

OptixEQ Looks at the 2020 Breeders' Cup TURF Sprint (G1)

By Donald Harris

INTRO

The \$1 million Breeders' Cup TURF Sprint (G1)—a 5.5 FURLONG dash—has a massive field of 14 lined up. Two returning starters from last year's race are the #3 IMPRIMIS and #7 LEINSTER. Both looking to improve off disappointing performances. The morning line favorite #12 GOT STORMY comes in as the no doubt class of the field with 7 Grade 1 races under her belt. Including two victories. But interesting enough, all those races were of the two turn variety. 3 other female runners take their place in the starting gate alongside STORMY, looking to make it two years in a row and third female since the 2008 inception to win this race. Last year, the mare Belvoir Bay lit up the tote with a gate to wire victory. As is always the case in these sprint races, we need to have a visual for how the pace situation is going to unfold. That is where OptixPlot comes in as a great resource.

OPTIXPLOT2020

Plot fit shows a 'RED' light which means it is not as reliable as we would like. The 'snowflake' tells us that there is not a ton of pace signed on. A close look at running lines and the plot suggest that the #1 BIG RUNNER, #2 JUST MIGHT and #10 BOMBARD all do their best running on the front end. They figure to be the runners most aggressively handled early. The plot of all 3 of those runners are represented with circles in Q1. My pick from last year's race, #7 LEINSTER has the prettiest looking plot as a strong square in Q1. But we don't want to get caught up too much into the Plot based on that 'RED' light fit.

OPTIX FIG RANGE

Taking a glance at the Optix Fig range which tells us what number the winner is probably going to fall. We have 105-97. I decided to do a filter of turf races run at 5.5 with Optix figs 100 or higher. It gave a healthy list of seven runners (#2,#3,#7,#8,#9,#12,#14). The highest fig is 105. Both earned by #7 LEINSTER over the Keeneland turf. Second highest fig is 104. #7 LEINSTER with another effort at Keeneland as well as #14 EXTRAVAGANT KID who also earned that fig at Keeneland. My mind next took me to how these runners have done in G1 spots. A quick filter of G1 and it shows there is not one runner in here with a win at 5.5 in the G1 category. As mentioned previously, #12 GOT STORMY has the most G1 wins with two but none sprinting. #5 WET YOUR WHISTLE and #8 OLEKSANDRA are the only two with G1 wins turf sprinting. Both at the distance of 6 furlongs with closing efforts. #6 GLASS SLIPPER is the lone overseas invader. Has 4 Group 1 races under her belt with two wins. All at the distance of 5 furlongs.

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 BIG RUNNER (12-1) has been a lightly raced 5 year old that just notched his first graded win off the bench in late September at Santa Anita. It marked his third straight win over that course at the 5.5 distance. He clearly has found his niche. Interesting to note that he clearly wants the lead but also showed three starts back that he can win from off the pace when breaking slowly. My two concerns with him: 1) The Keeneland surface is not comparable to Santa Anita where he has enjoyed all his success. 2) The rail draw with a horse that has not been the greatest horse from the gate. 3 SLOG's and 2 RUSH's in his brief 7 race career.

#2 JUST MIGHT (30-1) is similar to his neighbor on the inside where it would appear he wants to get to the front. The four year old is in the best form of his career and his best career effort came in his last start at Keeneland at the distance of 5.5. Will never talk someone off a horse seemingly at his best. No doubt some value in the exotics.

#3 IMPRIMIS (4-1), has been fantastic in his two starts this year. It appears Orseno has a specific plan to get back to this race and it seems to have worked out perfectly. In his last race he overcame a SHUFFLE to get a tough win in a very fast race. I don't think it is coincidence that one of his best effort came off a 55 day break. Today will be 56 days since his win at Kentucky Downs. Strong square in Q2 hints he could trip out. Major player.

#4 FRONT RUN THE RED (12-1) just missed to his neighbor directly inside of him in that Kentucky Downs race. Always have to respect Chad Brown in the big turf races. Biggest question mark with him is the 5.5 distance. He has never run a race at this short of a distance. Can't use on the win end. But certainly fits in the exotics picture.

