

Race 1 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#3 CLEVER CODY has been facing much tougher than the pacers her meets here and taking a big drop to this non-winners of \$10,500 last five level should provide the spark he needs to get a much better result. He came into this season off a good sophomore year where he earned more than \$473,000 and registered five wins from 18 starts including a lucrative score in the Ohio Sires Stakes final. Like many racehorses turning four, he has found tough sledding, racing against the likes of Brue Hanover, Ervin Hanover, Nijinsky, and Gem Quality. None of those speedsters are in here, and this is definitely the best opportunity he has since the start of the year to score his first win as a four-year-old. He should be raced aggressively here, probably looking to go right down the road. He gets top honors to kick off tonight's \$75,000 guaranteed Pick 5.

#4 FORTIFY is another one in here that has faced tougher in several starts this year, and it was logical that he would be bet down to 3 to 5 last week when he dropped to a level similar to tonight's. He raced well in defeat, making front in the second quarter then pacing a 55 2/5 middle half, but he simply couldn't fend off a razor-sharp class dropper in Redwood Hanover. He looks like the main threat to the choice, and it looks like he has a good chance to race in that rival's pocket turning for home. He is the second one that I would consider using in the early Pick 5.

#1 NAZARE has compiled a nice record so far this year taking four wins and four seconds from 18 starts, good for close to \$67,000 in earnings. In all eight of those starts, he was positioned no worse than fourth at the quarter. In the one race where he was fourth at that stage, he had started from post 10. He should get another aggressive steer tonight, but I wonder if he will get outsprinted by the top two picks in here. He should be able to work out a good trip regardless and take another slice.

#2 AMERICAN HISTORY has been in some great spots recently considering his class and he has disappointed. In his last start, he landed in what should have been a soft spot for him, and he showed nothing. He raced much better five days previous. He leaves the Menary barn, which is probably typically a negative, but he returns to a stable in which he earned more than \$147,000 last year. This millionaire could wake up on the barn switch here and land in the Tri or Super.

Race 2 Selections

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#6 CAPTAIN FEAR NOT raced against killer Brue Hanover in his last two starts and that rival is just too tough right now. Drawing the nine hole for the Mohawk Gold Cup was mission impossible, but he did close on 25 4/5 to stay sharp. He then raced against that foe again last week, but he had missed three weeks. He tried a wide late move, but he wasn't going to go forward when the leader was pacing a 27-flat kicker to finish off a 1:48-flat mile. Three starts back, when he raced at a level similar to this one, he took his lifetime mark of 1:49-flat, beating the #4 horse in this race in the process. With Jody Jamieson at the Meadowlands, capable replacement Travis Henry gets handed the lines. I'll call gelding to notch the mild upset.

#7 CRACK SHOT is a bit of a conundrum in here because he is racing in between OSS Gold starts, but on paper, he is good enough to beat his elders in this spot. He gave a decent account of himself in this track's signature race, the North America Cup, two starts back. He paced a 53 1/5 back half and a 1:48-flat mile to be beaten only four lengths in a Canadian mile. Here's the thing: he may or may not be raced aggressively in this spot, and even then, he could drop back, trip out, and still win like he did on May 10th. But there is some concern about intent, and with that, I wouldn't take odds-on here which is what he will likely close at.

#4 STORM SHADOW dropped out of the Open on June 28th, and he took a little action at the windows. After leaving well enough from post eight to get tucked in fourth, he was sent first up to chase 3 to 5 favorite Madden Oaks, and that wasn't going to work. He raced tough at this level three starts back when he was nailed late by Captain Fear Not. He can be much better in this spot and he is worth a price look for the Pick 5.

#1 CODENAME CIGAR BOX always races well at this level it seems, and two starts back he handled Gem Quality who came right back a week later and won on the Preferred 2 class. This classy 41-time winner is capable of beating these with the right trip, but I don't love the rail post for him in this spot. I'll use him underneath this time.

