Handicapping Analysis
Sat May 6th, 2023

Emily's Analysis

Churchill Downs Race 1

Post Time 9:30 AM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#1 EXTRA ANEJO ran a big effort to break his maiden back in October of last year and the hype train will likely follow him back from that race into this return. The field on October 13th was not one of the stronger fields with just two clearing the condition going forward one doing so for the $25k tag at HOU. With that said, he does not catch the strongest group in this allowance return. That could be enough to assist here with many in this field also looking to find where they fit and number wise on the lighter side for even this 89-81 OFR, an OFR that is lighter for this type of allowance condition overall.

That OFR is compared to the April 8th race at Keeneland run at a similar OC$100kN1X level **#8 DEER DISTRICT** returns from with the higher 94-86 OFR. That could present a move forward for that runner as he makes his second start back off the layoff and has recorded higher numbers on the turf, the surface he was racing over during his juvenile season.

Debut maiden winner #3 FEDERAL JUDGE also caught a softer group in his debut score last month at Oaklawn Park where the others in that field are a combined 0/33 still maiden eligible.

Churchill Downs Race 2

Post Time 10:01 AM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

This race is crying out for a "new face" with many in this field that have come up short at the level without excuse (four-year-old #1 CAPE TRAFALGAR one of those and multiple times as the chalk) or have been pointed to races/circuits this season and have shown who they are. **#5 SIR ROCK** could be that new face with upside. His races last season both recorded here at Churchill Downs and potential upside off those juvenile efforts. He returns with additional changes with McCarthy taking over the training adding Lasix and picking up John Velazquez on return. **#7 JUST A PHOTO** made a positive physical appearance on the track (though did run with his head/nose up early not sure what's up with that - possible kickback as he did correct that mechanically and ran on late) for his debut back at Keeneland on April 8th, a should note the top 2-3 horses from that Special Weight event will run later on the card. **#8 REAL NAUGHTY** could be real sneaky as this one had the GATE issues and SLOG on debut and claimed from that race at high $100k number going first off the claim here picking up a live rider in Castellano for Hiles.

Churchill Downs Race 3

Post Time 10:31 AM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#1 BRIGHT FUTURE fits logical in this field especially if he is able to pair his Gulfstream Park form and figures. While is has that appearance the shorter price is expected and there are some horses in this field with buried and progressive form that could pop up and surprise.

#4 EMBRACE is one that could be overlooked here as a runner that started to find his form and improvement last year as a sophomore. The intent could have been to use the return race on April 16th as a prep, noting a similar improvement pattern coming off layoffs (and the debut) where a step forward is expected. The race shape is tough to assess here, though is to the benefit of EMBRACE as one that has shown he can close into fast and slow early paced races.

The connections for **#3 TRANSECT** picked this spot after a noted scratch from the Lexington (G3) where he had a look in that spot. As a horse he showed ability breaking his maiden on debut and improved numbers and with the B+ OptixGRADE against allowance company. His run in the Gotham (G3) is one to completely excuse especially coming back with a rider change noted the timing and pairing with Talamo was a complete mismatch on the day and never had this horse in the right spot to run.

#2 COASTAL DEFENSE is one of the older horses in this field and has been class tested and competitive at times in graded stakes company. As of late, he has struggled with the layoff lines with the distance change looking to keep this one at one turn since his 2021 season. His Plot position is in line with #5 KING OTTOMAN (no value), one making the distance change back to one-turn for this race and also taking a step up in class from the race par back in March at Oaklawn Park, standing out over the softer group that day.

#14 PETULANTE is deserving of a mention and tough to knock any of his races to date. He has the challenges here stepping up on this circuit and field as well as arguably taking the worst of the draw with the outside post. His natural early speed could assist to offset and clear and is a fast horse.

Churchill Downs Race 4

Post Time 11:04 AM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#5 MATAREYA looked pointed to this race making her return back on March 31st at Oaklawn Park. She ran a solid race off the layoff and game in the place finish (B OptixGRADE) making rival #3 WICKED HALO work for the win. MATAREYA was potentially short off the layoff and distance wise also shorter than her ideal. She has both factors on her side today in the second start back off the layoff and with the added ground returning to Churchill Downds a course she has run well over in the past. As far a s running style her class has allowed for versatility and that again should be in play here with the ability to show early speed. That front end trip could give her the edge in this compact field and looking to use that tactical speed to get the jump on Wicked Halo today and her main rival, the race favorite and horse to beat in #2 GOODNIGHT OLIVE.

