Handicapping Analysis
Sat December 28th, 2024

Emily's Analysis

Oaklawn Race 1

Post Time 12:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

This is a spot where there are horses that look the most safe or likely on paper and will be shorter odds with some question marks. As well as #5 BRIGHT SPARK ran last out (and the time before) taking a shorter number in this field is tough with their projected trip from off the pace and rise in race par. That also carries to #1 GRANADA FLAVOR shipping in from California and a live P. Miller barn, something that gives them a look however their current form and off the pace runstyle sits below par and tough to endorse outside of the live connections.

#3 TRUCULENT also returns from the opening day 12/6 race could step up here with the change back to the mile distance after taking part in a WIDE DUEL. #4 ON A SPREE also fits off their current form and in today's race shape however the M. Maker runners have come up short on the win end in spots where they looked similar to today's race and some concern on that front.

Taking a stab with a couple of prices: #8 ETERNALLY GRATEFUL is still unproven at the route distance though will be given just their second chance today. Going back to the effort last year tough to say it was the distance alone with a TRAFFIC TROUBLE trip under less than ideal handling (TACTIC-) and outside of the unknown they fit at this starter level with consistent figures, class and current form wheeling back trip adversity and the BLANKET finish outcome two weeks ago.

#6 EL CERRITO is another that just might not be to the level of the competition though at longer odds paired with a BTL effort back in November at CD and trip last out at TP could present upside today and compete with a top effort – again the key being those longer odds.

Oaklawn Race 2

Post Time 12:58 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Recency could be the key and upgrading runners with a start and from the 12/14 common race. An honest early pace is projected and a scenario to assist #10 DALTON'S RUTROW as they make their second start of the meet and from a competitive effort all things considered. They had to deal with the WEATHER conditions racing inside against the profile (SAVED) and TROUBLES+ playing a role in the outcome.

#6 CHEZ WHIZ did not appear fully intended on the day and from the common race with similar TROUBLES+ and showed run/MOVE from off the pace to suggest they can step forward with that race under their belt.

As far as the early pace #4 RYNO WRECKER projected to be the controlling, speed of the speed and set the pace with a X_FLOW upgrade and overall upgrade with that start under their belt where they might have lost their race in the GATE, fractious and lunging out before getting RUSH into the DUEL.

Oaklawn Race 3

Post Time 1:26 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#6 WESTEROS fits as a contender running back to the efforts at DMR over the summer. There could be intent with the circuit switch, class change and second off the layoff along with a subtle trip in the 12/4 TP event.

Despite being assigned ML favorite role, #12 SAFE BET should hold value in this full field paired with the far outside post. In terms of current form this spot is closer to a lateral move from the current RP cycle though going back to last season at Oaklawn that form stacks up strongly as a contender with higher figures and competitive races contested at a higher MCL condition than the one they return to today.

There was a clever idea with #4 NON FUNGIBLE when they were entered to return off the long layoff back on 12/14 with upside and maturity improvement from the juvenile campaign. They did scratch that day perhaps the rail being a factor and is encouraging following the scratch to see the breeze just five days later and back in this spot with the quickness. and while not wanting to abandon the creativity on this one, this spot could be tougher with the race shape all around and part of the idea was looking to get the jump on closer #5 PHENOMENAL DREAM one that finished second on the day and still holds pace/trip as their prime hurdle to clear this level though consistent enough to be consider as one of, if not the most likely to hit the board.

Oaklawn Race 4

Post Time 1:54 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#5 TWO DOLLAR EDDIE could present both the early speed and class edge in this field. They were compromised at the break on debut though following has shown who they are with consistent figures and early speed and held their own against open company after the meet ended here in the spring.

#10 BURLSWORTH also fits with their efforts at this statebred MSW level when looking at some others with similar figures though running in MCL company. BURLSWORTH is a Plot upgrade to a Q1 Square with the edge on fitness, the connections getting a start at CD coming off the layoff and given a X_FLOW upgrade and without much intent on the day especially with this meet right around the corner.

The connections thought enough of #8 RANCH HAND to debut in the Rainbow Stakes last year and tough to assess with the placement, WIDE trip and layoff that followed. They did not post a work on the published tab until November following that race though has been consistent and with the longer drills should be fit and would not be surprised to see an honest effort here.

Trainer Tammy Hornsby has quietly sent out some very live runners this meet including a dominant FTS winner on Sunday with Caliente Start to at the least keep #9 PARAMOUNT PAYCHECK on the radar here with that pattern and paired with the projected long odds.

Oaklawn Race 5

Post Time 2:22 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

These longer distance events are a bit of a specialty and the edge with runners that have shown intent to these type of races. That includes #1 MIDNIGHT CHANNEL one that could be flying under the radar given the recent running line and finishing position, though should factor the WIDE trip and first start off the claim there and could be pointed to this meet while encouraging they remain protected at this starter level.

#9 WELAKA shows up with fitness and the edge on recency along with current form in this third start of the cycle. They have raced closer to the early pace in those races though a factor of race shape, with the Slow early paces and the early pace does appear to be more contentious and honest for the distance given the complexion of this field for WELAKA to find their stalking trip. That trip should be similar for both #2 HUGE BIGLY, one that has local form and win under similar to today’s conditions and #8 BRIGHT LEAF one that will be tested for stamina though in their limited races beyond a mile, did not appear that will be a factor, however still an unknown to factor as the assigned ML favorite.

Oaklawn Race 6

Post Time 2:50 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#1 MONTANA CAFÉ could be a live FTS. Looking through past entries they were entered and scratched from MSW events at SAR and KEE, two strong boutique meets to have this one entered at. Santana picking up the call here also catches the eye as they ride first call for other barns in this race but also live in a limited sample over the years and especially during this Oaklawn meet for Moquett.

