Handicapping Analysis
Sat September 16th, 2023

Stakes Spotlight

Churchill Downs Race 4

Post Time 1:13 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

RACE 4: LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY STAKES

#4 BANGO projects to get a lot of attention and attention paid to his local record. As an individual he fits today's race especially if Gaffalione can be assertive here and in a race that outside of #2 AWESOME AARON does not hold much early pacesetting types. That trip is key as ***#3 STROBE***, one that has been lighter on class has been at his best when LONE on the lead and could look to take advantage of that trip if BANGO does not claim his space on the lead.

#6 NECKER ISLAND reestablished himself as a one-turn horse has holds buried form coming into this race despite returning from a win. He recorded a solid B OptixGRADE in this race last year, with a WIDE trip finishing in a BLANKET at the wire.

Number wise #1 BAYTOWN BEAR and #5 GULFSTREAM WAY have recorded figures that fit on their best day, however on class have come up short under similar conditions on the win end. *#1 BAYTOWN BEAR* comes back for this race with a weaker rider, though will be plenty of price compensation to keep in the minor mix. #5 GULFSTREAM WAY could get the "wiseguy" look in this race and underlay as a result. He will be given a stiff class test here, one that could be a tall task. He did pick up the win in his most recent start at a lower class/OFR and the race strength much softer than today's group.

Churchill Downs Race 6

Post Time 2:18 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

RACE 6: OPEN MIND STAKES

#2 WICKED HALO is the class of the field and the connections picking this spot looking to keep her on a faster race track noting a recent scratch out of the Ballerina (G1) – a race won by her stablemate Echo Zulu. The placement here also fits on class noting a similar higher purse listed stakes race at Oaklawn Park back in March. The 6f distance is one she has won at though despite the overall recorded she might be event better at 7f and this race a jumping off point for the BC F&M Sprint.

#1 YUUGIRI was unprepared at the start and off a step slow last month at Presque Isle taking her out of her natural front running ways – a trip she projects to get back to in this spot especially with the rail draw once again. YUUGIRI won her prior start, a common race with rival **#3 FIRE ON TIME** – a filly that projects to improve off that subtle trip and especially back here at Churchill Downs.

Churchill Downs Race 7

Post Time 2:50 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

RACE 7: POCAHONTAS STAKES (G3)

#1 EMPIRE ISLAND broke her maiden on debut though benefit from a smart ride after breaking a step slow (potential challenge here from the rail again) saving ground. The filly she finished alongside with Lady Moscato return in the Spinaway (G1) faltering (7th place/C OptixGRADE) with a pocket trip. That is noted as the August 6th race has yet to show a winner from the runners that have returned.

Both #2 PEIGNOIR and #5 REGAL RUMOR return from maiden wins on the August 26th Ellis Park card. Both runners appeared well-intended bet down from their assigned morning lines. PEIGNOIR was smartly handled from the jump getting position and maintaining her lead with enough to keep her rivals off a duel asked for separation and clear late with a space back to place and another to the others with the field spaced out at the wire. REGAL RUMOR showed natural (POP) gate speed, then professionally rated as the eventual place runner, moved up to her inside, rating off that rival before given her cue and showed class improving in her second start all around.

Looking at the August 13th Debutante stakes a common race for three in this field. #9 HOT BEACH the winner of that event, validated herself after coming up short as the race favorite in her debut. She was kept into the race early stalking wide taking over in the lane though never changed to her right lead. Both #3 RIPERTON and #7 YOUALMOSTHADME had subtle trips; YOUALMOSTHADME stumbled at the start, pulled wide flattened out late doing her best to hold in a blanket for the minors and RIPERTON also off a step slow took dirt racing covered up behind horses, she changed leads late and finished with a good closing kick making up ground on HOT BEACH.

#4 RAINING SUGAR showed a lot of class on debut. She made a positive physical appearance, lunged slightly out of the gate, rated inside behind pacesetters, showed another gear moving outside and taking over from the pacesetting place. That race was scheduled for the turf and clearly she can handle the main track and also off her visuals could see her handle grass as well – a versatile type. She will be tested here and from the questionable race strength as seven of the August 4th runners have come back and without much improvement in the group and remain maiden eligible.

#6 V V'S DREAM broke her maiden dominantly here at CD on debut and was not disgraced finishing alongside Brightwork, as she returned to win the Spinaway (G1) last month at Saratoga. She will give up some recency returning from the 76-day layoff into this race. She has been up at Saratoga training coming into this race and watching her works she appears fit and should be able to hold her form into this race.

Bejarano rode ***#8 COURBE*** very confidently to break her maiden on debut. They had some mild contact at the start moving up to rate in the pocket and take over (very late lead change) from the pacesetting rivals. The race strength is yet to be determined as most of the field were first time starters and at the time of this analysis, have yet to run back though could be some quality with runners to follow from that race.

Churchill Downs Race 9

Post Time 3:55 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

RACE 9 – IROQUOIS STAKES (G3)

#8 RISK IT caught the eye breaking his maiden dominantly (B+) and earning a solid figure (91 OptixFIG, the highest in the field) first out at Saratoga. He did appear to have the right trip with the track profile though his visuals suggested talent and appears confidence the connections return in this spot and kept up training going right back to work with a strong breeze on August 28th.