#5 WET YOUR WHISTLE (15-1) is one of a few runners in here with a G1 win sprinting. It came last year at Woodbine when getting a FLOW trip at 6 furlongs. Most of the time he is making his run from the back of the pack. Strangely, he stole a race on the lead at Belmont in his last race. That trip feels like a true outlier. I don't suspect he is going to get the right race shape for him to fire his best effort.

#6 GLASS SLIPPERS (12-1) is the lone overseas runner in the field. I generally lean away from the overseas runners in the sprint game over here. The quicker tempo to American sprint races seem to impact these types in a negative fashion. Can't fault the quality of the races she has been facing. All four of her starts this year have been in Group 1 competition.

#7 LEINSTER (4-1) returns for a second try in this race after a disappointing off the board effort last year. He wasn't able to carve out his trip. When he does find his trip he is super tough to beat. The lack of pace in this race could lead to him sitting his garden trip. His square in Q1 certainly stands out. His last two races came at this distance over the Keeneland surface and are the first and second best figures of the field.

#8 OLEKSANDRA (12/1) is a flat out runner from the Drysdale barn. Her career best effort came last year over this track and distance. Drysdale has decided to bring her in off a hefty layoff. She strikes me as a runner that will fire fresh. The lack of pace is a concern but if a closer can overcome that issue I believe it is her. Of the closers in this race. She is my favorite.

#9 INTO MYSTIC (12-1) appears to be in career best form for Team Walsh. Last couple of races she has been haunted by the morning line favorite #12 GOT STORMY. Did everything right in last and was nailed on the line. She is not proven against this quality of competition which is the big question she will have to answer.

#10 BOMBARD (15-1) should offer some intriguing value based on the soft pace situation. Recent morning activity is signaling he has never been better. Just missed against #3 IMPRIMIS in last race where he set the pace and was run down very late. Dead heated for second with #4 FRONT RUN THE FED. Love the cutback to 5.5. Would expect Prat to be super aggressive out of the gate. Must demand a price.

#11 WILDMAN JACK (15-1) is a genuine runner. He consistently fires an honest effort. Have to take note of the BTL effort in his last start. Didn't get his customary trip when encountering traffic issues. But was still making ground late on a LONE trip winner from the #1 BIG RUNNER. I did have to take

note that the worst effort of his career and lone no show came over the Keeneland turf course as the favorite earlier in the summer.

#12 GOT STORMY (7-2) enters as the clear class of the field. Has put together a great career at two turns and now is attempting to revive another successful run as a late running sprinter. Last two efforts with B+ wins sprinting at the G3 level. It is impossible to knock a mare of this quality. I am going to try and beat her today based on the race shape and lack of value.

#13 TEXAS WEDGE (20-1) will be one of the bigger prices on the board from the barn that won with a bomber in this race last year. Miller got an apparent prep race under his belt at Pimlico. Now the blinkers are added. Feels like a reach. Doesn't seem fast enough for this group. Have to pass.

#14 EXTRAVAGANT KID (15/1) is all freaking racehorse. What a warrior. Yes, I am a huge fan of this dude. After all the fights he has been in, his last few races may have been his best. He handles the Keeneland surface. He has performed well in his lone G1 race that took place last year at Woodbine when finishing second. He can fire under any sort of race shape. The major question he has been unable to answer is getting to the wire first in a graded race which is surely why the price will be fair. Must use in all exotics. Will have on all my spread tickets.

CONCLUSION

I could make a case for the majority of the runners in here. This race has a truly wide open feel to it. I think the deserving favorite is the **#7 LEINSTER**. Favorite track. Favorite surface. Highest figs. Best plot. Figures to sit his trip which is getting first run on the pace. **#8 OLEKSANDRA** is up against it from a pace profile. I just think she is a flat out runner that has the quality to overcome that fact. Those are my top two choices. The underneath slots could be filled in a ton of different ways. Which means I will stay away from the exotics because my opinion is so darn scattered. A fun race to breakdown despite it leaving me with a massive headache.