

Expert Analysis

By Brad Free

BEST BET: John Metcalfe (8th race)

First Race

1. Spun Not Stirred

2. Last Call Paul

3. White Mountain

Class dropper ~SPUN NOT STIRRED^ should win this \$10k claiming N2L dirt mile at a short price based on his last-out third in a \$16k N2L. This is the first time 'STIRRED' has raced at this low level. The knock is running style. 'STIRRED' is a late-runner; dirt miles this meet have favored speed. From 28 races, 11 winners set the pace, 12 winners were positioned second or third. Top choice nonetheless. ~LAST CALL PAUL^ is a 1-for-31 sprinter (nine seconds, seven thirds) stretching out for the first time in his career. He figures to set the pace, and if the track continues to favor speed, 'PAUL' could wire the field in his first route try. ~WHITE MOUNTAIN^ is likely to improve second start back from a layoff, following an okay midpack sprint comeback.

Second Race

1. Nikolina

2. Kitty Marren

3. Manhattan Beauty

~NIKOLINA^ returns from a layoff as the choice to win this maiden-50 turf mile. It is the first time she has raced for a tag; her in-the-money finishes last winter would crush. But the new surface generates uncertainty, because NIKOLINA is not exactly bred for turf. Progeny of Honor A.P. are 1-for-21 in turf sprints according to Formulator, the dam of NIKOLINA made four starts on turf, low odds each time, and produced just one third-place finish. Nonetheless, the "best horse" in the field gets the call. ~KITTY MARREN^ is a six-start maiden whose third-place finish over this course at this level last fall puts her in the hunt. She will rally late; both rails-at-30 turf sprints this meet at six furlongs were won from off the pace. ~MANHATTAN BEAUTY^ figures to improve second start following an extended layoff, and first time running for a claim tag. She is trained by Richard Baltas, who also entered class-drop comebacker WATERSHED MOMENT.

Third Race

1. Union Heiress

2. Perfect Life

3. Brandon's Girl

Another N2L dirt mile in which the off-pace top choice must overcome the speed-friendly track profile. These are fillies and mares; dropper ~UNION HEIRESS^ is the call to overcome the pro-speed trend. The last time she raced on dirt, she won a maiden-12.5k by more than six lengths; she was overmatched and off the board three subsequent starts on turf. These are easier; trainer D. Wayne Baker and jockey Victor Espinoza popped last month with a \$38.60 surface-switcher (dirt-to-turf Mars Magic). Notwithstanding the track profile, late-runner 'HEIRESS' is the tepid choice to rally for the win. ~PERFECT LIFE^ missed by less than a length in a similar low-level N2L claiming route last month. She will be grinding away late. ~BRANDON'S GIRL^ should improve second start back from a layoff, and she does have "speed" to be forwardly placed in a race that could unfold at a tepid pace.

Fourth Race

1. Rostovsky

2. Both Sides of Bad

3. Lorenzo Bernini

First start since his third-place debut in late 2024, ~ROSTOVSKY^ gets the nod in this maiden-50 at nine furlongs on turf. He ran well last out finishing third in a MSW mile, running his final quarter-mile in a respectable :23.45. Both previous starts at this longer distance produced MSW in-the-money finishes. He can rally for the win. ~BOTH SIDES OF BAD^ stretches out from an okay third vs. similar maiden-50s at one mile. Jockey Antonio Fresu won twice last weekend in his return from a toe injury; Fresu and trainer Jeff Mullins are 5-for-19 together the past year and a half. ~LORENZO BERNINI^ is speed, second start back from a short break and expected to lead as far as he can. He set/pressed the pace to deep stretch both recent starts at one mile, the fractions of this longer race will be slower. ISLAND PROFILE returns to the maiden-50 level of his creditable third-place debut two back, and will rally late. Trainer Leonard Powell won with three of his last six starters.

