Expert Analysis

By Brad Free

BEST BET: Comedy Town (2nd race)

First Race

1. Coyote Cafe	2. Adia	3. Training Good

Gradually improving ~COYOTE CAFE^ is nearing her first victory. It could happen in this turf mile for Cal-bred maiden fillies. Each start by 'CAFE was better than the start before including a third-place finish last out. She missed by just slightly more than two lengths, and galloped out willingly after the wire. The race was flattered when the winner Cecilia Street returned to finish second in a stake, and win an allowance. ~ADIA^ figures to set the pace in this five-runner field as she stretches out for the first time in her third start. She showed speed both starts last year at Del Mar including a promising runner-up debut. She misfired in her second start, but now adds Lasix for her comeback and removes blinkers. A sibling to multiple stakes winner Air Force Red, ADIA will lead as far as she can. ~TRAINING GOOD^ finished a nose in front of top choice COYOTE CAFE last out; 'GOOD will be running late. TINA'S PRINCESS, first-time route, will keep ADIA honest on the lead.

Second Race

1. Comedy Town	2. Del Mar Jerry	3. Four O Six Creed

~COMEDY TOWN^ is likely to win this $25k claiming starter at a short price, as he drops in class from a fast-pace N1X in which he missed just slightly more than three lengths. Good try by the seven-win gelding, who drew outside in this five-runner field and figures to make short work of it with a pressing trip. ~DEL MAR JERRY^ shortens from a route to a sprint, also drops from N1X, and has speed to contest the pace. He was fast enough last summer to win a $40k claiming route by more than four lengths, followed by a nose loss in a N1X route. 'JERRY has sprinted on dirt three times, with two wins. ~FOUR O SIX CREED^ returns from a two-month break after a troubled seventh as the favorite in a $16k claiming starter at two turns. He won both previous sprints from off the pace, and will be running late. KAHUNA MAGIC is the fastest finisher, but he will be rallying from last.

Third Race

1. Video Review	2. Artic Power	3. Maximon

~VIDEO REVIEW^ meets a modest maiden-50 field as he tries to finally win in the sixth start of his career. He must stave off the rally of MSW-to-MCL dropper ~ARTIC POWER^ in this six-furlong turf sprint. 'REVIEW has speed to set or press the pace, he adds blinkers, and returns to the Santa Anita turf course on which he ran the two best races of his career including a runner-up finish at this class level last June. First start in five months, 'REVIEW is the one to catch. But this is the easiest race yet for ARTIC POWER, a two-turn stretch-runner shortening to a sprint and dropping for the first time to maiden-claiming. He will be rolling in the lane. ~MAXIMON^ is a first-time starter with decent workouts for a stable that won with five of its last 19 maiden-claiming firsters.

Fourth Race

1. Hard to Figure	2. Leyas Candy	3. Maniatic

At a mile on dirt, speed was powerful the first two weeks of the winter meet. If the profile continues, ~HARD TO FIGURE^ will be hard to beat. The last time he ran long on dirt, he wired a $25k claiming N2L field by more than five lengths. 'FIGURE gets the same scenario in this open $25k claiming dirt mile. He should make the lead, and be long gone. Seven of the first 12 dirt miles this winter were won by the pacesetter; three others were won by a horse positioned second. ~LEYAS CANDY^ moves up a notch after a $20k claiming win at LRC. He is likely to be positioned second behind the speed, and would get first run if the top choice falters. ~MANIATIC^ jumps two levels off a runner-up finish for $16k. He was claimed from that race by Manny Badilla and will be rolling late. GHAZAALY ran races last spring and summer fast enough to win, but he was pulled up last out and finished next-to-last the start before.

