INSIDE TRACK

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2022 Malibu Stakes

Taiba or Bust

Baffert Trainee Looks to Make Case for 3YO Honors

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2022 Malibu Stakes

This **Inside Track to the Malibu Stakes** wagering guide gives you an Inside look at the six stakes races running at Santa Anita Park on December 26, 2022, including the $300,000 RUNHAPPY Malibu Stakes (G1).

With a win in the Malibu, the Bob Baffert trained Taiba could make his case for 3-year-old Male of the Year at the Eclipse Awards in January. Can he do it?

The Racing Dudes have been at it for 10+ years, offering daily handicapping picks and analysis for every track across the country. For this year's **Inside Track to the Malibu Stakes**, our lead handicappers have been scouring through the card at Santa Anita in search of winning tickets on this loaded day of racing.

Along with the Malibu, the other stakes Monday at Santa Anita are the $300,000 La Brea (G1), the $300,000 American Oaks (G1), the $200,000 San Antonio (G2), the $200,000 Mathis Mile (G2), and the $200,000 San Gabriel (G2).

But that's not all! Along with the six major stakes races, this Inside Track to the Malibu Stakes wagering guide also includes race-by-race analysis, betting suggestions, and multi-race plays for Santa Anita's entire Monday card.

For each of these **six stakes** at Santa Anita, you will find the following:

FULL PREVIEW FOR THE RACE, including:

- Race Overview
- Race Shape and Pace Analysis
- Top Selections
- Major Threats
- Long Shots to Use

You will also find specific wagering under the "Picks and Plays" section, which includes:

- Win Bet
- Place or Show Bet
- Long Shot to Play Across the Board
- Exacta
- Trifecta
- Superfecta
- Horses to use in Multi-Race Wagers
- What to Play on a Straight Wager
- What to Play on an Exotic Wager

Each Win, Place, Show, or Across the Board wager comes with a confidence rating so that you can see how strongly we feel about each pick.

Finally, always remember to wager responsibly and never wager more than you can afford.

Good luck today!

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RACE №1:
SANTA ANITA MATHIS MILE STAKES (G2)

1 MILE (TURF)
3-YEAR-OLDS
$200,000

2022 Malibu Stakes

OVERVIEW:

The Santa Anita Mathis Mile Stakes (G2) kicks off the card today with a solid field of 7 runners set to do battle. Usually a stakes race isn't the first race on the card, but it is on this day, which adds to the excitement.

RACE SHAPE: EXPECT A SLOW PACE

Pure Speed: *Sumter*
Pressing Speed: *One More Bid*
Stalkers: *Time to Party, Handy Dandy*
Closers: *Balnikhov, I'm A Gambler, Agatino*

It looks like Sumter could be alone on the lead in this spot. No other horse looks likes they will want to run with him early as Sumter comes out of back to back sprint races.

TOP CHOICE: #3 I'M A GAMBLER

We'll see what this guy can do running in the United States for the first time after winning four of his last five starts overseas against deeper fields. He's in the capable hands of Mark Glatt, while Flavien Prat jumps aboard, which is a good sign the new connections like the horse. His best effort should make him tough to beat in this reasonable spot to begin his career in this country.

MAJOR THREATS: #1 Balnikhov, #6 Handy Dandy, #7 Sumter

Balnikhov goes for two in a row today after winning a Grade 3 race at Keeneland last time out. Handy Dandy gets class relief after running in the Hollywood Derby (G1) in his last start. Sumter could be the one that gets loose on the lead today, which will make him tough to catch.

LONGSHOTS TO USE: #4 Time to Pary

This gelding has won two of three starts coming into this race, including a win over this track three races back. However, the horse must now move up in class in a big way, which is the biggest question mark heading into this one.

OTHERS: #2 One More Bid, #5 Agatino

It'd be surprising to see either of these horses make an impact in this race. However, with 3-year-old turf horses, there is always a chance for some unexpected big improvement.

