

SANTA ANITA, SATURDAY 2/23/2019

RACE 1

ATONARUN ----- Promising that Puype brings this one back for maiden special weight, rather than for a tag. It means one of two things, either he's doing well, and they want to give him another chance against the best maidens or the racing office called and said "Yes, we know he lost for a tag in October, but this race is particularly easy".

ACCESS GRANTED - - - - - Tiago and Phil D'Amato have been one of the hottest combinations on track over the last several weeks. It's never a positive sign when they wait until a horse is four years old for its debut. Like with all first-time starters, we will closely watch the warm-up. And VERY closely watch the tote.

SIR EDDIE - - - - -OMG, this guy has burned more money than Bernie Madoff. Look at the closing prices for all 12 of the past performances in the Daily Racing Form. He'll probably take a ton of money again, especially because Prat is back on him. Please don't let a horse like this win the first race of a shiny new weekend.

HIT THE SEAM - - - - - 23 losses for 2 sons of SQUARE EDDIE neighbors in the starting gate. During the middle of this one's progression, I actually thought he had a chance to become a pretty nice little horse. Should we give him one more chance?

UNBRIDLED ETHOS - - - - - I'm willing to forgive his only start being in September 2017. It's much harder to overlook the fact that he was 55-1. Treat him just like a first-time starter with regard to workouts, warm-ups, action. Mullins and Baze give him street cred in my book.

DUBNATION - - - - - Certainly the one with the least worrisome red flags. Comes with pretty decent recent form. Makes more sense now for the first-time D'Amato entry. Gets a perfect post position and certainly doesn't have that much to beat. If he wants to avoid becoming a SIR EDDIE or HIT THE SEAM, today is the day.

HIT THE SEAM is the "4th" wagering choice. Makes no sense to me. He's no great shakes but neither are the three that are supposedly going to be shorter numbers. His San Luis Rey work pattern suggests maximum fitness. Blinkers on suggest speed.

Top selection HIT THE SEAM. Exotics 3-5. Horizontals 3-4-5.

#4 HIT THE SEAM***

#5 UNBRIDLED ETHOS

#3 SIR EDDIE

RACE 2

PLATINUM NIGHTS – – – – – Not very often we see Mr. Smith riding a maiden claiming race. He must really like this horse, and I don't mean his chances, I mean personally. They did team up for a pretty good 2nd last time he ran for a tag. The rail is never a good place in a dirt sprint. It's even worse when the jock is a 50 something Hall of Famer.

BULLION – – – – – A \$120,000 purchase running first-out for \$75,000 can't possibly be what his connections had hoped for. One of the reasons why Jerry Hollendorfer insists on owning a piece of almost all of the horses he trains is for exactly this type of situation. Otherwise he would probably be forced into a maiden special weight race, even if the trainer knew he didn't belong there. Warm, paddock, tote, blah blah blah you know the drill.

RIVER GOD – – – – – I would love to be the bloodstock agent that is selling all of these Florida horses to Vlado. Most of them have been very live, and the ones who haven't have also been dead on the board. As I've said in the past, Cerin is especially good with this angle. A player, if he's played.

SALAH – – – – – Another example of I think a trainer being called by the racing office and told that a race is coming up unusually easy. Eoin Harty owns this horse himself with his wife Kathy and has shown he has no problem running him for a cheap tag. And yet here he is, in for \$75,000. It's the kind of entry that would be hard to justify with an outside owner. But makes perfect sense to me because he's part of the family.

HIGH FIVE – – – – – Please refer to what I wrote about RIVER GOD.

One horse with confirmed form. Confirmed but nothing special. One first time starter, SALAH who's slow, and a Cerin import. We're not using a horse on the rail with average numbers. It's not gonna be a horse in for \$75,000 that they paid \$125,000 for. It's no gonna be one that's slow. So, which one of the Florida boys? In this case why not the one that seems less likely? Once we've committed to dysfunctional, let's embrace it.

Top selection HIGH FIVE. Exotics 1-3. Horizontals 3-5.

