



Handicapping Analysis

Sat May 4th, 2024

Ron's Picks

Churchill Downs Race 12

Post Time 5:57 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

2 Sierra Leone - 3/1 **4** Catching Freedom - 8/1 **17** Fierceness - 5/2 **11** Forever Young [JPN] - 10/1

THE KENTUCKY DERBY

Fierceness might be the best horse in the race but there's no guarantee that he'll get the best trip or even a good trip. I know his connections say they like the draw but he's going to have to work awfully hard to get position from out there with all the speedy runners to his inside. So, I opted to look for a runner that could take advantage of what promises to be a blistering early pace and that seems to have the ability to get the 10-furlong distance. 2-SIERRA LEONE just seems to get better with every start. He's only a nose away from a perfect four-for-four record. Like that he was starting to draw away in his two races this year, both at nine furlongs. The pace sets up but, as always, it's going to come down to the trip. 4-CATCHING FREEDOM is another who could be favored by the pace. He's another that has been steadily progressing. He finished a couple lengths behind Sierra Leone in the Risen Star but went on to capture the Louisiana Derby at a mile and three sixteenths. However, like top pick and all the other deep closers in this race, they have to deal with traffic jams and one brief check could cost them the race. Obviously 17-FIERCENESS is the one to beat. The Beyer Speed Figure (110) he generated in the Florida Derby was INSANE and people often use the last Beyer as a handicapping source. Obviously in a 20-horse field the trip is all-important and he could struggle to get the right trip from his outside post but he might really be that good. Would love to see the Japanese entrant 11-FOREVER YOUNG run well. By most reports, he is one of the best Japan ever sent here for this race and his perfect record, 5-for-5, lends credence to those reports.

Hawthorne Race 1

Post Time 2:50 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

3 Little Steven - 8/5 **2** Bourbon Life - 5/2 **6** T Law - 7/2

3-LITTLE STEVEN could be tough. He's stretching back out after a competitive sprint effort in his local debut. There is plenty of other speed in this race but he could outlast the rest. 2-BOURBON LIFE finished second here in early April. He didn't show much in his follow up effort in Indiana but he was taking on tougher company. He looks like one of the few in here possessing any late run. If a heated pace duel develops, he could fly by. 6-T LAW was one paced in last, his first start for this barn, but that race was probably only a prep. He was racing for the first time since August and he was sprinting. Stretches to a better distance today. Guessing he'll be close at the finish.

Hawthorne Race 2

Post Time 3:20 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

5 She's Inthearmynow - 3/1 **7** Mitole Magic - 6/1 **8** Angel Express - 8/1

The first local turf race of the season is an interesting affair. Not many of the entrants are confirmed turf sprinters, though most have had at least some experience. As usual, in these short turf sprints, there is an abundance of early speed. Not sure if anyone in here really stands out but have to go with 5-SHE'S INTHEARMYNOW. She has had two turf sprints, recording a win and a second-place finish. Plus, she's trained by Wayne Catalano. She'll have plenty of company on the front end but might be able to outlast the rest. 7-MITOLE MAGIC finished third in her two turf sprints, racing at Aqueduct. Both races were contested early last fall and both were against maidens. However, her "figs" from those races were competitive and she looks like she will do her best running late. 8-ANGEL EXPRESS lost ground throughout in her first start of the year and beat only one rival. However, that was on dirt and she had been far more effective on turf in the past. Like that she has some versatility and is capable of running well on or off the pace. Think we'll see a far better effort today.

Hawthorne Race 3

Post Time 3:50 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

5 Red Label - 3/1 **2** Rivzonaroll - 9/5 **1** Time Heist - 2/1

5-RED LABEL is a slim pick but he's coming off a strong effort in Indiana, he's a versatile kind of runner that is adept at coming from off the pace or going right to the lead, and he has the right rider to make the right decision depending on the way the pace develops. 2-RIVSONAROLL drops in class. Speedy runner races for the top barn and is another with a sharp rider in the irons. However, he tends to run out of gas late and there is plenty of other speed in here to keep him honest on the front end. 1-TIME HEIST figures prominently. He's two for two at the meet and won both fairly easily. Might be able to handle this slightly better company.

