

## Race 1 Selections

## The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

**#8 VANDIEMEN BLUECHIP** shipped north to race in leg 1 of the Graduate Series, and his fifth-place finish is better than it looks on paper. After blasting to the front and forcing Gem Quality to take a seat heading into the first turn, he let 3 to 5 favorite Captain Luke go and from there he sat the pocket through a wicked 1:20 2/5 three quarters. He had pace in the lane, but he couldn't use it because he had the door slammed shut by the leader who was fending off the closers. He finished fifth beaten two lengths, but he would have been much closer if he found racing room. Braxten Boyd, who has driven the gelding 11 times since late July of 2024 takes the lines tonight. He gets the call to kick off the guaranteed \$75,000 Pick 5

**#1 ODDS ON CAPITALISM** will welcome tonight's class drop after racing in several fast miles in a row at the top level against the likes of Brue Hanover, Soaring Now, and Taurasi. He took two wins and two seconds in four tries at the Preferred level then started to tail off when Brue Hanover appeared on the scene and Taurasi got good. He is capable of rebounding in this spot, and he is another that I would consider for the early Pick 5.

**#2 P L OZZY** was sizzling until he drew outside when he jumped up to this level last week and drew a wide post. He never got involved in that mile, but that doesn't mean that he can't compete at this level tonight. Drawing inside can be key as seen two starts back where he was driven more aggressively and notched a 1:50 3/5 score. He has won at higher levels than this at this track in the past, and he is another that is in with a shot in a competitive race to kick off the card.

**#3 HUNGRY MAN** is another one that drops from the top class that should be better tonight. He showed three starts back that he could win at this level, and he pulled a 26 3/5 third quarter out of his arsenal to get the job done. Positioning will be key in this mile as there are several in here that do their best work racing on or near the lead. This is another one to think about in this contentious field.

## Race 2 Selections

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**#5 MIKI AND MINNIE**, last year's Dan Patch winner for best two-year-old pacer, had a tune up race for this Fan Hanover elimination, and that's bad news for her five rivals that appear overmatched on paper. The Always B Miki sophomore was sensational at two, winning both the Breeders Crown final and the Three Diamonds, and taking a mark of 1:49 2/5. In a race where she will likely go off at 1 to 9, the object will probably be to win while conserving as much energy as possible looking ahead to the inevitable clash with Canadian Horse of the Year Chantilly in the final next week. She makes this Pick 5 into a Pick 4 essentially, but that's okay, because the takeout is 15 per cent which is lower than a typical Pick 4.

**#4 PERFECTLY CHIC**, a local hope, has turned out to be a bargain, already earning more than 14 times her \$12,000 purchase price. She comes off two solid efforts versus undefeated Chantilly, and she just paced the fastest mile of her life in a Gold race finishing third to that rival. She has been flashing sharp early speed in her starts this year, and she has a good chance to ride in Miki And Minnie's pocket and complete the Exacta in this spot tonight.

**#2 CANT SEE ME** showed flashes of brilliance at two, starting with her debut mile where she won a leg of the Whenuwishuponastar series by flying home in 25 3/5. She later won a Grand Circuit race and competed in the Breeders Crown. She has come back good, winning and finishing second in two races against salty older conditioned mares. It's hard to imagine her not being part of the Tri in this six-horse field.

**#3 DURATION** was good enough at two to make it into the Breeders Crown final won by Miki And Minnie. She took only one win in that rookie campaign, but she took cheques in all but two of her 14 starts. She comes out of a mile where she paced her own back half in 53 1/5 with a 26-flat kicker and she should be passing some rivals late tonight. A driver change at scratch time puts Scott Zeron in the bike tonight.

**BEST BET: MIKI AND MINNIE**

### Race 3 Selections

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**#1 CHANTILLY**, Canada's Horse of the Year in 2024, stayed undefeated winning another OSS Gold race last week, pacing her first sub-1:50 mile in the process. She will likely go off at 1 to 9 again tonight, but she faces a bit of a tougher group here with some sharp invaders showing up for this Grand Circuit race. She will likely keep her perfect record intact, setting up a battle royale with Miki And Minnie next week, but she might get a race in this spot.

