Handicapping Analysis
Sat March 29th, 2025

Emily's Analysis

Oaklawn Race 1

Post Time 11:20 AM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#7 ICARUS follows a positive second off pattern to move up today from the 2/14 higher race par when giving up recency off the layoff and longer route distance. They turned in a credible effort all things consider to hold place behind the PERFECT trip winner and today's rival #10 CASHMEUP one that had the recency edge on the day and could see the tables turn this afternoon. CASHEMEUP fits as an individual though could struggle with today's outside draw and race shape, a change in projected dynamic from the races this season -a noted Fire Contention.

#9 EXECUTIVE ACTION has a longshot look in this race returning from the freshening and distance change along with a sneaky trip back in January, a slightly higher starter allowance conditions and one that just sneaks in on eligibility. The TROUBLE trip back in January played a role in the outcome and perhaps even the timing with the break since and rider change with the connections scratching from the 8.5f distance starter allowance along with ICARUS back on 3/8 and perhaps prefer this spot with the 9f for this individual.

Oaklawn Race 2

Post Time 11:50 AM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#2 VITAL MIND could come in live to make their debut. They have been working at the FG with the published drills starting back in February and perhaps needing the time in training and recent improvement with the gate move and longer drills in March. J. Ortiz picks up the call often riding first call for this barn in NOLA. The barn will also return with #4 FAUST one that still must improve though has the two start foundation and some changes with the addition of blinkers after the SLOG in the 2/23 return behind pacesetting winner, and AR Derby entrant Cornicopian something to follow to assess form from that maiden race.

FTS #8 THIRTEEN G'S was training out in CA going back to last year with the three recent works at OP including a move from the gate in company breaking a step SLOG heads up with recent maiden winner Bolt on the Rocks, one that has consistently recorded speed figures on par with today's group to suggest THIRTEEN G'S could fit right in first out.

#7 FANATICAL showed some class weakness for the level on 3/8 though caught a higher par that day. They wheel right back for this event, working another half mile last Sat to maintain fitness and make a rider change along with the distance change to a sprint and with the field high recorded figure from the debut, they would be no surprise in this spot.

#10 GATESKEEPER also with their career high recorded figure in the sprint debut back in December and return to this circuit and distance change to take on maidens as well. The December race won by I Got Game the eventual Ozark stakes winner and also featured common rival #5 BON TEMPS another looking to find where they fit after running in stakes company and the route distance – and land here back with 3yo as the only 3yo in the 3/7 race and flow upgrade as part of the early pace with the top two Darrow and Lebombo running from off the pace – many from that group will be racing on the Friday card to follow results.

(#9 DRILL BABY also has shown gate issues breaking SLOG in the 3/8 drill moving up on their own and better of the two throughout. Following that work they rated behind stablemate La Houligan adding blinkers in the 3/15 move.)

Oaklawn Race 3

Post Time 12:22 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#3 WILLY CUTS had a PERFECT trip and visually some class question marks especially if with shorter odds.

#10 DAWSON JAMES caught a solid field on debut with the higher par on 2/23 and solid returning rival in Touchdown Arkansas, a next out allowance winner and making their debut on the day could present upside over the other established 4yo runners #1 TIZMARKUS and #11 TWO DOLLAR EDDIE bookending the field returning from that common race. TWO DOLLAR EDDIE with their typical early speed will be forced to clear from the outside and TIZMARKUS with the pair of WIDE trips this season could find a change here with the rail.

Oaklawn Race 4

Post Time 12:52 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#12 SHE CALLED had a big look despite giving up recency into the 3/8 allowance with the edge on class and speed figures from last season. and while best intentions all around racing luck a different monster with a complete EX _ EXCUSE with the trip staring with the SLOG and legitimate in running TROUBLE+ racing against the course profile and still to her credit put in a strong late CLOSE and GALLOP+. She appears to have come out of the race well working twice since, this placement three weeks later and Santana perhaps with some options sticking here.

One of those being #7 ASHBURN ALLEY perhaps one of the safter options in this field with the pair of place finishes and game efforts in both starts under similar N1 allowance conditions par and that is tougher to ignore. Prat takeover over on #9 PHAROAH'S HEART for Jacobson one that has shown run this season, back numbers that fit strongly and the connections scratching from the 5.5f sprint allowance on Sunday to run here instead.