Hawthorne Race 4

Post Time 4:20 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

6 Go Stormin Girl - 7/2 **2** Style - 6/5 **7** Summer At the Spa - 3/1

6-GO STORMIN GIRL has been solid against rivals like these, especially at Hawthorne. She's been in the money in 17 of her local races, winning seven times, including last. She likes to come from off the pace but think she can lead all the way if they send her. It was hard to pick against 2-STYLE. It's not like she's been in good form but she hasn't been in bad form and she's been in against much better rivals. She's dropping to the lowest level of her career and racing without blinkers. Would like her better at a slightly higher claiming level. Drops like this can be a cause for concern. Use caution. 7- SUMMER AT THE SPA might be the best of the rest but think she would have a far better shot on turf.

Hawthorne Race 5

Post Time 4:50 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

7 River Ridge - 2/1 **4** Toscano - 5/2 **1** Young Mischief - 6/1 **2** Pontus - 5/1

Very interesting maiden race. 7-RIVER RIDGE might have the edge. He had one race, at Tampa, where he split the field. Adds blinkers for this outing. Worked well, apparently with blinkers, since that start. 4-TOSCANO is a first timer with great drills. Heard rumors that he was fast and his drills suggest that he is. Races for the top barn and they win with 21% of their first timers. Beautifully-bred 1-YOUNG MISCHIEF shouldn't be overlooked. His drills downstate have been very good. He'll be a much longer price than the top pair. 2-PONTUS finished third versus Illinois breds in his only race. This could be a tougher field but his race was good enough to warrant another look, at least as an inclusion on the bottom of vertical gimmicks.

Hawthorne Race 6

Post Time 5:20 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

12 Jeff the Lion - 10/1 **4** Simple Logic - 5/2 **2** Red Hornet - 5/1 **8** Land Mark Deal - 10/1

Don't think it will rain enough between Thursday and Friday for races to come off the turf but, just in case, we need to take a look at 12-JEFF THE LION. He's entered for main track only and he could prove best if this race does get moved to dirt. 4-SIMPLE LOGIC seems to hold a huge advantage on turf. Ignore his last couple on dirt. Although he has only one turf victory, he is a turf runner and this could be the easiest field he ever met on the lawn. 2-RED HORNET is another with poor recent form but another that has been far better on the weeds. He was stakes placed early in his career and has earned over \$170k in turf races. 8-LAND MARK DEAL has been better in turf sprints but he's another that will benefit from the move back to grass.

Hawthorne Race 7

Post Time 5:50 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

7 Defiant Malice - 9/2 **8** The Speedy One - 3/1 **9** Border Patrol - 2/1

Have to give 7-DEFIANT MALICE another chance at this level. He's been ineffective in his two local starts but he was routing in his local debut, against maiden specials, and he had some trouble, on an off track, in last in what turned out to be a "key" race from which multiple members came out of that race to win their next. 8-THE SPEEDY ONE finished second in the first two races of his career but up the track in his last two. Now he's turning back in distance and dropping in class. Could reawaken. 9-BORDER PATROL makes his 2024 debut. Five of his seven races have been on turf and all have been at longer distances. But his trainer sports a 22% win average with runners returning from similar layoffs and when they trainer and this jockey team up, they win 38% of the time.

Hawthorne Race 8

Post Time 6:20 PM CST

Analysis by Ron Uchman

11 Battle Scars - 7/2 **1** Degree of Risk - 3/1 **3** Professor Higgins - 6/1

11-BATTLE SCARS gets the nod. He finished fifth in the Hawthorne Derby in 2021 in his lone previous local start, after winning his first two career starts at Arlington, but has been far more competitive in many of his races since, despite winning only once since then. He's been drawing outside posts all year, today included, but typically runs competitively. The big change is adding blinkers for the first time in his career. That just might make the difference. 1-DEGREE OF RISK takes blinkers off after a three-race experiment with them. This Grade 1 placed runner, in 2021, is hard to figure. He's spent most of his career on the West Coast where he has had only minor success. In ten career turf races, he hasn't won and managed to finish as high as second only once. He sports the highest turf figures of any in here and it might be argued that he's facing easier company today but that won't be determined until after the race. 3-PROFESSOR HIGGINS could be interesting. This lightly-raced runner ran well in two of his three turf races but both were claimers. He's been gelded since his last start, however, and his recent drills have been brilliant. Might be headed to the best race of his career.