Handicapping Analysis
Fri May 1st, 2026

Emily's Analysis

Churchill Downs Race 13

Post Time 10:40 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Unlike the Derby, the Oaks (G1) this opinion is far more spread. An analysis of the contenders here as well as on a video/podcast recorded for the Kentucky Oaks (G1) for the audio visual media enjoyment https://youtu.be/hOd05wYUhqg?si=5XTODKRioCEqX_qU

#9 ALWAYS A RUNNER has legit talent to be taken seriously as a contender despite the two starts and lacking foundation with the tendency to break slow. It can be a trade of with the likely price compensation even with both starts recording a win. This field has a lot of depth and many recent winners for ALWAYS A RUNNER to hold around the 10-1 ML.

#1 EXPLORA brings in the right runstyle for today's race and similar with the draw where she can establish position from the rail, something that could be key on some of the main rivals from off the pace. In terms of speed figures she has run some of her highest figures off a slight break, the 61-days noted today. Prat sticks with her and worth noting he was not only aboard for the most recent Honeybee (G3) win but also named when they entered and scratched from the Golden Rod (G2) last November at CD.

#5 MEANING is where J. Hernandez lands and fits here while looking for a new top effort to get the win. She has shown progression, flow upgrade from the two races this season (TROUBLE upgrade from the BC Juvenile Fillies G1) with the Very Fast early/late race shapes.

#3 SEARCH PARTY has the nod over stablemate #4 COUNTING STARS both in terms of value and form coming into this race. SEARCH PARTY coming out of the Fantasy (G2) with the BTL effort, COUNTING STARS a PERFECT trip with a Very Slow early/late race shape and that dynamic projects to change here.

In terms of #2 ZANY and #11 PERCY'S BAR they are both more than capable in this race returning from a 1-2 finish in the Ashland (G1) to prep for this race. Both bring in a level of class and speed to compete with a consistent body of work and foundation from their juvenile campaign. They also both land "second off" less than 30-days a conditioning change in this case.

Oaklawn Race 1

Post Time 2:45 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Longshot look to #5 MAZING MARK placed at the right level for their abilities in this second start off the layoff. They find a key rider change after the scenario on 4/4 racing in the poor WEATHER conditions chasing WIDE not asked for their best.

#9 SARA'S SHAMAN presents value and on their best day even the "bos" edge over from ML favorite #4 LEAR. The pace should be honest though still needs to be there for #8 BATTER UP to make their late run. #2 D DAY REUNION also worth a mention, while not thrilled with the two month break and in for a tag at the same time the efforts from 12/12 and 2/6 compete here.

Oaklawn Race 3

Post Time 3:55 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#6 CLASSIFY brings in current form (lack of Red) for this race to compete, noting trips this season and class change here.

#1 WINNEMAC AVENUE has every right to rebound and pick up the win following a legitimate EX/EXCUSE in the AP Stakes after stumbling/TROUBLES+ and making an early WIDE MOVE to try and recover.

#4 GUN PARTY requires a trip and the pace in front of him to develop at the same time brings in current form, subtle class edge wheeling back for this race.

Oaklawn Race 5

Post Time 5:04 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#5 WHITLEY is the most "likely" though not always the most trustworthy, something to keep in mins as they could be favored here - ML favorite #8 EMINENT CAT recorded a solid number in their debut three weeks ago and could get attention off that but at the same time lacks value/weak with the rise in class from MCL to MSW.

#10 CATTLE BARON still must show up with a solid effort though returns to take on maidens here after taking a shot in the Rainbow Stakes last month, a race won by their stablemate, Seventies Music, from off the pace.

#4 ARKANSAS LOVIN MAN is interesting as they showed run leading up to their debut back on 2/14, took wagering support as a result and has been off since. They look to get back on track and could be overlooked as the ML suggests.

Oaklawn Race 12

Post Time 9:20 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

No big knocks on #3 CUDA CUTIE as the favorite in this race looking for the win after two B efforts settling for place this season. Perhaps they have to overcome others on or near the lead and hold form though those are not impossible tasks here. #3 VEKOMA'S DIVA was very live on debut perhaps would have to take a step forward at the least run back to the debut race to stay in the mix, not quite presenting a value exchange, while capable.

Some longshots underneath: #2 SISTERS IN TOWN coming out of the Rainbow Stakes recording a B- OptixGRADE back to allowance company and similar for #4 ROSEANNE, a tough ask to run second start in stakes following a MCL debut win.

#8 PLINKO CHIP sits softer on numbers though has shown run this season and subtle change with the 47 day freshening in this spot. The races this season for #6 LADY ASTRID have been a touch light though one who has raced into shape with back numbers closing weekend here, could be the time for that top.

#1 ARR PIRATETREASURE should be rolling late and in form to compete. The rail and return to a sprint does create some hurdles whereas #12 ALOHA BABY has similar challenges though outside and paired with longer double digit odds.

Santa Anita Race 5

Post Time 7:25 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

Throughout the month of April the V. Brinkerhoff barn was sending out live runners 4/11 including the maiden win for #4 SOI NGEM as part of that sample and does look to step up and stretch out while in against winners. They will be joined by stablemate #3 B GRAYSON less proven at the route distance, though potentially live here returning off the layoff and now their second start in against winner. They land a live rider change as T. Baze has had success for the barn during that April sample with four mounts, 2 wins and another in a photo for win (place outcome) for a positive $4.08 ROI.

#6 HONDO CROUCH is a logical type in this race. They recorded a B OptixGRADE when in for the $25k tag back on 1/11 and in terms of the distance change the STRETCH figures a positive overall in addition to past route form to fit on par here.

Santa Anita Race 6

Post Time 8:00 PM CST

Analysis by Emily Gullikson

#8 NAMARON was BTL at this level on 3/14 less than ideal TRAFFIC CLOSE to finish in a BLANKET at the wire and GALLOP+ after it. The should compete right back in here, the STRETCH to 9f, and a slight freshening. In addition, to the return to allowance conditions and already given the class relief since coming stateside from the prior stakes races.

#10 AMERICAN HOPE also showing intent at this level and circuit for the connections. They can be upgraded from the 4/3 layoff return start not only the shorter distance on the day while lacking recency, the trip less than ideal TACTIC- after the TROUBLE_S and while on the day the X_WIDE trip did them no favors, it should assist here with fitness.

#3 HENRY ADAMS has a live longshot look and form to fit keying off the B/BLANKET finish win under similar conditions back on 1/11. They were backed with wagering support off that race in the 2/8 start making a WIDE MOVE after the SLOG while racing X_FLOW to upgrade here.