Oaklawn Stakes Race Analysis **Sunday, April 7, 2024**

By Jeff "Money" Taylor

RACE 8 - $175,000 ECLIPSE (4:26 p.m.): While it may not pack the cosmic punch of the actual event Monday, this first (and potentially last) running of the Eclipse Stakes is going to be a big deal to the connections of one runner in here who will pick up black type for the first time in two seasons.

If there was ever a case of a horse leaving his race at the gate, it would have to be **Tapatio Leo (#6)** in his last start. Burning precious energy by being fractious in the gate prior to the start, the Peter Miller trainee proceeded to break last in the field of seven as the 2-1 favorite, spotting his rivals precious real estate right from the start. Strictly a one-dimensional speedball, he was then used to make the front end. He helped set a blistering :21 3/5's opening quarter, himself running an even quicker fraction due to his tardy beginning. No surprise then that he threw it into reverse down the lane, quickly shutting down the engines after his fate had already been sealed. That effort ended a four-race winning streak during which he had never been headed. Miller is taking the blinkers off today which should allow him to relax a bit prior to the break. He has trained well between starts and should benefit greatly by the lack of other quickness in this group.

In what looks to be a classic Steve Asmussen reclamation project, **Gun Pilot (#5)** looks to be back to the kind of colt that saw him compete in some high-level graded company last spring as a 3-year-old. After splitting the field in a fifth-place performance in the G1-Woody Stephens at Belmont in June, he went to the sidelines before reemerging in at the Fair Grounds optional affair January 27 where he won in professional fashion, besting outgunned competition as the even money favorite. He looked equally sharp in winning in a similar spot here four weeks ago, running his local record to 2-2-0 from five starts. As a son of Gun Runner, he has license to develop into a terrific older horse, albeit going one turn versus two like his daddy.

Former stakes regular **Kavod (#4)** makes his first start for new trainer Mike Maker following an $80,000 claim in his last start at the Fair Grounds in mid-March. With just win of any kind in the last two seasons, he certainly fits the conditions of this race to a tee. Obviously, his new connections saw something in this 5-year-old veteran that they thought they could build on, including perhaps, some early speed of his own which should place this one just behind **Tapatio Leo** in the early going, giving him first crack at the early pacesetter. Given his honest record of usually getting a share, he certainly belongs in the gimmick mix.

Tut's Revenge (#7) is another expensive Maker claim, having been haltered for $62,500 here back in late January. His new barn has been very patient with the 8-year-old gelding, working him in regular seven and eight-day intervals during the down time. Like his new stablemate, the wins have slowed down in recent seasons, but he too might be ready to wake up.

Wagering Strategy - **Win: #6**
Exactas: 6 w/ 4, 5, 7
Saver Exactas: 5 w/ 4, 6, 7