace challenge from the outside draw and despite finishing in the money with improved figures this meet, class is still a question based on the visuals.

Oaklawn Park Race 12

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#6 STUCK N SNOW looked pointed to this meet for a maiden win and while he has shown run in each start is still looking for the win. He could find it today with the complexion of the field and his ability to show early speed with some price compensation expected as well. Similar intent looked in play for **#10 TIME ANDBEYOND** showing up on this circuit against statebred for his second career start back in December. He turned in a solid race (B OptixGRADE) just coming up short with those top two finishing clear of the rest. Moquett has given him time to recover and reset though could be to a fault noting the lack of published works in January and just the lone published move on 2/18 this year.

#7 MIDNIGHT TAXES projects to find attention here as the "new" face making his local and statebred debut in this race. He will also race with the addition of Lasix and for Hartman, factors that will keep him popular with the public.

#4 TABLE MONEY is another new face as he shows up for his debut and for a capable debut barn with a consistent series of local works. The works are not as consistent on **#9 PAID DOUBLE** the other debut runner in this field.

#2 SKYPED has recorded some of the higher figures in this field and somewhat logically so as the elder (6yo) in this group. He could just have that edge to catch the right group though can also be "PLODDY" and has shown that pattern with the series of minor finishes.

#14 PEARCY ROAD (AE) could have to wait for another day though one that despite the pattern of slow (SLOG) starts has shown run in spots and perhaps the addition of blinkers will assist and at the least suggest some intent. **#5 FOUR DICE** could also be worth a follow as he turned in a BTL effort on debut, that race however run against maiden claiming company.