



Oaklawn Stakes Race Analysis

Friday, May 3, 2024

By Jeff "Money" Taylor

RACE 9 \$150,000 NATURAL STATE BREEDERS' (4:36 p.m.): A competitive group of Arkansas-breds kick the big closing weekend off that also includes the iconic Kentucky Oaks and Derby.

Kantex (#6), installed as the 9-5 morning line favorite, ran fourth in this race a year ago and appears to have progressed solidly this year while a couple of primary rivals have gone in the other direction. She is perfect this season against fellow state bred and exemplifies the kind of meeting that her connections have enjoyed, especially with their runners bred in the Natural State. The 5-year-old homebred daughter of Street Strategy, whom the owners and trainer also campaigned, adores the local oval with five victories from seven starts. The two-turn distance today raises a few questions, but she has run well enough in a couple of previous middle-distance attempts and the momentum she and her barn ride coming in makes her look like a deserving favorite.

Second choice **Sulwe (#1)** also looks a lot better this year than the mare who finished far back in last season's edition of this race. She too is a two-time winner at the current stand, including a tidy score in a major prep for this event in late March while negotiating today's distance. She is a confirmed stalk-and-pounce type going two turns and there should be a legitimate set of fractions for her to track.

Behind the obvious two public choices, things really open up with regard to value. Last year's victress, **Kaboom Baby (#9)**, appears to have lost a step and with everyone else in here flirting with double digit odds, longshot players have some options.

Those who like to combine price and early speed are likely to migrate to **Bennykayandsuzytoo (#10)**. With little choice but to ship early given her outside post, she looks to repeat the kind of effort that produced a gate to wire win while sprinting in optional company February 17. Trained by Tommy Vance, another who is having a solid meeting, the daughter of Strong Mandate gets awfully big hearted when alone on the lead and while she may have an early pace challenger or two, she seems the best equipped to pull off the wire job, especially off a creditable effort against open company early last month.

Although she has just the one maiden win to her credit, **Cashmere Baby (#5)**, could more than make up for her lack of experience with her fondness for negotiating a route of ground. The tom Swearingen charge has not finished out of the exacta in three attempts at a middle distance and has seen her Beyer Speed Figures improve nicely with each subsequent start since stretching out. She finished only a length behind **Sulwe** when they met five weeks ago and if her improving trend continues, she likely makes it interesting with regard to that foe while much better in value.

Wagering Strategy - **Win: #5 and #10**
Trifecta Box: 1, 5, 6, 10