

Del Mar

Saturday November 6, 2021

Race #12

Breeders' Cup Classic

Contest bet - \$100 win on #5 Knicks Go

Note: The analysis, and selections below are all taken from my full card detailed selections and analysis report for Breeders' Cup Friday 11/5 available [here at Equibase](#) or at most online wagering sites such as Xpressbet, TVG and Twinspires. You can also get the full report for Saturday 11/6 as well.

Win contenders, with minimum odds for win bets:

#5 Knicks Go – 6 to 5

#6 Art Collector – 3 to 1

#9 Max Player – 4 to 1

Exactas:

5 over 6, 9

5, 6 over 5, 6, 9

Box 5, 6, 9

Knicks Go has an edge over the other eight horses in this year's Breeders' Cup Classic because of his running style. **Knicks Go** has had the lead from the start in his last eight races, consisting of seven wins. As such, the trainers of the other eight horses can strategize all they want about how the race can be won by their charges, but one thing is certain and that is if any of the other entrants try to fight for the early lead with **Knicks Go** they are likely to be severely compromising their own chances of success. On the other hand, if **Knicks Go** is left unabated on the front end, he is likely to get into a steady rhythm and will not allow any other horse to get within a length of him in the last quarter mile. Since returning from a trip half way across the world to compete in the Saudi Cup in February and being short of 100% when fourth in the Metropolitan Handicap in June, **Knicks Go** has reeled off three straight impressive victories with Equibase Speed Figures of 118, 117 and 115. Jockey Joel Rosario, who has been in the saddle aboard **Knicks Go** for his last six wins, fits the horse perfectly by allowing him to get into a fluid stride and do his thing, which once again in the Breeders' Cup Classic should be to control the tempo on fast fractions from the start and never look back.

Art Collector and **Max Player** are both likely to be taking up stalking positions behind **Knicks Go** shortly after the start as that has been their successful strategy in winning key Classic prep races this summer and fall. **Art Collector** has won three straight since moving to the care of Hall-of-Fame trainer Bill Mott this summer, with each effort better than the rest. After winning the Alydar Stakes in August with a 110 Equibase figure, **Art Collector** improved to 115 in the Charles Town Classic then to a career-best 120 figure effort in the Woodward Stakes last month. Although he led from start to finish in two of those three races, in the Charles Town Classic **Art Collector** stalked the early leader in second before forging to the front in the last eighth of a mile. Therefore if **Knicks Go** can be passed in the final stages of this race, **Art Collector** is one of those who may be able to go by the early leader and post the upset.

Max Player has also run career-best races in his most recent starts. After returning from an 11th place finish in the Saudi Cup, **Max Player** finished a poor sixth in the Pimlico Special in May but rebounded nicely to win the Suburban Stakes at the distance of the Classic in July. Earning a career-best 113 figure with that effort, **Max Player** duplicated it when winning the Jockey Club Gold Cup in September with the same figure. In both races, under jockey Ricardo Santana Jr., who will ride again in the Classic, **Max Player** sat in second in the early stages then pounced on the leader before drawing off, doing so by four lengths in the Jockey Club Gold Cup in a decisive effort in his most recent win.

About the rest:

Essential Quality is eight for nine in his career, his lone defeat coming when a troubled fourth in the Kentucky Derby. Although beaten just one length by **Medina Spirit** for the win and just a head behind **Hot Rod Charlie** for third place, **Essential Quality** proved he belongs with the best in that race. Winning the Belmont Stakes five weeks later, then the Jim Dandy Stakes at the end of July, **Essential Quality** earned very similar figures of 107 to 109. Stretching out to the Classic distance for the Travers Stakes in August, **Essential Quality** once again ran professionally while battling head and head with Midnight Bourbon for the last eighth of a mile, coming out on top by a neck with a 109 figure. That 109 figure might be the issue with this talented colt in the Classic. Not only is **Essential Quality** coming back from the longest period of rest of any horse in the field (more than two months), he also has not improved his figures throughout his three year old campaign where significant improvement is needed to get to the 118 to 120 figure threshold it is going to take to win this race.

Hot Rod Charlie ran the best race of his career when victorious in the Pennsylvania Derby near the end of September, earning a 120 figure in the process while easily defeating Midnight Bourbon, who had battled down to the wire with **Essential Quality** one month earlier. On the other hand, **Hot Rod Charlie** puts blinkers back on for the Classic and it appears to me that when wearing blinkers for six straight races from October of last year through the Belmont he either ran evenly in the last eighth of a mile, or lost ground to the winner in the final stages. The first of two examples of that came when he was only a head behind **Essential Quality** in last year's Breeders' Cup Juvenile entering the stretch before finishing three-quarters of a length behind at the finish, and the other was when he was a head from **Essential Quality** in the Belmont with an eighth of a mile to run but one and one-quarter lengths behind him at the end.

Next we come to Kentucky Derby winner **Medina Spirit**. Never worse than third in nine career starts, **Medina Spirit** ran the best race of his career in the Derby with a 110 figure. Regressing to a much lower 95 figure effort when third in the Preakness, **Medina Spirit** won the non-graded Shared Belief Stakes in August after three months off with a 105 figure then improved to win the Awesome Again Stakes last month back to the 110 figure from the Derby. The problem **Medina Spirit** may have in this year's Classic is he has led from the start in his last four races, starting with the Derby. Being as **Medina Spirit** is unlikely to run as fast in the early stages as **Knicks Go**, he will be asked to take up a stalking position in the Classic and if his previous efforts from off the pace are any indication, **Medina Spirit** isn't as good from that position as he is on the lead. For example, when fourth in the early stages of the Santa Anita Derby in April, **Medina Spirit** could only manage second at the end and was beaten four lengths and the same thing happened previous to that when second and eight lengths behind the winner in the San Felipe Stakes.

Tripoli won the Pacific Classic Stakes at this distance in August with a 109 figure, having earned 106 and 109 figures previous to that. Then he regressed significantly in the Awesome Again when fourth with a 98 figure and as such it does not appear likely he can contend with the top horses in this race. Similarly, Express Train ran his best race of 2021 when winning the San Diego Handicap in July with a 107 figure but as he is entering this race off sixth and third place finishes with 95 and 99 figure efforts and has a tall order ahead of him to be competitive. Stilleto Boy finished second by five lengths to Medina Spirit in the Awesome Again with a 102 figure and ran the best race of his career with a 106 figure in the Iowa Derby in July but has never run this far and appears to be up against it in terms of a top three placing.

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