

SANTA ANITA ANALYSIS



BY BRAD FREE

BEST BET: RACE 8, DONWORTH

FIRST RACE

If front-runner **LITTLE SCOTTY** does not lead wire to wire in this \$40k turf mile, any of the other six can win. **LITTLE SCOTTY** is likely to control the race on the front end. Freshened two months since tiring in a marathon, he shortens to a mile and figures to be loose out front. Four of the last eight turf miles (through Friday) were won by the pacesetter. East Coast shipper **ANY QUESTIONS** could get a good trip positioned second behind the speed. If the top choice falters, 'QUESTIONS probably would get first run. He is trained by David Jacobson, whose five-year record in Southern California is 9-for-79, with a 66-cent ROI (return per \$2 wagered to win). However, Jacobson is 5-for-13 in SoCal with a \$2.40 ROI when he employs Kent Desormeaux. He rides **ANY QUESTIONS**. **DEFIANTLY** returns from a three-month layoff as a late threat. He perked up last time, runner-up second start back from a long layoff. **WALDORF** will roll late, as will **EXCESSIVE KID**.

SECOND RACE

The maiden-claiming race which **TRAPPER PEAK** finished second by a neck turned out to be non-productive, so far. Five from that race ran back; only one hit the board. That will temper enthusiasm for **TRAPPER PEAK**, who remains the one to beat dropping a notch to maiden-40. First time out, he finished more than four clear of third, and finished as if he'll appreciate the stretch-out from six furlongs to seven. First-time starter **RISKY PROPOSITION** debuts for trainer Peter Miller, whose maiden-claiming first-time starters are 20-for-81 (25 percent) the past five years while generating a \$2.84 ROI. Slow works are not an issue from this stable. **SANDBED** has been gelded since trailing the field last out in a special-weight on turf. First start since early November, he may have improved since the ultimate equipment change.

THIRD RACE

Trainer Art Sherman entered the principals in this Cal-bred maiden sprint. They are **YES I'M READY**, the expected pacesetter, and first-time starter **FAVERSHAM**, full brother to \$14 million-earner Horse of the Year California Chrome. The choice is the speedster with racing experience. That is **YES I'M READY**, who pressed a blazing pace in his second start, and finished a creditable third. The race turned out productive. The second- and sixth-place finishers returned to win. The speed of the field, **YES I'M READY** is the choice to lead gate to wire. **FAVERSHAM** debuts with a steady work pattern and high-profile pedigree. Stewart Elliott has been riding the top choice; he opts for the first-time starter. **MAVERICKS** finished a better-than-looked fifth in his debut, compromised by a slow start and wide trip. But he misfired second out. Freshened two months, blinkers on, rider switch. He can improve. **VIOLENT RIDGE** finished in the money both starts in fall against similar. He might be ranked too low by this handicapper.

FOURTH RACE

There is a ton of speed in this \$25k claiming N2L sprint, which is a challenging scenario for **MISTER MOJO**. He also has speed, but at least he drew post 8 of 9 where he might have the option of a stalking trip in the clear. Runner-up last time in a fast-pace starter allowance, 'MOJO is the lukewarm selection to win with a pressing/stalking trip. Seven of the nine in this sprint are front-runners, which theoretically benefits the two closers including **REVEREND AL**. He returns from a two-month freshening, drops slightly in class and has a versatile style that should play well in this speed-filled lineup. He is a logical contender, while late-runner **PAMPERS N' BOOTS** has an upset chance shortening from a route to a sprint, returning to dirt and dropping in class. 'BOOTS N' will be outrun early, he will roll late.