#5 HIGH FIVE***

#3 RIVER GOD

#1 PLATINUM NIGHTS

RACE 3

PIED N TRUE – – – – – The first starter for ex quarter horse jockey Caesar De Alba. Caesar had some very nice things to say about this report. On behalf of everyone, we wish him the very best of good luck, as he embarks on his training career. If the horsemanship he showed as a jockey translates into being a conditioner, he should have an excellent career. Good to see that he didn't get overly ambitious and step this one up several levels in class. She needs to run for the \$16,000 tag that she's in for today. Interesting to see that he, being an ex-jockey, adds blinkers.

RIZZI'S HONOR – – – – – What are the chances of two horses running against each other 2 ½ months ago, finishing 4th and 5th, ending up in post positions 1 and 2 in their next start? A \$16,000 horse and yet, Mark Glatt sees fit to ask Rosario to ride. He must think she's ready for a big one. He better be right, or he might not get this rider again in a similar spot for a long time.

MAGICALCHIC – – – – – Her last win was last summer at Los Alamitos at 43-1 against a much easier field. Low percentage connections make her a rank outsider.

FRACAS – – – – – Continues to plummet down the claiming ladder, after being taken for \$40,000 4 starts back. When a horse is in bad form continuing to drop, it rarely works. No matter the level, horses that win in California must be in some semblance of good form. I see none of that from her.

MI PAJARITO – – – – – I think it is very cool that Eswan Flores takes off a filly he just won on, to ride for his buddy Caesar De Alba. It couldn't have been easy, as this horse is only one of five that Flores has won on at the meet. While I concede, it's hard to win back-to-back races in lifetime conditioned company, her speed makes her viable.

MAMA'S KID – – – – – A firestorm of zeros. Jockey zero. Trainer zero. 2018 zero. 2017 zero. She was actually pretty nice early on, but from that she has advanced zero.

COME ON KAT – – – – – When you really stop and think about it, she has actually never run a bad race. The two races where she finished far back, were more trainer and connection mistakes than anything she did wrong. She's not a maiden special weight, and she's not a \$30,000 turf horse. Beat her and win.

We're not going to get \$17.20 like we did on FOR THE HUSTLE in last Monday's 2nd. But COME ON KAT is very much the exact same play. One of the more probable winners on the card.

Top selection COME ON KAT. Exotics 1-5. Single in horizontals.

#7 COME ON KAT****

#1 PIED N TRUE

#5 MI PAJARITO

RACE 4

WHAT'SONTHEAGENDA – – – – – I said on TVG a few months back that HARDCORE TROUBADOUR was the fastest Thoroughbreds in training. And when I say fastest, I'm talking about the first 3/8th of a mile in longer races. This horse could give the TROUBADOUR a serious run for his money. Post position is absolutely meaningless for this guy. And come to think of it, although it's strange to say, in a way so his class. When you're always five lengths in front, how can it matter who the hell you're running against? It becomes you against the clock. Now, I know it's not that simple, but it feels that way with him.

ACCLIMATE – – – – – One of the perks of owning a California bred is that you can win the first allowance condition twice. Once open and once against fellow state bred horses. And it doesn't matter in which order you do it. That's the case here with ACCLIMATE. He ran very well last time. In theory these should be tougher. And they might be, but he might be tougher too offer. As I said with an earlier horse there's no hotter combo than Tiago and D'Amato.

EXTRAORDINARY JERRY – – – – – Pretty nice horse to have in the barn, as he seems equally comfortable dirt or turf. I think putting him in a claiming race would make him much more comfortable. He doesn't seem to be quite good enough to beat a solid field of allowance runners.

FLIP THE COIN JAN – – – – – Unlike his stablemate to the direct left, this guy has been to the wars and succeeded. I always tend to lean towards multiple winner's vs horses that are truly the first allowance condition. Which actually, at times, can be no tougher than a glorified claiming race. He loves this track. What he might not love is no longer being trained by Doug O'Neill.

KIWIS DREAM – – – – – The only positive thing I can say about the chances of this horse is that his trainer John Martin is excellent. Needless to say, this horse became much better once Mickey put him on the turf. Well, the turf course at Golden Gate Fields is closed until April, so he's forced to run down here. Don't think of him only as a 5-furlong sprinter. That's as far as they run around one turn up north. If he gets beat, it will not be because he wasn't fit enough.

CASTLE – – – – – The biggest problem with both KIWIS DREAM and this guy is, they both seem to be need-to-lead types. Well they can need all they want, but with Mr. WHAT'SONTHEAGENDA looming large down on the rail, I can assure you, neither of them will see what they need. The lead will be taken but not by them.

