

A Guide to Betting Santa Anita Park: Key Trends and Tips for the Autumn Meet

by Noel Michaels

Southern California racing returns to [Santa Anita Park](#) with the track's 2025 Autumn Meet set to begin Friday, Sept. 26 and continue through Sunday, Oct. 26. For handicappers, Santa Anita's Autumn Meet is sure to offer plenty of thrills for racing fans and prime betting opportunities and high-quality racing and wagering on both turf dirt and the turf.

In addition to daily top-notch racing at every level, Santa Anita will feature 22 stakes races during its 16-raceday season. The stakes program will be an important steppingstone for horses preparing for this fall's [Breeders' Cup World Championships](#) at [Del Mar](#).

The betting menu includes a new wager, the \$1 [Sunset Pick 6](#). The Sunset Pick 6 will feature a low 15% takeout and will be comprised of the final three races from both Santa Anita and [Gulfstream Park](#) on days that both tracks are running.

The Sunset Pick 6 is part of a comprehensive wagering menu available at the Santa Anita fall meet. The traditional \$2 Pick 6 will return to the menu on the last six races each race day. In addition to the usual betting pools you would expect, Santa Anita also will again offer player-friendly 15% takeout bets that have recently become popular in SoCal like \$5 late Daily Double, \$3 late Pick 3, and \$3 All-Turf Pick 3.

Get to Know Santa Anita – the Great Race Place

When handicapping Santa Anita, there are several trends horseplayers should pay attention to in order to improve profitability. Here are some things bettors can watch for at Santa Anita this fall.

Santa Anita's dirt track can yield some post-position and running-style biases and angles. On the main track, the predominant way for horses to win Santa Anita dirt sprints is by using early speed. Closers rarely win. There were 310 dirt sprints run at Santa Anita's various meets over the past year, and 179 of those races (58%) were won by horses racing on or close to the pace (within one length of the early lead). This represents a giant advantage. Stalkers coming from 1-4 lengths off the pace won 105 dirt sprints accounting for 34%, while closers coming from four or more lengths behind won only 26 of the 310 dirt sprints to account for just 8%. Post positions played little role in dirt sprint outcomes over the last year at Santa Anita.

Early speed also is effective in dirt route races, and in routes it also helps to draw an inside post position. Santa Anita ran 158 dirt route races (including one mile) over the past year with speedy horses racing on or close to the lead winning 83 of 158 to account for wins in 53% of the races. Stalkers won 35% of the routes and closers won only 12%.

Santa Anita's dirt routes over the course of the past year have had an average field size of 6.84 horses per race and when it comes to post positions, the track favored inside gates as horses breaking from posts 1-3 won 78 of the races to account for nearly half of all route wins.

Santa Anita Turf Trends

Santa Anita's turf course is home to some of the best grass racing in the country and it generally plays fairly to all running styles and running paths, with all types of horses routinely winning races from on the lead, stalking, and from off the pace. Obviously, it is better to save as much ground as possible and stay within a workable striking distance of the lead, but horses have fair chances on this course from outside post positions with any type of running style.

In 217 turf route races run at Santa Anita during the past year, horses with a stalking running style had the slight advantage over speed horses and closers. Stalkers coming from 1-4 lengths off the pace won 95 of the 217 turf routes the past year to account for 44% of the wins. Front-runners won 33% of the turf routes and closers won 23%.

Santa Anita has long been a turf sprint epicenter thanks to its unique 6 ½-furlong downhill turf course. These days they conduct even more turf sprints from a backstretch turf chute that accommodates sprints at a variety of distances, primarily at six furlongs.

On the 6 ½-furlong downhill turf course, the first turn in the race is actually a right turn, and with decades of stats to go on in these races it's generally accepted by handicappers that the inside posts 1-3 are a disadvantage in turf sprints down the hill. In terms of preferred running styles, speed horses and stalkers outperformed closers in a small sample of 39 downhill turf sprints at 6 ½ furlongs over the past year.

