

Race 1 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#1 TELLS ON A ROLL comes into tonight's race off a lifetime best performance racing one level lower. While the 1:49 1/5 smoke show wasn't entirely predictable, her taking a win in that spot on the class drop was hinted at the week before in an improved performance. 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 1:21 4/5 three quarters. Down the lane she tired from her early efforts, but she did hang around for the smallest cheque. She draws the rail again tonight, and she will be under the gun at the start, but she is a former Fillies and Mares Open winner (many times) and she can overcome the post when she is in peak form. I'll call her to repeat in this opening leg of the \$75,000 Pick 5.

#3 CENTURY JAMILA has been regularly finishing on the edges racing in the top class against the likes of Sylvia Hanover, Grit N Grace and Caviar N Crackers, any of which would be 1 to 5 (or lower) in this field. She has won seven races this year, but none since April 18th. The last time she raced this low; she was a first-over winner. I think she gets put into this ace leaving the gate, and she should be a formidable opponent for the choice in this spot.

#2 ODDS ON PLATINUM dropped and did everything but pop last week, leading most of the way and falling just short of holding on. That followed a similar effort two starts back where she took a field of Preferred mares to deep stretch on the lead before coming up short in a blanket finish. She is only a one-time winner this year, and I don't love that she got a 56 half last week and couldn't seal the deal. I'll use her underneath tonight.

#4 WESTERN WISH drops back to the spot where she typically does well, having landed in the top Tri three times in a row. Her best asset is her speed and J R Plante will put her into play leaving the gate then likely get covered up for most of the mile. She projects to get a good following trip here and that puts her in the equation to land in the Tri or Super. She is a good one to use on the bottom in this spot.

Race 2 Selections

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#6 CAVIAR N CRACKERS showed last week that she is back in peak form, and that might be bad news for her rivals. After closing with her patented late rush two starts back, she produced one of her better efforts of the season last week in victory. After tracking a moderate 55 2/5 opening half, she was sent first-over by regular driver Eddie Hensley. She grinded a long way, and at one point on the last turn she looked stalled. But she just kept coming, wearing down the leader, taking command and opening up a lead, then holding off the closers. There is always a danger that she will drop back to last, and her rally will fall short when she draws the widest post, but she is razor sharp now, and she gets the call to repeat.

#4 GRIT N GRACE shoots for the fourpeat tonight having taken three of these Mares Preferreds in a row before missing last week. The Manitoba bred is having a terrific season having taken eight wins and five other Exacta finishes from 17 starts while earning more than \$157,000. Jody Jamieson, who is having a great summer at Mohawk Park, has been a good pilot for her, and he will have her in position to take her best shot again. I split hairs between two excellent mares by going with the one that raced last week. Others will side with this consistent daughter of Im The Pied Piper.

#5 ANGOSTURA HANOVER has been really good recently racing at this level. Two starts back, she made a big late move along the pylons to just miss to Grit N Grace. Last week, she found an inside tracking trip to the lane, then in mid stretch, she came out and closed on Caviar N Cracker's helmet, but she could do no better than get within a length at the wire. She is sharp, and she should be part of the Tri again.

#2 BLUE PACIFIC tried the front end last week, but she got ground into submission by relentless Caviar N Crackers. I imagine that she will now look for an easier trip following a helmet. She was second twice at this level in June when she tripped out, and she could better this placing if she can get a similar trip tonight to the trips she got in those two miles.

Race 3 Selections

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#4 SET SHOT tried this level last week after taking two straight wins, one of them in an OSS Gold race, and he didn't have much hope the way the race played out. After dropping back to sixth, he was in chase mode while the leader was pacing identical 54 3/5 halves on his way to a 1:49 1/5 new lifetime mark. This sophomore Bettors Delight colt paced a 54-flat back half to stay sharp, now he gets Jody Jamieson back in the bike which can be a key here because that teamster typically drives him aggressively. He can get a good trip racing near the front tonight and get back on track.

#5 CONTROL ROCKS just took a new lifetime mark beating non winners of three and he is sharp and obviously dangerous in here. He always gets an aggressive steer from Tyler Borth, and that has worked out well for him so far this year as he has notched three wins, and three other Exacta finishes from nine starts. Two starts back, he set the pace with Set Shot riding in his pocket. The two rivals battled down the stretch with Set Shot getting the late measure by a head. There is probably a decent chance that the same scenario can be repeated and play out again tonight. There isn't much between these two sophomore pacing colts.

