

xb wager guide

CALIFORNIA CUP

JANUARY 30, 2016 • SANTA ANITA PARK



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Analysis

A logical starting point in this race is #5 ROO'S VALENTINE, a Kretz Racing-homebred that just happens to be the only of today's eight entrants with a grass win on her resume. In her only turf start, she took a field of Del Mar maidens wire-to-wire and followed that score up with a frontrunning victory in Los Alamitos' Soviet Problem Stakes last month on the dirt. Needless to say, she's in top form and is the one they'll need to catch. She should vie for favoritism with #7 PACIFIC HEAT, a first-time turf starter for Pete Eurton, who was actually the 2/1 favorite in the Grade 1 Starlet Stakes last month at Los Al. She didn't do much running that day, checking in 8th of 9, but this race isn't as tough and she's back in against state-bred company. She's a daughter of popular California stallion, Unusual Heat, and her breeding suggests she'll find turf racing to be right up her alley.

Value Plays

With PACIFIC HEAT and ROO'S VALENTINE projected to take the majority of the money, just about anyone else is a good value play. Pete Eurton's other entrant, #8 CHEEKABOO, finished second in a pair of turf races earlier in her career and broke her maiden by 4 ¼-lengths on the dirt earlier this month. She has been sub-even money in her last two starts and her backers should get significantly better value this time around.

OAKS PICKS

1. #7 PACIFIC HEAT
2. #8 CHEEKABOO
3. #5 ROO'S VALENTINE
4. #6 RUN LIKE THE BOSS

\$20 WAGERING STRATEGY

- › **\$4 Exacta** #7 Pacific Heat, #8 Cheekaboo / #5 Roo's Valentine, #7 Pacific Heat, #8 Cheekaboo (\$16)
- › **\$4 Win** #7 Pacific Heat (\$4)

Analysis

With just about all of today's seven entrants trying two-turn racing for the first (or second) time, it'll be up to you to determine which ones you trust to make the tricky transition from sprint success to two-turn triumph. For example, #2 SMOKEY IMAGE is a perfect five-for-five in his career, but he has never raced beyond seven-furlongs and he hasn't started since October. As today's probable favorite, he has a lot going against him while trying to route for the first time. He could win this race on class alone, but let's try to beat him in a race where he may not be fully cranked. Both #5 GLORY BOUND and #1 TOUGH IT OUT are no strangers to two-turn racing – they each have several attempts and a win on their resumes – and finished 2nd and 3rd behind the highly-regarded Cal-bred, Found Money, in the King Glorious Stakes last month at Los Al. With GLORY BOUND expected to prompt the pace, TOUGH IT OUT could get the dream trip from a little further back.

Value Plays

Rafael Bejarano is one of the best jocks in Southern California and we recommend taking a long look at each horse he rides today. He's aboard #4 DEMONSLAYER in the Derby and while this is that one's first two-turn attempt, he showed the type of tactical speed you'd have wanted to see from him when he broke his maiden last month against a highly regarded next-out winner, True Brilliance.

DERBY PICKS

1. #4 DEMONSLAYER
2. #1 TOUGH IT OUT
3. #2 SMOKEY IMAGE
4. #5 GLORY BOUND

\$20 WAGERING STRATEGY

- › **\$5 Win, Place** #4 Demonslayer (\$10)
- › **\$1 Exacta Box** #1 Tough It Out, #2 Smokey Image, #4 Demonslayer (\$6)
- › **\$2 Exacta Box** #2 Smokey Image, #4 Demonslayer (\$4)

Donald Valpredo California Cup Sprint

Race 6 (5:30PM ET)

\$150,000

4Y0+ – 6 Furlongs

Analysis

Nothing quite gets the blood pumping in racing quite like a good old fashioned 'battle of the sexes.' And if you're playing the Donald Valpredo Cal Cup Sprint, that's exactly what you're in for. We can't wait to see the incredibly talented mare, #6 SUNDAY RULES, throw down against venerable six-year-old gelding, #1 SAN ONOFRE. Both love to throw down from the moment the gate opens, and when you add the natural speed of #4 RICHARD'S BOY into the fray, there's plenty of speed signed on. SAN ONOFRE may have a slight edge, having tipped his hand to his strong current form with a victory in the Grade 3 Midnight Lute Stakes last out. And while he and Hall of Fame rider, Alex Solis, are disadvantaged by drawing the rail, he won the 'Lute from the one hole, so we aren't concerned. If RICHARD'S BOY and SUNDAY RULES lock up early, SAN ONOFRE should be well poised to run them down when Solis sees fit.