Churchill Downs Race 5

Post Time 11:36 AM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

The "Fire" Contention and higher 63 SpeedRate can set up runners from off the pace and this course profile also flatters Quad IV runners. Brown has the pair of Quad IV runners with #7 FLUFFY SOCKS and #2 SPEAK OF THE DEVIL in this race. Some intention could be given to the pair landing this spot especially with **SPEAK OF THE DEVIL** picking this spot rather than run against (scr 4/15) her stablemate In Italian in the Jenny Wiley (G1) at Keeneland. SPEAK ran an A- OptixGRADE with her win over this course and distance in this very race last lead. She followed up that race with the layoff following the June 11th, Just a Game and returned with a WIDE trip over the Gulfstream Park course in the Honey Fox (G3), a trip and effort that can be upgraded as a tougher trip to overcome and win.

In terms of #5 SPENDARELLA she is a quality type and clearly intent bringing her back off the 259-day layoff in this event with the premier racing day and stage. She is part of the Quad I "Fire" group and while "best" of that set she still must overcome that pace and profile in this spot with the layoff and likely in the role of the race favorite. She has been able to transfer her form all over the work though this will be her first race at Churchill Downs.

Churchill Downs Race 6

Post Time 12:14 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Morning line favorite #6 ZOZOS has been flattered by trips and competition and still must prove himself against other graded stakes types. That is the test here he has as an individual and creates opportunity as the "hype" on this horse projects to have him at a shorter price in this competitive race.

Rival #3 BABY YODA is another still looking for his first stakes win and something to consider as he projects to be another shorter price in this race though has the benefit of early speed, one turn form and has recorded some of the higher consistent figures in this race.

Looking at OptixPLOT, Baby Yoda fits this race shape though does not hold any edge over others in this field. His Quad I/III Square is overlapped by **#2 MASQUEPARADE** one that should offer value in this spot returning off the layoff. He has form over Churchill Downs recording some of his higher OptixFIG over this course. He will find the subtle change in distance for this race, though could be one that is in his favor. In addition, Masqueparade has proven stakes form and company lines giving the necessary edge on both speed and class for this race.

#9 KNEEDEEPINSNOW is another overlapped with Baby Yoda and Masqueparade on OptixPLOT, though a smaller Square of that group - still unproven at the distance. He will trade that shape for recency as this start marks his second start off the layoff and has the benefit of fitness. In addition he has form at Churchill Downs and in stakes company keying off the Kellys Landing effort here back in July 2022 earning a B OptixGRADE and 101 OptixFIG, a Grade/Fig on par and in line with both Baby Yoda and Zozos and projects longer on the board and in play over those two.

Also returning from the layoff, **#8 PROMISE KEEPER** reuniting with Saez (hot rider, picking up live mounts starting starting the CD meet) as he makes his first start in the Dallas Stewart barn. Promise Keeper has buried form and figures with those races at the graded stakes condition and even holding a graded stakes win, the Peter Pan (G3) back in 2021. He will make not only the barn change but also returning as a gelding for Woodford/Winstar to suggest they have made the decision for this older horse to become a race horse rather than a stallion prospect and could be intent.

A win is a bit of a reach for **#5 SURLY FURIOUS** though this one has some buried form that suggest he can get a share and overlooked in this spot. Some of his more competitive race has been recorded over this course and distance, including the B- OptixGRADE effort in the Ack Ack (G3) last fall. The morning line would be a surprise to stick on #7 THREE TECHNIQUES, the upset 36.8-1 winner of this race last year and did have the setup on the day though given mention here as one that is capable though does still require the compensation as a legit longshot again.

Churchill Downs Race 7

Post Time 12:56 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#2 GO BEARS GO is an interesting presence in this race and now in the care of Wesley Ward. The previous connections showed confidence and intent all 2022 pointing to the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint where GO BEARS GO lost his race before it started. He was visually anxious, and worked up before the race his demeanor was tough to support and carried to the race breaking slow and not showing his natural RunStyle or run his race. This horse has ability and can suggest that he remains stateside, landing in this event and picking up a very live rider in Velazquez.