PASSIONATE REWARD – – – – – Very tough read. Obviously, he's cut out to be really nice. Surprisingly, the figure he earned in his debut win wasn't particularly fast. He sure did look good doing it. Based on his work-out pattern and the fact he gives the feel of being pretty fragile, I have to think Mandella will have him ready to run his A race.

RUMPUS CAT – – – – – Never runs a bad race but did have to drop into maiden claiming ranks to get his first win. Then took the sanctuary of the starter allowance level to get his second. By doing so, they are pretty much conceding they know that he's not a wide-open claimer or allowance horse. His figures solidify that.

Can a horse win when taken out of it's game? Being forced to change tactics? FLIP THE COIN JAN, KIWIS DREAM and CASTLE are in for a very rude awakening, if they hope to replicate what's been a winning recipe. Making the lead with sharp, early speed. They can forget about that, with WHAT'SONTHEAGENDA in here. They're fast. He's nuclear. The good stretch runners must be licking their chops. Even so the speed of the AGENDA makes him the top selection.

Top Selection WHAT'SONTHEAGENDA. Exotics 6-7-8. Horizontals 1-6-7-8.

#1 WHAT'SONTHEAGENDA***

#8 RUMPUS CAT

#7 PASSIONATE REWARD

RACE 5

GOLDEN IMAGE – – – – – Must be given credit for his consistency. He broke slow in both starts. In the first he was beaten 17¼ lengths. In his second he was beaten 17½ lengths. Clearly, the drop into a claimer is needed. But is it enough?

BLUE SKYE JADE – – – – – The only explanation for a very average debut might be the slop. But he was 14/1 versus the bottom, which is probably the more plausible explanation.

JACK'S A DIVA – – – – – One of the things we always have to concern ourselves with, are horses at the bottom levels sound? This one is or he would've never made it to California. He obviously was a private purchase, probably hitched a plane ride within a more

expensive horse. But he's here, he passed the vet, and he's got speed. That all adds up to being tough.

GRAN MARTILLO — — — — Clearly one of the horses to beat. His second-place finish to NICE WORK was flattered when that one came back and won in super-game fashion on Monday. Maldonado is the perfect rider for him. I get the feel like the drop from \$50,000 to \$30,000 really matters in his case.

LU CAT — — — — It's one thing to put a bug boy like the new kid JC Diaz or Fuentes, who Bonde always uses, or even Figueroa to make a money run. It's a completely different thing, to leg up some guy who has never won a race. The opportunity to win in Southern California, any race, can never be discounted or treated cavalierly. As much as we want to help newcomers, and Jeff is one of the best at that, you'll rarely waste an opportunity to win, just to give a guy a chance. Therefore, I don't think this horse has much of one.

FRIGHT NIGHT — — — — George Papaprodromou has three wins at this meet and we've been on all three of them. The reason is, I have always felt he was better than his record shows. He's been good to us, so let's throw this guy into the mix.

TEMPLE VIEW — — — — Here's a horse that will be very quickly discounted by many handicappers. Not by us. The closer you look at his first race, it wasn't nearly as bad as it might seem on paper. He's a new gelding, they drop him in class and take the blinkers off. Many people would look at that equipment change as an indication that he won't show, or they don't want him to be fast early. I look at it as just the opposite. I think the hood was just to help a young horse stay focused first time out. Now that he's more mature, perhaps they think he doesn't need that security blanket. My gut feeling is, he's very fast. If I'm right that makes him a player in this context.

TIZ ME NOW — — — — His work-out pattern started way back in October in New Mexico, where his drills were pedestrian. They didn't change much when they brought him to San Diego and haven't changed much now that he lives in Arcadia. They paid \$7000 for him. I have a feeling it was \$6900 too much.

I have zero problem with you using one of the favorites on top. Even singling, if you like one much better.

Top Selection JACK'S A DIVA. Exotics 4-5-6. Horizontals 3-4-5-6.