PICKS AND PLAYS:

BET TO WIN: #3 I'm a Gambler - Confidence Level: 4 out of 5

BET TO PLACE: #7 Sumter - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

ACROSS THE BOARD PLAY: #6 Handy Dandy - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

EXACTA: 3,6,7 BOX

TRIFECTA: 3,7/1,3,6,7/1,3,6,7

SUPERFECTA: 1,3,6,7 BOX

MULTI-RACE WAGER HORSES: 3

STRAIGHT WAGER: $20 Win on #3 I'm a Gambler

EXOTIC WAGER: $2 Trifecta 3,7/1,3,6,7/1,3,6,7

RACE №3:
SAN GABRIEL STAKES (G2)

2022 Malibu Stakes

1 1/8 MILES (TURF)
3-YEAR-OLDS & UPWARD
$200,000

OVERVIEW:

The San Gabriel Stakes (G2) keeps the stakes action going early and often in Race 3 on this star-studded card. A field of 7 runners will line up to try to take this one home, which looks to be a pretty evenly matched race.

RACE SHAPE: EXPECT A SLOW PACE

Pure Speed: *Masteroffoxhounds*
Pressing Speed: *Rip City, Go On, Bob and Jackie*
Stalkers: *Prince Abama*
Closers: *Dicey Mo Chara, Flashiest*

This one looks to have another slow pace with the projected favorite looking like he could get loose on the lead. With that projected trip he could be tough to catch; however, there are capable closers in the race.

TOP CHOICE: #6 PRINCE ABAMA

Flavien Prat picked up the mount on this horse last time out at Del Mar, and that moved paid off, as he cruised home to win the Hollywood Turf Cup (G2). He faces similar horses in this spot, while he should be able to get a nice early stalking position against this group. He will likely have to run down the front-running Masteroffoxhounds, but with Prat aboard he probably has the ability to get the job done.

MAJOR THREATS: #2 Masteroffoxhounds, #3 Dicey Mo Chara

Masteroffoxhounds should get the perfect trip in this spot today, while looking to be the class of the race. Dicey Mo Chara always can be counted on with a solid effort in these types of spots. He has been competitive with these horses in his last two starts.

LONGSHOTS TO USE: #1 Rip City

At times, this gelding can show up with a big effort, and should like getting back to the turf for this race. From this inside post, he could be the "other speed" in the race, and might hold on for a piece of things at a big price.

OTHERS: #4 Go On, #5 Bob and Jackie, #7 Flashiest

These horses looked to be a bit overmatched in what should be a pretty top-heavy field. Any of them making an impact would be a surprise.

PICKS AND PLAYS:

BET TO WIN: #6 Prince Abama - Confidence Level: 4 out of 5

BET TO PLACE: #2 Masteroffoxhounds - Confidence Level: 4 out of 5

ACROSS THE BOARD PLAY: #3 Dicey Mo Chara - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

EXACTA: 2,6/2,3,6

TRIFECTA: 2,6/1,2,3,6/1,2,3,6

SUPERFECTA: 1,2,3,6 BOX

MULTI-RACE WAGER HORSES: 2,3,6

STRAIGHT WAGER: $20 Win on #6 Prince Abama

EXOTIC WAGER: $5 Exacta 2,6/2,3,6

RACE №6:
SAN ANTONIO STAKES (G2)

2022 Malibu Stakes

1 1/6 MILES (DIRT)
3-YEAR-OLDS & UPWARD
$200,000

OVERVIEW:

The San Antonio Stakes (G2) is always a staple of this opening day card at Santa Anita. It usually can lead to some interesting results, while this years version could be more of the same.

RACE SHAPE: EXPECT A FAST PACE

Pure Speed: *Hopkins, Breakfast Ride*
Pressing Speed: *Stilleto Boy, Country Grammer*
Stalkers: *Hudson Ridge*
Closers: *Heywoods Beach*

Even though there are only 6 horses in this race, the pace still could be fast, with most of the horses doing their best running near the front. That could turn this one into a chess match between all of the riders.

TOP CHOICE: #3 BREAKFAST RIDE

We'll take a little shot against a few of the shorter prices in this race with Breakfast Ride, who has won three of his last four races coming into this spot. There is no doubt this will be a jump up in class, but his speed figures suggest he'll be competitive, while Rosario jumps aboard which is a good sign. This is a perfect spot to jump up and take on stakes company for the first time.

MAJOR THREATS: #1 Hopkins, #6 Country Grammer

Hopkins is an up and coming Bob Baffert runner who has won two races in a row. This will be a jump up in class today, though. Country Grammer gets class relief, which looks to be needed after three straight dull efforts since returning form Dubai

LONGSHOTS TO USE: #2 Stiletto Boy

At his best, this horse can make some noise in this spot today, but it has been awhile since we have seen him run a big race. He does get a cut back in distance, which should help his chances, while this is an easier spot that what he has been facing.

