

Race 1 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#6 ALL GAS NO BRAKES was well meant in his last start as he was sent right to the front leaving the gate. He was overtaken by veteran Perfetto in the second quarter, and that rival was intent on trying to bottom out the field. After gapping the leader on the turn, this gelding re-rallied along the pylons and looked briefly in mid stretch like he could win. He tired late and got passed by two rivals nearing the wire. That was his second decent effort in a row at this level and there are no Spartan Generals in here. Tyler Borth sticks with him over the rival to his outside who drops in class tonight. He gets top call to kick off the \$75,000 guaranteed Pick 5.

#7 RADIO LAB tried the big boys in the New Holland series last time, and not surprisingly, he failed to pick up a check. He fits much better at this level; he won twice in a row in this class in January before winning one level higher five starts back. With Tyler Borth opting for the choice, capable replacement Billy Davis Jr. returns to the bike. Davis Jr. drove him in six straight starts earlier in the year and teamed him to three wins. The only question mark is the stale date. If he is sharp enough after missing three weeks, he should be right there vs. this group tonight.

#3 BELLA CAVALLA rarely leaves the gate hard, so it was no surprise that she trailed throughout her last start after drawing the 10 hole. She gets needed post relief in this spot, and she should be able to land in mid pack early, then pass some rivals. She can work her way into the Tri or Super. She is a good one to use underneath in this spot.

#1 NASEY was over bet last time based on finishing second the week before in a fast mile where he got an easy trip then rallied late. He gets back to the rail post tonight from where he worked out that good trip two starts back. He has taken 15 slices in 2024-25, and he can get another decent following trip here and come on late to land in the bottom of the Tri or Super.

Race 2 Selections

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#5 B STONEY has been close to unbeatable at this class level recently, winning five of the last six races that he contested in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 claiming handicaps. Most recently, he patiently sat fourth and watch some mid race action in front of him, was produced in the widest path by James Macdonald at the eighth pole, and he easily sailed past two of tonight's rivals while taking a new season's mark. When he draws the middle of the gate, he typically blasts off the wings, and that will likely be the strategy he deploys tonight. He should prove tough to beat in this small field, but he won't offer much of a price.

#6 BET THE BB couldn't go with the choice late in the mile on March 17th as they both sat good following trips then fanned out in the lane and sprinted to the wire. He was a clear second in a good effort, then he came back five days later and tried facing JK Together Again, who hasn't lost at this track yet and was never getting caught that night after cutting a 57-flat opening half. He fits better here, and he gets regular driver Travis Cullen back in the bike. He figures to be the main threat to the choice tonight.

#4 NAZARE was bet down to an 8 to 5 second choice when he dropped to this class last time, and he was aggressively handled in a race that featured a fast three quarters. The two top choices in here simply got a better trip than him, and they were not going to be denied after sitting and watching Nazare contribute to the swift 1:22-flat three quarters fraction. There is reason to believe he can be better here in his second start at the level. It's likely that the fractions will be more to his liking tonight. He has a shot at what should be a better price.

#2 TANGO SEELSTER is one that is good to use on the bottom of Tri and Super tickets racing at this level because he will typically sit back, conserve energy, then close late, passing some rivals that could be tired from early efforts in the mile. In his last start, he was a closing third to the top two choices in this race without threatening for the win. Another small share is likely for him tonight.

BEST BET: B STONEY

Race 3 Selections

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#2 ESPLOSIONE is a bit of a risky proposition because of his gait issues and the possibility that he could explode, but he fits versus these and gets some changes that should be positive, and he should offer a price that makes it worth the risk. Tonight, he gets back on the big track for this third start of 2025, and, perhaps more importantly, he gets Doug McNair back in the bike. McNair is familiar with the gelding having driven him to two of his wins last year, including a victory at this level in his final start of the year. I'll take a stab with him here expecting a much-improved performance with McNair in the bike.

#3 THE CANAM BANKER was predictably taken back and given a conservative drive last time after breaking on the lead in his previous start. He trotted a nice back half and kicked home in 28 2/5 in a solid effort that should set him up for another speed try tonight. He does his best work on the engine, and Trevor Henry will likely send him tonight starting from a good post. He could get brave in this spot if he gets left alone on the lead, and he is one that merits a close look for multi-race tickets.

