

Expert Analysis

By Brad Free

BEST BET: *Champagne Camie (8th race)*

First Race

1. Catch the Breeze

2. Cuban Confusion

3. Mutaz

Front-runner ~CATCH THE BREEZE^ can upset lower-odds ~CUBAN CONFUSION^ in this maiden turf mile. CATCH THE BREEZE dueled on an extreme pace last time at the same distance; he tired late to finish fourth after three-quarters in 1:08.87. Gelded since, blinkers off, 'BREEZE could be long gone at a generous price. CUBAN CONFUSION is obvious off his runner-up U.S. debut. He ran well; each quarter-mile was faster than the previous including a :23.43 come-home. The knock is four runner-up finishes from 11 starts. Also, he carried his head high and seemed content to race alongside his rival rather than try to put him away. 'CONFUSION is arguably the best and fastest in the field based on figures, but likely to be undervalued. First-time starter ~MUTAZ^ debuts with fast workouts for trainer Bob Baffert, who is 3-for-6 with debut runners in routes since last summer, although the three wins were on dirt.

Second Race

1. Positivity

2. Shady Tiger

3. Smooth Cruisein

~POSITIVITY^ crushed similar N1X sprinters last out and runs back at the same level while entered for the \$50k optional claim tag. An eight-time winner, he should add the total if he runs two alike. But this sprint is a little strange due to a conspicuous lack of pace. POSITIVITY once had speed, but he adopted a closing style this season. ~SHADY TIGER^ is likely to improve off his better-than-looked fourth-place comeback. He broke from the rail, lagged, rallied wide and missed by less than five lengths. It was a solid comeback; he has worked well recently. ~SMOOTH CRUISEIN^, the field's only 3yo, gets a six- to eight-pound weight break from his older rivals. He also adds Lasix and has enough natural speed to be forwardly placed in a race that may unfold at a tepid clip. MOMAD finished second to the top choice last out, and will be rolling late.

Third Race

1. Goldensunrise

2. Carol's Comic

3. Navy Man

Comeback front-runner ~GOLDENSUNRISE^ looks like the controlling speed; he gets the call to wire this N3L claiming sprint in his first start since August. Trainer Andy Mathis has a terrific record the past five years with comebacks: 37 percent (25 for 67) with layoff horses away six months or more including a pair this month (Maniae, Recycleyourheart). Come and catch him. ~CAROL'S COMIC^ will pick them up late. He finished in the money three of his last four starts at this N3L claiming level, while earning speed figures recently that exceed par for this level. 'COMIC usually starts at high odds. Look for him late, at a price. ~NAVY MAN^ gets off the rail and moves to a more desirable outside post. He will be rolling late; his closing third two starts back puts him in the hunt.

Fourth Race

1. Eagles Flight

2. Mirahmadi

3. For All Mankind

Lightly raced ~EAGLES FLIGHT^, sibling to Flightline, gets the call over ~MIRAHMADI^ in this allowance dirt mile. EAGLES FLIGHT crushed a N1X last out with a triple-digit figure, he worked well since, and is drawn outside his pace rivals where he can either press the pace in the clear, or go on with it. MIRAHMADI set the pace and backed up in the G1 Santa Anita Handicap last out. This spot is easier, his N1X win two back compares favorably to the top choice (100 Beyer for EAGLES FLIGHT, 97 for MIRAHMADI). Stretch-out ~FOR ALL MANKIND^, stablemate of the top choice, is quick enough to set the pace. 'MANKIND would be moving out from runner-up finishes in G3 sprints and involved in the pace.

Fifth Race

1. Dandy Man Shines

2. We're in Trouble

3. Fast Buck

~DANDY MAN SHINES^ might prefer two turns, but his runner-up sprint comeback was okay and this turf sprint could unfold at a strong enough pace to flatter his late kick. He sprinted four times, and though he did not win, he placed in three. With committed front-runners in posts 3 and 8, the fractions should be fast enough to run at. 'SHINES can mow them down late. ~WE'RE IN TROUBLE^ ran better than the line looks in his runner-up comeback at this level. Making his first start since July, he rallied from sixth in a race otherwise dominated by front-runners. 'TROUBLE rallied against the grain, finished well, and worked three times since. Improvement likely second start back for the lightly raced (four starts) 4yo. ~FAST BUCK^ is one of the aforementioned front-runners, dropping from a Cal-bred stakes to run for the optional \$80k claim tag. His pace rival is class-drop speedster MUCHO DEL ORO. If the race unfolds on the hillside course like it does on paper, with a contested pace, top choice DANDY MAN SHINES will have every chance to rally for the win.