#11 BROOKLYN DREW likely needed the race last month coming off the layoff and taking on older for the first time as well as a rider assignment not often used for this barn. This j/t trainer combination scored with El Rey Dorado earlier this month, a claiming type though on a similar second off pattern and BROOKLYN DREW with their early speed and foundation from last year could be sitting on that peak second off effort as well.

#4 POPPERINA is a deeper closer, one that requires a lot of racing luck especially on the win end though can be upgraded with the EX back in December and competitive effort and number in January to keep in the mix at least for underneath. Similar underneath inclusion for #10 DEALING JUSTICE as she brings in current form and honest type that shows up each time and today should be no exception.

Oaklawn Race 5

Post Time 1:24 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#5 GIANT MOON projects to get a lot of attention here especially from the public that play connections with trainer B. Cox and Prat aboard. This gelding has been in training all season should have no excuses on fitness and has shown run and early speed in the works and class in the recent 3/14 heads up with Calamity, 3yo KYbred maiden filly in her four starts earning speed figures that sit on higher side of par with this group.

While GIANT MOON appears well intended they projected to be favored and similar intent could follow #8 NICHOLAI at longer odds on debut, a horse that has been training with legit early speed in the morning and should be live first out. #10 MARKANSAS also has some run and while they have not shown the same early speed in the morning the outside post should be ideal for this one as they look to pass horses late.

As far the runners in this field, those returning from the 2/8 common race can be upgraded and should establish some form from that race with common rivals returning earlier on the card: #1 FOUR O NINE turned in a BTL effort with a less than ideal trip that might have cost them a better position if not the win. FOUR O NINE has been given a slight freshening after that race and before returning to the work tab earlier this month putting in two maintenance moves to keep up fitness.

#11 PERSONAL JET recorded a BTL effort in their debut and appeared intent off that initial start showing up on this circuit with the higher purse and statebred company 3 weeks later for a second start. They made a positive PRERACE+ on the track and less than ideal start (SLOG TROUBLE_S) that followed showing interest making a WIDE MOVE something tougher to see with the running line and finishing position. #2 SWIFT RULER also made a positive PRERACE+ appearance and a slight RUSH showing some early speed that could be in play here again and in contrast to the others with established form and lack tactical speed.

Oaklawn Race 6

Post Time 2:04 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#4 ALMOSTGONE ROCKET picks up this spot for a belated return and reasonable given the connections to see her back on this circuit where she started her career around this time last year. She has trained consistently out in FL should be fit off the series often working solo nothing to standoutish in the moves though could be who she is.

She will face an established #6 HAULIN ICE one that was able to regain some confidence with a dominant stakes win earlier this month in statebred company following an EX in the Inside Information (G2) back in Jan at GP.

Those two look to set the pace, something that could assist J. Ortiz reuniting with #1 BENEDETTA in this spot along with the rail draw to track behind that pair and look for first run -a similar type trip to the Carousel though projects to find softer fractions here than how that race shook out.

The 2024 Matron pace shook out perfectly for #5 AMERICAN BAND getting the right set up for an upset win. Overall, in terms of numbers and class she is on the lighter side today and going back to last year, the Matron par was lower than it is this time around.

Oaklawn Race 7

Post Time 2:40 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#3 CLEAR THE AIR is one of a few that must run for the higher tag to compete in this spot and with that noted as they hold a win under today’s conditions from last August at SAR – a race with a similar par, purse and Vazquez in the saddle. CLEAR THE AIR could reasonably be sitting on a peak effort with return to Oaklawn third off and for a horses that does not always consistently run that big race but when they do, a major contender.

While a case can be made for the two S. Asmussen runners with #8 CARBONE sticking at the one turn moving to an outside post and #5 ZAMBEZI coming back off the layoff to OP and conditions where they have been competitive in the past. A similar case could be made for the C. Hartman pair.

#10 FAVORITE OUTLAW has competitive races at Oaklawn going back to the start of their career one that has consistently been pointed to this meet. The connections have been working to get him back this year entered under similar conditions here in January 5, apparently not quite race ready though has the steady string of works since including bullets in Feb. #11 EGLISE has been a consistent type and find a rider change after poor TACTIC- in the 2/23 allowance showing run in that less than ideal trip.