**#6 WESTWINDS** isn't as heralded as some of the others in here, but the Noel Daley trainee knows where the wire is having taken wins in six of her nine starts, and she couldn't be any sharper right now. After gutting out a Pennsylvania All Stars win racing first up two starts back, she beat a field of veteran older mares by unleashing a 26-flat final quarter. She adds Lasix now, and that could be part of the recipe for a potential upset score. If she is close enough at the head of the lane, she might be able to pull it off. I would consider using her in the early Pick 5.

**#5 THE LAST MARTINI** was probably the second best two-year-old filly south of the border last year. She won her Breeders Crown elimination and finished second to Miki And Minnie in the final, and she won her Shes A Great Lady elimination at this track, then finished a distant second to Chantilly in the final of that Grand Circuit stake. She has shown versatility, but I think Doug McNair rolls her starting from a good post here and she can stick around for a good share.

**#3 RODEO DRIVE DEO** finished off her rookie campaign with a big effort to finish second to Miki And Minnie in the Three Diamonds, pacing a sub-1:50 mile in defeat. She has come back strong so far in 2025, but I don't see much value using her underneath as the likely second choice. She could beat this prediction of course, but I will try to beat her out of the Exactor and Tri using other sharp fillies instead and create a little value in this race.

## Race 4 Selections

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**#7 CAPTAIN OPTIMISTIC** is no stranger to Mohawk Park having won an elimination of the Metro Pace and finishing third in the final here last year. He was a winner of seven of 11 at two and his biggest moment came in the Governors Cup in November where he beat Swingtown by four lengths. He took a mark of 1:49 1/5 at two so he is obviously fast enough to be one of the main contenders in this renewal of the North America Cup. He had a good tune up for this elimination in a fast Pennsylvania Sires Stake, and he should be on his toes tonight. It's go time and he gets the nod here in the opening leg of the 20-cent Pick 6.

**#8 SWINGTOWN** is the other obvious contender in this first elimination. He closed to finish only three quarters of a length behind Captain Optimistic in the Metro then finished second to him in the Governors Cup. He looks faster at three as evidenced by his 1:49 3/5 qualifier raced over a good track that was assigned a one second variant on May 13th. He followed that up with a 1:50 3/5 win beating some overmatched rivals in a Buckeye race in Ohio. I don't think he has much choice but to blast off from the widest post. He and the top pick could decide this race coming to the wire.

**#2 BOURBON COUNTY**, a winner of 6 of 13 at two, gave notice that he was ready for his sophomore campaign in his first start at three here on May 24th. Racing against his elders that night, he paced his own back half in 53 1/5 after dropping to the back of the eight-horse field at the start, kicking off the year pacing a 1:50 1/5 mile. Bettors that were onto him off that performance were rewarded with a \$12 mutuel last week when he rode the cover of the 1 to 5 favorite to score his first Grand Circuit win in his first attempt. He is obviously improving, and he might be the kind of colt that takes another step forward tonight. He is worth a look as the probable third choice.

**#4 FAST CHOICE** had a nice rookie season in the New York Sires Stakes program at two, winning all of his first four starts contested in sires stakes. He ran into some gait issues after that, and his season got derailed. His first start at three was a good one with him finishing second to Courts On Fire. He can pass some of these in the back half and sneak into the Tri or Super.

## Race 5 Selections

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**#6 LARRY KARR** surprisingly took back at the start last week considering that he almost always heads to the front leaving the gate, and that strategy almost paid off with a win when coming off a three-and-a-half-month break. He was sent first up in the third quarter, and he wore down the 8 to 5 second choice, but he got picked off right on the wire by the even money favorite that he had provided perfect cover to. There is a solid argument to be made that he was the best horse in that race, but trip worked against him. I think Tyler Borth will send him to the front from the best post position tonight and look to bottom out the field, and he has a good chance of doing just that.

