

COMING TO AMERICA: FORMULA ONE IS IN AUSTIN

It has been a very long week. Time to let loose. For a change, we open up with with the Formula One circus. For the first time since the not much loved race in Indianapolis gave up the Brickyard ghosts in 2007, Grand Prix returns to the United States. The setting is the newly constructed Circuit Of The Americas in Austin Texas.

This is pretty exciting stuff. Grand Prix needs to be in the US, but has not had a venue that felt right since leaving Long Beach due to a tizzie between Bernie Ecclestone and the local promoters over the licensing fee. The US venues since then, including Detroit, Las Vegas, Indianapolis and, yes, even a forgettable three year stint here in Phoenix, just never felt right. But there is a ten year agreement to stage the race at Circuit of the Americas, and the hope is for stability.

The promoters and F1 have trotted out Mario Andretti to rave about the new facility but, from what I saw of it during practice yesterday, it looks butt ugly to me. Coming two weeks after a stop at the opulent and gorgeous Abu Dhabi Yas Marina Circuit, the dustbowl cheap blight of COTA is embarrassing. Austin is a great city, maybe COTA will grow into something worth while with a little age, let's hope so.

As for the race, so far – as expected – the Red Bulls are fast. Vettel, Hamilton and Alonso, in that order, seem to be ahead of the pack early. The final practice is live on Speed starting at 10 am EST and qualifying starting at 1 pm EST, also on Speed. Coverage of the actual race starts at 1:30 pm Sunday, again on Speed. I will say this much, while the facilities and surrounding land look a little bleak, the track surface is smooth, wide, and looks both fast and

promising for passing. Tally ho!

No, it is not time for football yet, we have a report from Emptywheel's fearless Roving Reporter, Rosalind! Yep, it is horse racing news, and boy it is exciting. You all remember the blog love we had for the one and only amazing Zenyatta. (See also here). Well, Zenyatta is retired, but has a colt we shall see in another two years or so. But Zenyatta's younger sister has arrived baybee! That's right, Eblouissante!! Rosalind reported yesterday Eblouissante started, and won, her first race at Hollywood Park. And, with Corey Nakatani up, it was pretty special; worthy of Zenyatta in every respect. Take a look at the video, it almost gives you goosebumps.

Okay, I guess we better do a little football since, after all, this is a football blog. Starting with the college boys, the best action, by far, this weekend is in the Pac. The big matchup is Stanford taking its Tree up to Eugene to do business with the Ducks. Stanford is really good, but I don't think they have enough to beat the Quackers. Not in Autzen Stadium. The other interesting game, and it has been a while since this could be said with these two teams, is USC versus UCLA. The Bruins have a real shot, and the Trojans have been disappointing. They really need to terminate the Lane Kiffin experiment I think. Baylor doesn't have RGIII anymore, but they may give Kansas State a test.

In the pros, the action starts early with The Cheesers visiting the Kittens up in Detroit. The Pack are coming off their bye week, but still are plagued by injuries. Greg Jennings, Charles Woodson and Clay Matthews are all out. The Lions are starting to gel, at least a little. I smell an upset if the Lions front four can put pressure on Aaron Rodgers. The other must watch early game, even if it is just to see which way the train continues to wreck, is Philly at the Skins. At this point, it is hard to picture either team winning the game. Maybe it will be another tie, because Randiego's Bolts can't have

all the fun in that department. Speaking of the Bolts, they will be up at Mile High Casa de Peyton. Not likely to turn things around there.

The must see late game is Colts at the Pats. The Colts are actually a pretty decent team, it is not all Andrew Luck. If the line gives Luck some time, they have a real shot because, as seems to be habitually the case, the Pats defense sucks. But then there is Tom Brady, my guess is he is going to show the rook how it is done.

Then there are the night games, and they are both excellent. Sunday Night is Baltimore at Pittsburgh. Normally that is all that would need to be said, but not this time. No, the metrics have changed because Big Ben hurt his throwing shoulder and he is out. Taking over will be Byron Leftwich. Leftwich has had an up and down career, partially due to injuries, but he is certainly a serviceable backup. The Steelers will have Rashard Mendenhall back, and with youngsters Isaac Redman and Jonathan Dwyer, that is a hell of a backfield. They will need it as the Ravens are on a roll; look for that roll to continue. Monday Night is Bears at Niners in the Concussion Bowl. Both Alex Smith and Jay Cutler have issues with the noggin, Cutler is definitely out and Smith is very questionable. My guess is Smith will be cleared, and that makes the difference.

That's it for this week, get down to it.