

OAK TREE AT SANTA ANITA ANALYSIS
By BRAD FREE



BEST BET: Deal Breaker (4th race)

First Race: 1.Great Attack 2.Heir Joe 3.Ishmael

This race is open to 2-year-olds which have broken their maidens for "any" claiming price, and which have never won two races. It's a new wrinkle to a condition previously open only to horses that broke their maidens for a \$40k tag or less. The revision favors Saratoga shipper GREAT ATTACK and local winner HEIR JOE. Although the romping debut win by GREAT ATTACK was against a suspect field (just one subsequent winner), the five and half-length stroll in that \$75k maiden-claimer sets him up for a front-running win against a field that came up void of speed. A pair of sharp works at Keeneland suggest he is more than just a dirt horse, and with Tyler Baze aboard, GREAT ATTACK can be long gone. HEIR JOE rallied from behind to win a \$75k maiden-claimer on the Santa Anita synthetic, and if wheeling back in two weeks is not too soon, he will make a run at the pacesetter. ISHMAEL broke a step slow, then finished fifth of eight in a N1X allowance just 12 days ago. He drops in class, and his win in a \$62.5k maiden-claimer at Del Mar makes him a contender. He could be the one positioned closest to the pacesetter.

Second Race: 1.Cafe Con Leche 2.Megillah 3.Charlie and Chris

CAFE CON LECHE looks like the controlling speed in this downhill turf sprint, and based on his good runner-up finish 11 days ago on the main track figures tough to catch. The downhill course fall has produced surprisingly fruitful results. Seven of the first 14 turf sprints at Oak Tree (through Sunday) were won by the post-time favorite. MEGILLAH could be the upsetter. Two turns was too far last out, but his maiden-claiming form at Del Mar and Fairplex Park (in the money every start this fall) makes him a legitimate off-the-pace threat. His trainer Eric Kruljac has been on a roll, with 5 wins from 9 starters this meet. CHARLIE AND CHRIS finished an even-paced fourth in the same race the top choice exits. He ran well his only start on grass this summer at Del Mar.

Third Race: 1.Neeko 2.Elegant 3.Lady Adelle

NEEKO established ability two months ago at Del Mar, finishing second behind odds-on winner Softly Singing. That good experience may give NEEKO the edge over her main rivals who are first-time starters. The knock on NEEKO is she was a late scratch Oct. 4 (race 5), and did not work again until Oct. 11. She also is a Calbred facing open company. But this field of 2-year-old maiden fillies did not come up particularly tough, and off a bullet half-mile work four days ago, NEEKO should be ready to roll. ELEGANT is a first-time starter that reportedly has shown speed in morning works. Offspring of Maria's Mon win at a decent 12 percent rate first out according to Thoro-Graph; ELEGANT can come out firing for trainer Bob Hess, Jr. LADY ADELLE is another debuting 2-year-old from the John Sadler stable. A half-sister to stakes winner Dawn After Dawn (debut winner at Louisiana Downs), LADY ADELLE has a solid series of recent works. Her sire El Corredor gets 10 percent debut winners. SMOOTHIE AS CANDY and CANDY'S PLEASURE are Jerry Hollendorfer-trained maidens making their second starts after nondescript debut efforts. Both are eligible to improve. LINDA SURPRISE has some speed.

Fourth Race: 1.Deal Breaker 2.Searchforthetruth 3.Headache

This is another downhill turf sprint that came up light on speed. DEAL BREAKER battled on a strong pace in his U.S. debut at Del Mar, missing by a nose while finishing more than three clear of third. He cuts back to a sprint, and switches to the surface (grass) over which he scored his only victory in Europe. The apparent speed of the field, DEAL BREAKER can be gone with a front-running/pace-pressing trip. On paper, he is the most probable winner on the card. SEARCHFORTHETRUTH is a veteran win machine (5 for 21) from Northern California. The last time he ventured to SoCal, he scored a 7-1 upset in a \$50k claiming sprint on turf at Hollywood. In that race, he defeated venerable Shadow of Illinois; no such rivals in this lineup. HEADACHE finished second by a neck in a slow race three weeks ago. The pace scenario could be similar here, which does not favor his closing style. Comebacker YOUNG JOE is the only front-runner other than the top choice.

Fifth Race: 1.A Royal Tizzy 2.Best of Intentions 3.Run Over You

A ROYAL TIZZY finished second in a \$16k claimer for 3-year-olds at the Fair, and a repeat of that effort would make him tough to beat in this \$10k claimer for 3-year-olds. BEST OF INTENTIONS takes a negative class drop to the bottom claiming level for his age group. It's a surprising drop considering he finished second in a Calbred N1X only one start back. He probably is best as a sprinter, but it sure looks like they are giving him away for "only" \$10k. The thing is, no one gives anything away without good reason. RUN OVER YOU is racing in good form; his runner-up finish three weeks ago against similar makes him a proper fit.

Sixth Race: 1.Brian the Bold 2.Remus 3.Sagaponack

BRIAN THE BOLD shortens to a sprint after a decent two-turn try in his comeback. He rallied to contention, and was only one length off the lead at the eighth pole before he flattened out. Not a bad effort. He drops a notch into a \$12.5k claimer that is restricted to nonwinners of two lifetime. It's a good spot for a turnback to seven furlongs. REMUS drops to an all-time low class level, while SAGAPONACK is reunited with a hustling rider (Martin Pedroza) after a sixth-place finish at the Fair that might not be as bad as it looks on paper.

Seventh Race: 1.Easy Ashley 2.Onefonsonofagun 3.Earstoyou

EASY ASHLEY has won 5 of 11 lifetime, yet remains eligible to the Calbred first allowance condition because her wins were in starter allowance and/or claiming races. A front-runner that has shown she can sit behind the pace, EASY ASHLEY has a series of fast works on this track and looks ready to fire. The condition book is working in favor of trainer Wesley Ward (he also starts the favorite in race 1), and if EASY ASHLEY can stay six furlongs she can win it. If not, then ONEFUNSONOFAGUN might win right back. She won this condition at Fairplex Park, but she ran for the \$40k claiming tag in that race and therefore retains her eligibility for this. A presser who runs from just off the pace, this race sets up well for her. EARSTOYOU is a deep closer in a race that figures to unfold at a solid pace. She fires every time; first or second all five starts. STREAKIN EXCESS looks like the speed of the field, and front-runners fared a lot better last week than they did the first two weeks of the meet.

Eighth Race: 1.Warren's Swap Fox 2.Whyprincesswhy 3.Saturn Moon

WARREN'S SWAP FOX is sitting on a win after an improved effort last out. She pressed a strong pace, made the lead midstretch, then weakened to fourth. The 1-2-3 finishers rallied from the 9-7-6 running positions. FOX appears to be facing easier, and can win with a pressing trip while "stretching out" to six and a half. WHYPRINCESSWHY disappointed at the Fair, but could improve while taking off blinkers, moving out to a longer distance and to an outside post. SATURN MOON ran all right in her comeback, her first start in more than three months. She should improve off that fifth-place return.