Fair Grounds | Race 12 | Saturday, March 21, 2026 Dirt | 1³⁄₁₆ Miles | Grade 2 Louisiana Derby | $1,000,000 3-Year-Olds | 9-Horse Field | Post: 6:42 PM ET

SECTION 1 — PACE ANALYSIS

True Front Runners

Chip Honcho (#3) — The model identifies this Connect colt as the primary front runner in the field. Has led or pressed the pace in every career start, including setting the pace in the Risen Star at Fair Grounds last month before being headed late. Projects to establish the early lead immediately from post 3 under Saez.

Stalkers / Pressers

Easterly (#8) — Has raced in a pressing to stalking role in both career starts, tracking 2nd-3rd early before making sustained runs. Model projects him settling just off Chip Honcho through the opening turn.

Pavlovian (#1) — Has pressed and stalked in multiple routes this season. Won the Sunland Derby by pressing and wearing down the leader. Model projects him in a tracking position 2-4 lengths off the pace through the first turn.

Maximum Offer (#3 — note: #6 Spirit of Royal) — Spirit of Royal (#6) has shown a mid-pack pressing style in his route starts. Model projects him settling 4th-5th early.

Autobahn (#2) — Has shown a wide pressing move as his signature trip pattern. Model projects him 4-6 lengths off the pace early, angling in for his run on the far turn.

Closers

Golden Tempo (#5) — Deep closer profile. Has come from well off the pace in all three career starts, including a massive far-turn move in the Lecomte. Blinkers on for the first time. Model projects him last or near-last early, timing a sustained run for the stretch.

Universe (#4) — Has raced as a mid-pack to closing type in routes. Model projects him settling 5th-7th early, requiring honest fractions to generate his best effort.

Blacksmith (#7) — Has stalked and pressed in his most recent start but projects as a mid-pack horse at this distance first time routing. Model projects him 4th-6th early.

Emerging Market (#9) — Only one career start. Came from mid-pack in his maiden win. Model projects him settling mid-field early with significant unknown trip variables.

Pace Scenario Projection

The model projects a MODERATE-to-HONEST early pace scenario. Chip Honcho is the lone confirmed front runner — the critical question is whether Easterly or Pavlovian press him aggressively or settle into comfortable stalking positions. If Chip Honcho gets an uncontested lead, this becomes a pace-favoring scenario that plays directly to his front-running strengths. If Easterly pushes him through honest fractions, the door opens significantly for Golden Tempo and the closers. The 1¾₁₆ mile distance is the longest any horse in this field has run — stamina questions exist throughout.

SECTION 2 — WIN PROBABILITY MATRIX

Horse	ML	Model Win %	Model Top-3 %	Value Rating
#5 Golden Tempo	7-2	24%	60%	VALUE
#3 Chip Honcho	3-1	21%	58%	FAIR
#1 Pavlovian	6-1	16%	48%	VALUE
#7 Blacksmith	6-1	13%	42%	VALUE
#8 Easterly	6-1	10%	36%	FAIR
#9 Emerging Market	6-1	8%	30%	MARGINAL
#2 Autobahn	8-1	5%	22%	MARGINAL
#4 Universe	12-1	2%	14%	NEGATIVE
#6 Spirit of Royal	20-1	1%	8%	NEGATIVE

SECTION 3 — CONTENDER ANALYSIS

#5 Golden Tempo ★★★★

Strengths:

- Won the Lecomte at Fair Grounds in January with a devastating late move — proven at this track and proven ability to close into a pace
- Won his maiden at Fair Grounds in December — 2-for-3 at this venue overall
- Model projects the highest late velocity in the field — ELITE Sustained Speed Rating
- DeVaux/Ortiz combination is sharp; Ortiz running at 29% nationally and 31% in the key J/T stat at Fair Grounds
- Blinkers on for the first time — the model projects a sharpening effect for a horse that has already shown elite closing ability
- The one legitimate concern from the Risen Star — finishing third after a wide move — is directly addressed by the blinker addition

Concerns:

- Three career starts is a limited foundation for a Grade 2 at $1\frac{3}{16}$ miles
- Blinkers are a variable — adds uncertainty in either direction
- DeVaux running at only 10% in graded stakes — small but relevant sample
- Needs honest pace to generate best effort; a slow pace scenario eliminates his advantage

Race Shape Fit: Ideal if pace develops as projected. The Lecomte win demonstrated the ability to close from last into a genuine pace — the Louisiana Derby at this distance sets up similarly.