**#4 ORDER ONE TO GO** has been consistent lately racing in \$50,000 claimers taking top three finishes in all of his last three starts. He was sent off as the even money choice last week starting from the best post, and it took him every step of a perfect trip to get past Larry Karr in the final strides of that mile. I certainly won't punish him for finding the best trip – that's a big part of how James Macdonald wins 'O'Brien Awards – and he could find the best trip again tonight. But based on last week's trips and results, there is very little separating him and the top pick here, and he will likely offer little value in the win pool tonight.

**#7 MAJOR FERNCO N** raced great three starts back when he was claimed by Garry Merner, making several moves in a sub-1:49 mile. He followed that up with a win at a generous price of 3 to 1 then looked to double up last week. He made a middle move to the front then came under pressure from Larry Karr in the third quarter. He fought gamely but fell short finishing third behind the top two picks in this race. Drawing outside he will likely float out for position and look for a trip. If he can land in Larry Karr's pocket, he would be in with a shot here. His price will likely be much higher than last week's 8 to 5 here, and that makes him worth a look as a potential value play.

**#5 HOWMAC VICTOR** blasted right to the front from post eight last week then rode in Major Fernco's pocket to the stretch. That rival drifted off the rail when he started to tire, giving this gelding every chance. He had a clear run up the inside, but he couldn't stay with Larry Karr and Order One To Go in the drive to the wire. He is likely destined to take another small share tonight.

## Race 6 Selections

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**#6 STONEBRIDGE HELIOS** raced here Monday night at a class one level lower than tonight's and I thought he raced well in defeat. After getting away second last leaving the gate, he was immediately asked to go forward, and he charged into the pocket by the time he reached the first turn. From there, he followed a charged-up leader down the backstretch then popped out of the pocket entering the last turn. He forged his way to the front outside the eighth pole then fended off all but one rival that rode cover to the stretch. I like that he fires back quickly and draws the best post. If he can get a more alert start tonight, he might lead these all the way.

**#8 JACK PANIC** gets needed class relief tonight, and he is the only dropper in this field facing many that are stepping up in class. The last time he made this kind of a class drop, he was sent off at 9 to 5 and he set some wicked fractions, looked like a winner at the head of the lane, then got picked off in deep stretch. I have no doubt that Jonathan Drury will be sending him here, and the 20th start might be the charm for this hard trier that comes into tonight's race with a 0 for 19 record in 2025.

**#3 KAPTAIN KARLOS** raced well in his first start back at Mohawk Park, closing from the back to finish a narrowly beaten third while kicking home in 26 4/5. He gets off the rail post tonight, so he should be able to get spotted closer to the front. He also gets back on a seven-day cycle after missing three weeks prior to his race last week. Driver Travis Henry again handles the lines, and he continues to do well in limited opportunities at this track, often going off as an overlay. This gelding is only 1 for his last 38, so I'd demand a price, but he is in with a chance versus these.

**#2 SOUTHSIDE EDDY** will get some play tonight because of the way he closed from 10th last week to fourth, finishing only a half length behind Kaptain Karlos at the wire. His 26 2/5 final quarter certainly stands out. Starting from a better post tonight he will get put into play by aggressive driver J R Plante. He stacks up well in this field, but he has had a busy season so far and has taken only one win from 20 starts. I prefer to use him underneath in this spot.

## Race 7 Selections

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**#6 SIPPINONSEAROC** earned close to \$780,000 last year on the strength of six wins from 11 starts, all of those wins coming in sires stakes races in the states of Kentucky and Ohio. He earned a good chunk of that too in the Breeders Crown final where he showed he could go with the big boys. That night, he rallied off third-over cover and fired home in 25 3/5 to just miss catching his tripped-out stablemate Louprint. He had a couple of tune ups for this North America Cup elimination the most recent a crushing sub-1:50 win over some overmatched Buckeye Stallion Series rivals. He gets the best post here and he will likely look to go down the road. He gets top billing over last year's Metro Pace winner.

**#7 FALLOUT** started his sophomore season with two losses, but I'm not worried about that especially considering that in his most recent start he was a narrow loser to last year's Breeders Crown winner Louprint, who sat a perfect pocket trip for the first seven eighths of a mile before pouncing. This Captaintreacherous colt is of the highest quality having won the Metro Pace here last year and falling just a neck short in the Breeders Crown after setting the pace. Tim Tetrack will no doubt put him in play leaving the gate tonight, and he figures to be the main threat to the top pick.

