Handicapping Analysis
Sun January 26th, 2025

Emily's Analysis

Oaklawn Race 1

Post Time 12:30 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#8 ROCCO STRONG projects to be the controlling speed while bringing in current form for live connections first off the claim. The connections find this spot where they fit on eligibility with the $10k claim three weeks ago the only time in their career in for $10k and to run in this starter allowance horses need to have run for that number or less in one of their two most recent starts.

A similar upgrade could follow #2 BOOGIE BODE as they make their second start of the season and from the 1/3 common race with ROCCO STRONG recorded an overall similar (both B-) effort and projects to be much longer odds of those two coming back in this race.

#7 FACE VALUE fits that eligibility with the race back on opening day – a race that could have been an excuse with the legit stumble at the start though showed class to get the win. They were claimed out of that race given time before returning last week and coming right back in this spot from a subtle trip to race protected here.

#1 NEPAL UP could hold a class edge going back to prior season though in terms of their form late 2024 lack a strong edge and number wise has not quite been their best since 2023 – a capable type though requires some price compensation.

#3 KHOZY MY BOY and #6 MAD ADAM bring in the recent wins though overall form and runstyle in line with #4 MR. THUNDERSTRUCK for this race and upgraded as the projected higher odds of the trio coming into this race with dirty form.

Oaklawn Race 2

Post Time 12:58 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#5 MARSHSIDE MAMA takes the drop as well to run for the claiming tag and upside in this second start of the meet and a positive rider change. De La Cruz has yet to finish out of the money paired with this mare in four starts - he was aboard in the first two starts finishing in the money from the sophomore season making a belated return to the saddle over the simmer with the win and place finish at PRM.

#1 BLAZE ON makes their seasonal debut in this spot and first start for the barn with changes all around for this race. She will add Lasix the blinkers and in very late with Romero aboard and also find a distance change from the recent races. With that said she does hold a mile win going back to last June at DEL recording an effort and figure on par and a four time winner with timing eligibility for these conditions. The barn will not race protected here though protecting some of the $20k claiming investment running for the higher $35k.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle could be trip if some of the others in here decide to go and contest the pace. #4 INTERSTELLAR has those options and some intent in this second start of the meet and overall form, figures and class on par as they try to find the right spot on this circuit running first time for the claiming tag since the $30k claim last summer.

The race shape should suit #7 TEMPLAR RED with their runstyle however has a bigger test shifting to the main track where a lot of their stronger form has been over the turf or even an off track. Perhaps worth noting as there is a chance of rain in the forecast. The surface/distance question marks also follow #2 SUPER ENTICING along with the class rise and recent front wrap addition.

#6 LADY COMMANDER had a longshot look to sneak into the minors at this level returning from the layoff last month and can be given a similar look right back in here. The race shape did not quite set up for her over the off track as the pacesetters finished 1-2 and despite that 7th place outcome was a blanket for the deeper minors.

Oaklawn Race 3

Post Time 1:26 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#3 HOLDING PATTERN wheels right back for this race and right back with a key rider change as L. Quinonez jumps back aboard a horse they have had success with in the past. The pace should be contentious for their runstyle and bring in form given a PREP with the X_WIDE move coming off the layoff and followed up with another WIDE trip just over a week ago.

#5 FIRE BRYAN tends to be an “every other” type since the claim for these connections and following that pattern can project a move forward in the second start off the layoff. They will find the class relief as well from the race earlier this month, a better draw and race shape to suit their runstyle.

The noted race shape should be honest as #1 LARRY’S LEGEND might be forced from the inside and the two Hewitt runners bring in early speed as well with both CHAPEL BARN and STOMPING HOTROD. That group could also be joined by #10 SUPER BRADY on that has the benefit of drawing outside that group and as an individual overall class and speed to compete at this level and form finding that subtle change in class in a similar second off pattern to FIRE BRYAN from the 1/3 common race.

Will also give a mention to #9 OUT RUN’M one that can pop with a big race from time to time and with fitness making the distance change from the two router races this season – a longshot type that is not totally out of it here.

