

**1 A BOY NAMED SUZZ** gets the nod even though he has been rather disappointing in his last two starts and now 0/3 in March. Sometimes you just have to throw caution to the wind and stick with ultra-reliable trainers like Richard Moreau. If anyone can get to the bottom of what happened last time it's Moreau as he's had this horse on two other occasions, including his 1:52.1 lifetime record.

**5 NEEDLECREST** doesn't leap off the page but look a little closer and you'll see that he got within a nose of beating A Boy Named Suuzz back on 02/26. That was no doubt part of the reason that trainer Tony Montini scooped him up when he was re-priced on 03/13. He's reunited with Trevor Henry who was one of the first drivers to sit behind him back in 2013 when he raced in the OSS for Garth Gordon. Have a look!

**2 SMALLTOWN TERROR** has been grinding out a living in both the conditioned ranks and this 12K-15K claiming level since his last win in February 2017 when trained by Kyle Fellows. He has been a factor in some recent races but we don't see enough to justify more than a top-three call.

**4 CASIMIR OVERDRIVE** will be more than happy to fill in should A Boy Named Suuzz deliver another clunker. One drawback is that this longtime member of the Vic Puddy barn had much more success in the 8K-10K class than he did in this 12K-15K class, including one race on 02/12 where he finished far behind A Boy Named Suuzz.

**6 THINK AGAIN** will have to be a bit better than he was last week when treated to a second-over trip and unable to hold second in the closing strides. I won't write him off completely as this is just his third start for current trainer Carmen Auciello.

### ON THIS DATE...

1894 – George Albert Callbeck, born in Augustine Cove, PEI

## Race 2 Selections

## THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

**7 UF BETTORS HANOVER** rarely gets off to a great start so perhaps we shouldn't have been so hard on him last week when he drew outside and figured to be at the mercy of the pace. Evasive Card Shark put up honest fractions in that race (as he might in this race) and when he plodded through the last eighth of a mile it was UF Bettors Hanover who swept the field. He probably fits the condition better than any of them as he did indeed race for a purse of \$8000 or less in one of his last two, but he also won a \$11K race and he tied his lifetime best in the process. That's significant when you're talking about a 21-time winner!

**3 EVASIVE CARD SHARK** was double entered for his 03/19 race before he completed the 03/15 race at Flamboro and that went over rather well when he used a pocket trip to defeat UF Bettors Hanover (who had a much tougher trip). He wasn't nearly as good last week when Denis St Pierre rolled him through three-quarters in 1:24.3.

**4 BANK SHOT HANOVER** has been relatively close yet unable to win in 9 starts this year and that includes the 03/19 race in which he was bet down to 4-5 and then held to fourth despite a third-over trip in the race where Evasive Card Shark blew a big lead.

**1 REIKI** was entered for this race before he completed his 05/22 assignment at Flamboro and that proved to be a winning one. It was also his first start off a claim by Duane Marfisi who was batting .511 at the time of this writing. While things are looking up for Reiki, he'll definitely need more than a 31 second last quarter to win this one.

### ON THIS DATE...

1915 – Vancouver Millionaires swept the Ottawa Senators to win the Stanley Cup

1917 – Seattle Metropolitans became the first US team to win the Stanley Cup when they beat the Montreal Canadiens, 3 games to 1.

**1 NATURAL KEMP** made a successful transition from the claiming ranks on 03/17 so we'll turn to him one more time. He didn't go off as the chalk in that race but the difference was just a few cents on the dollar between he and O Narutac Perfetto who came from far back to claim second. We're giving the edge to Natural Kemp this time as he starts from the inside which should eliminate any chance of him being parked to three-eighths, as was the case last week.

**6 O NARUTAC PERFETTO** recently came very close to giving trainer Dean Nixon his first WEG-based winner since 02/03. That's right, this once red hot barn has been on the back burner for a while. But write off all Nixon starters until further notice? No way! In O Narutac Perfetto you get a 14-time winner who faced much tougher in early February and who was stuck in Post 10 and then parked every step on 03/03. He'll get it done one of these times.

**3 TOUCHDOWN AS** returns to the level at which he was a winner as recently as 02/26. He's worth considering but not that the type that we automatically latch onto at this level since he has been known to make the odd break and he did give way late in his 02/03 race at a lower level.

**5 ITS HUW YOU KNOW** was shown an inside trip in his latest which didn't seem out of line for a horse who made a break in the previous race at Flamboro. I'd feel a lot better about him if he had won more than a single race last year.

### ON THIS DATE...

1931 – Leonard Nimoy born in Boston, Massachusetts. Nimoy played Commander Spock on Star Trek. There has never been a Standardbred named Commander Spock but there have been two horses named Spock, plus a Spock Hanover, Spocks Rocket and my personal favourite, Spock The Trotta.