**#4 LITE UP THE WORLD**, one of the top local hopes comes in off a loss in the Somebeachsomewhere stakes, but that was one of his best efforts to date. After dropping back to sixth early, he embarked on an outside journey that would leave him uncovered for the final five eighths of the mile. He provided perfect cover for the eventual winner though, and even then, it took that rival most of the stretch to get past him. He is a bit of a dark horse, but he oozes talent, and he could notch an upset here with the right trip.

**#5 CRACK SHOT** failed to hit the board as the 1 to 20 favorite in the Somebeachsomewhere stakes, but that loss can be excused because he was out of position and would have needed to pace a sub-26 final quarter to get himself in the win photo. He gets his regular driver Doug McNair back tonight, but he gets the acid test facing some of the best colts in North America. A small share is likely for him, and he could make it into the final.

## Race 8 Selections

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**#2 TWIN B FRESH BET**, a \$500,000 Harrisburg buy, took only one third place finish from seven starts at two and earned only just over \$13,000. He looks faster and better at three, though. In his first start back, he raced first up and provided perfect cover for the winning favorite who rode his helmet to victory. He parlayed that good effort into a maiden win as the 1 to 5 favorite where he paced the fastest final quarter of his career to date. Racing on Lasix seems to have contributed to his improvement as a sophomore. He fits well here, and he has the best driver in the world listed to take the lines. He has a good shot to double up.

**#4 REIGNING CAPTAIN** is another that has been better as a sophomore. He hasn't missed the top three in his first four starts, and his 1:52-flat mark taken racing on the engine two starts back is the fastest mark in this field by a full second. In his most recent start, he got away decently from the tricky rail post then he took a shuffle back to fifth on the far turn where he snuck off the pylons in traffic to latch onto second-over cover. He rallied widest and won the race for sure behind the two 8 to 5 favorites. He stacks up well in this field and getting off the rail, he may be able to control the race on the front end. He should be the main threat to the top choice.

**#6 GRIN AND WIN** should improve by default facing easier in this spot and drawing the best post. His race three starts back where he was a closing second in 1:52 1/5 certainly qualifies him as a contender versus this non-winners of two group and Jody Jamieson should put him in play early from post six. Not lining up against OSS Gold colts tonight puts him in the picture and he is another possibility for multi-race tickets.

**#1 BETTERDEALMEIN** had a decent rookie campaign, taking two wins from seven starts and missing the board only once and he did some good racing over this track racing in the Snowshoe series earlier this year as a sophomore. He has only one win this year from eight starts, but again he has missed the board only once and that came in his comeback race two starts back when he drew an outside post. He came close in a Grassroots race in London on their closing night, and he can take a share here now that he is sharp. He is a good one to use on the bottom of Tri and Super bets.



## Race 9 Selections

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**#6 LOUPRINT** finished off a stellar rookie campaign with a win in the Breeders Crown last October and he has gotten sharp racing and winning in three Pennsylvania Sires Stakes this spring which should have him perfectly primed for this North America Cup elimination. The homebred son of Sweet Lou has taken 10 wins from 13 starts and he hasn't missed the board, and he should be brimming with confidence coming off a win over last year's Metro Pace winner. Starting from the best post tonight he is strictly the one to beat.

**#1 PRINCE HAL HANOVER** had a nice rookie campaign last year that started with a Grand Circuit win in his debut when he won racing first up in the Tomkins-Geers. His best effort was also produced racing over this track when he was a strong second to Fallout in the Metro Pace final while pacing his only sub-1:50 mile at two. He is faster at three, having already won twice in 1:49 and change and finished third in his sophomore debut while also beating the 1:50 mark. Trainer Doc Moore lists Dave Miller to drive and he steered him to a Pennsylvania Sires Stakes win two starts back. If any horse in this race is going to take down Louprint, it will likely be this son of Captaintreacherous.