Projection: The model projects Golden Tempo as the top selection in this race. At 7-2 with a 24% win probability projection, the model identifies a positive expected value overlay. The combination of ELITE velocity, Fair Grounds mastery, the top rider, and the blinker addition make this the model's primary recommendation.

#3 Chip Honcho ★★★★

Strengths:

- Proven Fair Grounds front runner — has led or pressed in every career start

- Won the Gun Runner Stakes at Fair Grounds in December — proven graded stakes winner at this venue
- Model projects a STRONG Sustained Speed Rating for a pace horse — deceleration profile is manageable if he gets a comfortable lead
- Asmussen/Saez combination has a 25% J/T strike rate at Fair Grounds this meet
- Works at Fair Grounds have been consistently sharp heading into this spot

Concerns:

- Was headed in the Risen Star last month by Paladin — the first time he has been beaten at Fair Grounds
- 3-1 morning line offers limited overlay given the pace exposure risk
- Lone confirmed front runner against a field with multiple pressing types — contested pace is likely
- Has never run $1\frac{3}{16}$ miles — stamina at this trip is an open question

Race Shape Fit: Fits best in an uncontested lead scenario. If Easterly or Pavlovian push him through genuine early fractions, the model projects a late vulnerability.

Projection: The model projects Chip Honcho as a legitimate win threat and the co-favorite in the model's matrix. Near-fair at 3-1 — the model does not identify a meaningful overlay but respects his Fair Grounds form and pace projection.

#1 Pavlovian ★★★

Strengths:

- Won the Sunland Derby by pressing and wearing down the front runner — proven route winner at $1\frac{1}{8}$ miles
- Has improved with every start — ascending trajectory across nine career starts
- O'Neill barn running at 14% in the 31-60 day window; strong ROI pattern
- Model projects a STRONG Sustained Speed Rating from his tracking position
- Has demonstrated the ability to handle pace pressure and still close

Concerns:

- No Fair Grounds experience — first start at this venue
- Ran third in the California Cup Derby at Santa Anita in January — beaten by horses not in this field
- Maldonado is a significant jockey downgrade from the Sunland Derby
- 6-1 morning line is fair but not a standout overlay

Race Shape Fit: Workable. The Sunland Derby win profile — tracking the pace and wearing down the leader — translates directly if the pace sets up as projected.

Projection: The model projects Pavlovian as a live value play at 6-1. The Sunland Derby win is the most applicable form in the field for today's scenario. At 6-1 with a 16% win probability projection, the model identifies a modest overlay worth a secondary investment.

#7 Blacksmith ★★★

Strengths:

- Wired his maiden at Santa Anita in February in dominant fashion
- Was second in the Los Alamitos Futurity at 2 — proven stakes-quality competition
- Baffert running at an elite 31% with dirt route runners — the strongest trainer angle in the field
- Model projects a STRONG Sustained Speed Rating — consistent deceleration profile
- Wathnan Racing ownership signals significant investment behind this horse

Concerns:

- First start at Fair Grounds — no track experience
- First route start beyond 1 mile — stamina at 1³⁄₁₆ miles completely unknown
- Was third in his January Santa Anita maiden before the February win — form consistency questions
- Geroux is a solid but not elite booking for this level

Race Shape Fit: The model projects him as a mid-pack stalker who needs a clean trip and a comfortable pace. The distance question is the primary concern.

Projection: The model projects Blacksmith as a legitimate value play at 6-1. Baffert's route/graded stats and the horse's raw ability make him a mandatory multi-race inclusion. The distance question introduces enough uncertainty to keep the model's confidence moderate.

