

OAK TREE AT SANTA ANITA ANALYSIS

By BRAD FREE



BEST BET: My Summer Slew (8th race)

First Race: 1.Mr. Rod 2.Our Partner 3.Art Currency

MR. ROD is set for his best, third start into his comeback. A G3 turf winner as a 2-year-old, he missed by a head last time after setting the pace to deep stretch. It was his first route in 10 months, and with that one under his belt he looks poised for a front-running win in this N2X at a mile on grass. OUR PARTNER is a 9-for-34 pro (plus 10 seconds), claimed for \$50k last time by Mike Mitchell and perhaps not facing any tougher than the claimers he just beat. The consistent pro is a good fit here. Mitchell also trains ART CURRENCY, who stretched out for the first time in the U.S. and upset the consistent runner-up On Fire. A son of Street Cry, ART CURRENCY is lightly raced (nine starts) and on his way up.

Second Race: 1.Dirty Dish Mitch 2.Marcade 3.Dynamalt

This restricted \$12.5k claimer (nonwinners of two) is soft. Comebacker DIRTY DISH MITCH has a second and a close fourth two starts at this level. His front-running style has played well lately going two turns on Pro-Ride. MARCADE finished third in a similar sot three weeks ago. The third-place finisher Colato returned Wednesday to win a \$10k claimer for 3-year-olds. DYNAMALT ran poorly as the favorite last time, without a visible alibi. But his earlier races this season against better make him an obvious contender.

Third Race: 1.Privilaged 2.Macias 3.Our Minesweeper

This is a tough stake for 2-year-olds; any of the top three can win. PRIVILAGED followed his good maiden victory with a sharp second in a fast allowance. He has a pace advantage over the locals, and if he avoids a duel with the shipper to his outside, the improving colt can win with a forwardly placed trip. The aforementioned shipper is undefeated Northern California-based OUR MINESWEEPER. A gray gelding bred in Idaho, he has won on three different tracks; last out at Golden Gate he defeated the good Southern California shipper Court Mischief. OUR MINESWEEPER is fast, he has Tyler Baze, and might be this good. He is the third preference; the second preference is MACIAS. He broke poorly in his debut and finished four lengths behind the top choice, then followed with an improved win over next-start winner Via Verde. MACIAS is on his way up, and could get the best trip sitting behind the top two.

Fourth Race: 1.Whispering Hush 2.Fugitive Angel 3.Star of Sapphire

The 2-year-old maiden filly WHISPERING HUSH is unlucky to have not already won a stake. She bucked an inside bias one start back and rallied wide to finish second in the Generous Portion at DMR, then had a troubled trip (blocked) and finished third in the Cal Cup Juvenile Fillies while possibly best. Produced by the stakes-winning turf dam Shalni, WHISPERING HUSH stretches to two turns, switches to grass, and drops in to face maidens. She could be a good one for trainer Eric Knuljac. Her normally consistent jockey Victor Espinoza is due to end the autumn doldrums. FUGITIVE ANGEL comes off a huge second-place finish at Keeneland. Racing on Polytrack, she finished more than 10 lengths clear of third. The filly that beat her, Orchestrator, came back Wednesday to win a N1X. STAR OF SAPPHIRE disappointed last time despite a good trip. Always in position, she failed to kick in the stretch. Blinkers are on, and maybe she deserves one final chance. But she sure did waste a good opportunity last time.

Fifth Race: 1.Wood Art 2.Princess Susan M 3.Ballet Ribbons

It is unusual for a \$20k claiming mare to be such a complete and total standout as last-start winner WOOD ART. Consistently there or thereabouts, and 4-for-12 this year, she returns at the same level against a field not nearly as good as the field she just beat. It's a soft race for the \$20k claiming level, and most any of WOOD ART's last few races would be good enough to bury this lower-class group. PRINCESS SUSAN M moves up ambitiously in class, from a win at \$10k to a win at \$12.5k and now to this \$20k level. It's a good pattern obviously, and the filly that is 6-for-13 this year might just handle the jump. BALLET RIBBONS drops from a different class, she finished midpack in two maiden-40 starters. She is unproven against legitimate claiming company, but the numbers say she fits with these, and her connections have won a few races this year. RECESS also seems spotted ambitiously, but aside from the standout top choice, class thins out quickly. RECESS has a win and a second this meet at the \$10k claiming level. Surprisingly, it makes her a borderline fit.