Race 3 Selections

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#4 CONTROL ROCKS raced great in defeat last week, losing the sprint to the wire right on the line. He controlled the race from the outset while the eventual victor sat the pocket then came out on the last turn to challenge. It took every inch of the stretch for the Ian Moore trained even money favorite – who had won an OSS Gold race a week before – to get up for the win. This Jack Darling pupil was also a narrow loser at this level three starts back in a race where he also set the pace until late. He should be the one to catch again here, and he might be able to see it through this time. He gets a slight nod as we kick off the early Pick 3 in this race.

#3 CAPTAIN HURLEY is an improving colt that shoots for the threepeat here coming off a new lifetime best 1:49 3/5 score. He sat fourth early watching some early battling and he definitely got the trip, but he made a quick, decisive move around the final turn and he left no doubt, sprinting away for the new speed badge. The Team Cullen pupil has won the last three times he started in conditioned races, and he looks like a good fit here as he steps up to non-winner of three. He will likely be the one to fend off late.

#5 SOS SPORTS BET steps up one level coming off a solid effort from post 10 versus non-winners of three two weeks ago. Despite starting from the worst post, he had intent to make front leaving the gate, but several rivals racing to his inside had the same idea, and he ended up in a three wide firing line at the start of the first turn. He managed to tuck in fourth by the time he reached the quarter, then he stayed in and took a shuffle. He rallied between horses in the stretch to close for third, and he was gaining on the top two at the wire. He gets Doug McNair back tonight, and he chose him over the #7 horse. I think the short field helps him here, and he is a third horse that I would consider using on early multi-race tickets.

#7 TIP OF TIME was a perfect trip winner here at this level two starts back, then he tried OSS Gold on June 28th, and he was a victim of interference. He was in a four-horse firing line into the first turn when Control Rocks made wheel to wheel contact which threw him off stride. He should bounce back and get a better result tonight, but there are at least a couple to his inside that figure to leave in here. I prefer to use him underneath in this spot where he will likely have to take back early.

Race 4 Selections

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#8 TELLS ON A ROLL is a class dropper that rates highly in here coming off a race last week where she was better. In that mile, she made front from the rail – which in most races is no easy feat – but she paid a 25 4/5 price to do it. She was overtaken by the 1 to 5 class dropping favorite in the second quarter and she followed in the pocket to a 1:51 4/5 three quarters. Down the lane she tired from her early efforts, but she did hang around for the smallest cheque. Last time she raced this low five starts back, she was a front end winner at 1 to 5. Travis Cullen will likely look to set up shop on the lead again, and this mare could prove tough to catch.

#6 COCO JO JO comes into tonight's race off three seventh place finishes in a row, but a few factors swing her way tonight. First, she gets to take a needed class drop. Equally important, she moves from the worst post to the best starting spot tonight. She makes her third start off a sick scratch, so hopefully she is fully over whatever ailed her. She is capable of much better than she has shown recently, and the class drop is probably exactly what she needs to show it. She loses the leading driver who is plying his trade at the Meadowlands tonight. Jonathan Drury should put her into play at the outset, and she could get a cozy pocket trip following Tells On A Roll which makes her a live contender in this spot.

#9 PERFECTLY CHIC was a Grand Circuit winner at two and she is now an OSS Gold winner at three following her two-move win on June 21st. Taking full advantage of the absence of scratched Chantilly, she was aggressively driven by Bob McClure and it paid off as she scored in a lifetime best time as the even money favorite. She hasn't raced in three weeks, and she draws the worst post and faces some salty elders in here. All of that likely adds up to her getting a conservative steer this time. I'll use her underneath expecting her to pass a few mares late and get up for a share.

#2 ONE MORE BET is another class dropper that figures to improve in this spot, and her last line where she made an uncharacteristic break is a toss for me. She hasn't finished in the top two yet this year and this is her 11th start. She did finish third twice though, and tonight's driver J R Plante was in the bike for both of those miles. I see her sitting a trip and staying for a share.