#8 Easterly ★★★

Strengths:

- Won his most recent start at Gulfstream — arrived off a winning effort
- Cox/Zayas combination is sharp; Cox running at 29% with winners off their last start
- WinStar Farm ownership signals serious investment
- Model projects a pressing profile that could set up favorably

Concerns:

- Only two career starts — the thinnest experience in the field
- Both starts have been at Gulfstream — zero experience against Fair Grounds conditions
- Neither start was at route distance — stamina at $1\frac{3}{16}$ miles is completely unknown
- The model projects his pressing style could contribute to honest fractions that benefit the closers

Race Shape Fit: The model projects Easterly as a pace contributor more than a pace winner. His pressing style sets up Golden Tempo and the closers if he pushes Chip Honcho through honest fractions.

Projection: The model projects Easterly as a near-fair play at 6-1 with significant distance and experience questions. Use underneath in multi-race wagers rather than in win position.

#9 Emerging Market ★★

Projection: The model projects Emerging Market as a live longshot with enormous upside uncertainty. One career start — a dominant maiden win at Tampa Bay — is

nearly impossible to project into Grade 2 company at 1³⁄₁₆ miles. Brown/Prat is the most compelling trainer-jockey combination in the field, and Brown running at 26% in the 31-60 day window is a genuine angle. The model cannot dismiss a horse breaking from the maiden ranks with this team behind it. Use lightly underneath in multi-race sequences as a deep shot — the upside exists, but the model cannot project it with confidence.

#2 Autobahn — TOSS

Projection: The model projects Autobahn as a throwout in this spot. Three career starts, all at Gulfstream, with a maiden win as the lone accomplishment. The wide move pattern has produced a single victory against maiden company — insufficient foundation for Grade 2 competition at 1³⁄₁₆ miles. Do not use in win position.

#4 Universe — TOSS

Projection: The model projects Universe as below the line in this field. Has shown flashes of ability including a second in the Kentucky Jockey Club, but two consecutive flat efforts to begin 2026 and a wide trip pattern that has never produced a stakes win make him a fade at 12-1. Do not use in any keyed position.

#6 Spirit of Royal — TOSS

Projection: The model projects Spirit of Royal as the clear throwout in this field. A maiden win at Oaklawn followed by a distant ninth in the Southwest Stakes is insufficient preparation for a Grade 2 at this distance. Do not use in any position.

SECTION 4 — MPH ANALYSIS + SUSTAINED SPEED RATINGS

Opening Velocity Projections (Q1 — First Quarter Mile)

Horse	Q1 Proj MPH	Role
#3 Chip Honcho	38.1 mph	Pace — STRONG
#8 Easterly	37.2 mph	Presser — STRONG
#1 Pavlovian	36.8 mph	Stalker — STRONG
#9 Emerging Market	36.4 mph	Mid-Pack — ELITE
#7 Blacksmith	36.2 mph	Stalker — STRONG
#2 Autobahn	35.9 mph	Wide Presser — VULNERABLE
#5 Golden Tempo	35.4 mph	Closer — ELITE
#4 Universe	35.1 mph	Closer — VULNERABLE
#6 Spirit of Royal	34.8 mph	Mid-Pack — VULNERABLE

Closing Velocity Projections (Q4 — Final Quarter Mile)

Horse	Q4 Proj MPH	Decel %	Sustained Speed Rating
#5 Golden Tempo	36.2 mph	−2.3%	**ELITE**
#9 Emerging Market	35.8 mph	−1.6%	**ELITE**
#1 Pavlovian	35.4 mph	−3.8%	**STRONG**
#7 Blacksmith	35.1 mph	−3.0%	**STRONG**
#8 Easterly	34.9 mph	−6.2%	**STRONG**
#3 Chip Honcho	34.6 mph	−9.2%	**STRONG**
#2 Autobahn	33.8 mph	−5.8%	**VULNERABLE**
#4 Universe	33.2 mph	−5.4%	**VULNERABLE**
#6 Spirit of Royal	32.9 mph	−5.5%	**VULNERABLE**

Critical MPH Insight

The model's most significant finding is Golden Tempo's ELITE Sustained Speed Rating (−2.3% deceleration) combined with the lowest opening velocity projection among the primary contenders — a horse that conserves energy early and unleashes sustained late velocity is precisely the profile that wins the Louisiana Derby when the pace develops honestly. The secondary finding is Emerging Market's ELITE rating in only his second career start — the model flags this as a significant unknown that could represent either a false projection from a single data point or a genuinely elite horse. Chip Honcho's −9.2% projected deceleration at 1¾₁₆ miles is the model's primary pace-collapse concern — sustainable if uncontested, vulnerable if pressed.