#4 ETERNALLY HANOVER hinted that he was going to wake up when he finished third in two of three starts where he stayed flat in late February and early March. He stepped up in class on March 17th and he was provided with a perfect second-over trip by Jody Jamieson which enabled him to get the job done as a 17 to 1 longshot. He is in peak form now and he figures to be a threat right back at the same level. I just wonder if he will get over bet off that perfect trip win. Price will be the key factor for me with this Kadabra gelding.

#6 SOUTHWIND DOMINO was Louis-Phillipe Roy's choice in here over The Canam Banker which is interesting when you consider that Roy last drove this gelding last November, and in that race he steered him to a lifetime-best 1:54 1/5 score, a two-and-a-half length win. This Walner gelding has taken three wins already this year from only nine starts, and he isn't out of place in this field. He is another to consider for multi-race tickets in this competitive field.

Race 4 Selections

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#7 BOOMANDBUST it could be argued is appropriately named because he can have gait issues at times that cause him to bust, but he has also shown he can boom when he stays flat. Coming off two breaks in stride that required him to requalify, he raced well in defeat in a Pop Up series race last time. Trailing around the last turn, he was kept racing along the pylons by Louis-Phillipe Roy, and he trotted the lane well to get up for fourth while visually moving well at the wire. Four starts back he beat a field similar to tonight's with an impressive wire job from post eight. It's expected that he will be handled more aggressively now that he got that flat mile down and he gets top billing here.

#2 JOKIC is another that was having gait issues recently and he seems to have that problem solved as he has stayed flat in three straight starts at Flamboro Downs and raced well in all of them, taking a win and two seconds. His most recent start at the Dundas oval was impressive as he rallied from last making a wide move on the far outside to get up to finish a clear second. He is no stranger to Mohawk Park having taken two of his eight wins here including his 1:54 1/5 lifetime mark. He should be in the mix with these tonight in a class that he seems to fit.

#1 COLLECTOR S hasn't shown much since requalifying on February 21st, but he was racing at a higher level in all of those starts and he did trot progressively faster miles in each and trotted a decent final quarter in his last start after floundering late in his previous two miles. Class relief could be exactly what the doctor ordered to get him back on track, but I don't love the rail post for him, and I wouldn't take a short price here.

#6 DONATOVER exits the same race as the top pick, and he finished two-and-a-half lengths behind that rival while finishing with broken equipment. In his previous start, he was simply in over his head facing Macallan in a Pop Up series race. He figures to improve tonight starting from the best post and he was an impressive first-over winner racing at this level four starts back. He is another in with a shot in a race with several options for multi-race tickets.

SPOT PLAY: BOOMANDBUST

Race 5 Selections

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#6 SOUTHWIND SAMBUCCA broke in his comeback race following a two-month break then he came back five days later and got a tour of the track and a flat mile. He just missed getting a cheque, now he drops to the bottom level and draws the best post. There are no Kolby Two Steps in here and there is a good chance we will see the best version of Southwind Sambucca tonight. He was a four-length 1:52-flat winner last time he raced in this class in November. He is the clear top pick here.

#5 THRILLING TIMES comes out of a solid qualifying mile where he chased a loose leader to the lane, and stayed inside until late in the mile. Then he split horses and closed late, pacing a 27 4/5 kicker without being urged late in the mile. That was a good prep that should have him well set up for a solid try in this second start of 2025. He raced in tough claiming handicap races most of last year and took his lifetime mark of 1:51 2/5 here in the summer. He will likely give the choice a race tonight.

#1 MAJOR HILL raced decently in a Pop Up series race last time, making front before the quarter, then getting outsprinted in a fast third quarter. He re-rallied in the lane down along the pylons, finishing with interest to be beaten only two lengths. He should find this class a bit easier, and I could see him tripping out following the choice in this spot. He can be an exotics factor at a square price tonight.