Sixth Race

1. Petite Ange

2. Aggro

3. Be a Goldfish

The pick six begins with a weak maiden-20 route, led by ~PETITE ANGE^, who stretches out from a respectable third-place sprint. She might be the speed of the field, she could be gone. None of her previous route races were good, but those were in MSWs. This maiden-20 came up soft. ~AGGRO^ finished second last out in a maiden-32 mile restricted to 3yos. She faces older fillies and mares this time, and earned a figure last out that exceeds par for this level. AGGRO will be grinding away late as one of the favorites. ~BE A GOLDFISH^ moves from Cal-bred maiden-50 to open maiden-20, and goes sprint to route. Her runner-up comeback two starts back in a sprint makes her a contender in this low-level maiden-claiming route.

Seventh Race

1. Raw Ability

2. Tirupati

3. Uncorked

~RAW ABILITY^ is less accomplished than favorite ~TIRUPATI^, but RAW ABILITY has more upside and gets the call to upset this G3 turf mile. A 3-for-3 European import, RAW ABILITY smoked her final quarter in :22.41 both stateside victories. Her most recent was more decisive visually than the three-quarter length margin indicates. Working well since raced, up in class, 'ABILITY can post a minor surprise and increase her record to four-for-four. However, TIRUPATI is very good. Runner-up in a G2 two back, winner of

a G3 last out, with high figures and a versatile style that adapts to any pace scenario, **TIRUPATI** will be positioned in front of the top choice turning for home. For what it's worth, favorites won this stakes race four of the past five years. ~**UNCORKED**^ won this race a year ago, but is winless since. She will be rolling late while speedster **HAMWOOD FLIER** and stretch-out **VENGANZA** will keep the pace honest.

Eighth Race

1. Champagne Camie	2. Twilight Empire	3. Discrepancy
---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------

~**CHAMPAGNE CAMIE**^ figures to start at a short price in this claiming sprint. She is likely to win. She returns to dirt and drops in class after an okay fourth on turf; her recent dirt races are faster than any of these. 'CAMIE has speed, an outside post, and her only previous start on SA dirt was a romp by more than 12 lengths. ~**TWILIGHT EMPIRE**^ defeated similar two starts back, regressed last out, and changed barns since. Now trained by Librado Barocio, the veteran mare looms a logical alternative if the favorite happens to misfire. ~**DISCREPANCY**^ is not particularly "fast," but she does win races. Her career-high 66 Beyer is modest, yet she has won 6 of 14 on dirt. She will rally late.

Ninth Race

1. Jimmy Blue Jeans	2. Rodrigoknows	3. Clouseau
----------------------------	------------------------	--------------------

~**JIMMY BLUE JEANS**^ should be tough in this Cal-bred N1X/optional claiming turf mile. It's the easiest chance in a long while for 'JEANS. The six-win veteran has defeated tougher; he drops off a creditable fourth in an open \$32k claiming turf mile. If he makes the lead as expected, and gets comfortable without excess pressure, he can be gone. ~**RODRIGOKNOWS**^ benefits by the shorter mile distance after losing his punch late going a mile and one-eighth. His best recent races are at one mile. ~**CLOUSEAU**^ looms an off-the-pace upset candidate, switching surfaces first off the claim. He ran below par last out, but wins in his three previous starts on dirt put him in the hunt. He has run well on dirt, runner-up in the Snow Chief Stakes at Santa Anita in 2023.

Tenth Race

1. Mighty Kai	2. White Mountain	3. Battle Cruiser
----------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

~**MIGHTY KAI**^ drops to \$16k claiming N2L, switches to dirt, and faces a modest cast in this dirt mile. The speed figures he has been earning on turf top this weak field. ~**WHITE MOUNTAIN**^ crushed a slow field of maiden-20s by more than four lengths in his first try around two turns. Realistically spotted for his first against winners, 'MOUNTAIN is a threat right back. ~**BATTLE CRUISER**^ will be clunking along late. This race is befuddling.

Eleventh Race

1. Naturally Blonde	2. Big City Miss	3. Miss Mrazek
----------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------

~**NATURALLY BLONDE**^ has worked well since changing trainers after being purchased this winter for \$25k at a horses-of-racing-age sale. The six-start maiden has speed, she is now trained by Jeff Mullins, and this turf sprint for Cal-bred maiden fillies and mares came up modest. First start back, first start for new connections, 'BLONDE should fire first off the bench. ~**BIG CITY MISS**^ was well-bet in her career debut at a mile and one-eighth, but she finished last. She trained better than she ran. Perhaps the cutback to six furlongs will benefit. ~**MISS MRAZEK**^ showed promise in her runner-up debut in September; this is her first start since. CLUBHOUSE CUTIE, sibling to retired star sprinter The Chosen Vron, is eligible to improve second time out. She finished next to last in her debut.