#2 MYULTIMATE SNOWY A is 0 for 5 so far this year, but he does show a race at this track in January where he was bet down to 3 to 5 and he took his lone second place finish in those five starts. He qualified well for this return to the races winning from the nine-hole, but he meets a couple of razor-sharp rivals here in what is probably too tough a spot for him tonight. Still, I can see him sitting a trip and landing a share in this return race.

#1 JMR SPEAK AWAY was sent off at huge odds in both of his last two starts, and he managed to close late in both miles to add some value to the Super by getting up for fourth. He ramped up his late speed in those miles, and he was moving well at the wire last week. He will no doubt sit back and look to rally again tonight, and he can sneak into the Tri or Super via his typical good late kick.

Race 4 Selections

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#6 STASH IT AWAY makes a move here that often pays off with a win at this track. He gets off the rail post and he starts from the best post position tonight. You see the effect starting on the rail can have at this track when there are several leavers lined up outside of you that are intent on blasting off the gate when you look at how much closer to the front he was in previous races when he left from better posts. Last week, he ended up in an impossible spot racing on third-over cover when the pace accelerated. He made a wide move and closed in 26-flat to get a share in an excellent effort. Now, he can lay much closer to the front, and he gets the nod to get the job done.

#9 B STONEY got the leading driver in the bike on July 7th, and he proceeded to win two straight. He got overlooked leaving from a wide post last week, and he got overlooked by bettors, but he was provided with a perfect trip by Macdonald, and he won going away. He draws even wider now, which can mean that he will offer another good price tonight. He loses the leading driver and picks up Travis Henry tonight, but he is sharp and dangerous, and he is worth a look for the early multi race tickets.

#3 BOLD SPIRIT was favored last week off a mile where he raced aggressively and finished close the week before in his first local start since last August. He once again was put into play, and he was part of some fast fractions in a race that featured plenty of action. He was one-paced in the stretch, tiring due to his early efforts. One of these nights he will get a pocket trip from the outset and score. That could happen tonight, and he will offer a better price this week.

#5 HOWMAC VICTOR raced first up last week when claimed by Amanda Riley, and he gapped out enough that B Stoney could get out and launch his successful late attack. He comes back at the same level and draws a good post, and racing first-over isn't his best trip. I could see him getting a covered trip and landing in the bottom of the Tri or Super.

Race 5 Selections

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#3 P L OZZY is currently in catch me if you can mode, and in his last two starts, that strategy worked once, that being last week where he won in 1:49 2/5. The difference in the two races is he was down to the three quarters almost a full second slower last week than the week before, and that left him with more for the final quarter to fend off the closers. His strategy will be no secret tonight, and he will be the one to catch again.

#8 HEAD HONCHO raced well in two straight against P L Ozzy, catching him in the stretch two starts back, then closing off second-over cover to finish second last week while cutting into the winner's lead late in the mile. He draws wide now, but post eight is no worse than the rail draw. Hot driver McClure will likely have him out and in the flow by the time they reach the half, and he could be the one to fend off late in the mile. He should offer a square price tonight, and he merits a look in this anchor leg of the early Pick 5.

#1 DRAGONONTHEBEACH won two in a row at this level, and he was claimed out of the second one then jumped up to a level where he unfortunately ran into one of the top sophomore pacing colts in the country. Once he got outsprinted early, he lost all hope, because he wasn't going to go forward in a 53 2/5 back half of a 1:48 2/5 mile. He drops back down to the level where he was claimed, and his good late kick should play much better in this field. He can close for a spot in the Tri or Super.

#2 ORDER ONE TO GO raced first up against P L Ozzy last time and he did okay to stick around for a spot in the Tri considering the fractions he was trying to overcome. Two starts back, he rallied from farther back and finished ahead of that rival who simply went too fast on the lead that night. This gelding has hit the board the last three times he raced at this optional \$50,000 claiming level, and he should be in the mix again tonight.

Race 6 Selections

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#3 FOREFATHER had been racing well prior to last week's race, but quite often he would close a little too late and fall just short. Enter Tyler Borth, who took the lines last week in Leg 1 of this series and handled him more aggressively. Sitting sixth at the half, he made an early three wide move in the third quarter to get close to the front and by the time they reached the three quarters, the gelding was in an unfamiliar position second on the outside and pressing the leader. Forefather did the rest, sprinting home in 26 3/5 to decisively take his first win of the year. His 53 3/5 back half racing on the rim the entire time shows that he is as sharp as a tack, and he gets the call to repeat in Leg 2 of this series.

