

OptixEQ Looks at the 2020 Breeders' Cup Juvenile TURF Sprint (G2) By Donald Harris

INTRO

The \$1 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile TURF Sprint (G2)—a 5.5 FURLONG dash—will be run for the third time after being introduced into the BC in 2018. When it comes to young horses sprinting, there is one name that demands attention. Wesley Ward. Not surprisingly, Wesley has the morning line favorite Golden Pal (he won this race last year with the post time favorite Four Wheel Drive) along with three other runners in the meat of the field. And if there are any scratches he has three more waiting in the bullpen. We have three runners flying in from overseas that include two Ireland bred runners and a Kentucky bred by Uncle Mo. If you watched this race the last two years, you know the race was decided a couple of steps out of the gate. Pletcher gate to wire with Bulletin in 2018 with Chelsea Cloisters from the Ward barn chasing that one home from second throughout. Then a basic photocopy of that race last year when the aforementioned Four Wheel Drive took control out of the gate and second place finisher Chimney Rock chased him the entire way. In other words. Gate speed. Gate speed. Gate speed. Which takes us to the OPTIXPLOT. I always concentrate on SURFACE-DISTANCE.

OPTIXPLOT2020

First off, with a 'green' Plot Fit, it tells us this plot can be relied on. The 'sunny' contention suggests there is plenty of speed but is not over the top with pace. After confirming Fit and Contention, my eyes immediately goes to Q1. And surprise, surprise. The probable big favorite Golden Pal jumps off the screen. A big fat square at the top of Q1 says this horse has the needed speed and also a big finish. It says this favorite is most likely legit from a Plot perspective. The obvious reason gate speed is so key in a race like this is it takes racing luck out of the equation. With a massive field size of 14, those runners that lack big gate speed will need to get fortunate with traffic while also hoping for a pace meltdown.

OPTIX FIG RANGE

Taking a glance at the Optix Fig range, which tells us what number the winner is probably going to fall under. We have 100-92. After a quick filter for races at the distance of 5.5 we see there are three horses that fit into this range. Cowan and Bodenheimer have the highest figs. Both exiting the Indian Summer at Keeneland. Bodenheimer with the win after enjoying a LONE trip with a 100 fig. And Cowan finishing a closing second with a 99 fig. The other runner is the favorite Golden Pal. Last seen at Saratoga dominating the Skidmore with a 94 fig.

KEYWORDS

In a race where gate speed is the key, I only looked for one key word. It wasn't LONE, BOS, EASY_LEAD . . . it was POP. POP is the best signal of the best gate speed. And only one runner has that keyword. The favorite, Golden Pal. After that simple search, I decided to look for runners with no red in their running lines when racing on turf. Red being keywords that hint at regression on the horizon. The #2 WINDY CITY RED, #5 COWAN and the #13 SECOND OF JULY. This is a rather simple process but I have found it can highlight some possible value in the exotics.

Horse-by-Horse Analysis

Note: for more detailed trip-note information where applicable, you can go to [OptixGRID](#) and click on the Extended Comments.

#1 MIGHTY GURKHA (20-1) is one of two Ireland breds invading the states. Her two wins came over the synthetic, not the turf. Both of those wins were when he went straight to the lead. Included two back

when given an **EASY_LEAD** keyword. This horse is not getting the lead today. Rail draw no bargain in this massive field. Have to pass.

#2 WINDY CITY RED (30-1) is an interesting runner from the very capable Jonathan Wong barn. Plots well as a square just at the edge of Q4. Showed some competitive guts in debut when proving BOS over the synthetic. Then came back with an effort that caught my eye. Sat a completely different kind of trip in first start over the turf. Love the fact he showed a willingness to pass horses. Acts like a rapidly improving sort. Big value in the exotics at the very least.

#3 LIPPIZANER (20-1), a Kentucky bred coming in from overseas for the ubiquitous Aiden O'Brien barn. Actually faced off against Golden Pal earlier in the year. Finished a few lengths behind the Ward speedster on that day. The positive side is the steadily improving grades in last three races. Certainly isn't going to be lacking fitness. This will be his 5th start since September 5th.