#3 JACK'S A DIVA***

#4 GRAN MARTILLO

#5 LU CAT

RACE 6

WHITEHOUSE ROAD – – – – Mullins attracts Rosario for a well-bred first-time starter. They must have barfed when he drew the rail, which is even worse running down the hill, than on the dirt. This course, as you know, has the only right-hand turn in all of North American racing. That turn becomes even more dramatic for horses stuck on the inside. Those in the middle of the track can actually shave off a bit of the turn, while the ones where this guy will be, don't get that luxury. If they leave him in and run him first time out from this post, it means one of only two things: Either, he's not much so it doesn't matter, or he's such a beast it doesn't matter. As always, our friend Mr. TOTE BOARD will tell.

MONTANA MOON – – – – If nothing else, his last race proved conclusively that he would prefer to be a sprinter. It may have also proved conclusively that he would prefer to be a claimer.

GALLOPING MISCHIEF – – – – I've said in the past I love first-time starters that don't have overly extensive workout patterns. It tells us they are learning their lessons quickly and have the ability to graduate up the ladder towards making their debut. With Mandella debut horses, there's no middle ground. He either totally gives them a race, or they are totally cranked up and ready to roll. Interestingly enough, contrary to what I constantly preach, with Mandella the tote board doesn't always reveal the truth.

LACAZETTE – – – – By the same sire INTO MISCHIEF as the Mandella, one stall over in the starting gate. His two dirt races were certainly nothing to write home about.

TAOS – – – – Has to be considered a massive disappointment thus far. Impeccably bred by TAPIT, he's been solidly trounced in all three of his starts. Blinkers off is always, in my opinion, a desperate guess equipment change. Lasix on isn't and can turn things around very quickly. Leave it to the arrogant Mandella to deprive the horse of Lasix three times.

MOUNTAIN SPIRIT – – – – Impossible to come out of a race that could be more productive. The horse he finished 3rd to, has already come back to beat winners. The horse that was 2nd has already come back to break his maiden. He hasn't missed a beat, except for the rains, on his work tab and Smith is back aboard.

VOLUBILE – – – – If MOUNTAIN SPIRIT is as live as I just suggested, this horse has to be considered as well. He was favored to beat SPIRIT when they faced each other last time out. They finished six lengths apart, but this one did have a bit of trouble that could narrow that gap.

CAECILIUS – – – – Broke slowly and just galloped around there in a 5-furlong debut at Del Mar. We haven't seen him since. Indicating there might be a physical reason he didn't run like his connections had hoped. This is a barn that is not afraid to dunk one in for a tag quickly if needed. So, it's either the allure of keeping him on the turf or he really is better than that first race might indicate. Sneaky.

ALLEVA – – – – In his previous races he was beaten by a horse's that would quickly graduate into stakes races. He's got a real Who's Who of nice horses in his lines. At some point soon, that has to stop being an excuse. But for now, I still think that explanation might be viable.

WORTHY TO STAND (**SCRATCHED**)– – – – Are you kidding me? Seven consecutive 6-furlong workouts? This has got to be one of those situations where the trainer just didn't have the balls to tell his owners their horse was a bum. Eventually you're forced to run them, and the bad news quickly becomes evident.

I don't look at the numbers until after I do the individual write up on each horse. I prefer they don't influence me when I'm looking for more traditional, old school, insights. When I did switch over and check the figures, I was expecting to see a total grab bag. Which I was, until I happened upon the figure for **MOUNTAIN SPIRIT**. Wow! Really fast. A repeat almost certainly wins. He figures to move forward, which almost certainly CRUSHES. OK, here we go with our **4th *****5 STAR PLAY***** of the season!!** I've passed on a couple before because I didn't trust the morning line. They all won but were severely bet down. I am trusting Jon White to be right about 5/2. I do believe, it's reasonable to expect that we can get that. If he is close, fire away. If he's super short, wait for another day

Top selection MOUNTAIN SPIRIT. Exotics 2-4-8-9. Single in horizontals.

#6 MOUNTAIN SPIRIT*****

#9 ALLEVA

#2 MONTANA MOON

RACE 7

TOUGH BUT NICE – – – – How often do you see a jockey, especially one of the leading riders, finish 35 lengths behind and ride the horse back? That's the case here but it makes sense because Peter Miller runs his horses where they can win regardless of how much they may have claimed them for or hoped they would be worth. That, boys and girls is how you become leading trainer or battling for it.

