Handicapping Analysis
Sat December 16th, 2023

Emily's Analysis

Oaklawn Park Race 1

Post Time 12:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#1 FIGHT N READY sits as the most logical in this race and should be bet accordingly. He has recorded some of the higher figures and competitive races at higher conditions. That includes his most recent start when claimed for the $40k tag and the connections could be looking at a slight loss even with the win and the claim. #3 DELUCA will also show up with the class drop and the move is not too extreme as this is the first start back since February. This could also be just his second start on a fast track going back to last season catching weather conditions doing this one as a poor gate horse no favors. #2 STRICKLAND is another that has gate issues and a pattern of breaking slog throughout his career. With that said, he has competitive races at this level, course and distance that are tough to see just looking at the running line and finishing position. He also is a two turn hors and that is the concern the two projected pacesetters, #7 MY BROTHER MIKE stretching back out for the first time in a long time as well as #8 MO MOVES one that otherwise is upgraded with the class drop and flow upgrade from 11/9 at CD.

Oaklawn Park Race 2

Post Time 12:58 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#5 CAMPISI returns to Oaklawn with local form from last season. Since that meet and the current cycle he has remained in protected company at FanDuel and shows back up today for the claiming tag. As an AR-bred he also is eligible for the statebred purse in this spot taking on open company. #11 SQUARE DEAL draws further out where trip will be key for Bowen though this one has a sneaky class edge over many in this field and moves up naturally here. #9 BLACK STORM also makes an Oaklawn return today and return off the layoff for Moquett. As far as his most recent start, he had legit trouble that was not picked up by the chart as this one was making up ground along the inside and checked behind a tiring rival and was in hand for the final furlong. The early pace should be honest for his late run and the outer post can assist with a trip. #12 IAN GLASS also returns from a troubled trip on 11/14 at RP where he was forced to check at a crucial time and likely cost a better finishing position noting the 7^{th} place finish was a blanket finish for the minors behind the open length front running winner.

Oaklawn Park Race 3

Post Time 1:26 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#4 DEALING JUSTICE appears well intended with the return to Oaklawn and the timing for this second start off the layoff. She has run well and picked up the March win under similar allowance conditions and race par last year. #7 LEELOU also has some form under similar conditions that present a class edge over many of her rivals and upgraded with the freshening in relation to others coming off taxing wins. Statebred runners #8 SUMMER SHOES and #9 CONNIE K are legit race mares. This will be the first start for the pair since last season and back at the preferred sprint distance for both. The two have won off a layoff with SUMMER SHOES given the edge on her class, consistency, and trip versatility, though Morse is respected as the barn has started out live.

Oaklawn Park Race 4

Post Time 1:54 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Divito has sent out some live runners with less than ideal results to start the meet and #5 LIFE IS HARD representing the barn here and that early start. His Oaklawn form is solid, consistent, and numbers/class on par for this event. He fired a big race first off the layoff last February to finish in a blanket at the wire in the place finish and under T. Baze, a very cold rider at the time for extra credit. #4 RUNAWAY JACK had the string of place finishes last year and all similar in slog as well as result. Since the meet he improved on numbers and results, form he will look to transfer back to this circuit to compete. Those two will be looking for a trip and for the pace to come back to them, that early pace being set from #7 SUPER OCHO. This one is very quick and in today's race shape should be in send mode and a scenario where he runs them off their feet. They tried that tactic last month going too fast (X_FLOW) too soon and running out of gas (NO_FINISH) late. This will be the third start of the form cycle since returning from Dubai. The front wraps have been added as of late and perhaps we could see a removal today to further intent as they land in this spot on the three week turnaround. In this event, the preference landing with the older horses though keeping #9 BLUE LIGHT on the radar as he has some ability with sprint figures in line with many in this field. He also can be given some excuse last out making a WIDE RUSH before losing group and has to avoid similar from the outside post.

Oaklawn Park Race 5

Post Time 2:22 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#4 CHOCTAW GRACE could get overlooked for the connections as she shows up in this spot with buried form. Overall she has yet to run a "bad" race and in each race was compromised with ground loss. Most of her races were contested at the higher maiden claiming level with the place finish (and second choice in the wagering to the winner) on 9/20 at CD. #10 COLLIER was upgraded on 11/1 with the class drop though was compromised out of the gate with a rough start. She finished up with a decent late kick, something tougher to see on the running line and finishing position alone. The similar upgrade for #11 BABE IN THE WOODS with the class change on 11/24 and had TRAFFIC TROUBLE before making the move to finish second.

