



Breeders' Cup value bet

STRAIGHT NO CHASER 14-1 Breeders' Cup Sprint

Could the key to the incredibly competitive, wide open Breeders' Cup Sprint lie in a race at Pimlico some 17 months ago? Well, after it was confirmed the **STRAIGHT NO CHASER** is being pointed at the championship race at Del Mar it's clear that we need to look back on the 2023 Maryland Sprint Stakes, which this lightly raced 5yo entire won by 7 1/2 lengths in a very sharp time. That was a top class performance but Straight No Chaser has not been easy to train; he has had only two starts since, the most recent when he outclassed a decent field to win the Santa Anita Sprint Championship in September. He performed to GF 125 on that occasion, taking the race by 6 1/4 lengths from Roll On Big, with See Through third and the slight favorite Fort Bragg back in fourth place. The horses he beat at Santa Anita are not up to proper G1 standard, but he beat them with such ease, and the form he produced in this prep is good enough to make him one of the best horses going into the Breeders' Cup Sprint.

The best news, however, is that Straight No Chaser ran even better when winning on Preakness day at Pimlico last year. He absolutely crushed better rivals there, beating Prevalence and Nakatomi out of sight after making all the running under John Velazquez, who partnered him also at Santa Anita last month. His runner-up, Prevalence, was admittedly not in great form around that time but he is a talented runner capable of Globeform 116 and he is inconsistent. He took second by a nose from Nakatomi. Nakatomi won a Saratoga allowance race by 3 1/2 lengths on his next start, then went on to run second in the Phoenix Stakes before running third in the Breeders' Cup Sprint. Straight No Chaser went for the Runhappy Stakes after Pimlico, but stumbled at the start, had to be rushed up to lead, started pulling too hard, and was rather flat coming down the straight; he was well below par in fourth place.

Straight No Chaser's Pimlico run was excellent, an assessment the clock also confirms. He cruised home in 1:08.27, lowering the old stakes record by almost half a second. Ryvit, who returned Globeform 114p when winning the Chick Lang Stakes on the same day, covered the 6-furlong trip in 1:09.33. In other words, Straight No Chaser was about 5 lengths quicker, and the most impressive part is the fact that Straight No Chaser's fractions for the first two quarters were almost identical to Ryvit's fractions; after that, Ryvit slowed down, while Straight No Chaser just kept going, and he won with plenty up his sleeve. He performed to **Globeform 128**, making him the top rated contender for the BC Sprint.

Yes, this son of Speightster had a long break due to injury after the Runhappy last year and he has raced just 9 times for 5 wins over the past three seasons, so it may feel a bit risky to make a future bet on him, but we are only three weeks out now and he looked healthy at Santa Anita. The main reason to jump in now is his odds; some bookmakers have him at **14-1** for the BC Sprint, and that is naturally way too big a price for a top rated contender.

GEIR STABELL

Santa Anita Sprint



Maryland Sprint 2023