Flat turf sprints from the backstretch turf chute have become more frequent than downhill turf sprints at Santa Anita, and there were 170 of those races run during the past year. These flat Santa Anita turf sprints play remarkably fair in terms of running-style and post-position biases at all of the various distances ranging from five furlongs to 6 1/2 furlongs. The common flat turf sprint distance of six furlongs was the fairest distance of all. Speed horses won 35.6% of the six-furlong races, stalkers won 34.9% of the races, and closers won 29.5% of the races.

Santa Anita Fall Trainer Trends

For clues to which trainers might be the best bets at the 2025 Santa Anita fall meet, the optimal place to look is in the results from the corresponding meet last year.

Bob Baffert won the Santa Anita autumn 2024 training title with 14 wins from 44 starters for 32%. The leading trainer at the 2023 fall meet, **Mark Glatt**, went from 12 wins (24%) in 2023 to 7 wins in 2024 (17%) which was enough to place him in a tie for fifth in the trainer standings last year. **Phil D'Amato** ranked second on the trainer leaderboard each of the last three autumn seasons with 13 wins last year, 11 wins two years ago, and 15 wins in 2022.

The rest of the 2024 Santa Anita Autumn Meet top seven trainers were **George Papaprodromou** (12 wins, 31%), **Doug O'Neill** (10 wins, 20%), **Michael McCarthy** (7 wins, 18%), and 2022 fall meet leader **Peter Miller** who had 6 wins for 14% last fall.

If you prefer to draw your comparisons from the recently completed Del Mar summer meet, Baffert won the Del Mar title with 24 wins from 80 starters for 30%. Glatt finished second with 18 winners (19%), followed by Miller (18 wins, 15%), D'Amato (17 wins, 13%), and **John Sadler** who had 16 wins from 79 starters for 20%.

Santa Anita Top Jockeys

At the Fall Santa Anita meet, the rider to beat for the riding title will be **Juan Hernandez**, who led the 2024 autumn meet with 25 wins from 103 mounts (24%). The clear second and third in terms of wins were **Umberto Rispoli** (15 wins, 17%) and **Antonio Fresu** (14 wins, 17%). **Hector Berrios** and **T.J. Pereira** completed the top five in the standings with 10 wins apiece. It should be noted that **Mike Smith** had only 22 mounts during last year's fall meet but won six times, including multiple stakes that placed him second behind Hernandez in terms of purse money won at the meet.

Hernandez also won the 2023 autumn meet title at Santa Anita with 24 wins (25%) and he ran away with the recently concluded Del Mar summer meet title with 45 wins (27%). Fresu finished second at Del Mar (37 wins, 17%), Berrios finished third (26 wins, 19%), and Rispoli finished in a tie for fourth (23 wins, 18%) along with **Kazushi Kimura** (23 wins, 11%).

Get ready for a tip-top autumn season of racing and wagering at Santa Anita Park. Good luck and enjoy the meet.

2025 Autumn Meet Wagering Menu

- Traditional \$2 Pick 6 offered on the final six races each day
- 50-cent Early Pick 5 with 14% takeout, as well as traditional 50-cent late Pick 5
- 50-cent Early Pick 4, which is composed of race 2 through 5
- 50 cent Late Pick 4, covering final four races of each day
- Rolling \$2 Daily Doubles (except for final two races)
- \$5 Late Daily Double with 15% takeout rate on last two races
- \$3 All Turf Pick 3 with 15% takeout covering the final three turf races of the day
- \$3 Late Pick 3 with 15% takeout on final three races
- \$1 Rolling Pick 3 beginning with first race each day
- \$1 Sunset 6 final three races at both Santa Anita and Gulfstream Park
- \$1 Coast-to-Coast Pick 5 with 15% takeout
- \$2 Win, Place and Show wagering on each race, with 15.43% takeout
- \$1 trifecta on each race with minimum of four scheduled runners
- 10-cent superfecta on all races with a minimum of six scheduled runners
- \$1 exacta on each race