#3 SPEECHLESS has shown run at times in the MSW events though not always consistent and creating their own trips to suggest this move could be right on class while in form to find the right level to compete against. A similar upgrade to #8 BERMUDA BLITZ with the change in class, the DROP should be right off the races to date and recent visuals to suggest some class weakness for the allowance level.

#11 WACO has been racing for the MCL tag though a change today to run for $50k. The par is closer to a lateral move and from the 12/15 start two weeks ago, a drop to move up naturally with this group and perhaps some intent with that timing and the return to the sprint distance.

Oaklawn Race 7

Post Time 3:18 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#6 HOODLUM is interesting in this spot showing up for trainer Al Stall. The barn has send out only a handful of runners in limited spots in the past few seasons and notable with this runner. Their overall form has remained consistent and fits on their best day with a runstyle that should suit today’s dynamic. They also race here as one of the few older horses in this field and that can be an edge and noted for #3 SILVER HEIST one that has Oaklawn experience and experience under similar allowance conditions to today’s race. Those top efforts can compete here though one that does not appear to hold much upside as they have struggled to move forward on speed figures since their sophomore campaign.

I could see where #4 SIR GREYLIND makes sense though did not love the effort enough on 12/6 to support at a shorter number and going back to the dominant maiden win in May had the race flow in their favor, potentially flattered on that front as well. #10 ANTHONIAN could present the most upside as a lightly raced sophomore making the distance change following the maiden win returning from more than a year away from the races. #12 LINEBACKER could be given a look as well. They have shown gate issues in the recent cycle though also showing interest and on their best day have recorded some of the higher figures in the field, granted those efforts at the one turn distance.

From that 12/6 common race, #2 ZATARA offers enough price compensation to try and get into the number here. They showed progression race to race in the spring and similar in this current cycle set up for the third start. They raced X_BIAS back at KEE and while in similar company on opening day, 12/6 landed a higher race par than today’s event.

Oaklawn Race 8

Post Time 3:46 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#4 POPPERINA had a legitimate EX – EXCUSE with the TROUBLES+ and in running through TRAFFIC making MOVE showing interest though unable to compete. While questionable on value that day, the number should be higher here “dirtied” up off that recent running line.

#1 BRUNCH PUNCH with the rail could show early speed though if some others outside of her in this field gun it to the front could track inside to work a first run stalking trip. The break for her has been more impactful and likely key here more so than overall ability to compete as the likely favorite.

#2 SILVIA had a longshot look to get a share on 12/7 and similar right back in this spot. Overall, she might have needed the race and can be given a further upgrade chasing inside against the course profile behind a Fast early pace, both factors playing a role in the outcome. Tougher to make excuses for #7 BANTERRA in that race one that really has struggled to step forward on speed figures and while the case for a new top presented last time second off the layoff, faltered and shows up into this race lighter numbers than others.

Oaklawn Race 9

Post Time 4:14 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#2 LIBERAL ARTS (scratched – dominate win in an off the turf race at FG on Thursday) has done nothing wrong in his career and showed improvement with each race and coming back strong off the layoff with an improved number in the allowance win last month at CD. The races over this course last season were competitive with a BTL effort in the Southwest (G3) and a very unfortunate time to record an EX – EXCUSE in the AR Derby (G1) and given no favors rushed two weeks later in the Lexington (G3) with the timing and KICKBACK and overall visuals earning them a follow.

#5 RED ROUTE ONE followed a similar path towards the Derby at Oaklawn back in 2023 and competitive over this course as well as coming back last season as a older horse with a strong effort and figure in the Oaklawn Handicap (G2) and topping off the summer campaign winning the Cornhusker (G3) in July. He was freshened and credible effort in the Clark (G2) a race they did not appear fully cranked for though should benefit from the race in this second start of the cycle.

#7 CREATIVE MINISTER is still looking for the first win as an older horse though has shown an affinity for Oaklawn and the 9f distance. The timing for this race on a quick turnaround has also been effective keying off Preakness (G1) show finish and strong place finish over this course last January, a winning type effort for that allowance level – a race with a similar par to today's stakes event.

#9 SEIZE THE NIGHT can make the case for on the deeper tickets and include underneath with races that fit on speed figures, class and local form. They have struggled with the layoffs as of late and returning to a top effort though did show as much with a similar pattern in this race last year shifting from the CD turf to the Tinsel Stakes and recording a solid number, though lighter on overall for a contender.

Oaklawn Race 10

Post Time 4:40 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#2 KING RUSSELL has the edge over the other older horses in this field. They have consistently shown up with their best here at Oaklawn picking up the maiden win during the sophomore campaign and black type with the place finish in the AR Derby (G1). They returned from the layoff back at Oaklawn in January and competitive in allowance company with subtle trips enough to give a look to get back on track here. The connections ended up picking this spot noting they were entered on opening day under similar conditions on the AE and for that race as well as here retain Santana to looking to secure that second career win.

#8 DAILY GRIND had a longshot look under similar allowance conditions on 12/6, opening day and while the 7th place outcome and running line do not inspire much on paper, it was the opposite from the visuals, a BTL effort with adversity at the break (SLOG, TROUBLE_S) that forced a MOVE X_FLOW and played a role in the outcome. Something that should see an improved effort all around here.

The number coming back off the layoff could be a tad short on #12 LAT LONG though otherwise fits with this field and with today's race shape. They are the type that tends to run their race each time though the one win, the maiden score over this course last December was picked up with a PERFECT trip.