Handicapping Analysis
Tue December 26th, 2023

Emily's Analysis

Santa Anita Race 1

Post Time 1:00 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

There should be some opportunity in this race assessing the morning line favorites with some vulnerabilities: #2 MOOGIE SON will get a lot of attention with Prat aboard though overall does not hold any edge in this field. The lack of edge continues with #5 BIGOFROMFRESNO, a lightly raced four-year-old that must present a move forward to compete and in that case price compensation is required.

Taking a stance against that ML fav pair: #1 BILLY'S BET fits at this level, holds current form and foundation around two turns returning from a TRAFFIC trip last month at DMR. #9 LUKA GRAZIE projects to IMPROVE out of the same common race last month where the trip/TACTIC- was less than ideal and will reunite with Hernandez today. His form 8f Turf is sneaky good and projects upside going back to the juvenile figures.

In addition to MOGGIE SON, Moger Jr. will send out #7 FORE FLAG one that should be higher of the two and has run faster races of the pair. He has yet to run that "winning" race at the level on this circuit though has held his own and returns from a less than ideal ride and subtle trip earlier this month at GGF.

#8 BARELY FUNCTIONAL also projects IMPROVE from the 11/18 effort and finishing position. Part of that projection with added ground from the 5f distance and while he will STRETCH here there has not been intent for two-turns and has that unknown.

Santa Anita Race 2

Post Time 1:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Experience can be an advantage though the three in this field have left something to be desired to open the door to the first time starters. #1 MALIBU GLORY looks live off his works and opening day placement. He has plenty of foundation and shown run working in company. The 12/14 gate move was more of a gate "blowout" as they asked for speed for the first 1.5f and then was in hand working the rest of the drill for stamina and fitness. #4 TESSUTO has some run and some speed, though can also be his own menace. At times he has been rank and the gate work on 12/3 he hesitated, walked out of the gate. He went back to the gate on 12/17 though did not see the move to knock if that behavior was corrected. Baffert worked #5 NEW KING in company with #6 URBAN LEGEND on 12/10. There was not much between the two both in very shallow cup blinkers, in hand and together at the wire - nothing to knock, pretty standard drill for this barn - both will be bet. #7 MONGOLIAN CHAMP have not seen this one train and only visuals back in March working in blinkers 10.2 and still looked to be growing at the time.

Santa Anita Race 3

Post Time 2:00 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#4 MISSED THE CUT is a value alternative and one with buried form and class. He showed class prior to showing up on this circuit and the connections took a couple shots, including the BC Classic (G1) last month. Fresh off that race, they will return to the turf, where he fits at this level and SHORTER distance noting a B OptixGRADE in the DMR Handicap (G2) back in December. As far as #2 EASTER, he is logical though that does not even need to be said as he figures to be a heavy favorite in this race and "single" use on many tickets. While capable, he has a SLOG pattern and while has been able to overcome, that is still something to consider as the SLOG played a role in the SAR allowance outcomes.

Santa Anita Race 4

Post Time 2:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#5 JUDGE MILLER should benefit from the debut chasing a "lone flow" winner, Matanzas Creek, as well as the added ground for this longer bodied individual. He presents more upside in this second start compared to the other seasoned maidens in the field, runners that are who they are.

#6 VEGAS BURNER could be given some consideration as he projects to be one of the double digit runners in this field and has early speed and one of his better figures and efforts was the lone start over this course sprinting one year to the date as a juvenile.

#7 SNEAKING CANDY has had some setbacks making this belated debut. He was on track training last year and earlier this year at Santa Anita. He has started back on training steadily in November, though have not seen his works to assess where he is as an individual coming into this race. #1 MONGOLIAN ALTAI gave an honest effort as a longshot on debut over a year ago. On debut he SLOG and NO_LEAD and watching his 11/22 work he did not change leads in that drill despite the rider working for that change. #3 CAVENDISH will also make a belated return from a average effort in a five horse field. Watching his return works, he looks fit and as race ready as possible, however there are still concerns on improvement as he requires a step forward for this level.

Santa Anita Race 5

Post Time 3:00 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#2 ANISETTE is a solid favorite. She fits at this level with consistent speed and class. She holds a G1 win earning a B+ OptixGRADE over the summer at DMR - dominant over a quality runner in #6 BE YOUR BEST, the WIDE trip place finisher. ANISETTE also has form over this course and 10f distance, with a sneaky good effort with the place finish given a less than ideal trip bottled up inside and was the only 3yo filly in the field of older fillies and mares.

#4 ELONDA QUEEN has the G1 experience and the connections pushing forward right back at the level. As far as her local races, she has shown run despite the line and finishing position. In both starts, she broke SLOG and based on her visuals appears to have more tactical speed and could show that here with the change in rider and distance.

Santa Anita Race 6

Post Time 3:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Morning line favorite #5 SUBSANADOR will make his local debut and a runner that has shown class in South America. He comes into this race, live and race ready off the works and with Prat aboard. That will be key in this field and for a horse that has some RunStyle versatility and showed he can pass horses working in company rating off Heywoods Beach on 12/18 taking over from him in hand clear late in the move with an extra burst to the wire.

Trip is also key for #6 MIXTO, a horse that showed some class as a juvenile and has shown improvement coming back this year as a sophomore and with the preferred added ground. He has faced winners and graded stakes company, though will be the first time against older, proven winners.