#3 CONTROL THE GOLD had two starts back to open the year where he didn't have much pop on the end of his miles. He was given a month off, and he raced much better in his qualifier on March 21st when finishing second to Open pacer Fortify. He couldn't go with that classier rival late in that mile, but he did pace a 26 3/5 final quarter and he is probably at his sharpest of 2025 right now. The six-time winner can get a piece of this, likely racing closer to the front than he did in his opening two races of the year.

Race 6 Selections

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#2 PENNTPELLER HANOVER, a \$500,000 Harrisburg yearling, perhaps didn't live up to expectations to this point, but he did show some of his potential with an impressive four-year-old debut where he flew past non-winners of two rivals to win as the 8 to 5 favorite on March 14th. He has been lightly raced having made only five starts at three and this single start at four so far, but he has been good in all but one of those races where he broke stride. He might reel off several wins in a row now if he stays sound, the second of which should come in this spot tonight.

#3 MRSTERY DEAL is always around the money, but he never gets bet it seems and that can be good for Exacta and Trifecta players that include him on their tickets. He comes into this race off two solid efforts in defeat to streaking My Buddy Sam. Previous to that he landed two thirds and two fourths, so he is getting closer to getting off the 2025 schneid. I think if the top choice performs as expected tonight, he will be racing for second again, however, but this gelding should give another good accounting of himself in this spot.

#5 ROYAL BELUGA is 0 for 11 this season so far, but he almost always trots his race which is to drop back and pass rivals late. He took an aggressive approach and went the front on March 14th and he looked like a winner until Pennteller Hanover showed up late raging with trot. He came back with another good effort at Flamboro Downs where he was parked a long way and still got second. He is an honest horse that never lacks for effort, and he is in the mix for a good share again.

#8 FABULOUS FREDDIE goes from the rail to the widest post, but he might be able to get positioned better early starting from out there. He has produced several good efforts at this level, including two wins in his last four starts and he is capable of beating this prediction if he can work out a better trip than he got last time in a fast mile of this class.

Race 7 Selections

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#9 LETS GET ROCKED reeled off his second win in a row on March 17th when claimed, and he paid the minimum 1 to 9 mutuel that night. That was his fourth win in his last six starts, but only the second time he was directed by the leading driver. The two teamed up for another win last August, a 1:51-flast score taken at a higher claiming handicap level. He is sent out by trainer Garry Merner tonight, who is clicking at a 22 per cent strike rate in 2025 so far. Despite drawing widest, he is clearly the horse to beat here.

#6 JJ TOMMY hasn't been able to beat the choice in his last two starts, but he raced well in both of those starts and he draws best again, so he should work out another good trip. He has only one win so far this year, but has taken four other shares, and he races off the Amanda Riley claim tonight. He is the logical alternative to the Lets Get Rocked if you think the widest post might lead to that one's demise.

#8 HOWMAC VICTOR has been racing well and passing horses at the end of most of his miles and he has shown he is competitive at this level winning in wire-to-wire fashion six starts back when claimed by Vic Puddy. He will likely get overlooked in this spot and he can pass many of these late and get a good piece of this at a square price. He is worth using on Tri and Super tickets.

#4 KYLES ART finished fourth twice in a row to Lets Get Rocked since being claimed, getting similar trips in both races. Prior to those two starts, he was a winner of three of four starts racing one level lower than this, where he seems to fit better. A small share is likely the ceiling for this one again, but he could sneak into the Tri if he gets a good following trip. Jonathan Drury will likely put him into play leaving the gate again tonight and hope to find the pocket.

Race 8 Selections

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#5 PESO HANOVER raced great in defeat at this level on March 14th, trotting a big first-over mile and producing a 27 2/5 kicker in defeat, but he provided perfect cover for the eventual winner, and he got nailed late. He came back in a tough non-winners of six race at Flamboro Downs and he ended up in a strange race where there were geese on the track and the judges honked the horn at them which in turn gave the drivers the idea there would be a recall. The horses were also not released until past the typical starting point, so the entire race was refunded but purse money paid out. He did his best to finish fifth, and he gets top billing in this field tonight.