OTHERS: #4 Hudson Ridge, #5 Heywoods Beach

This one seems to be a weird race no matter how you look at it. That could mean someone from this group could jump up and surprise at a price.

PICKS AND PLAYS:

BET TO WIN: #3 Breakfast Ride - Confidence Level: 3.5 out of 5

BET TO PLACE: #6 Country Grammer - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

ACROSS THE BOARD PLAY: #1 Hopkins - Confidence Level: 2 out of 5

EXACTA: 3,6/1,3,6

TRIFECTA: 3,6/1,2,3,6/1,2,3,6

SUPERFECTA: 1,2,3,6 BOX

MULTI-RACE WAGER HORSES: 3,6

STRAIGHT WAGER: $10 Win on #3 Breakfast Ride

EXOTIC WAGER: $5 Exacta 3,6/1,3,6

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2022 Malibu Stakes
RACE №8:
La Brea Stakes (G1)
7 FURLONGS (DIRT)
FILLIES 3-YEAR-OLDS
$300,000

OVERVIEW:

The Grade 1 action kicks off in this race with the La Brea Stakes, which has drawn a solid field of 8 runners this season. Most years this can be a wide-open event, with this year looking to be more of the same.

RACE SHAPE: EXPECT A FAST PACE

Pure Speed: *Hot Peppers*
Pressing Speed: *Ganadora, Under the Stars*
Stalkers: *Midnight Memories, Ain't Easy, Kirstenbosch*
Closers: *Fun to Dream, Awake At Midnyte*

One-turn races at Santa Anita are always pretty quick up front, with this race looking to be no different. Hot Peppers can really fly up front, while she should be pressed by a couple of these runners entered today.

TOP CHOICE: #1 UNDER THE STARS

Last time out, this filly was a solid second to Ce Ce, who won the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Sprint in 2021, and also had a solid 2022. While this is still a tough field, there isn't anyone as good as Ce Ce in this spot today. She also was a winner in her only start at this distance, while she always seems to run well at Santa Anita. Her best race should get the job done here.

MAJOR THREATS: #2 Hot Peppers, #4 Midnight Memories, #5 Ain't Easy

Hot Peppers should be the one setting the pace here, and can get brave on the front end, but faces a lot of projected pace pressure today. Midnight Memories looks for her third straight win, but must cut back in distance for this one. Ain't Easy should run better second off of the layoff, while also getting back to the dirt.

LONGSHOTS TO USE: #3 Ganadora

This filly was ultra-impressive last time out at Los Alamitos, winning a small stakes race by 8-lengths. Can that form translate to Santa Anita? Getting Velazquez aboard is a good sign that it might, but this is a tougher spot by far.

OTHERS: #6 Fun to Dream, #7 Kirstenbosch, #8 Awake at Midnyte

This one seems a little top-heavy, which makes these three horses up against today. However, this race has produced upsets in the past, so it wouldn't be shocking to see it happen again.

PICKS AND PLAYS:

BET TO WIN: #1 Under the Stars - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

BET TO PLACE: #4 Midnight Memories - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

ACROSS THE BOARD PLAY: #5 Ain't Easy - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

EXACTA: 1,4,5 BOX

TRIFECTA: 1,2,4,5 BOX

SUPERFECTA: 1,2,4,5 BOX

MULTI-RACE WAGER HORSES: 1,4,5

STRAIGHT WAGER: $20 Win on #1 Under the Stars

EXOTIC WAGER: $.50 Trifecta BOX 1,2,4,5

RACE №10:
RUNHAPPY MALIBU STAKES (G1)

7 FURLONGS (DIRT)
3-YEAR-OLDS
$300,000

2022 Malibu Stakes

OVERVIEW:

The main event of the card is the Malibu Stakes (G1), which is the last Grade 1 for the males of the season. Taiba should be ultra-tough to beat in this spot; however, there are several solid runners looking to take him down.