PAPA TURF – – – – – Not a fan of the trainer switch. Not a fan of his regressing form pattern. Not a fan of the fact he hasn't had a recorded workout since his last race. Gotta be going the wrong way.

MARKET SENTIMENT – – – – – We've had good success with the Steve Knapp barn. This one doesn't have the feel of the kind we are looking for. He's been searching for the right spot for this horse ever since he came west, by way of New York and Philadelphia. Maybe the right move is to go back?

CROISSANT – – – – – Managed to finish 3rd at 43/1 last time. Based on his form coming into that race, it tells me the \$12,500 spot he was in might have come up very soft. We've already established that PAPA TURF might be tailing off. Well, he just finished in front of this one.

BARGAINING – – – – – He was the opposite version of the ship and win bonus they have at Del Mar. After being a voided claim at the beginning of the meet, off he went to New Mexico. His last race there in November actually was pretty good. I don't think that's enough for us to like him upon his return to the Golden State.

JIMMY THE JUICE – – – – – The 4th place finisher in the aforementioned, possibly weak \$12,500 heat that PAPA TURF and CROISSANT finished second and third in.

BOY HOWDY – – – – – I admit his record is spotty. When he does make it to the races, he lays his body down. He can't be traveling that badly or Carava wouldn't get Rosario. Never runs a bad one.

BURN ME TWICE – – – – – It would be easier to toss this horse if he wasn't trained by Bill Spawr. He has a real knack for winning with horses that have a form exactly like this one. Good thing is when they are going to run well, they almost 100% of the time take money.

I can't fault the claim of TOUGH BUT NICE two back for Miller. Sometimes horses run too fast for their own good and are never the same. I think that's the case here. BOY HOWDY on the other hand is progressing slowly to new tops. He might run another one here and that will get the job done. Rosario seals the deal in a race where the strongest finisher might make the difference.

Top selection BOY HOWDY. Exotics 6-8. Horizontals 6-7-8, more if your budget allows.

#7 BOY HOWDY***

#8 BURN ME TWICE

#6 JIMMY THE JUICE

RACE 8

TAKE THESE CHAINS – – – – – A very rare West Coast entry for Brad Cox. The allure of a Grade 2 will cause many trainers to look all over the country for the right spots. I have to get out of my mind that Cox has been terrible during the first five weeks of OAKLAWN. Anybody can go into a slump. This filly has won 4 out of 6 and must be respected.

MS BAD BEHAVIOR – – – – – 14 starts and has literally never run even one bad race. She gives the feel of one that is just a tiny bit cut below a grade 2 winner. But her amazing consistency makes you kind of hope she finds a field she can beat.

ZAFFINAH (**SCRATCHED**) – – – – – Funny that she is drawn right next to MS BAD BEHAVIOR. Since I just said I think that one is a cut below a true Grade 2 winner. This one is just a cut below that one.

FAHAN MURA – – – – – Just because you get invited to a multimillion-dollar race in Florida, doesn't mean you have to accept the invitation and take a chance of ruining a super nice filly. I find it very hard to believe that Vlado liked the idea of shipping her 3000 miles to be 42 to 1 against some of the best grass horses in the world. And yes, I mean horses as in males. A totally nonsensical decision. Maybe she's made of iron and the trip will take nothing out of her. Maybe not?

COMPELLED – – – – – Scratched out of a race that was taken off the hill last weekend. Very likely that Proctor would have much preferred to run her in that spot. When they made the race 5 furlongs, I think he did the right thing by coming out and trying this field. She's nice but will have to improve quite a bit to be a serious contender here.

AMANDINE – – – – – The decision to run her back in a Grade 1 on three days' rest, possibly haunts her for the rest of her career. Or can it? Flashback to her win at this distance, on this course, on opening day and she's a candidate to upset VASILIKA. Give me the right price and I suppose we can speculate she'll go back to that form. I doubt she'll close at a price high enough to make that guess worthwhile.

ENGLISH DANCER – – – – – They've done everything they can and exhausted every possible condition but when you win 5 of 9 races, eventually you have to try stakes company.

ELYSEA'S WORLD – – – – – Making her first start for Richie Baltas. That would almost always be considered a step up in trainer. It's hard to say that here because it wouldn't be too much of a stretch to call Chad Brown the best turf trainer in North America. When she was on the East Coast in Brown's barn, I always got the feeling he thought she was

just a notch below the very best turf mares in his loaded stable. We found out just how loaded that stable was in this year's Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare turf. She would have to go forward off her East Coast numbers. Is it reasonable to expect Baltas to be able to get better races out of her than Brown? He'll need to win this.