Sixth Race: 1.Welken 2.Dona Amelia 3.Higher Incentive

WELKEN won a good race down the hill four weeks ago for \$32k, and the razor-sharp veteran mare should easily handle the slight bump to \$40k claiming. She sure likes the downhill course. So does DONA AMELIA, who scored a 7-1 upset here in winter at this level while returning from a layoff similar to the one she returns from now. Claimed one back for \$20k by A.C. Avila, she ran an improved race immediately, and then was freshened. Avila's horses are firing big, she returns at double the price for which she was claimed (a good sign), she runs well fresh, and she likes the course. No knocks. HIGHER INCENTIVE gave Hall of Fame jockey Gary Stevens his first career win as a trainer when she upset similar. She beat a sharp filly last time that returned to win (Raiding Party).

Seventh Race: 1.Domonation 2.Conveyance 3.Fandino

A good runner-up finish three weeks ago by DOMONATION sets up the 2-year-old maiden for a second-start maiden victory. It was a good race visually and according to the speed figures. Obvious favorite, CONVEYANCE was scratched from a maiden race Oct. 24 after he drew the rail. He worked another sharp five furlongs one day later, and appears to be "live" first time out. His sire Indian Charlie gets 18 percent debut winners. FANDINO debuts with a solid workout pattern, though his stable rarely wins with first-time starters. BRADY BLUE EYES added blinkers, went fast out front, and tired to fourth in a decent second start. Blinkers are off, he is headed the right direction.

Eighth Race: 1.My Summer Slew 2.Kanan Dume 3.Cleisthenes

The improving MY SUMMER SLEW moves up to open company after a sharp win vs. N1X Calbreds, and the gelding enters as the most probable winner on the card. He beat a good field at Fairplex last time; runner-up High Standards is a stakes-caliber pro who returned to finish third in a \$58k stake at Fresno; third-place finisher Lucky Honey returned with a good third in a \$50k claimer. MY SUMMER SLEW has a strong workout pattern since raced, he proved Aug. 20 in a much-troubled comeback that he handles grass, and his versatile style should lead to a cozy trip on or near the lead. Up the ladder with the improving gelding who is 2-for-6. KANAN DUME was always well-regarded (troubled sixth in the Del Mar Futurity in 2008), but he has been unable to string together a campaign. Off five months, he returns from another layoff, he is bred for grass (dam was top-class on turf), and he runs well fresh. He was gelded prior to his April 24 comeback, and with only four career starts he could still turn out to be a good older horse assuming he holds together. Deep closer CLEISTHENES returned from a short layoff with an improved runner-up finish in a similar N1X on the hill. The knock on that race is it was dominated by closers such as CLEISTHENES and there is no assurance he'll get the same fast pace to run at this time.

Ninth Race: 1.Six Eighteen 2.Straighttomidnight 3.Screwball

SIX EIGHTEEN drops to maiden-32 after showing hints of ability against much better (special-weight, maiden-62.5k, stakes). Each of his three starts have been better than the one before, and he ran respectably two starts back in a two-turn route at Del Mar. Blinkers on, Bejarano on, and down in company, SIX EIGHTEEN enters as the logical choice in a difficult pick six sequence. STRAIGHTMIDNIGHT stretched out and ran the best race of his career, a runner-up finish at one mile on this track. It might not take much better to win this. SCREWBALL was a first-time gelding last out when he set all the pace and only got worn down late after putting away several challenges in the lane. The time was slow, but the 2-year-old finally seems to have put it all together. He is learning how to be a racehorse.