#2 DELICIOUSSTONE DK raced better two starts back when he blasted to the front from post 10, showing some zip for the first time in several starts. That hint at better form wasn't heeded by most bettors as he was sent off at 11 to 1 racing at this level on March 21st. He rallied well off third-over cover and got up to take the upset win, trotting the same 28 4/5 kicker that he did the week before. Now that he has reached his form peak, he is in with a decent chance to repeat.

#4 BUCK DANCER is always around the money at this class level, and he simply got too long of a trip last time, but he provided the live flow that helped Deliciousstone DK. He performs better when he can make front and control the fractions, and he has a better chance of seeing the lead starting from the four hole tonight. He is another that is in with a shot here in this fourth start since being claimed by Auciello.

#6 MISTER MAGIC, like his stablemate Buck Dancer, is always in the hunt at this level, but he has only one win in 12 starts this year to show for it so far. As he does often, he made a middle move to the front last time, and he came close to holding off Deliciousstone DK and another rival. He is hard to count out completely, but based on recent results, I prefer to use him underneath in this spot tonight.

Race 9 Selections

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#6 MY BUDDY SAM is a hot horse right now and although he faces tougher tonight, he projects to get the trip that will take him to a threepeat. Starting from the best post, he will surely get put into this race leaving the gate by Scott Young, and it is likely that he will then accept a pocket trip when the one-dimensional front ender lined up to his right takes over the lead. From there, he can get carried to the lane then unleash his strong late kick to get up for the third consecutive win.

#2 SPARTAN GENERAL is another horse that comes to this race in terrific form, and he also is seeking a threepeat here. He took two wins in a row using different tactics, and he looked good powering up to win on March 17th, unleashing a wicked 27 2/5 late kick. He will probably be taking a closing approach again tonight with some fast leavers lined up on the outside of the gate, but he will likely be the one to fend off late in this mile.

#7 SPARKS FLY's strategy is never a secret. He will blast off the gate in high gear, look to make front as quickly as he can, then try to lead all the way. In his last start, though, he showed he can relinquish the lead and make another move to get the job done. He qualified in good time on March 21st to stay sharp, and he is hard to toss from multi-race tickets because you know he is always a threat.

#5 PERFETTO raced much better last week, and he looked like he might win until Spartan General came flying late in the stretch. The 31-time winner who is creeping up on \$1,000,000 in earnings probably won't see the front tonight and will be forced to take a closing approach. I see him closing for a slice in this field and I prefer to use him underneath in this spot.

Race 10 Selections

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#4 MACALLAN has dominated in this series so far simply because he holds a big class edge on his rivals. He controlled both of the preliminary legs on the engine and enjoyed soft early fractions, and he might not get as easy of a trip here because they race 'em in these finals and there tends to be more movement right from the start of the race. Still, he is the best horse, and he can make more than one move and still beat these. He should prove hard to take down tonight.

#2 SHADRACK HANOVER raced decently in Leg 1, and he was no secret in the second leg, getting bet down to 4 to 5 and getting a much more aggressive drive that led to a blowout win. That was his best race of the year, and he retains the leading driver here. This eight-year-old veteran is the logical alternative to Macallan in this spot where he should get another aggressive steer.

#1 ARCHIMEDES was a distant third to Macallan in Leg 2, then he fired back in four days and got bet down to 4 to 1. He produced a nice rally in that race to fall just short, and he is another that comes into this final sharp. There is plenty of early speed in here to set up his late rally. If the race falls apart late, he could be the beneficiary. He would start to get interesting if dismissed by bettors at 15 to 1 or higher.

#5 ARRAKIS knows only one way to go, and that is straight to the front leaving the gate. Assuming that Macallan isn't going to sit for long before moving to the front, the dynamics of this race could lead to this gelding getting a pocket trip and he should be able to stick around to take a share. He is a good one to use underneath in Tri, Super, and High-5 bets.

#8 EYES OF JUSTICE changes tactics for this series and showed big speed in both legs while finishing second twice to Macallan. The issue for him tonight is, there will be plenty of leavers to his left and he will likely be forced to take back, sit, and rally. He has shown many times that he can pass horses, and he can beat this prediction if he gets out into a live flow.