

## RACE 1

Well, it took exactly one race to have a GREAT betting opportunity. A full field, down-the-hill grab-bags that embody everything we love about Santa Anita. Shockingly, not one of these horses, except for NOMIZAR, who is based at San Luis Rey, worked at Los Alamitos during the down time. They all have similar gaps in their training. But for this race, there's clearly nothing to be garnered from that angle. First thing that jumped off the page, for a race of this type there seems to be very little early speed, which makes NOMIZAR the first horse to get mentioned twice. One major problem with her though is she's one of only two 3-year olds in the race. It's still "only" the 29th of March. To me, it still is a distinct advantage in favor of the older horses. Heck, she's a "MAY" foal which means she's still physically a 2-year old. As much as I'd like to try her, the long run says it's a losing play. Therefore, the top selection is going to be THE CRAIC (SCRATCHED). She's one of only a couple of multiple winners. She did something that is VERY difficult which is winning off a similar layoff on the undulating Kentucky Downs course. Make our downhill track seem like putt-putt golf compared to Augusta National. One other thing: I'm usually wrong when I question Jon White's morning line but I think she'll be longer than 7/2.

***Top Selection #13 THE CRAIC. Exotics 1-5-10-12. Horizontals 1-5-10-12-13.***

***#13 THE CRAIC\*\*\****

***#1 DON'T BLAME JUDY***

***#5 FICANAS***

## REVISED AFTER SCRATCHES:

***Top Selection #1 DON'T BLAME JUDY. Exotics 5-10-12. Horizontals 1-5-10-12.***

***#1 DON'T BLAME JUDY\*\*\****

***#5 FICANAS***

***#10 MERGER ARBITRAGE***

## RACE 2

Until there's a reason to think differently, the guys who made us the most cash will still be the go-to barns. Those have been, in no particular order, Koriner, Pappadromu, Bonde, D'Amato, Spawr, Holldendorfer. This race has two of those guys. One is on the rail and the other one drawn all the way outside. The trip FOR THE HUSTLE got two back, when we hit him at 7/1 looks very much like the trip FERGUSON may get in here. It's interesting that FACTS MATTER and NEIGHBORHOOD BULLY were given time off before the closing. Suggesting, as I

thought, they were both very questionable when it came to soundness. Now the question is, will the enforced layoff actually help them, coming from barns that probably wouldn't have given them as much time as they really needed? There are three horses who, if they run their best race, can win. Obviously at this level that "if" is a big deal. The three are: HEY SEQUOIA, SMUGGLER UNION (**SCRATCHED**), and FERGUSON. Needless to say the play should be the longest price of those three which is SUMGGLER UNION. But I just have a feeling FERGUSON is going to win. Usually when I do it this way, I end up kicking myself. I'll do it for you.

**Top Selection #9 FERGUSON. Exotics 6-7. Horizontals 6-7-9.**

**#9 FERGUSON\*\*\*\***

**#7 SMUGGLER UNION**

**#6 HEY SEQUOIA**

**REVISED AFTER SCRATCHES:**

**Top Selection #9 FERGUSON. Exotics 5-6. Horizontals 5-6-9.**

**#9 FERGUSON\*\*\*\***

**#6 HEY SEQUOIA**

**#5 FACTS MATTER**

### **RACE 3**

I suppose Morey had to try TIZ A MASTER against Stakes company, after winning three in a row. Hard to be 28/1 after three straight wins, but he managed it with a ridiculous entry. Perhaps he was forced by his owners. When a horse has the guts to win three in a row, it makes you wonder if getting her trounced like that will have a lasting effect. If it does, she's a great bet against today. If not she's probably the horse to beat. TRUE VALIDITY ran the fastest last race. It was a very easy field and she starts for a new barn. RATHER NOSY is slightly slower but has many things in her favor. She's never gone backwards. Another forward move puts her right with VALIDITY and she stays in the cozy confines of Jack Carava's barn. She's the pick.

**Top Selection #5 RATHER NOSY. Exotics 1-6-8. Horizontals 1-5-6-8.**

**#5 RATHER NOSY\*\*\***

**#6 TRUE VALIDITY**

**#1 PERFECT ICE STORM**

#### **RACE 4**

Seven first time starters make this our first guessing game of the day. Even of the four who have run, only FLAT OUT JOY has what could be considered decency, having run in mid-February. Both HONEYFROMTHESOUTH and AVA'S UNION have been away. But boy did they run fast before whatever caused their layoffs. If they are even 90% ready, it will take a very big effort from one of the firsters. HONEY blew up twice at 1/2 and 2/5. She can very well win. AVA though certainly seems like the better gamble. She's the selection.

**Top Selection #8 AVA'S UNION. Exotics 5-6-11. Horizontals 5-8.**

**#8 AVA'S UNION\*\*\***

**#5 HONEYFROMTHESOUTH**

**#6 ELLIE ARROWAY**

#### **RACE 5**

Not the strongest older horse Grade 1 in the history of Santa Anita. Here's the first byproduct of the shutdown. Barns with good grass horses couldn't take a chance on the track re-opening and had to ship to Keeneland, where they knew for sure they could run. CATAPULT is a very legitimate GRADE 1 runner. He's the right horse. Interesting to see Franco on DESERT STONE. His winning ride on NEXT SHARES was awesome. I wouldn't read too much into it though. It's hard to commit to ride a horse when you don't even know if the race will be run. I do know for a fact that right after the closure, Franco and his agent intended to go to Oaklawn where they did well last year, only to quickly change their mind when several phone calls found no open doors to return. RIVER BOYNE is a newly turned 4-year old. Remember, that's a very big change when facing older horses for the first time. CATAPULT is the pick.