Fifth Race

1. Rousing Jewel

2. A Real Jewel

3. Cheeky Gal

~ROUSING JEWEL^ and ~A REAL JEWEL^ top this \$10k claiming sprint at five and a half. The call is the mare with a little more speed. That is pace-presser ROUSING JEWEL, who backed up as the favorite last time in a low-level claiming starter, finishing fourth. But this field is light, and ROUSING JEWEL figures for a pressing trip from the outside (post 7 of 10) rather than the inside trip she did not handle last out. The 6-for-27 pro can win with a forwardly placed trip if she holds off dropper A REAL JEWEL. The latter returns to preferred footing (dirt) and drops from \$25k claiming. Her third in a \$16k claiming sprint two back at Los Alamitos puts her in the hunt. ~CHEEKY GAL^ finished only a half-length behind A REAL JEWEL when they met in fall at Los Alamitos. This is the lowest class level CHEEKY GAL has tried; she has speed for an up-front trip stretching from 1,000 yards to 1,210 (five and one-half furlongs). Last-out \$8k claiming winner SENSATIONAL Z Z adds speed.

Sixth Race

1. Latitude

2. Legal Heir

3. Midway Lane

First-time turf, first-time long ~LATITUDE^ stretches out from a comeback sprint as possibly the speed of this maiden turf mile. His two starts last summer were relatively fast sprints; there is no reason the son of Candy Ride will not stay a mile on turf. Speed has been good this winter with the rails at this outermost 30-foot setting. Seven of the 12 rails-at-30 turf miles were won by the pacesetter. Come and catch him. ~LEGAL HEIR^ finished an okay second last out in a similar maiden turf mile, which was his first start since being purchased at a December auction for \$120k. A front-runner, he probably will be positioned second behind the speed, and get first run if the top choice does not stay. ~MIDWAY LANE^, John Sadler-trained stablemate of the top choice, figures off his nose defeat last out in a maiden-50 turf mile. MUCHO DUCLE is a 4yo Mucho Macho Man colt making his career debut at a mile on turf. His half-sister is G1 winner Sweet Azteca.

Seventh Race

1. Artisma

2. Lovin' On the Run

3. Pocket Venus

An evenly matched field of N1X filly-mare sprinters race six furlongs on dirt, the call is ~ARTISMA~ Runner-up three straight at this level before finishing eighth in the G1 La Brea Stakes, ARTISMA returns to her proper level, with a forwardly placed running style and an outside post. FWIW, eight of 27 sprints this winter at six furlongs were won from the outside post (regardless of field size). ARTISMA can win with a pressing trip, although this race is deep. ~LOVIN' ON THE RUN^, a multi-surface six-time winner, moves up to N1X/optional \$50k claiming off a sharp turf win. Claimed for \$25k off that win, with figures that are as fast as the top choice, LOVIN' ON THE RUN probably will rally from behind. ~POCKET VENUS^ returns to preferred footing (dirt) after an eventful trip finishing seventh on turf. 'VENUS is eligible to an easier spot (N2L starter), but her dirt races last year give her a look in this N1X. DELITEFULL HART makes her first start in nearly two years. She has run well fresh. She won her career debut; she won a N1X returning from a layoff of nearly a year. Entered for the \$50k optional claim tag, 'HART will rally from behind.

Eighth Race

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| 1. John Metcalfe | 2. Flash of Lightning | 3. Dr. Filkins |
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~JOHN METCALFE^ figures to win this Cal-bred maiden turf route at a short price, despite his next-to-last place finish in a Cal-bred stakes. He had an excuse. He did not break well and was unable to establish position, was always uncomfortable surrounded in traffic, and retreated on the far turn. The race was a toss. Runner-up three previous routes including a Cal-bred stakes, the Clubhouse Ride colt returns to the maiden ranks. He ran well his only other turf start, and enters as most probable winner on the card. He is even-money in the program. Also-eligible ~FLASH OF LIGHTNING^ ran the best race of his three-start career last out, beaten less than two lengths finishing third in a similar Cal-bred MSW turf route. He will be rolling late, if he draws in. But with the turf rails at 30 feet, and an outside draw, he has much to overcome. ~DR. FILKINS^ stretches out for the first time in the fourth start of his career. He showed speed and tired three sprints, but figures to set the pace on slower fractions in this longer. Come and catch him.