VASILIKA ----- Talking about how good Chad Brown is, the only time this mare has lost in her last ten starts, is in the Matriarch at Del Mar to a Chad Brown horse named UNI. I'd guess she was also invited to that stupid spot they sent FAHAN MURA to in Florida. This race offers only two new horses that she hasn't been beating up on for the last six months.

STREAK OF LUCK ----- One has to admire her tenacity and consistency. Those traits are probably not enough to put her in the winner's circle. She looks very much like ENGLISH DANCER in a worse post position.

VASILIKA is probably going to win. Just like she has 9 times out of her last 10 starts. The one loss though was to an invader from the barn of a superstar young trainer. In that case it was UNI and Chad Brown. TAKE THESE CHAINS is trained by Brad Cox, who burst on to the national scene with the great job he did last year with the Champion 3-year old filly MONOMOY GIRL. We get 12/1, the rail and a talented new face. Is it enough to slay the dragon? Maybe not. But it's worth a try. ELYSEA'S WORLD has actually run some numbers comparable to VASILIKA. They were at Monmouth in the summer and with Chad Brown at the helm. They're in there but can Baltas produce them?

Top selection TAKE THESE CHAINS. Exotics 5-9-8. Horizontals 1-5-8-9.

#1 TAKE THESE CHAINS***

#9 VASILIKA

#5 COMPELLED

RACE 9

IMPRESSION ----- A classic example of how it takes a while to acclimate to the world of wide-open winners after going through your non-winners of 3 lifetime condition. He's a nice, hard knocking consistent horse that will eventually find his proper level. This could be it.

KENZOU'S RHYTHM ----- Sometimes the difference of \$10,000 in claiming price doesn't mean much. Sometimes it means everything. Yes, this guy had a very nice win. The horses he beat would get eased in a spot like this.

HOLLAND ROAD ----- I got crushed on Twitter when this horse won last time. Because, after the race, I said that Aaron Gryder was one of the strongest finishers of the entire

Southern California Jockey colony. Twitter was wrong - I'm right. He doesn't get the opportunities of the marquee jocks. But I'll take him in the last 200 yards over anybody in the room not named Rosario. This horse fits.

CURLIN ROAD----- This horse is even harder to read than one like KENZOU'S RHYTHM. At least with him we know exactly what we're getting. This one is a total and complete guess. He has back form that can crush a field like this. Including frankly his most recent race. So, what the hell is he doing in a \$20,000 claiming race? Doug O'Neill is a master at keeping us all guessing. Just when you think all of his droppers are good, you get a horse like HOLLYWOOD SQUARE. All he needed to do was finish 4th on the triple drop Monday, to cash a massive Superfecta, and he staggered in last. If I was ever to teach a college curriculum on handicapping, solving this puzzle on the drop would be the first assignment. I've been doing this for 40 years, and I am currently no better at reading which way this horse will go, than I was 40 years ago.

BEDEVILED----- When I was an agent, there was one trainer more than any other that would convince me to ride horses that were garbage. That trainer was Mark Glatt. In retrospect, maybe he wasn't trying to deceive me, maybe he just didn't know any better. I eventually stopped riding any of his horses. He tried to go behind my back and spoke straight to Rosario. That didn't go well. Looks to me like the same thing is happening with Joel's current agent, Ron Anderson. I doubt he will be very happy when he sees the form on this piece.

CLEAR THE MINE----- Not sure why they tried to change the style of this horse. He was okay coming from off the pace this summer at Del Mar. Putting bug boys up and sending him hasn't served him very well.

PIONEER OF THE WEST----- More than any other horse at the meet, I was sure he was home at mid-stretch last time out. I was talking earlier about the finish Gryder put on HOLLAND ROAD last time. It was to beat this horse, who we REALLY needed as a single on the report that day. Even though he won on an off track the time before, he wasn't comfortable on that surface last time. He never runs bad.

LITTLE SCOTTY-----Cerin has all bases covered. If the speed inside of him doesn't go, this one is good enough to go all the way on the front end. If he can't clear or has to go too fast to make the front it will set things up very nicely for the PIONEER.