RACE SHAPE: EXPECT A FAST PACE

Pure Speed: *Forbidden Kingdom, Messier, Straight No Chaser*
Pressing Speed: *Hoist the Gold*
Stalkers: *Taiba, Strava*
Closers: *Apprehend, Nakatomi, Perfect Flight*

Look for another fast pace in this race with several horses looking to fly from the start. Stalkers and closers should have an advantage in this one.

TOP CHOICE: #6 TAIBA

He looks to become a 3-time Grade 1 winner in this spot, while returning to Santa Anita for a race for the first time since April. The horse is easily the class of the field, while there is no doubt he is the top horse left in training after the Breeders' Cup. He must cut back in distance today; however, his first race was a dazzling win going one-turn. He should have no trouble running these horses down with a clean trip.

MAJOR THREATS: #1 Forbidden Kingdom, #2 Messier, #4 Nakatomi

Forbidden Kingdom will likely set the pace from this inside post and could prove dangerous if left alone on the front end. Messier should bounce back after bleeding in his last race at Keeneland. Nakatomi goes or two in a row after a sharp allowance victory at Keeneland in his last start.

LONGSHOTS TO USE: #3 Apprehend

Peter Miller is always dangerous in these situations when he has horses that are big prices. Apprehend is a fairly consistent runner who is good enough to make some noise at a price if he shows up with this best race.

OTHERS: #5 Hoist the Gold, #7 Perfect Flight, #8 Strava, #9 Straight No Chaser

Beating horses like Taiba and Messier could prove tough for any of the horses in this group. They all look to be a bit overmatched in this tough spot.

PICKS AND PLAYS:

BET TO WIN: #6 Taiba - Confidence Level: 5 out of 5

BET TO PLACE: #2 Messier - Confidence Level: 4 out of 5

ACROSS THE BOARD PLAY: #4 Nakatomi - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

EXACTA: 2,6/2,4,6

TRIFECTA: 2,6/1,2,4,6/1,2,4,6

SUPERFECTA: 1,2,4,6 BOX

MULTI-RACE WAGER HORSES: 6

STRAIGHT WAGER: $50 Win on #6 Taiba

EXOTIC WAGER: $5 Exacta 2,6/2,4,6

RACE №11: AMERICAN OAKS (G1)

1 1/4 MILES (TURF)
FILLIES 3-YEAR-OLDS
$300,000

OVERVIEW:

The action comes to a close with the American Oaks (G1), which is the best betting race on the card. A large field of 11 runners are set to battle it out for top honors in this one, which truly looks to be an evenly matched group.

RACE SHAPE: EXPECT A SLOW PACE

Pure Speed: *NONE*
Pressing Speed: *Sparkle Blue, Miss En Scene*
Stalkers: *Skims, Salimah, School Dance*
Closers: *Rhea Moon, Lady Clementine, Oakhurst, Bellstreet Bridie, Pizza Bianca, Duvet Day*

There is no speed in this race at all, which should lead to a crawling pace up front. Look for them to all group tougher and close fast down the lane together.

TOP CHOICE: #5 BELLSTREET BRIDIE

This filly shipped to Del Mar last time out for her United States debut and simply dusted the competition to win the Red Carpet Stakes (G3). That kind of effort was eye opening, while she should improve in her second start in the United States today. Prat has jumped off of her to ride for Chad Brown, but Mike Smith climbs aboard, and Glatt has solid success using Smith on this circuit.

MAJOR THREATS: #2 Sparkle Blue, #6 Mise En Scene, #7 Skims, #9 Salimah

Sparkle Blue has won two of three stakes races this season coming into this race. Mise En Scene gets class relief after running in the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Turf (G1) in her last start. Skims goes for two in a row after a nice win in the Sands Point Stakes (G2) at Aqueduct last time out. Salimah ships in for Chad Brown and gets Flavien Prat aboard.

LONGSHOTS TO USE: #1 Rhea Moon

The local filly has won two straight races for a trainer who is dominant in turf races in Southern California. The shippers will be tough in this spot, though, while this definitely will serve as a class test.

OTHERS: #3 Lady Clementine, #4 Oakhurst, #8 Pizza Bianca, #10 Duvet Day, #11 School Dance

This one is pretty wide-open, which could lead to some long shots making an impact. However, we prefer others just a bit more than anyone in this group.