Oaklawn Race 4

Post Time 1:55 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#4 MARTINI BLU can be upgraded in today’s race shape and form cycle second off the layoff. Bejarano had to RUSH for early position something that took the starch out of them late and assisted #2 RAYMOND with pace to make their run from off the pace. As far as timing MARTINI BLU has been able to step and improve second off and with that fitness here might also look for a front wrap removal.

#5 ESPIONAGE scratched from a less restricted starter allowance last weekend and given the extra week for this race and still holds the same intent as Dan Ward will remove the blinkers and race protected for the connections – connections that have had success with this type of move in the past and with Castillo. Overall the race off the layoff, the common race on 1/4 should assist on fitness as well as the move off the rail to return to their competitive prior Oaklawn form.

#8 RAM will also make the move off the rail and another with Oaklawn form to run back to and step forward in this third start of the cycle. They just sneak into this race with the $10k claiming event back in July protected in the two recency starts and remains encouraging with R. Santana sticking around, not in for the tag again and could even look for a front wrap removal on this one as well.

Oaklawn Race 5

Post Time 2:25 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

This is a very tough race with the now 3yo taking different paths into this race. #8 COMPLEX MUSIC is no standout though has form and fitness into this race for the third start of the cycle and could be sitting on a peak effort just as they were last October with a similar form cycle pattern. They can be given a flow upgrade from the Springboard Mile and on the cutback earlier this month at the FG caught arguably a tougher group and if nothing else that 1/11 FG race COMPLEX MUSIC finished alongside a runner called Big Rasee, the winner of the Oaklawn 12/29 race many in this field return from.

Mark Casse returns with a capable pair and tough to assess intent with the duo coming into this race. #4 GRYPHON was green though still dominant with their debut win at GP just weeks ago and lands here where they will race protected though must pair up efforts at the least on shorter rest and over a new race track. #5 SWEET FANTASY, an AR-bred will make their first start on this circuit though curious they will race here against open while in for the claiming tag. They are fitted with the other changes running today first time as a gelding, on Lasix and with everything in play can run very light assigned 111lbs for this race.

The pattern for the pair is similar for the two D. Jacobsen runners wheeling right back with #9 PIQUANT following a FLOW aided CLOSE last week in the Renaissance Stakes and should appreciate the class change though has been a consistent honest type even without a big move forward in the recent races. The timing for #2 HAUNTED FLAME should see them at their best coming off the layoff, a pattern for this one so a “prep” is not guaranteed – they must come out race ready.

Oaklawn Race 6

Post Time 2:55 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#8 CALAMITY has the edge over the other experience runners in this field with consistent figures – a solid debut around two turns making WIDE MOVE X_FLOW and turned in a game place finish/B with the top three together and clear at the wire last month at the FG.

While the others have the experience to draw from both first time starters have a bit of a look and could be sneaky in here. #5 FROSTED MIRACLE ships in where they have been training at GP and was scheduled to debut over that course on 12/29 though poor weather conditions and off track might have provided the reason for the scratch. Watching her train there should be no issues with today's distance from a physical standpoint and holds plenty of fitness and has some run.

#9 MIDNIGHT MUSE is not one I have seen train though one that has been looking for a spot and some intent to run at the mile distance keying off a pair of recent scratches at TP. They land here at Oaklawn, a circuit the barn does not send many into run, though often intent when they do. The most notable name being the 2x Apple Blossom (G1) winner, Letruska.

Oaklawn Race 7

Post Time 3:24 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

The early pace should be honest and #8 IT'LL DO has experience with an honest pace as part of it on 1/5 to provide fitness here, a flow upgrade along with the change in distance. The they have been able to show sprint speed going back to the form from 2023 and even on 11/4 despite clipping heels and losing the rider at the start they were able to save ground for a very unofficial show result. They should be overlooked off the recent races and fit as well as #2 BLUE LINE and #3 AIRBOURNE ELITE if not better with a similar runstyle.