This 5.5f course can play fair and even set up for closers. The "Sun" Contention and honest 43 SpeedRate is supported by half the field sharing an E/EP RunStyle with those runners all shown on the Plot as Circles with the exception, **#10 ARREST ME RED** as a Large Square above the ParLine in Quad II. #11 MOTORIOUS is given the PC RunStyle designation though positioned on the Plot in the center as a Large Square - likely due to the translation of the horses from out west and coming out of the unique downhill 6.5f turf course.

#4 BIG INVASION is capable in this spot off his individual resume and positioned on the Plot sharing Quad IV as a Square. Value should be assessed as this is a step up in class based on his prior events and figures a more logical type to the public and in the role as the morning line favorite. **#3 EVAN SING**, a Large Square has a deeper Quad IV closer position, though odds compensation should be in play. That carries to **#9 OCEANIC** one that is tough to dismiss based on the Plot as a Quad II Square and could fall into the right time and place to get the trip.

Churchill Downs Race 8

Post Time 1:46 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Looking at OptixPLOT (and "Red" in the Past 3 Runlines), #5 ECHO AGAIN presents as a vulnerable favorite. He is a Large Circle in Quad III Standard (current form) and Circle in Quad I Surface/Distance with the "Sun" Contention, 50 SpeedRate and lacking an edge over others in the vicinity. **#9 GENERAL JIM** given the edge and upgrade as a Standard Square with a similar RunStyle.

#11 GILMORE could be overlooked of the two (#7 FORT BRAGG) SF Racing entrants with progressive form and a flow upgrade from the Bay Shore (G3) last month at AQU. GILMORE is positioned as a Quad III Square, a shape and position as a P RunStyle that could find the right trip as one that is not an E/EP RunStyle horse. **#10 CURLY JACK** is positioned as a Quad IV Square and another horse that could find today's race shape and return to the one turn distance just what he needs to run a top this season.

#13 DAMON'S MOUNT is one of those Quad I Circles though could be willing to take the Plot shape/position lightly in this case. The Iroquois 8.5f route is paired with the SHORTER? OptixNOTE and the turf return in the Palisades was given the NO_HANDLE/DIRT OptixNOTE projection to suggest both races come with excuses beyond trip.

Both #6 FROSTED DEPARTURE and #8 BOURBON BASH require a big step forward from their races this season and still must prove themselves on the graded stakes level, though should appreciate the distance change exiting the longer distance events this season at Oaklawn Park.

Churchill Downs Race 9

Post Time 2:40 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

This race is insane - in the best way possible. There is a ton of quality and any number of horses in this group with contender qualities. Of the group shorter on the morning line: **#1 MAJOR DUDE** is logical. He is proven, consistent already a multiple graded stakes winner. He has yet to run a "bad" race even the 9th place in the BC JuvTurf earned a 91 OptixFIG and B- OptixGRADE with a WIDE trip.

#11 CARL SPACKLER has shown versatility in terms of RunStyle (Quad I Square) pairing up strong 96/98 OptixFIG with B+ OptixGRADES in both starts to suggest he can step up in class. He took a tough beat on debut on the wrong side of the photo and held his own after the wire not allowing the winner to pass. He was validated with that winner, #2 FAR BRIDGE coming back to win the 3/11 allowance, though did show a slight decline in his figure from 96 on debut to 91 in March despite still earning a B+ OptixGRADE.

#8 MO STASH was soundly beat in the Columbia by #4 TALK OF THE NATION, one that projects upside though at the same time looks the part of a "wiseguy" horse in this race with Mo Stash returning to win the Transylvania (G3) last month at Keeneland with a front end trip.

The horses to follow/upgrade from the Transylvania (G3) **#13 ANDTHEWINNERIS** with the clear TROUBLE in the stretch and **#14 WEBSLINGER** off a trip that was tough to watch with Castellano wrangling this horse early and then forced X_FLOW into making a big WIDE MOVE and still willing late to the wire.

Churchill Downs Race 10

Post Time 3:31 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Returning BC Sprint (G1) champ **#7 CODY'S WISH** is the clear horse to beat even with the layoff line. His class, RunStyle and consistent figures make him a major contender.

#5 GET HER NUMBER should offer value and could land in the right spot to get back to a top effort. The placement in the Pegasus (G1) as far as class and distance played against this horse and that race has continued to be a key race this year. GET HER NUMBER has since returned to one turn and improved. He had the trip and race X_FLOW (and COLD barn) against him in the San Carlos (G3) and upgraded from the effort again against the flow in the Commonwealth (G3) with other adversity losing his footing out of the gate, racing in traffic and gaining wide behind the top two - #3 HERE MI SONG and #4 HOIST THE GOLD.