PICKS AND PLAYS:

BET TO WIN: #5 Bellstreet Bridie - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

BET TO PLACE: #9 Salimah - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

ACROSS THE BOARD PLAY: #2 Sparkle Blue - Confidence Level: 3 out of 5

EXACTA: 2,5,9 BOX

TRIFECTA: 2,5,6,9 BOX

SUPERFECTA: 2,5,6,9 BOX

MULTI-RACE WAGER HORSES: 2,5,6,7,9

STRAIGHT WAGER: $10 Win on #5 Bellstreet Bridie

EXOTIC WAGER: $.50 cent Trifecta BOX 2,5,6,9

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Race 2: 1-3-2-6
#1 Princip was a decent second last time out at this level and could improve today with the services of Flavien Prat. **#3 Bletchley Park** should improve in this spot with this being his second race off of the layoff. **#2 Purified** has hit the board in all three starts at this level. **#6 Palagio** needs to improve a bit after back to back poor efforts at Del Mar.

Exacta: 1,3/1,2,3
Trifecta: 1,3/1,2,3,6/1,2,3,6
Multi-Race: 1,2,3,6
Suggested Bet: $.50 Trifecta 1,3/1,2,3,6/1,2,3,6

Race 4: 3-7-5-4
#3 Faustin has the best looking workouts of the Bob Baffert runners in here, so we'll go with him on top. **#7 Worcester** is also a Baffert debut runner with powerful connections that usually win with first time starters. **#5 Yellow Brick** looks like he has some nice talent for Mandella, while Prat jumps aboard. **#4 Sonoran** is yet another Baffert runner who looks talented.

Exacta: 3,5,7 BOX
Trifecta: 3,7/3,4,5,7/3,4,5,7
Multi-Race: 3,4,5,7
Suggested Bet: $2 Exacta BOX 3,5,7

Race 5: 5-7-10-9
#5 Dandy Man Shines was a close second at this level last time out at Del Mar. **#7 Escape Artist** is a first time starter for a solid barn, while it is a good sign that Velazquez jumps aboard. **#10 Smart Code** was a decent fourth in his turf debut last time out and should move forward off of that race. **#9 Zihuatanejo** should improve stretching out in distance today after running fifth on debut going short at Del Mar.

Exacta: 5,7,10 BOX
Trifecta: 5,7,9,10 BOX
Multi-Race: 5,7,9,10
Suggested Bet: $.50 Trifecta BOX 5,7,9,10

Race 7: 9-1-8-7
#9 La Deuxième Etoile has hit the board in three straight races at this level. **#1 Flame McGoon** has hit the board in all three starts since moving to the turf. **#8 Big Beauty** has run second in two straight starts over the turf at Santa Anita. **#7 Eleuthera** returns from a layoff today, but was a neck away from winning at this level in her last start.

Exacta: 1,8,9 BOX
Trifecta: 1,7,8,9 BOX
Multi-Race: 1,7,8,9
Suggested Bet: $.50 Cent Trifecta BOX 1,7,8,9

Race 9: 12-3-6-10
#12 Karakatsie was fourth at this level last time out and should improve today with Rosario aboard. **#3 Ballet Dancing** looks to rebound after a poor effort in her last start. **#6 Batyah** should like the stretch back out in distance for this race. **#10 Leisurewear** goes for two in a row in this spot after a solid maiden special weight score at Del Mar.

Exacta: 3,6,12 BOX
Trifecta: 3,6,10,12 BOX
Multi-Race: 3,6,10,12
Suggested Bet: $.50 Cent Trifecta BOX 3,6,10,12

2022
Malibu Stakes

SANTA ANITA
MULTI-RACE ANALYSIS & PLAYS

RACE 1: $0.50 PICK 5

3 with 1,2,3,6 with 2,3,6 with 3,4,5,7 with 5,7,9,10 = $96

RACE 2: $0.50 PICK 4

1,3 with 2,3,6 with 3,4,5,7 with 5,7,9,10 = $48

RACE 5: $0.50 PICK 4

5,7,9,10 with 3,6 with 1,7,8,9 with 1,4,5 = $48

RACE 7: $0.50 PICK 5

1,7,8,9 with 1,4,5 with 3,6,10,12 with 6 with 2,5,6,7,9 = $120

RACE 8: $0.50 PICK 4

1,4,5 with 3,6,10,12 with 6 with 2,5,6,7,9 = $30

2022

Malibu Stakes