I've watched the race with HOLLAND ROAD and PIONEER OF THE WEST about 10 times. It's undoubtedly the key to who wins this. Simple question: Did PIONEER lose because he

hung like a rat? Or was his race valiant since he hated the slop? I've decided it was the latter and he's going on top.

Top Selection PIONEER OF THE WEST. Exotics 3-4-6. Horizontals 3-4-6-7-8 on half. Single 7 on the other half.

#7 PIONEER OF THE WEST****

#6 CLEAR THE MINE

#5 BEDEVILED

RACE 10

ZUSHA ----- Pretty tough assignment for a horse making its first start on the turf. Gary Mandella has a way, a special gift, for making almost all his horses overcome pretty tough assignments.

STRADELLA ROAD ----- Even though she made the first 8 starts of her life, with good success, on the turf course, I cannot fault Gary Stute for running her on the dirt and trying to get her Graded Stakes placed. Almost worked too. Back to where she belongs, and boy does she belong. Clear contender.

TAMMY'S WINDOW ----- Gave off the feeling the \$32,000 group she finished 2nd against last time might be the ceiling for her. Kicked up a level to \$40,000 and starting for a new barn concerns me. Her number say she can be right there.

LADY MAMBA----- Won sprinting but gave off a feel she wasn't a sprinter at all. Pretty nice when you can run in what was most likely a prep for longer later and still take home first money. Well, here's the longer later. She'll have to continue to improve and answer the turf question.

SUTRO----- Her last race is sending mixed messages. The filly she beat won Monday. The one who was 3rd was our top pick in the same race and couldn't have been more putrid. If only all reads were as easy as this. She's very likely to run her race. Why wouldn't she? She gets a 5 lbs. bug weight. It's incumbent on us, me, to know where she fits. I'll figure it out.

COPPER FEVER----- She's done a lot of solid work. Almost all of it up North at Golden Gate Fields.

SUPER PATRIOT----- Remember we were talking about winning the 1st condition twice? Once wide open and once vs Cal-Breds? It got me thinking about the male and female divisions of those two conditions. I realized, the difference for girls is much more

pronounced. Take this SUPER PATRIOT for example. She couldn't have looked sharper, beating Cal-Breds from a tough post 3 back. Two tries wide open have gotten her SUPER NOTHING. Like I said, tough. Eventually through attrition they get through. Maybe here for her?

K K PERGOLICIOUS— — — —Here's something you might not see more than once in 10 years. A filly who's eligible for the 1st condition while being Grade 1 Stakes placed. Yep, somehow, she managed to finish 2nd in the American Oaks at 90/1. Here's the CLASSIC debate between "class" and "figures". On class she's supposed to be a mortal cinch". But do the numbers support that theory? Read on...

MIRTH— — — —D'Amato's horses that ship in and take \$\$\$ almost never run bad. She did. There has to be a reason why the barn and all of us who made her 7/2 were so wrong. I'm not big on giving horses a 2nd chance. Putting Prat aboard signals that's exactly what Phil is doing.

DRIFT AWAY— — — —The starter 50K field she beat, wasn't close to as tough as these. Plus, she loses T. Baze Would be a very big surprise to me.

QAFILAH— — — —Very positive she's doing so well they don't want to wait for the Golden Gate turf course to re-open. Doesn't change the fact she broke her maiden for 20K up there. Yes, she's getting better and better. Good for her. She could run 5 lengths faster than she's ever run in here, and nobody would know.

Without question the best race of the day and probably weekend. It's going to take a Thoro-Graph "7" to win this race. There are four that can run that fast. STRADELLA ROAD, TAMMY'S WINDOW, SUPER PATRIOT AND K P DUTY er PERGOLISCHOUSNES, whatever. Which will be our pick? MIRTH! What? She's not on the "7" list? Correct, but she will be, after today. D'Amato switches to Prat. She ran a very nice number as a three-year-old at Laurel and her figure here was nicely buried enough to speculate that her "7" is coming today.

Top selection MIRTH. Exotics 2-3-7-8. Horizontals 2-3-7-8-9.

#9 MIRTH***

#7 K P PERGOLICIOUS

#3 TAMMY'S WINDOW