Churchill Downs Race 11

Post Time 4:27 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

A case was made for **#2 MASTER PIECE** in the Pegasus turf (G1) with the distance change as a horse that could appreciate the change cutting back from the longer distance turf events. He had other challenges that day with the quality of the field and the outside post that did play against him overall, though still the effort honest, racing in TRAFFIC to finish in a BLANKET for the minors earning a B- OptixGRADE. He has held his form since and should return fit with that cutback to today's 9f distance after setting the pace (VF early pace - flow upgrade) in the Pan American (G2) last month.

#8 SANTIN is a legit contender in this race. He is a multiple G1 winner with both of those G1 wins recorded at Churchill Downs and at today's 9f distance.

#5 UP TO THE MARK is an improving up and coming type, though will be given a legit class/distance test in this field, a step up and stretch out from his prior turf races. That must be considered as he is assigned the second choice on the morning line. #7 HONG KONG HARRY also has value concerns in the role of the morning line favorite. He had a series of favorable trips against G3/G2 company out in California and came up short as the favorite in a WEAK running of the Kilroe Mile (G1) and also noted he was fractious in the GATE.

#10 BYE BYE MELVIN is worth keeping on the radar. This race could be a prep for Pimlico/Preakness day with solid form over that turf course going back to 2020-21. Motion has been able to get this horse ready off the bench and on his best day has races and a RunStyle that stacks up with others in this field.

Churchill Downs Race 12

Post Time 5:57 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

See Stakes Spotlight for KY DERBY analysis

Churchill Downs Race 13

Post Time 6:55 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#2 EQUIVOQUE showed a lot of talent leading up to his debut and showed as much (B+ OptixGRADE) on the track breaking his maiden first out. The effort suggests he should handle the class rise and from a physical standpoint there are no obvious signs the added ground will be a hurdle for this individual.

Quad I Square, **#9 LET IT RIDE** is tough to ignore off that Plot visual and paired with the double digit morning line, a upgrade value combination. His debut back on March 4th was GRIT earning a 91 OptixFIG and was allowed to get a workout breaking his maiden at AQU in the second start.

#3 BO CRUZ earned a follow off his GREEN debut making a MOVE through TRAFFIC in the place finish. He validated that effort coming back with a strong B+ OptixGRADE/95 OptixFIG breaking his maiden in the second start. There was a change in tactics sending him for the lead after losing his footing out of the gate and despite controlling dominantly on the lead and going on to score by open lengths, the effort appeared taxing. That is noted as he has been provided the recovery time returning from the two month break and freshened here off some strong local works and picking up a live rider in Rosario. #6 PROMISE ME A RIDE earned a similar 94 OptixFIG in his maiden win at the FG, though did so with a favorable trip in an off-the-turf race and with a softer early pace. His Cox trained stablemate finishing second, Tapthedrum was favored and came up short as the heavy favorite once again on May 2nd at HS Indy.

#1 SINGLE RULER looked like a horse that was improving off his maiden win and coming back with a sneaky good B- OptixGRADE effort in the Risen Star (G2). Those efforts could have put him "over the top" when returning the following month in the LA Derby (G2) a race that was tougher to take on face value with Kingsbarns setting a slow pace in the gate to wire win and many not given their trip or better chance to compete with that race dynamic.

Churchill Downs Race 14

Post Time 7:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Equivoque is worth a follow in Race 13, with **#9 MULLIKIN** returning from the April 8th common race and game in his place finish (95 OptixFIG) that day validating his BTL/92 OptixFIG debut in February at Oaklawn Park. #16 LE BAR also returning from that common race though would require a lot more than luck in this field currently sitting deep on the AE.

#10 NORTHERN INVADER could be the most dangerous FTS in this field. He was working forwardly to debut last year as a juvenile and had some setbacks delaying the initial start. Some of those setbacks carried into 2023 working well down in FL before shipping back to Keeneland where he has steadily worked in preparation for this race.

#2 EVERSO MISCHIEVIOUS was given a follow off his debut effort back on February 11th and that effort one that did not go ignored. He will be tested to repeat that effort in this second start with the circuit switch and giving up recency returning from the 84-day layoff. #14 DILLINGER improved number wise as projected from his debut last July returning this year as a sophomore. With that said, his races on the track required more earning B-OptixGRADES, efforts short of "winning" type races for the level.