Oaklawn Race 8

Post Time 3:17 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Each horse in this field has the credentials to win though still has the horse to beat in #8 SAUDI CROWN. They are arguably is the class of the field with the G1 races and is not even assigned the high weight in this field. While they have those positives, throughout his career he has often had the right trips and race track profiles – factors in their favor. So far there have not been many returning from the Pegasus (G1) though from the group a couple of winners and dominant scores from Locked in the SA handicap (G1) and Skippylongstocking in the Challenger (G3) as well as a strong effort from Steal Sunshine place finish in the GP Mile (G2). While this could be seen as a lack of confidence dropping back down to the G3 level, the class change is probably right for this horse and at the same time the $500k purse is still a massive prize.

Frome the outside SAUDI CROWN should look to establish position and should find company with inside runner #2 IM MCDREAMY and #5 DIMANTIC one that was not asked to show tactical speed in the Razorback (G3) last month and perhaps has yet to show their best this could be the time for them. #3 BANISHING was able to take advantage with the forward trip in the Razorback racing with the track profile (BIAS) and race FLOW as the pacesetters ran 1-2-3 finishing together at the wire. BANISHING has been in form and forward in the races this season including the sprints though often close to Slow-to-Average early race shapes and today's early pace could be more contentious, a Fire rating with a higher SpeedRate – assuming there are no scratches.

#4 JUST STEEL also brings in tactical speed, a X_FLOW upgrade from the two starts this season and while looking for the first win of the year, his form has been progressive something that might not jump off the page when looking at the running lines and finishing positions, though yet to run back to a top in the current cycle, this could be the time and place wheeling right back and has a published work from just this Monday. There are also cross entered

M. Maker brings in a pair for this race with the local form of #1 THE WINE STEWART coming back for their second start off the layoff and 5th Season stakes win with a favorable trip despite brushing with pacesetting place rival late. Reasonable can excuse the Belmont effort otherwise has been a consistent type though keying off the other graded stakes efforts from the sophomore season was right there though shy of a winning effort and will need their A game today.

Oaklawn Race 9

Post Time 3:53 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#4 OY GEVALD looks to take up the role as the favorite today with the ITM finishes and coming off a place finish over this course and distance earlier this month. While he is logical off those races there is still room for others in a top spot and as the projected favorite is lacking value on the win end.

#8 ZARDUN turned in a BTL effort on debut at the FG and caught a solid group showing up at Oaklawn with the stretch out in distance last month. He was able to pair speed figures with the changes on the day and moving to an outer post, a rider change with Prat given the call and further intent with the blinkers on for this race.

#11 SPURGEON also brings upside from their races to date and slight 42 day freshening returning to Oaklawn Park. They ran their career high figure in the second start, last August at SAR to suggest they still hold a move forward all around. As far as the races this season, they turned in a strong CLOSE in the November return had legitimate TROUBLE and WASTED energy prerace in the December start and was competitive against older in January and raced against the profile last month at the FG. While stablemate #5 FEVER NIGHT has recorded the higher figures this year and ITM finishes, they have been in lower par events compared to SPURGEON.

Oaklawn Race 11

Post Time 5:12 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#6 LIBERAL ARTS is tough to knock as a horse that has been extreme consistent since their debut when considering an EX the Ark Derby (G1) as well as the Lexington (G3) on the two week turnaround rushing for Derby points and the layoff that followed. They paired up wins coming back from that break and finishing an honest BTL third in the 5th Season stakes stumbling at the TROUBLE_S and making a WIDE CLOSE behind the 1-2 pacesetting pair. With that said, they could be tested to run a “faster” race with the older more established types though has some price compensation as projected from the ML.

They will be joined by stablemate #1 BISHOPS BAY one that is has held their own in the allowance races this year and slight rise in class stepping up to stakes company. Fitness is on their side as well as the draw with their early speed with the connections likely looking for that trip noting a scratch from the New Orleans Classic (G2) last week.

If looking for a softer race shape or early pace in this event, that is not necessarily guaranteed with the complexion of this field with #7 MAYCOCKS BAY also opting for this spot following a pair of scratches last week and Ben Curtis certain is not one to be conservative with a front runner they should be assertive and as an individual does not hold any strong edge as the horse to beat as the favorite suggested by the ML.