Fifth Race

1. How Lovely	2. Prime and Ready	3. Princess Midnight

~HOW LOVELY^, who lost her chance as the favorite when she broke through the gate last out, can make amends for that third-place finish. Her best start in the U.S. was her only sprint over the SA turf course, a runner-up finish in a N3L starter similar to this. 'LOVELY was claimed from her most recent start by Steve Knapp, who won with seven of his last 24 first-off-the-claim turf sprinters. 'LOVELY can win with a pressing trip. ~PRIME AND READY^ may also appreciate the return to SA turf. Six starts on the main turf oval produced two wins and a second. She missed by only a length last out finishing fourth in a N1X that was tougher than this. ~PRINCESS MIDNIGHT^ has been stuck at this N3L starter level since autumn 2024. She always picks up the pieces, and could slip in for a piece. KETONIA, off more than a year, returns with a work tab that suggests she could fire first start back.

Sixth Race

1. Stormin Midnight	2. Grandisimo	3. Road Rules

~STORMIN MIDNIGHT^ drops from maiden-50 to maiden-12.5k, with speed figures that are highest in the field. He stretches to a mile after an okay fourth in a sprint vs. better. Furthermore, a Formulator trainer stat may apply: trainer Mike Puype is 11-for-17 with maiden-claiming favorites on dirt the past five years (64 percent). ~GRANDISIMO^ drops from a maiden-50 turf route. He did not finish in the money any of four starts, but he earned okay figs and faces a soft field here. ~ROAD RULES^ finished last in his maiden-50 debut; this maiden-12.5 is his second start and first route. CITIZEN BARRETT improved late last year after he was gelded; his recent third in a Cal-bred maiden-12.5k gives him a shot.

Seventh Race

1. Mrs. Astor	2. Thebestisyettobe	3. Hey Jessie

The class of the field, five-time stakes winner ~MRS. ASTOR^ is a deserving favorite in this filly-mare turf marathon. She is three-for-five on SA turf, proven at a mile and one-half, and has enough natural "speed" for an up-front trip in a race without true pace. For what it's worth, favorites won four of the last six editions of this stakes. ~THEBESTISYETTOBE^ stretches back to three turns after she scored a sharp N1X win at DMR. The longer she runs, the better she runs. It's a significant class hike from N1X

to $100k stakes, but if the top choice falters, anything goes. ~HEY JESSIE^, who was entered against males in the Unusual Heat Turf Classic on Saturday, would figure as a fringe contender vs. these fillies and mares based on her N1X win two starts back at a mile and one-quarter. SAKURA BLOSSOM adds blinkers, stretches out from a mile, and could be closer to the pace than normal.

Eighth Race

1. Last Call Zondlo	2. Tiger in My Tank	3. Winds of Freedom

~LAST CALL ZONDLO^ returns to the $10k claiming level of his most recent win, and stretches out from an 870-yard nighttime race at Los Alamitos. 'ZONDLO looks like the speed of the field, and can be long gone racing five and one-half furlongs. However, class dropper ~TIGER IN MY TANK^ also has speed and drops from a third-place finish for $16k. Win or lose, he will keep the top choice honest on the lead. ~WINDS OF FREEDOM^ dueled and tired last out; he was claimed from that third-place finish. His pressing style and outside post (6 of 8) projects to a forwardly placed trip racing in the clear. WINDRIBBON is a 10yo gelding whose recent starts at LRC and LA (same track, different configurations) are okay.

Ninth Race

1. Ventry Strand	2. Mo Holland Drive	3. Marcos Performance

~VENTRY STRAND^ was compromised by trouble last out when he finished fifth as the even-money favorite in a similar N1X turf sprint for Cal-bred 3yos. He meets easier this time, and gets another furlong to flatter his closing kick. He does seem pace-dependent however, and it is uncertain if this race includes enough speed to run at. ~MO HOLLAND DRIVE^, gelded since raced, returns to preferred turf footing after misfiring in a dirt route. The last time he sprinted on SA turf, he produced the best effort of his career, a decisive maiden win last fall. 'DRIVE is trained by Peter Miller, who also entered front-runner/pace-presser ~MARCOS PERFORMANCE^. The latter is unproven on turf, but bred for the surface. His dam won three turf races. Through Thursday, his sire Cistron had one turf starter: maiden winner Cee Drew.