Value Plays

If a speed duel develops, you may want to throw your allegiance into the corner of a closer. Someone that can sit back, bide his time and catapult past the favorites when they start getting leg-weary. Doug O'Neill's #7 PAY THE FINE would be a decent option in that role. O'Neill is no stranger to winning big races and PAY THE FINE showed a decent kick against an allowance field here on New Year's Day.

SPRINT PICKS

1. #1 SAN ONOFRE
2. #6 SUNDAY RULES
3. #4 RICHARD'S BOY
4. #7 PAY THE FINE

\$20 WAGERING STRATEGY

- > \$5 Trifecta Key #1 San Onofre / #4 Richard's Boy, #6 Sunday Rules (\$10)
- > \$5 Exacta Box #1 San Onofre, #6 Sunday Rules (\$10)

Sunshine Millions Filly & Mare Turf Sprint

Race 7 (6:00PM ET)

\$150,000

4Y0+ – F&M – 6 1/2 Furlongs Turf

Analysis

You've heard it many times before, but it bears repeating – the best bets on Santa Anita's quirky downhill turf course are runners that have previously performed well racing down the hill. Of those entered in this year's Filly & Mare Turf Sprint, #5 HEAVENS STAIRWAY and #7 VELVET MESQUITE have five wins each in downhill dashes at the Great Race Place. Plus, several others, including #3 SMOOVE IT, #4 CHATI'S ON TOP and #8 SINGING KITTY, have good recent form on the course. The one we're most interested in is SINGING KITTY. She won the Xpressbet Cal Cup Oaks last year and was nearly 10/1 when she won the Unzip Me Stakes racing down the hill in September. This year's Filly & Mare Turf Sprint is her second start off the layoff and note that top jock, Gary Stevens, retains the mount. He's selective about the mounts he takes these days, so anyone he gets aboard can be considered live.

Value Plays

In a twelve horse field, there is no shortage of value. We've already thrown our allegiance to SINGING KITTY, who figures to be a price, but we also won't be surprised if HEAVENS STAIRWAY is able to turn her luck around as she drops back in against Cal-breds. This is her second start off a layoff and she simply went too fast early last time out. With the screws fully cranked this time around, look out.

F&M TURF SPRINT PICKS

1. #8 SINGING KITTY
2. #5 HEAVENS STAIRWAY
3. #7 VELVET MESQUITE
4. #11 QIAONA

\$20 WAGERING STRATEGY

- > \$1 Trifecta Key #8 Singing Kitty/ #3 Smoove It, #4 Chati's On Top, #5 Heavens Stairway, #7 Velvet Mesquite, #11 Qiaona (\$20)




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Analysis

With defending champion, #5 ALERT BAY, and last year's runner-up, #11 BOOZER, back in the picture, this race figures to pack the same level of fireworks we saw last year. Throw in a few other veteran turfers, including #1 TAMARANDO, #2 G.G. RYDER and #12 AWESOME RETURN, and this is one race you won't want to miss. We know ALERT BAY loves the Santa Anita oval – he's 4-for-6 on the lawn here – and we also know he has the perfect level of tactical speed to sit just behind the pacesetters and unleash his powerful kick whenever Martin Garcia calls upon him. There are a number of speed horses entered, which could also open things up for the closing run of #3 UNUSUALLY GREEN, who is 0-for-8 locally on the win end, but has finished second at Santa Anita four times, and the aforementioned AWESOME RETURN, who may be hindered by a tough outside post.

Value Plays

Even though Rafael Bejarano opts to ride AWESOME RETURN over UNUSUALLY GREEN, we favor the chances of the latter. He drew much better and his recent form is a bit stronger. #10 POSHSKY will be piloted by top up-and-coming rider, Flavien Prat, and won the Grade 3 Berkeley Handicap two starts back at Golden Gate. He rarely fails to fire and should be heard from late.

TURF CLASSIC PICKS

1. #5 ALERT BAY
2. #10 POSHSKY
3. #3 UNUSUALLY GREEN
4. #12 AWESOME RETURN

\$20 WAGERING STRATEGY

- › **\$5 Exacta** #5 Alert Bay / #3 Unusually Green, #10 Poshsky, #12 Awesome Return (\$15)
- › **\$5 Win** #5 Alert Bay (\$5)

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