Race 5 Selections

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#2 IN THE BLACK is one of two colts in here that has had two starts, and the second one was much better than the debut. He started his career at Georgian Downs, and he broke before the start then again at the three quarters when he was on the move. He rebounded in a big way in his second start in the Grand Circuit Tompkins-Geers race. After leaving third, he bided his time then made a first-over move in the third quarter. A slow early pace was no problem to overcome for him, he simply powered away from his rivals in 27-flat to score a resounding maiden win. Off that strong winning effort, he gets the call to repeat in this first OSS Gold leg and anchor leg of the early Pick 5.

#4 ANOTHER GREAT MASS is the other rookie trotter in here that has had two starts, and both of his were solid efforts. In his debut race, he made an aggressive middle move to the front, but he was immediately overtaken by a filly that was sent off as the favorite facing the boys on debut, and she was simply much the best that night. He came back to win last week in a race where he got a bit of a break. He sat the pocket to the backstretch, then was given a gift when the green leader came off the rail which allowed him to shoot up the pylons and take over command. From there, he powered home in 27 3/5, giving his rivals no chance to catch him. He will likely be the main threat to In The Black and he is the other one that I would consider using on multi-race tickets.

#1 STROBE LITE got a debut race in leading up to his first OSS Gold engagement and he raced well in defeat to Another Great Mass. He blasted straight to the front and stole a 32-flat second quarter then continued to slow the pace. He then drifted far enough off the rail to allow enough room for him to be passed on the inside. He was game right to the wire, but the damage was done when he drifted out. I don't love the rail post for him here, but he clearly has potential, and he can take another share here.

#7 D A MASSTERMIND brought \$120,000 at the London Classic Sale being related to five siblings that have all earned more than \$200,000 including his full brother Masstercraft who has won four of his last six starts at this track this summer. He was sent off as the 3 to 2 favorite on Canada Day but he blew up at the start. He can take a share here if he minds his manners.

Race 6 Selections

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#2 SET SHOT tops a field laden with stakes types racing between those stakes engagements, and he comes in off a gutsy win in a conditioned race last week. In that mile, he sat second while the leader set some solid fractions, then he came out around the final turn to challenge. An all-out final quarter sprint ensued, and this Doc Moore trainee prevailed over a game Control Rocks. He was a similarly game winner in an OSS Gold race two starts back, and this razor-sharp gelding gets the call to repeat.

#3 BOXER SEELSTER raced much better in his last start, and that can be a sign that he is coming back to his best form. He blasted off early and dropped into 3 to 5 favorite Set Shot's pocket, getting a bit of a break when to rivals that were leaving hard from the outside contacted wheels in the first turn. He rode that pocket trip to a clear second-place finish behind the dominant winner. This gelding was a double Grand Circuit winner last year at two, and he is capable versus this group if he has reached peak form. I'll give him a look for the late Pick 5 that starts here.

#7 COURTS ON FIRE's main objective is always the New York Sires stakes, and that is where he has taken his two wins so far this year. He had 15 days between starts last time where he faced a tough field, including the colt that almost knocked off Louprint in the North America Cup. In that mile, he floated out for fourth, sat in, took a shuffle, then finished willingly between horses in the stretch. He gets Doug McNair back tonight, and he will probably look for another trip in here. He could be right there on the wire with some racing luck.

#8 STERLING CHOICE tried hard when racing against Set Shot on June 28th, but that rival has a recency edge on him now having won again a week later. This Grand Circuit winning roan colt always puts himself into the race leaving the gate, and he might be the first leader in here. He will likely be overtaken on the backstretch then sit a following trip. I see him sticking around for a small share tonight.

Race 7 Selections

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#3 AARDIES MONEY N seems to be either brilliant or quirky in her races, and sometimes a combination of both. She broke twice at odds-on in late May/early June and she had to requalify on June 23rd. She returned to pari-mutuel action on June 27th, and some bettors abandoned her, and she went off at 3 to 1. She made a middle move to the front and sped off to a fast win. She did run in down the lane as she is prone to do. She gets Doug McNair in the bike tonight and she gets the call to repeat, but I have a hard time taking a short price on this mare who tends to have a mind of her own to her detriment at times.