#5 WALLACE HARTLEY got bet down to 2 to 1 last week, a slight second choice to Forefather, and he raced well in defeat to finish second. After sitting the pocket for most of the mile, he was able to slide off the pylons once Forefather took over the lead on the outside. He rallied to get up for second, but he was no threat to the winner. I'm not sure he can bridge the gap if both horses bring their best efforts tonight, but he is handy, and he could get the jump this time if Forefather times his move differently. He is the obvious alternative to the choice in this spot.

#7 LAKERS BANK is an interesting newcomer shipping west from Ottawa where he has been racing well in the top class. He moved into trainer Darcy Clancy's barn four starts back when he made the move to Rideau Carleton, and he took a win and three shares in four starts racing in the top class there. He has been showing good gate speed, and he gets aggressive teamster Louis-Phillip Roy in the bike tonight. He should be a threat racing close to the front in this field.

#6 ULYSSES has been racing well in the lower conditioned ranks recently, finishing in the top four in all of his last three starts. Most recently, he closed for fourth behind class dropping winner Nautical Hanover in a good effort. He will likely be passing some horses late in this mile again, and he is a good one to use on the bottom of Tri and Super bets.

Race 7 Selections

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#8 BEAU JANGLES was a colt that caught people's eyes in his first qualifier when he absolutely flew home in 26-flat with his trainer driving. After winning his next qualifier in a blowout, the Cattlewash colt was unveiled here in the opening Gold leg and he predictably got hammered down to 1 to 2. He didn't disappoint, taking over the lead in the second quarter then speeding away to an easy 1:50 1/5 score. You could be looking at this year's Metro Pace winner right here and the impressive Doc Moore pupil gets the call to repeat.

#3 BORDERLINE MOBBY turned some heads when he won his debut race sailing past the leaders in deep stretch while under a Bob McClure stranglehold. That set up a date with Beau Jangles, and this Cattlewash colt raced well in defeat. After leaving near the back, he stayed inside, and he was bottled up to the far turn. He found some room to get off the pylons on the far turn, and he was shown clear racetrack once he straightened out for home. He absolutely flew in the final eighth to get up for fourth in an effort that was better than it might look on paper. He can be an Exacta factor if he gets a better trip this time.

#5 WINDOR, from the first crop of Bulldog Hanover, entered the first Gold off a loss to Borderline Mobby, and he raced well in that Gold to take a share. He was the first one to move on Beau Jangles and he was left uncovered in a 54-flat back half, and he was game to the wire, but he got nailed for second by the colt that he provided cover for. He gets off the rail post tonight which should mean he will get a better start. He can get a trip here and stick around for a share.

#10 TILTHECOWSCOMEHOME has done nothing wrong in his short career to date, and he was closest to Beau Jangles in the first Gold leg. Now, he gets the tough task of starting from the widest post facing that impressive rival, and some other tough rookie pacers. Starting from out there, a small share is likely his ceiling. I'll use him on the bottom in this spot.

Race 8 Selections

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#4 TIP OF TIME exits a race where he made front early then faced all kinds of mid race action that isn't typical in the non-winners of three class. After being used hard early, he took a shuffle on the far turn behind a rival that made a move but couldn't keep up. This looks like a race where he can get a trip racing close to the front like he did three starts back when he took a new lifetime mark off a pocket trip. I'll take a price stab on him here relying on that theory that he can trip out and win.

#6 ALLSTAR MANIAC is a lightly raced Millar Farms gelding that comes into this race off a solid third place effort in the second Gold leg. He will get plenty of play here because the race replay shows that he was blocked for most of the stretch drive, and he had plenty of pace. When room was finally given along the pylons, there were only a few strides left to go, and he ran out of time. He certainly qualifies to beat this non-winners of three field, the only concern being the stale date with him having missed three weeks between starts.

#5 AQUINUS HANOVER has been flying late in recent starts, and two starts back, he was smoking down the middle of the track to get up for second over Allstar Maniac. He followed that up with a similarly good effort when he closed for second in a sub-1:50 mile. The short field might help him here, but it can also be a hinderance if there isn't a lot of action on the front end. He will be passing rivals again tonight, and he is a third one that is in with a chance here.

#7 THE VICAR had a great year in 2024, taking nine wins and five seconds from 17 starts, and he returned to the races in good form as a four-year-old, although he has yet to take a win from four starts. Last week, he raced first up against the fast sophomore Courts On Fire, and he stuck around for a share in a 1:49 1/5 mile. He is sharp but another small share is likely his ceiling again tonight.