Keene Thoroughbreds will be represented by a pair of AR-bred filles in this race. While #8 KAT'N CHROME has a "race" this could really be taken as a first start after losing the rider back in October. That "race" two months ago would have preferred to see her back quicker than the two month break she shows up from here. The timing off the works is preferred on first time starter, #7 ERUMPENT and for a barn that has had a small sample of first time starters though to take much from. Her odds will be significantly higher than #12 GLOBAL RISK showing up for B. Cox, a barn that has started out very live and she will get a lot of attention on that alone.

Oaklawn Park Race 6

Post Time 2:50 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

The wagering support was logical for #10 BANG BANG FURY off the strong debut number and the winner, West Sunset returning to win the Rags to Riches stakes. As far as the second start there no real excuse in terms of trip for the second start, though the race shape might have played a role as there was minimal change in running order. The connections have pointed to this meet and takes this spot after failing to draw into a similar MSW on opening week. #2 TALE OF LA BEE was upgraded off the debut as she stayed on well after rushing up into a solid pace, a pace that benefit the top two finishers as they ran on from off the pace. That effort paired with the three week quick return might have taken something out of her as she faltered early on the second start, the recent 11/23 event. #3 RUBY QUEEN must improve off her first two starts, though does appear some positive intent for this filly as she made her debut at Saratoga and second start at Keeneland, both higher level boutique meets.

Oaklawn Park Race 7

Post Time 3:18 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#7 MR. KEATING returns from the 197-day break for this third start and brings upside from the first two starts. In both races, he had issues out of the gate though turned in strong numbers. Those two figures from back in the spring stack up as strong as many of the runners here with recency and maturity. #6 XCELLENT MEN projected to improve with blinkers and did just that on 11/12 in terms of numbers with the show finish and plenty of ground loss. He must continue to hold that form and figures though does appear intent with the 34-day freshening, series of works since and shift to this circuit for the Jacobsen barn starting off the meet strong on opening week. #8 WICKED AGAIN started out his career earlier this year recording strong figures, numbers that stand out in this field. Though as of late he has not run back to those numbers and the barn experimenting with the distance and surface hoping that would trigger a lightbulb moment to win. Running back to those runners and returning to a 6f distance might just be the key. #3 RAGING is likely to get a lot of attention on debut for the connections and the stats on the page with first time starters. Those stats look a lot different here at Oaklawn where Cox has not been nearly as strong in this category and often played heavily/underlays.

Oaklawn Park Race 8

Post Time 3:46 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#10 VULCAN returns from a legit EX- EXCUSE on 11/17 and based on his prior form fits on speed, class and could even hold a pace advantage on the front end. #7 EXXEL comes into this race with progressive form in this current cycle, a positive rider change off the recent trip with back numbers, class and local form that fit on par today. #4 NAUTICAL STAR did not have an “excuse” last month in the stakes at Mahoning Valley though had adversity at the break and ground loss with the rider not asking for their best late, wrapping up when the race result was decided. In terms of class, he still must show where he fits. The barn has been sending out live, he has recency compared to others off layoffs and local form from last season.

Oaklawn Park Race 9

Post Time 4:14 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

In the Tinsel Stakes, pace is key for this race shape and with many solid E/EP types in this field. The edge to #4 SPEED BIAS of that group as one that has been able to carry his speed in graded stakes company and his class has allowed at time to rate and finish. #1 WAR CAMPAIGN comes back for this race with the 42-day freshening and timing noted as he was on a quick turnaround for the 11/4 allowance. The rail draw is to his benefit as they can save ground, key with a horse that distance wise this could be his make and requires the right pace and trip to win, especially at this level. That contention could also benefit #7 DENINGTON (and/or #5 DOUBLE CROWN should they pick this spot, cross entered in a Friday allowance), a pair that at times have been light on class and a favorable race shape is to their benefit.

Oaklawn Park Race 10

Post Time 4:40 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#2 LASSIE MY GIRL came out running last season, she ran a big race and took a tough beat on debut. Some regression could have been projected off that race, but class prevailed as she came back to pick up that maiden win in her next start. Number wise, regression did set in and continued throughout the remainder of the meet. She returned with the freshening against open company in July and while she did not finish in-the-money, number wise she ran back to her 82 OptixFIG from the debut. #6 ONE WAY OR ANOTHER is another has been able to fire fresh and has form at this N1 condition, even turning in “winning” efforts still in search of that win. #12 FLY LIKE THE WIND could step up as she returns off the 252-day meet. Going back to last season she started to figure things out improving race-to-race and those numbers recorded early in the sophomore season could suggest maturity improvement. #3 MOCHA KISS must be mentioned as intent appears in play from a pure PREP three weeks ago. She has run some “fast” races at times and form at this N1 level, though has had many, many chances and come up short on the win end – though will not dismiss for a minor. #5 SASSY LASS also deserves respect from the efforts last season. In terms of form cycle, she could require the start and following a similar “every other” pattern from last year.