**#5 COURTS ON FIRE** will get a close look from trip handicappers who watched his Somebeachsomewhere stakes stretch trouble. He was sitting in leader Papis Pistol's pocket awaiting room and he never got clearance until it was too late, a few strides before the wire. He was several lengths in front just a few strides past the wire, he had that much pace. Last year's New York Sires Stakes champ should get a good trip racing close to the front tonight and he can land in the Tri.

**#3 DANDY IDEAL** is interesting here because he was fast at two and he finished off his season with a Grand Circuit win in the Matron at Dover Downs. He kicked off his sophomore season with a break in stride racing over the Saratoga half miler. That was the second time in his career that he jumped it off, the other incident occurring at Freehold Raceway last year. Those were the only two times that he raced on half mile tracks, and he has stayed flat in all of his other starts for a purse. He came back from the break on May 25th with a strong qualifying effort and he has a decent chance to make the North America Cup final.

**#3 BRUE HANOVER** was first under the wire in the Camluck Classic, and he made the race extra exciting by perfectly hurdling the last pylon right at the wire, getting a perfect 10 for his landing. He had let his stablemate go and followed him to the lane then he tried to pass him on the inside. The resulting inquiry decided that he violated the pylon rules, and he was set back to third. He has raced in Canada eight times this spring and he was first under the wire in all eight starts. He meets some tough horses here, but intent is unknown with some of them who are likely tuning up for next Saturday's Mohawk Gold Cup. We know where this Dave Menary pupil will be – on the engine as he usually is. He should be the one to catch when they turn for home, and he gets the nod to kick off the final Pick 4 of the evening that starts in this race.

**#2 SOARING NOW** has been very good winning two consecutive Preferreds in a row since shipping north. In the first one, he got a great trip following fast fractions, then he out duelled the rival that had been following him in the fastest mile paced in Canada this year. He followed that up with a front end score to double up. His good tactical speed should have him in striking position tonight, and it wouldn't be a big shock if he took down the choice. He is another one that I would consider using in the late Pick 4.

**#10 ABUCKABETT HANOVER** comes off a great six-year-old season where he took wins in seven of his races including the Potomac Pace and Fanduel to complete his season. He opened up his lungs racing first-over against Bythemissal in his first race back. That rival is favored in the Battle of Lake Erie tonight at Northfield Park. There isn't much question that this is one of the best horses in this race, but he is likely looking ahead to next week's Gold Cup in which he finished third beaten a head last year after setting the pace to the three quarters in 1:20 3/5. He can win here, but I'd demand a price from post 10.

**#1 GEM QUALITY** improved in the Graduate here last week, and he probably deserved a better fate, but he was thwarted by trip. He entered the stretch with pace, but he never found a clear lane to race, and he could do no better than come close to taking the smallest cheque. He is worth a look for the bottom of the Tri and Super at what should be a good price here.

## Race 11 Selections

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**#3 CENTURY JAMILA** was on a big roll at this track until Team Hensley's Caviar N Crackers got really good and went on a winning streak. That rival skips tonight coming off a win in the Forest City Pace, and that gives this Menary trainee a good chance to control this race on the engine or find a perfect pocket trip. I think the leading driver will point her in that direction leaving the gate and she can win here capitalizing on a good trip. Starting from a good post, she gets the nod tonight.

**#6 SYLVIA HANOVER** was patiently driven in her five-year-old debut here, and I thought she raced well, considering. She sat in fourth to the last turn where she was moved first-over. At that point, the pocket sitter vacated the garden spot and that pushed her three-wide turning for home. She towered up at the top, but the two leaders had enjoyed the better trip racing 1-2 in a pedestrian 57 1/5 opening half. She gets the best post tonight, but she missed a week, and she is likely pointing to the Roses Are Red stakes next week. She should beat these if she gets put into the race early enough, but I would be careful to not take too short of a price here.

**#7 ODDS ON PLATINUM** started her four-year-old season well, finishing a close second to Caviar N Crackers, then taking third behind the same mare racing at this top class both times. She followed that up with a score in the Margaret Juravinski Memorial which convinced bettors that she should be favored in the Forest City Pace over Caviar N Crackers. She jumped it off shortly after the start, so we will never know if she was over bet or not in that particular race. Her early speed is her best asset, and she will no doubt be sent by Louis-Phillipe Roy who picked her over the top choice here.