The public attention has not gone the way of MAYCOCKS BAY in the grades stakes races this season, maybe that changes here as suggested and maybe not as some of that at least should fall back to #3 BENDOOG one that should be fit and intended wheeling back in two weeks second off the layoff and while they had the ability to show early speed in the return race they broke a step SLOG rated and game behind a graded stakes type in Disarm, those two together at the wire.

#9 HONOR MARIE also showed a strong level of class and higher recorded figures during both the juvenile and sophomore season that fits on par. They have a very long worktab coming back today and taking a reasonable spot in this stakes race coming off the layoff a good jumping off point before returning to graded stakes company. That could also suggest added ground, though at the same time and off their visuals the longer distance did not necessarily seem their ideal and today’s distance suits their physicality, trip could be a different hurdle with the off the pace runstyle and similar in terms of value with the trip as well as giving up recency.

Oaklawn Race 12

Post Time 6:02 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#7 SIMPLY JOKING should find the ideal spot with the complexion of the field both in terms of strength and dynamic with what should be the run on the race on the front end. There are not many that appear capable of challenging her on the lead and could be futile to even try.

The assertive tactics with #5 QUIETSIDE was the right move winning the Honeybee (G3) last month though will note she had to RUSH for early position, something that was not a one-off rather a pattern throughout her career with the hesitation at the break. The combination of a heads up ride and class prevailed and while trip and pace might not be as ideal here, she has those other factors as an edge to compete in this group.

#2 CALIFORNIA SUNSET has yet to take the necessary step forward in the speed figure department, though has shown consistency and established two turn form as well as showing run through adversity in the races this season. That includes the start two weeks ago getting familiar with Oaklawn racing in TRAFFIC to make up ground, against a Slow early and Very Slow race shape, conditions to overall upgrade to even present a peak effort here.

Oaklawn Race 13

Post Time 6:48 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#9 CORNUCOPIAN was dominant breaking his maiden on debut and following the race has kept up training and given the complexion of field could find himself competitive in this group. With that said, he is going to have to prove it at a shorter number in here not only taking on winners for the first time, but facing a much stronger group, the 9f distance for a first route and likely going to show early speed something that lands legitimate company up front with #5 SPEED KING one that looks to get back to a peak effort following some regression following their Southwest (G3) win.

#3 PUBLISHER has shown improvement in each race to date and a level of class off the visuals in the series of graded stakes races as well as in the morning working with quality even older stablemates such as Dimatic running earlier on the card. They showed they fit at this level despite the TROUBLE+ and EX in the Southwest (G3) and coming right back with a rebound and again TROUBLE in the Rebel (G2). While they will require the racing luck to turnaround, this horse has run and due for his day.

#8 SANDMAN also with some adversity in his races to date and an honest type with a late run that look to benefit from a fast pace. J. Ortiz was aboard SANDMAN starting out their career and while they lacked success paired up last year at least there was intent with the assignment and notable speed figure improvement for this horse around two turns.

#8 COAL BATTLE is tough to really fault as he has five wins in seven career starts, four straight into this race. With that said and with all the respect he moves outside today and trip for this 9f distance could be an additional hurdle to work a trip – something not impossible though a horse that presents much shorter on the board and where a fair odds case was made in the Rebel (G2) at nearly 12-1 that is less likely here.

Oaklawn Race 14

Post Time 7:24 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

The connections and #7 GUNOE look to reset after a non-effort on 1/18 and very brief blinkers on experiment. Given the time off that followed, it might not have been the blinkers alone, just not their day after making a RUSH into a Very Fast early pace and in hand after losing ground. After coming up short as the favorite in the two recent starts, albeit a “winning/B” effort on opening day and C. Torres keeping the faith at the least expect positive intent here.

Like GUNOE, #2 LAT LONG has competitive races at this N1 level course and form from the races this season while sill looking for that win to clear. Perhaps coming back with the slight change in distance from the flat mile earlier this month and the rider change back to B Hernandes will make the difference here on the win end and based on the overall body of work a horse that consistently runs in the number.

#9 ETHAN ENERGY will make a very belated return to Oaklawn noting they were entered and scratched under similar conditions on 2/23 and a very late scratch nearing post time on 3/15. With the scratch earlier this month, they will pick up Prat for this race, the rider that was named if they were to run in February. Number wise they will require a top effort as today’s par is slightly higher than those other two events though has the higher figure from their juvenile MSW win and local experience going back to last season, another that had an EX with a short lived blinker experiment on 4/20.