#4 GENTRIFY raced first-over against the top pick last time, and although she couldn't get close to her in the lane, she did win the race for place. The previous week, she was a good closing third in a fast race. She already won at the non-winners of three level five starts back and she was dominant on that occasion. She seems like the logical alternative to Aardies Money N, and she is the other one that I would consider using on multi-race tickets.

#6 MISS DUTTON had virtually no chance last week racing from the back in a 1:49 1/5 mile, but she did show some late pace, coming her back half in 54 2/5. She was used earlier in her previous start where she found the pocket and rode a following trip to a top three finish. Drawing best here, I think she will get put into this race leaving the gate, and that gives her a much better chance to get a good result. She is probably a good one to use on the bottom of Tri and Super bets.

#2 WICKED N SINGLE was parked on the first and last turn in her last start, and although she had good cover, she could only pace her typical final quarter and that's why she didn't advance on leader Aardies Money N. Drawing inside now, she will surely avoid the three wide run into the first turn that she endured last week. That gives her a chance to take a slice in here. She hasn't hit the top two yet this year in six starts, and she is another one that is likely best used underneath in this spot.

Race 8 Selections

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#2 ILIKEMEBETTOR A has raced in some tough spots chasing fast winners since he shipped north from New York five races back, now he gets into a Pop Up Series which should be a good spot for him. Prior to his most recent start at Georgian Downs last Sunday, he chased winners in three straight races that all won in 1:49 and change. This looks like a spot where this 23-time winner will get a good trip racing on or near the front, and he gets the nod to kick off the late Pick 4.

#4 HOWYOUPLAY THEGAME comes into this Pop Up series off a season's best win that was only one fifth of a second off his lifetime mark. He did find a good trip following a leader that cut some big fractions before sling shotting past that rival turning for home. Leading trainer Jodie Cullen has this gelding in top form for the opening leg of this Pop Up series, and he should be prominent from the outset. I could see him and the choice racing 1-2 and settling this race in the lane.

#5 FOREFATHER flies home late most weeks and passes many rivals, and he comes in off a decent closing effort to a class dropping winner, although he did get passed late for second by a deep closer. He was even better in his previous two starts where he roared home in 27-flat and 26 4/5. The issue with him is, he makes a habit of falling short as shown in his 0 for 21 record so far this year. He will get there one of these nights, and it might come in this Pop Up series, but in this field tonight, I prefer to use him underneath.

#3 UP JOEYS CREDIT comes into this Pop Up series sharp, having won his last start at Grand River, and he has had some luck in a previous Pop Up series at this track. Last August, he finished in the top three in both preliminary legs then he was a good third in the final despite being parked a long way. Now that he seems to have reached peak form, he will likely be in the mix for a share in this spot tonight.

Race 9 Selections

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#7 GEM QUALITY was a winner here two starts back racing at this level then his reward was a date with mighty Brue Hanover who is virtually unbeatable at this track currently. Starting from the rail, he could do no better than follow along in a 1:48-flat mile. This is obviously a better spot, and the potential is there for him to get a similar set up as he did in that win two starts back. Tyler Moore, who gave him a good steer that night, is back in the bike tonight and I'll take a price stab on this one who is listed at 8 to 1 in the morning line.

#4 SOARING NOW comes out of the same race as the choice and he tried to rally in the outer flow in the back half, but he could only race evenly chasing Brue Hanover in that fast mile. His strong winning effort three starts back where he raced first up in a \$40,000 Open Pace and kept grinding to a win would put him right there with these if he could recapture that form. He is another one that offers a good morning line price, and I'll toss him on multi-race tickets in what appears to be a wide-open race.

#1 CENTURY KOMODO finished ahead of both Gem Quality in that race last week, although he got a better trip. He started the season with two wins, but he has been in too tough in subsequent starts. He fits well versus these, and he will surely get a more aggressive drive in this spot. If he is leading turning for home, he could prove tough to catch. He is yet another to consider for late multi-race tickets.