#1 STILLETO BOY has the chance to get back on track today. As far as the September race, the Pacific Classic (G1) is not the traditional "PREP" spot, though he was taken back early and taken out of the race without much ask. Intent appeared in play for the Awesome Again, though was caught WIDE in a stalking trip over a off, drying out race track. He needs a more aggressive ride and likely to be the plan here with the rail draw and rider change as Hernandez takes back over - these two paired up for a front running score (against three others) in the California (G2) in 2022. He might not have the same speed as #3 BRICKYARD RIDE showing up here though could find a "free" inside trip tracking him as he projects to send and clear early. STILLETO BOY should present value over #2 SALESMAN one that does not offer any value at the 5-2 ML and similar 3-1 underlay territory on #4 NEWGRANGE.

Santa Anita Race 7

Post Time 4:00 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

As far as the front runners, #7 BOOK SMART can be downgraded with the distance and class change in this spot, especially as the favorite. While has has held his form this year with some of the stronger figures, the conditions change here and race shape where another "LONE" trip is less likely given the complexion of the field. Part of the contention could include, #10 CATALINA EDDY returning in this spot off the layoff and with the outside draw where Kimura is likely to be aggressive once again. Class will be a test in against open company, though he could present upside and his maiden win over this course back in February is right on par with this group.

#1 LIVING LIFE is an improving type and one that should be overlooked with the rail draw. Fellow sophomore #5 HAWKER also has shown improvement and after the recent pair of TACTIC- trips, returns with a rider change.

#6 KING APOLLO is looking for that official win at this level, though has paired B OptixGRADES at this N1X allowance condition and form overall including over this course this season.

Santa Anita Race 8

Post Time 4:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Baffert will send out a trio of runners in this field. That includes morning line favorite, #3 SPEED BOAT BEACH one that is the least interesting in that role and with the added furlong of distance. His stablemate #7 HEJAZI has shown similar early speed as well as stamina in the longer distance races. Intent could also be in play for this particular race giving him the "prep" off the 210-day layoff against a softer allowance group (though flattered with the place finisher winning an N1X in their next start) last month. He has continued to keep up training and working solo with high energy coming into this race. #2 FORT BRAGG has been a little exposed at the higher graded stakes level, though remains at the preferred one-turn distance here.

The distance is noted for the horses shipping in for this race. Starting on the inside, #1 GIANT MISCHIEF has yet to be tested for class since returning from the layoff and since the Rebel (G2) back in February. He has that test looming over him for this race and in the toughest spot (higher OFR) of his career today. #5 DAMON'S MOUND projects to be part of the early pace and though is one that shown some gate issues as the case when he had to RUSH into a duel last month in the Steel Valley Sprint. To his credit he stayed on as the BOS/Best of the Speed through an honest pace (winner Rivit with stalking trip) though was drifting/NO_LINE late. That is noted as he will face legit early speed here along with the added ground as well as the higher OFR class test. #8 RAISE CAIN has proven class, stamina and at his preferred one turn distance. That distance change was part of the angle for the Gotham (G3) and making that belated distance change winning the Perryville, a race that has held form and overall quality group.

The one turn distance is a positive change for #4 SHARP AZA TACK though he has some other hurdles as he makes his main track debut in G1 company and must improve to compete on that unknown. #6 MATANZAS CREEK finds a massive class test off a LONE (flow aided) maiden win last month.

Santa Anita Race 9

Post Time 5:00 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#2 PANIC ALARM has class on his side and should present value in this race. He paired B- OptixGRADES in the graded stakes races, the same GRADE earned by morning line favorite, #4 ALMENDARES in common races. The distance change also looks to be a positive for PANIC ALARM one that was racing shorter overseas and holding his own in those events against solid company including, Paddington and River Tiber.

Santa Anita Race 10

Post Time 5:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#9 CLEARLY UNHINGED earned a follow leading up to the BC F&M Sprint (G1) even though that spot was not necessarily ideal. She was in against older and timing was the first time in her career was asked to pair up races. The visuals project IMPROVE as she showed run in spots despite not quite racing on the level of her competition that day. She has been given time, is fresh against sophomores and back on this SA main track where she has done her better work and recorded speed figures.

#6 ICE DANCING has class on her side and was dominant (B+) in the Santa Ynez (G3) over this course and distance in January. The connections likely had this spot in mind though ideally would have preferred another race after she return off the 210 day layoff against older in October.

Yakteen will send out a pair and find #1 BLESSED TOUCH with greater upside than #4 BIG POND, a quality type in her own right. BLESSED TOUCH recorded one of the higher figures in this field breaking her maiden last October as a juvenile. That effort at the time seemed to put her "over the top" and struggling with the timing, layoffs and placement that followed as she will look to get back to that effort here. There has been prior intent for the graded stakes level and while this is an ambitious spot off the bench, there could be some confidence with the placement at the same time.

Santa Anita Race 11

Post Time 6:00 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#3 GERWIG looked to need the race and added ground off the 12/1 visuals and first start back in three months. She showed run from start to finish and given no favors (and NO_PUSH) from the rider and upgraded off the trip and rider change here.

#10 SEA DANCER earned a B OptixGRADE in her second career start at SAR and follows a similar form cycle pattern with her second start on this circuit.

Second time starters: #8 FLIGHT TO QUALITY looked to need the debut and showed run after the SLOG. #9 AFFAIR also SLOG on debut on the main track and had TROUBLE as well. There was intent to run on the turf and mile distance though was unable to draw in on 12/2 at DMR and has had to wait for the grass since.

#1 SPEED SHOPPER will make her debut in this spot. She has a steady work tab for McCarthy and in capable hands with Kimura aboard. These two teamed up with older filly Chloe's Crown in her MSW win over the turf back in February at 11-1. that series of work, I have not seen them to match visuals with what is on paper which is similar for stablemate #11 AMERICANDREAMMAKER also on debut and has the outside post as an additional hurdle.