Race 9 Selections

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#5 PACINO HANOVER drops back to the spot where he last won two starts ago and he draws one of the best posts tonight, so he should be formidable in this spot. Last week he was elevated to the Preferred 2 level, and that race showed how hard it can be to close ground racing at the higher levels. After starting out last in the field of seven, he barely made a dent while pacing a 52 3/5 back half. Two starts back, a 53 4/5 back half got the job done in the easier class. He should be tough to fend off tonight if he gets a reasonable trip.

#4 STORM SHADOW raced tough last week and was game in defeat despite getting the worst trip. He was sent first up to chase an unyielding leader who stole a nice breather to the half. He looked stalled at the head of the lane, but he kicked again between horses, and he gained on the leader again. At the wire, he got picked off for second by a fresh rival and finished third in a blanket finish. That was a strong effort, and he has a chance to upset the choice in here if he gets an easier trip.

#2 CAPTAIN FEAR NOT was sent off as the 3 to 2 favorite on the class drop last week, and he fell only a stride or two short of getting the job done while catching Storm Shadow for second right on the wire. He followed that rival's cover to the lane, and he got into high gear in the final eighth of a mile to just miss. He gets Jody Jamieson back in the bike tonight and I could see him getting a more aggressive drive tonight. He is another one that is in the mix here that merits a look for late multi-race tickets.

#7 WRITE ME A ROSE had the unenviable task of trying to keep up to Prince Hal Hanover last time when that colt was on an all-out speed mission. He was stung by a 26 2/5 third quarter and he couldn't go with that rival. He did manage to stick around for a share, and I can see him doing the same here. He is probably a good one to use on the bottom of Tri and Super bets.

Race 10 Selections

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#5 BRUE HANOVER simply doesn't lose, unless he is searching for room following his stable mate and perfectly hurdling a pylon like he did in London in the Camluck Classic. That was the only local race where he didn't turn for home with a big lead, and he has been flawless since. He is now pacing in the 1:48 range every race over this track and it's hard to see him getting beat tonight.

#6 TAURASI comes off a strong effort in the Preferred, but that race came almost a calendar month ago, so Brue Hanover has a recency advantage on him even though he himself has sat idle since July 5th. Three starts back when he drew the nine hole, this Racing Hill gelding shot straight to the front then sat in Brue Hanover's pocket the rest of the way to complete the Exacta. That scenario will likely be repeated tonight, but you won't get rich betting the Brue Hanover/Taurasi Exacta.

#2 CENTURY KOMODO, stablemate to the choice, is one that will look to get away in the top three and sit a trip like he did in his past two starts. Then, when Brue Hanover turns on the afterburners and sprints away, he can rally for a small share. He is a good one to use to complete your Tri in this spot.

#1 DUBLIN DASHER's best local race came last week in the Preferred 2 class where he made front starting from the best post and almost saw it through in a fast mile. Unfortunately for him, he has virtually no shot of making front from the rail tonight with both Brue Hanover and Taurasi lined up to his right. Reality is, he will likely be fighting for scraps behind those two.

BEST BET: BRUE HANOVER

Race 11 Selections

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#4 THUNDER COUNTRY is in peak form right now, having won two straight racing first up, which is no easy feat at this track. Last week in Leg 1 of this Pop Up series, he was out a long way taking air, and after pacing a 26 3/5 third quarter on the rim, he powered home for a decisive victory, kicking clear via a 27-flat final quarter. He couldn't be any sharper, and the threepeat looms for this six-year-old Rockin Image gelding.

#2 MAYHEM HANOVER is the wild card here shipping north and moving into the high percentage Menary barn. He has been racing in some decent classes south of the border and he was a winner three starts back. He is no stranger to Mohawk Park, having raced in the 2019 Breeders Crown and 2020 North America Cup here. He gets Doug McNair in the bike tonight so he will likely get put into this race, but it might be a tall order to ask him to beat the choice having missed three weeks.

#5 RESPECT OUR FLAG was first leaving the gate last week, then he accepted a pocket ride to the lane. He managed to slip off the pylons in the stretch and gain while in close quarters racing to Thunder Country's inside. That was a decent effort, now he draws a better post. He should be prominent throughout, and he can take another slice tonight.

#1 YYC ON THE HORIZON races off the Malik Smith claim tonight coming off a lifetime best score at Georgian Downs. He gets mired on the rail tonight, but he gets aggressive driver Louis-Phillipe Roy in the bike. I can see him getting a spot racing near the front tonight and sticking around for a share.

#6 DRINKIN BUDDY hasn't missed the top four in his last six starts, and last week's front end effort in Leg 1 of this series was decent with him hanging on for third in a fast mile. He can get positioned near the front and stick around for another small share tonight.

SPOT PLAY: THUNDER COUNTRY