FIFTH RACE

AFLEET ASCENT returns to a sprint after a respectable effort in a two-turn stakes at Golden Gate. He rallied to the lead at the eighth pole, but then ran out of steam and finished a close fourth. Perhaps one mile was out of reach. His maiden victory two starts back in a turf sprint at Del Mar suggests sprinting might be his best trip, for now. He has tactical speed, and he can finish. 'ASCENT is the most qualified of the locals, but he faces an interesting European shipper. **MOVE OVER** makes his U.S. debut with good European form as a 2yo. He was a two-time winner, stakes placed, and a respectable fourth in a Group 2. The front-running style he employed running longer distances in Europe suggest he might be well-suited for this six and one-half furlong downhill dash. He is now trained by John Sadler, whose foreign imports typically race their way into shape rather than fire first out. However, this colt looks "live" first out. **COLONEL CASH** won his debut last fall, then had trouble finishing fourth in a turf sprint at Del Mar. Outside post is a benefit, and so is the rider switch to Flavien Prat. **PLATINUM EQUITY** is first-time turf, first-time California, first-time Richard Baltas. Upset candidate? **CANDY CREW** looks like the speed of the field. Come catch him.

SIXTH RACE

This maiden-30 is a good spot to take a shot with bred-for-speed first-time starter **JIMMYTHISNIMTHAT**. The gelding's sire and dam were both fast. His dam produced three winners including a debut winner; sire Lifestyle has had 14 starters including two that won first out. 'JIMMY has worked okay for his debut; trainer Blake Heap is 7-for-40 (18 percent) with firsters the past five years even though only two of those starters were favored. This is a good spot for a first-time starter. **GEM OF A GUY** drops from special-weight to maiden-30 for his second start. The MSW-to-MCL maneuver previously was a high-percent move for trainer Peter Miller, but not recently: 1-for-18 since May. **IMAGINEIAMFASTEST** is a first-time starter by promising first-crop stallion Violence. Okay works, modest foes, looks "live" first out.

SEVENTH RACE

Third last out in the G1 Matriarch, **INSTA ERMA** is the logical choice in this G3 turf mile. Much improved since joining the Richard Baltas stable in summer, she had a nightmare trip finishing fourth in a G2 at Del Mar, switched riders and won a turf mile stakes on the Sant Anita turf, followed by the G1 third at Del Mar. Impeccable form, corresponding speed figures, no knocks. She could find herself closer to the front than usual; the pace scenario is murky. **MADAME STRIPES** returns to grass after an okay third in a dirt stakes won by Majestic Heat (favored to win G2 La Canada on Saturday). 'STRIPES also is reunited with Kent Desormeaux, who has two wins and two seconds the last four times they teamed up. A minor stakes winner last summer, 'STRIPES fits perfect in this G3. Trouble-prone stakes winner **THUNDERING SKY** will be ridden for the first time by Flavien Part. Her runner-up finish in an autumn G2 at Del Mar puts her in the hunt. **LADY VALEUR** also has run races that put her fairly close.

EIGHTH RACE

Based on his last-start blowout, **DONWORTH** should be tough to beat moving up in class from N1X/optional claiming to N2X/optional claiming. **DONWORTH** last out was making just his second start since being claimed by Peter Miller; he pressed a fast pace and dominated by more than five. Up one level, tough to beat with a front-running/pace-pressing trip if he runs two alike. **COLONIST** ran better than the line looks in a G2 turf mile opening day. He walked out of the gate, trailed the field, and finished well. The start cost him his best chance. Dirt is fine; he will be rolling from behind. **STORMIN MONARCHO** misfired last out, but his runner-up effort two back in a similar N2X dirt route puts him in the thick of it. **HOT SEAN** ran the best race of his career last out, runner-up against similar while more than four lengths clear of third.

NINTH RACE

A wide-open turf sprint for maiden fillies and mares ends the week; **SUNDAY PROPHET** gets the call in her first try on the hill. She ran well both previous turf sprints, although perhaps five furlongs was too short. She "stretches out" to six and a half, has tactical speed and an outside post, and should run her best race first start in two months. **RED SHELBY** set the pace last time at one mile; she tired the final eighth. She benefits by the cutback to a turf sprint. **TIM'S GIRL** looms an upset candidate, first start since May. She has enough speed to be forwardly placed. First-time starter **SECRET OFFER** debuts against a modest field. Upset chance?