**Top Selection #4 CATAPULT. Exotics 1-5. Single in horizontals.**

**#4 CATAPULT\*\*\*\***

**#5 NEXT SHARES**

**#1 HUNT**

#### **RACE 6**

These work patterns tell us, sprinters need more timed workouts. Three of them shipped to Los Alamitos, so as to stay on track for this race. Flavien Prat told me, when he came to Oaklawn to ride Rebel week, the horse he possibly most

regretted not riding by being in Dubai on the 29th, was KANTHAKA. He said his work on March 9th was massive. Best he's ever worked by far. Bejarano will have to be smart, to work out a trip for him. There's no crazy speed in here to just sit and roll home. He's got to avoid giving him too much to do, while not using him up. Hey, these are supposed to be the best riders in the world. I'll have to trust him to figure it out. Even with that AX MAN is too much the controlling speed to pick against. I doubt Sadler will tell Espinoza to send ST JOE BAY for everything he's got. Much smarter to sit right off him. Have them both try to slow it down and sprint for home. Would love to pick KANTHAKA but his style, or lack of just won't let me. The AX is the MAN.

**Top Selection # 2 AX MAN. Exotics 1-7. Single in horizontals.**

**#2 AX MAN\*\*\*\***

**#1 KANTHAKA**

**#7 SOLID WAGER**

## **RACE 7**

Sometimes, when a race has a hundred angles, that makes it not have any at all. It then reverts back to simpler tactics like who is fastest? Who has the class and experience to beat a Grade 3 field? Who will get the best trip? Using those criteria dramatically separates the pretenders from the contenders in here. Matt Chew's filly will probably be the favorite. Some will say I cannot bet on Matt Chew to win a Graded Stake. I actually take the opposite view because it's been with his training, that's gotten her to this point and those naysayers will allow her to close a tick or two higher than what she really should be. If it's even half a tick over her 3-1 line she's the goods.

**Top selection #2 STREAK OF LUCK. Exotics 1-4-6. Horizontals 2-6.**

**#2 STREAK OF LUCK\*\*\*\***

**#6 ELYSEA'S WORLD**

**#4 POSTER GIRL**

## **RACE 8**

POPULAR KID and EL HUERFANO both looked over the top after long campaigns last time. This gives the feel that this respite might really help them. NERO on the other hand looked like his next race, even if it was a week later, would be break out. That makes for a very tough juggle. PEPE TONO is interesting. Yes, he's only won twice, but the horse that beat him last time, ALL OUT BLITZ, went on the

road and set the pace in a Grade 3 here at Oaklawn and then, just last weekend beat a real good field of sprinters in a \$100,000 Stake in New Mexico. AIR STRIKE'S race opening weekend was hidden and sneaky fast. In this one's case the extra time off may have been a blessing in disguise. If he fires his best he can win. The pick.

**Top Selection #7 AIR STRIKE. Exotics 2-3-5-8. Horizontals 2-3-5-7-8**

**#7 AIR STRIKE\*\*\***

**#3 POPULAR KID**

**#8 NERO**

### **RACE 9**

A super interesting race. SECRET SPICE was almost shipped to Oaklawn for the Grade 2 Azeri. Tells me she must be doing very well. Tyler Baze is doing well at Oaklawn but is returning to ride SELCOURT who is, surprisingly to me, being sent long by John Sadler. PARADISE WOODS was taken back last time, also very surprising. I don't think they'll make that mistake again, which doesn't bode well for SELCOURT. MARLEY'S FREEDOM won a Grade 2 Stake going 7 furlongs, looking entirely like a horse that wanted no part of running 7 furlongs. EXUBERANCE and JUST A SMIDGE just ran well vs allowance company; they earned a shot in this VERY tough spot. Sometimes a young horse will run a race that's too fast for its own good and never is able to replicate it. That could be the case with SECRET SPICE. If not, 6/1 is a very good gamble. Good enough to try to get her to beat MARLEY, which won't be easy. SPICE IS NICE and the top pick.

**Top Selection #1 SECRET SPICE. Exotics 5-7. Horizontals 1-5-7.**

**#1 SECRET SPICE\*\*\*\***

**#5 MARLEY'S FREEDOM**

**#7 MOPOTISM**

### **RACE 10**

The key to this race isn't so much who we like, as to who we don't. We made bags of money betting against CLAUDELLE and will continue today. One day she might make us regret it. I don't think it will be today. The closure may have had the most detrimental effect on LA SHRIMP as any horse in today. She was twice rained off the turf and now her workouts are going the wrong direction. Yes, she did finish 2nd in a 20-horse field in Ireland. But she doesn't have a feel of being anywhere near worth 3/1, especially when the best Phil D'Amato can find is Agapito

Delgadillo. Tossing those two together opens up all kinds of juicy opportunities. Let's take some shots and have some fun.

**Top selection AMEERAH B. Exotics 6-7-10-13-14. Horizontals 5-6-7-10-13-14.**

**#5 AMEERAH B\*\*\***

**#7 HELLO BUBBLES**

**#6 CAIRO CUTIE**