

MARK BELLING'S BELMONT STAKES PICKS - 2019

OVERVIEW:

This is certainly a snoozer from a drama standpoint. The Kentucky Derby winner isn't here nor is the horse that was disqualified from the Derby win. But Preakness winner War of Will, the horse that was interfered with in the Derby, is in the Belmont and has a chance to make some quirky history. If he wins, some will argue he was denied a Triple Crown by the interference caused by Maximum Security in the Derby. But War of Will is up against history. Horses that run in all three Triple Crown races have been lousy for 30 years now, unless they are trained by Bob Baffert. Mark Casse trains War of Will.

Tacitus was a solid fourth in the Derby and skipped the Preakness. He will be the likely favorite here. After that, it's a rather wide-open race. Those are the best ones. At a marathon 1 1/2 miles, the race is an anomaly and often produces long shot winners. I've had several of them including my great pick of 15-1 winner Creator in 2016. A lot of people like to pick horses that come from way off the pace in the Belmont, figuring they have the stamina to win this kind of race. There's just one problem with that theory: it is always wrong.

I love the Belmont Stakes because it rewards handicappers who can think outside the box. So, let's give it a shot. I will list, in order of preference, the horses I think can win.

PREDICTION:

HORSE #	HORSE	PROGRAM ODDS
6	SPINOFF	15-1
10	TACITUS	9-5
9	WAR OF WILL	2-1
8	INTREPID HEART	10-1
7	SIR WINSTON	12-1
5	BOURBON WAR	12-1

ANALYSIS

Trainer Todd Pletcher has won the Belmont three times and has both Spinoff and Intrepid Heart. I prefer Spinoff who is lightly raced, bred for the distance, has tactical speed that is critical in this type of race and an aggressive (and controversial) jockey. Spinoff had a lousy Derby but was stuck with a wide post position and is rested now. Tacitus has done nothing wrong and is rested after an excellent Derby. He's a grinder who looks like he can run all day. His price, however, will be short. War of Will was outstanding in the Preakness and was making a big move before being cut off in the Derby. But, as mentioned, he may be burned out. Intrepid Heart has the same trainer as Spinoff, the same running style and is also lightly raced. He's been based at Belmont Park for weeks. Bourbon War took a lot of betting action in the Preakness and ran awful. I have a hunch he'll improve here. Sir Winston scares me. He has the wrong running style in coming from way off the pace and was very good in finishing second four weeks ago over the Belmont track. Sir Winston is a possible winner here.

SOME BETS

(in order of preference; adjust bet size to your budget and comfort level)

\$15 to win place and show on #6 Spinoff ((\$45)

\$1 trifecta 6-10 with 5-6-7-8-9-10 with ALL (\$80)

50-cent trifecta 5-6-7-8-9-10 with 6-10 with ALL (\$40)

\$5 exacta box 6-10 (\$10)

10-cent superfecta 6-10 with 5-6-7-8-9-10 with 5-6-7-8-9-10 with ALL (\$28)

\$3 exacta wheel 6 with ALL (\$27); reverse for \$1 (\$9)

FRIDAY

My top play on Friday's card is on the longest graded stakes race in North America. The Grade 2 Belmont Gold Cup, run at two miles on the turf. It goes as race 10 and is part of a daily double with Saturday's Belmont Stakes. I like #3 Amade (8-1) a lot with #6 Arklow (5-2) as my second choice.