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SANTA ANITA PARK Race 9 – April 7, 2018

G1 SANTA ANITA DERBY

This rendition of the Santa Anita Derby has me fired up. There are three legitimate Kentucky Derby prospects with drastically different resumes.

#1 INSTILLED REGARD (VALUE) - This is the only runner in the race that could offer any sort of value. He will possibly get lost in the Bolt vs Justify hysteria which may lead to inflated odds for a horse with a legitimate resume. His six race career has been a picture of consistency from day one as a two year old. He showed off talent in the a.m. before that debut and has not disappointed. Only one **B-** effort in a string of **B's**. Proved that he doesn't back down from a battle in the Los Al Futurity. Handles business when superior as proven in the Lecomte. Flattered by Noble Indy when that Pletcher runner exited the Risen Star to win the Louisiana Derby. This is a classy colt that deserves respect. Added bonus is his visually pleasing Optix Plot.

#2 ORBIT RAIN (TOSS) - One of two maidens in the field looks over-matched. Has steadily improved in the Optix Figs and Grade departments but his best race came over the turf. Hard to find an argument supporting him.

#3 BOLT D'ORO (NO-VALUE) - Ran one of the most impressive races from a horse at any age last year in the Front Runner. It was an eye gouging performance over a tough race track. His BC Juvenile trip has been well documented as he turned the race into a scenic tour of the Santa Anita grounds when losing a continent of ground. His three year old return was awesome. I would suggest it was the best 3 year old prep race to this point. Him and McKinzie threw down in the San Felipe. It should be noted that an effort like that, off that kind of layoff is something that could set him back. McKinzie is now officially off the trail. His recent a.m. activity suggests he has another big effort in him. This is a tough horse to poke holes in. The Optix Plot is strong. I suspect Castellano will employ similar tactics as he did last time. Not wanting to let Justify get away.

#4 JIMMY CHILA (BELOW) - This guy is pure guts. Has a ton of heart. However, he has always seemed more like a sprinter. Completing the superfecta would be a home run.

#5 PEPE TONO (TOSS) - Needed a **FLOW** trip to get his first win. He would need a **SETUP** type trip to be anywhere in this one and the Optix Plot does not paint a friendly picture for that possible scenario. He had his doors blown off last time by Justify. Tough to get behind.

#6 JUSTIFY (NO-VALUE) - This gorgeous specimen has burst onto the scene with wow type activity in the a.m. and p.m. He is one of the best moving horses I have ever seen on video. His debut was awesome. His next start was another eye catching performance. Now it's time to list possible foibles. 1) His two main competitors are battled tested against classier competition. We don't know how this guy will respond when challenged. 2) He is a massive dude. It's a build that lends itself to possibly being a better miler than classic runner. He won at two turns but it should be noted that it came over a sealed surface. 3) Is not great from the gate. Has not been **SLOG** but in both races he was a hint slower than the rest of the field out of the gate. With all that said, we take one look at the Optix

Plot and see that he has a gigantic pace advantage. Speaking as a fan of the game, this is the kind of horse that we wait for. His promise is exciting. I look forward to seeing how he handles this next significant step.

#7 CORE BELIEFS (TOSS) - Peter Eurton trained colt handled the two turns rather nicely when breaking his maiden last time. We pegged the horse as more of a sprinter after watching him in the morning hours. He will not get the same kind of trip today with the high cruising speed of Justify to his inside. I suspect he may get very tired chasing that one. The Optix Plot backs up that feeling.