As far as the selections it was a coin toss between #5 QUARRYMEN and #10 KONTEEKEE for a name in the three spot selections though both are valid. Ultimately KONTEEKEE got the call as one that should be less obvious based on the recent running lines, finishing position and for the connections though presents upside making their second start this meet and fits at this level with that race under their belt and in today's race shape with a similar runstyle to QUARRYMEN.

Oaklawn Race 8

Post Time 3:52 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

John Haran has been sending out well-intended runners as of late and could be the timing lining up for #8 GEORGIA ON E'SMIND for this race. The 4yo filly turned was competitive last season under similar maiden conditions and coming back off the layoff to start the year on 1/5 had the front wraps added, took part in the early pace for fitness and perhaps a similar pattern keying off the Hawthorne races and improved second off the 9/12 race with the front wraps removed – something to look for.

#6 AUNT ALEX also returning from that 1/5 common race in the second start of the cycle and in a race that did not have much change in running order ran her race on the day. That has been a pattern though has enough foundation and consistency where perhaps some racing luck is required to win, though can be along for another share.

#4 HOT DAY finds a lateral change in class for this second start and showing up on this circuit. Miller sent out a runner called Big Gain to the maiden win on Thursday from a similar change racing last month at Los Alamitos and placed at the level for their abilities.

#10 LINE RUNNER the lone mare in the group, makes a belated return though to their credit has the Oaklawn experience and local training coming back for this race. She turned in a place finish under similar MCL conditions on debut and tough to take much from the step up mile race in April and with the layoff that followed. The works are nothing "jump off the page" exciting though consistent and given the prior history should be as race ready as can be.

Oaklawn Race 9

Post Time 4:22 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

While #7 HANDSOME PANTS can win this race as the favorite giving up recency and still must validate their debut win, a strong figure though flow-aided – the top two from off the pace. Stablemate #4 CHIEF LIAM showed run with a near EX on debut and projecting to IMPROVE did just that picking up the maiden win earlier this month, though had a moderately favorable trip with first run and number wise must take a step forward and has just three weeks timing for that improvement to kick in.

Both #5 OPTICAL and #9 CURVINO race for the higher $200k tag though bring in form and fitness for this race. #9 CURVINO had to race last summer on the grass for the route distance and held their form with the main track races the sneaky good effort back in November at DMR that validated the visuals picking up the win on 12/15 and the connections take this spot though had considered and entered in the Smarty Jones earlier this month.

OPTICAL returns with the quickness from stakes company, racing in the Lecomte (G3) last week and could be given some excuse as they chased and were quickly in hand not asked for run or their best on the day.

The distance is a test for #6 BRODEUR stretching out as they step up to take on winners and from the group last month. The distance still a question mark for #11 BIG MUCH as they return with Lasix and blinkers and from the 12/29 race – a race that could upgrade #10 AMOR PATRIAE of the pair given the timing and fitness as they were back on shorter rest following the maiden win opening weekend.

Oaklawn Race 10

Post Time 4:50 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#1 STUCK N’ SNOW holds speed figures and class on par to compete though not always the most consistent type when it comes to outcome though with that said will be paired with price compensation. They return for this second start of the meet and not the most ideal handling/TACTIC- with the SLOG and WIDE trip – a tougher race to take at face value with every runner in that field coming off layoffs in the first part of the meet and mentioned with many returning here.

Show finisher from that 12/21 common race #4 CYBERTOWN makes sense with the effort, solid GALLOP+ and returning to the route distance where they have spent most of their career and has had the majority of their success. Success, however, has not quite been at this allowance level and notable with the projected shorter odds – they are kept in the mix for a share though opens the door the top spot.

Numbers and class are overall similar for #3 WHERE’S RANDY one that has held their own in allowance company and capable with the right trip and pace to target – they find a similar dynamic today for the first time in a long time and similar to the April 2023 race, a TROUBLE trip show finish as the favorite.

#8 READY SHOES returns from the layoff and could have their ready shoes on as the barn is capable with these type of layoff returnees and this individual has run well off the bench in the past. Their runstyle could also be flattered with the complexion of this field and what could easily be a fast early pace and comes down to trip and stamina late where Torres can be an asset.