#2 POSEIDON SEELSTER finished ahead of all of his rivals listed above, but he got the perfect pocket trip that night. Two starts back racing at this level, he was part of a fast early pace, but he got covered up mid race. He got a clear shot up the pylons in the stretch and he lost three positions while Gem Quality was powering up to win. He certainly isn't out of the question in this field, but he has the feel of a horse that will get over bet, and I'll play to beat him.

SPOT PLAY: GEM QUALITY

Race 10 Selections

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#4 STONEBRIDGE HELIOS last won a race in August 2023 in an Open Pace at the Meadowlands in 1:47 4/5 and on that night, he beat six rivals that now have more than \$3,000,000 in earnings combined. I don't imagine his connections would ever think he would go winless for more than two years following that sharp win, but here we are with him racing in a Pop Up series. He holds a big class edge on his seven rivals, and I think he gets put on the point by Doug McNair and his class carries him to his first win in 23 months.

#7 BLOCKBUSTER TRADE had some lameness issues earlier in the season, but he appears to be over them based on recent efforts. He came off a month and a half break on June 10th and went right down the road from the rail at Georgian Downs. He raced evenly in his next start then he followed the winner in the Grand River Preferred 2 to get up for second over the 8 to 5 favorite. I like that he gets Trevor Henry in the bike tonight because I could see him blasting for position in this spot. He can be an Exacta factor.

#6 THUNDER COUNTRY entered his June 26th race coming off five straight races where he hadn't taken a cheque, and he drew the 10-hole that night. So little was expected, and he was sent postward at odds of 130 to 1. He produced a nice late charge to finish fourth, beaten only one length. He came back with an even better effort last week, making a decisive winning move, this time bet down to 5 to 2. He has clearly turned his form around, and he has also ramped up his late speed. He is in the mix to take a good share tonight.

#5 DELIGHTFUL LEADER was one that I thought raced better than it looked on the page two starts back, but he was a victim of pace on that night. Last week was an entirely different story as he got to close into a 571/5 back half and he took full advantage. He is sharp, but I like others better than him in here. I can see him closing to finish on the edges and he merits a look for the bottom of Tri and Super bets.

BEST BET: STONEBRIDGE HELIOS

Race 11 Selections

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#2 ODDS ON PLATINUM drops to a logical spot tonight coming off a game effort in the top class last week. In that mile, she first had to dodge a breaker on the opening turn, then she was sent to the front in the second quarter by Louis-Phillipe Roy. She set some solid fractions and held in there until very late when she was passed by the current queen bee of the Mares Preferred, Grit N Grace, and two other closers. This is a much easier spot, and she should get sent down the road by Tyler Borth with Louis-Phillipe Roy at the Meadowlands.

#3 GLENBORO comes out of the same race as Odds On Platinum, and she will surely get the attention of trip handicappers. After blasting off for the early lead, she took a shuffle and followed to the stretch where she began to look for room. She found none after twisting and turning, and she finished the race buried with pace behind a wall of horses. She looks like the obvious threat to the choice here, especially if she can ride in that rival's pocket. She is the other one that I would consider using on late Pick 4 tickets.

#5 SHES GOT IT ALL stepped up to the top class off a sharp front end win at this level two starts back. She camped out at the back of the pack and wheeled out widest in mid stretch. She was making good gains late in the mile without threatening the top three. I think she has her hands full with Odds On Platinum and Glenboro tonight, but she should be part of the Tri or Super in this field.

#6 SORCHA SEELSTER has ramped up her late speed in recent starts, kicking home in 26 2/5 in three of her last four miles. In her most recent race, she closed nicely for second in a fast mile despite having missed three weeks. She is sharp but she will likely fall victim to trip and pace tonight. She is another one that I prefer to use underneath in this spot.

#8 STYLE FOR A MILE dropped, got Doug McNair in the bike and crushed, now she moves back up to face some tough droppers from the top class. She likely won't get the same trip on the engine tonight and I imagine that she will finish on the edges in this tougher spot.