#4 COUNTY FINAL (15-1) is a horse that doesn't plot very well. Big circle in Q1. Best races appear to have been on the lead. Don't see him being fast enough to get his trip. Have to pass

#5 COWAN (8-1) is a runner you might toss when first glancing at the Plot. But this is a runner I will be using. Have had the chance to see him train and have liked what he has been doing. He has found his home on the grass and appears to be getting better with each start. Really liked his effort last time when finishing a good second behind LONE winner #10 BODENHEIMER. The optix grade of B in that race signals that it was a winning type effort. Must use in the exotics.

#6 UBETTABELIEVEIT (20-1) the third and final overseas shipper and second Ireland bred. Colt has shown he enjoys winning. I can't ignore based on that B+ graded effort. Love the extended comment of 'Push Button win'. This tells me the horse is a legit athlete.

#7 MOMOS (15-1) is a horse I had a chance to watch train over the summer in New York. Pure speed type. I am never a fan of big changes before these big races. The addition of blinkers is not something I find as positive. Biggest worry for him is not being able to get the lead. I envision him having to chase #14 GOLDEN PAL. If he somehow cleared, he is super dangerous. I just am skeptical of him clearing.

#8 AMANZI YIMPILO (15/1) has enjoyed a couple of **PERFECT** trips in his 3 race career. He will not sit a **PERFECT** trip today. His plot suggests he is just not fast enough. And I agree.

#9 AFTER FIVE (6-1) plots as a dead closer in this one with a square down in Q4. He will be at the mercy of racing luck. He has been given CLOSE in both of his two career starts so he is a must use in any exotic plays.

#10 BODENHEIMER (8-1) popped up with a big win over the Keeneland turf on October 4th. Holding off that late charge of #5 COWAN. His plot shows off that pace being at the top of Q1 but the big circle gives a skeptical view. My general feeling is he can't outrun #14 GOLDEN PAL to the lead. Which means he will be in chase mode. I see him getting discouraged

#11 INTO THE SUNRISE (15-1) adds to the Wesley Ward threats. I have always loved sprinters coming off a route effort and cutting back to the proper distance. That is what this guy is doing. Took pressure going two turns last time and held on rather well. We know he is plenty legged up off that effort. He will probably have the best late kick and when you look at him plotting as a Q1 square the confidence gets even higher. Cherry on top is that his best grade in career came at the 5.5 distance over the turf.

#12 DIRTY DANGLE (20-1) is the friendly Canadian of the field. The Canadian invader sports a friendly looking plot. Nice looking square bordering Q2 & Q4. The only true knock are the **TACTIC+** red keywords in both career starts. Might not be on my ticket but I can't blame anyone for using him.

#13 SECOND OF JULY (8-1) has had a brief career of blowing up the tote board. Undefeated runner scored at 68-1 in debut and then followed it up with a G3 win at 15-1. Along with #9 AFTER FIVE, he is a dead closer at the bottom of Q4. Negotiating traffic will be key. No red keywords to this point. Look for him to be rolling late. Demands respect.

#14 GOLDEN PAL (8/5) will certainly be the big favorite come post time. And I believe he should be. This is Ward's best two year old. He is a rocket ship. There is a reason Ward took him overseas when just missing against the best in the world. Have already discussed his tasty plot as the big square in Q1. I have seen him train. Dynamite stuff. From a value perspective, there is none here. If you play against him, you are hoping that outside post and possible stumble at the break takes him out of his game. I think he is the best horse in the race.

CONCLUSION

This is a race I will probably sit out. Hard for me to get involved when I am on the heavy favorite #14 GOLDEN PAL. For those in a value search mode. I see the #2 WINDY CITY RED, #5 COWAN, and the #11 INTO THE SUNRISE as the most compelling prices. The first few steps out of the gate will tell a lot of the story. At least that is what the last two years have said.