SECTION 5 — IMPROVEMENT & REGRESSION CANDIDATES

Likely to Improve

Golden Tempo (#5) — The model projects a peak career effort here. Blinkers on, ELITE velocity profile, Fair Grounds familiarity, and Ortiz in the irons. The Lecomte was a career-best performance — the Louisiana Derby at the right distance with pace setup is the scenario where that ceiling gets raised.

Blacksmith (#7) — The model flags the Baffert barn's pattern of significant improvement from maiden wins to graded stakes first starts. The February maiden win projection suggests a horse running well below his ultimate ceiling. First-time route distance is the ceiling question.

Emerging Market (#9) — One start. The model projects significant improvement from a maiden win to a graded route as possible — Brown's pattern with lightly-raced horses supports this — but the uncertainty range is the widest in the field.

Bounce / Regression Risks

Chip Honcho (#3) — The Risen Star loss introduced the first pace-collapse data point in his career. Extending to 1³⁄₁₆ miles against a field that includes multiple pressing types projects as the most likely regression scenario for this horse.

Universe (#4) — Two consecutive flat efforts to begin 2026 following a promising late 2025. The model projects continued regression until demonstrated otherwise.

SECTION 6 — SUGGESTED BETS

Win Bet: #5 Golden Tempo Confidence: 7.5/10 The model projects 24% win probability against a 7-2 morning line (22.2% implied) — a positive expected value overlay. ELITE Sustained Speed Rating, the top late velocity projection in the field, Fair Grounds mastery, DeVaux/Ortiz at peak form, and blinkers adding a sharpening variable make this the model's primary win recommendation. Any board drift to 4-1 or better significantly strengthens the case.

Value Play: #1 Pavlovian Confidence: 6.5/10 Model projects 16% win probability against a 6-1 morning line (14.3% implied) — a clear positive expected value overlay. The Sunland Derby win profile translates directly to today's scenario. At 6-1, the model identifies meaningful overlay on a horse with a proven route win and an ascending career arc.

Top 3 Multi-Race: A / B / C A — #5 Golden Tempo B — #3 Chip Honcho C — #7 Blacksmith Confidence: 7/10

Structure Pick 3 (R12-R14), Pick 4 (R11-R14), and Bayou Bluegrass Pick 5 legs using this trio. Golden Tempo as the single where structure demands — he is the model's highest-confidence selection in this race. Spread B and C to protect against the pace scenario producing a Chip Honcho wire job. Pavlovian (#1) can be added as a fourth option in larger multi-race tickets given the value at 6-1. Do not use #4 Universe, #6 Spirit of Royal, or #2 Autobahn in any keyed position.

SECTION 7 — CONFIDENCE RATING

Overall: 6.5 / 10 ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐½

The model holds moderate-to-high confidence in the pace shape projection — Chip Honcho as the lone front runner with Easterly and Pavlovian pressing sets up clearly for the closers. The primary uncertainty is the concentration of lightly-raced horses with limited data points — Golden Tempo has three starts, Blacksmith five, Emerging Market one. In a race where every horse is running 1³⁄₁₆ miles for the first time, the model's velocity projections carry a wider error range than a field of seasoned route horses. Golden Tempo's combination of Fair Grounds form, ELITE velocity, and trainer-jockey edge gives the model confidence in the primary selection. The wild card is Emerging Market — a Brown/Prat horse with an ELITE velocity projection off a single start is impossible to fully dismiss, and the model flags him as the most significant unknown on the card.

Report Generated by PTW-CHR Model 1
Methodology: Proprietary fractional analysis, MPH speed metrics, sustained

speed profiling MPH figures in PTW-CHR Model 1 reports are proprietary index values derived from the model's internal distance-weighting methodology and are not expressions of real-world velocity. All horses are evaluated through the same calculation engine, making the figures valid for comparative ranking and deceleration analysis within the model's framework. Figures above conventional speed expectations are a function of the methodology's design, not a data error.

All projections represent model predictions based on historical performance data

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Gambling is a significant risk investment. Only gamble with recreational money and money you can afford to risk and potentially lose. If you possibly have a gambling problem, you should always seek professional help