**#5 BLUE PACIFIC** tried racing first-over against Caviar N Crackers in the Forest City Pace and that strategy was never going to work. She has compiled a nice record so far this year, taking four wins and four seconds from 12 starts, racing mainly in this class. She should be part of the Tri or Super in this race assuming that she can work out a slightly better trip.

## Race 12 Selections

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**#8 D A LOVE BOAT** kicked off his sophomore campaign with a narrow loss as the 1 to 5 favorite in a race where he always looked like the winner until very late in the mile. He then tried Grand Circuit company in the Somebeachsomewhere stakes where he raced evenly and picked up a cheque. He is capable of better than he showed in both of those races, and perhaps the third start back will be the charm. Louis-Phillipe Roy chose the #3 over him in here, but that's okay as it will likely only help his price. I'll take a price shot with him expecting him to improve tonight.

**#1 CONTROL ROCKS** is one of those three-year-olds that is showing rapid improvement, and you get a few of those every racing season. He slayed the 1 to 9 dragon known as Crack Shot in a Gold race on May 24th by working out a much better trip than that rival. After he moved to the front in the 29 3/5 second quarter, he turned on the jets, and he was never getting caught. He draws the tricky rail tonight, but he has enough early speed to get away in the top four. He is a big threat to repeat coming off a lifetime-best 1:50 1/5 score.

**#3 TIP OF TIME** has produced two strong efforts in his four starts as a sophomore and he broke in the other two races. Most recently, he sat a second-over trip and closed for second behind Control Rocks in a solid effort to take a second place Gold cheque. Starting from a good post tonight, he should be able to work out another good trip and he is another one to consider using on late multi-race tickets.

**#4 SET SHOT** comes off a solid effort in an OSS Gold race where he rode the pocket and finished second to a colt that is in a North America Cup elimination earlier in this card. He has already shown that he is much faster at three, taking a win in 1:51 2/5 when his fastest mile at two was a 1:53 1/5 third place finish in the Battle of Waterloo elimination. He can get a good trip racing near the front tonight and stick around for a share.

## Race 13 Selections

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**#6 STORM SHADOW** has had six starts in 2025, and he has faced some tough older pacers in many of those starts, five of them being in stakes. He has been much better in his last two starts which should set him up for a big speed try here. Two starts back he was used hard to make front in a 27-flat third quarter and he just missed. Last week, he paced a 53-flat back half against Nijinsky to get beat by fewer than two lengths. He has the best post here and he gets the potent "first time McNair" angle in his favor. I think he blasts to the front and leads all the way.

**#3 PACINO HANOVER** has been in tough in his last three starts facing the likes of Brue Hanover and Soaring Free racing in the top class. He gets needed post relief tonight and he was a 1:49-flat winner last time he raced this low, although he did get a perfect following trip that night. He is the obvious danger, but he could get over bet in relation to his chances against Storm Shadow. Your call.

**#8 FORTIFY** is another class dropper that must be considered in this field when you take a look at the company he has been keeping in recent starts. Last time he raced at a level similar to tonight's he was a first-over winner. He gets the worst of it in terms of contender's post positions, however, and that could be the difference. He is obviously capable if he can get a decent trip from out there and he is another one for consideration in this anchor leg of the late multi-race tickets.

**#4 JABBERWOCKY** dropped to this level last week and he raced much better, from post 10 no less. After blasting to the front immediately at the start, he let one go then followed in the pocket to the lane. He lacked room to the 1/16th pole, then he rallied for third, but he wasn't catching either of the top two if he found room earlier. He should be a pace threat again, but this isn't the easiest spot. Another small share is likely for him.

**#7 A CLASS YANKEE** makes his third start back and exits the Graduate series here. He is capable of closing for a piece of the pie tonight if he can find a decent trip and he is one to consider for the bottom of Tri, Super and High-5 tickets at what should be a big price.

**SPOT PLAY: STORM SHADOW**

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**Race 9 Selections**

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