1940 – Jockey Braulio Baeza, born in Panama City, Panama

## Race 4 Selections

## THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

**9 CROCADILE CANYON** finally dodged Cobalt Man on 03/19 and he threw himself a little party. It looks like most of the Win pool bettors got an invitation as he closed at odds of 2-5. Unlike Regil Tiger who was safe but still under some urging at the wire, Crocadile Canyon was completely under wraps. It's unwise to underestimate a Richard Moreau pupil (like Regil Tiger) but in Crocodile Canyon that one may finally have met his match.

**4 REGIL TIGER** will likely get the most support even though he is moving up from the 12K-15K class. He's on a roll at the moment, having won five straight races with the latest in 1:53.4. He'll have to be every bit as good as he was last week when he took over from a totally spent A Boy Named Suuz. Sure, he drew off, but he was still under "tippy tap" urging as others like Charambo Orbit closed in on him.

**8 BUGATTI** could step it up a notch now that he has returned to the claiming ranks for the first time since 01/29. Although he has excellent early foot, there's no shortage of speed in this race and he simply cannot count on going wire-to-wire without Regil Tiger or The Roadies stretching him out.

**2 SENOR GRANDE** has had no fewer than 30 different trainers in his life, including some of the most successful in the business (Moreau, Burke, Allard, Brainard, etc.) and yet there's still a long line of trainers wanting to have him in their barn. Last week there were two claims entered when he left the Mike Weller barn to join Joe Pereira's outfit.

### ON THIS DATE...

1958 – Standardbreds General Tompse, Joyce Gallon, and McKinley Mahone finish in a triple dead heat for win at Santa Anita.

## Race 5 Selections

## THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

**3 POP I** has been sick since we last saw him beat a similar bunch on 03/05. We often lay off horses who are coming off a vet scratch (sick) but we'll place our faith in trainer Richard Moreau as he rarely races a horse that simply needs a start. In Pop I you get a 32-time winner beat optional \$30K claimers in his sendoff for trainer Andrew Harris and who also won first time for Moreau when forced to come first-over on the competitive Muscles For Life. To put that in some context, Muscles For Life came back one week later and went wire-to-wire with 5-3/4 lengths to spare.

**5 FREE WILLY HANOVER** should appreciate the fact that he has been spared another start in the weekly Preferred Trot. He has yet to win the top class after nine tries but he has twice been second (to Will Take Charge and Odds On Amethyst) and he has picked up a seven cheques. That's the good part. He has dropped out of the Preferred on two occasions and finished second each time. Granted, he faced a good group each time while racing for a \$25K purse and here he's in a bit easier for a purse of \$22K.

**9 CATCH THE DREAM** has purged a win from his last five lines gets to drop out of the Preferred as a result. I'm not too concerned with that recent break as it sure looked like he shied at another driver's whip as they were crossing over just after the start. Catch The Dream might have some trouble with Post 9 but anyone who can see past that will be glad to know that he did win his last two starts at roughly this level (01/15 and 09/15).

**6 VERO AMORE BI** is moving up slightly after a handy win at the NW5 level. He beat the favourite in that race – or perhaps it's more accurate to say that race favourite Achille Duharas took himself out of it as he was off-stride for the first quarter mile.

**7 MAJESTIC PRESENCE** is one that we'll monitor and consider again next time if finds an easier spot. No matter what happens, it can't be as bad as the shuffle that he took last week.

## Race 6 Selections

## THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

**1 DEEPFAVE HANOVER** didn't have much to offer when he faced 20K-25K claimers on 03/19 so we're hoping that the switch to the NW2600L5 class might be the answer. Moreau is a master at getting his horses into the right class whenever possible and this guy fits this class on the NW9500L9 clause which seems like a gift as six of those nine starts were for a far less successful trainer.

**3 SPEEDLING** didn't get the job done like we had predicted on 03/19 but neither was he humiliated in a race where Thorn In Your Side was fired up from the word go. Just five lines down the page Speedling did race at this level and he proved to be the best despite being used in the first and third quarters.

**2 HES A SENSATION** is another one to consider now that he has dropped to the bottom conditioned class. He's not the type that wins every time he drops in class – he had just one win last year – but at least here he faces just six rivals and none of them are screaming “pick me.” Last time out He's A Sensation took a third quarter shuffle then fanned widest of all and closed with the pack to finish a close seventh. Two back he was even better in the stretch drive as he wound up in a four horse photo.

**5 LUKE AND DUKE** didn't win when he was last at this level on 03/01 so we're reluctant to pick him any higher than third or fourth. Of course he should find things a bit easier than when he left from Post 10 in his latest.

### ON THIS DATE...

1971 – “Cannon” with William Conrad premiered on CBS-TV. There have been four Standardbreds named Cannon, including two sons of Beach Towel who were foaled in 1994. One of those foals died as a weanling so the breeder, Richard Staley of Los Angeles, was allowed to recycle the name. The surviving Cannon raced 283 times before he retired as a 10-year-old.

## Race 7 Selections

## THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

**3 SICARIO** is one that we're going to lean on for a second win even though we like Highland Dynamite equally well. The difference is that Sicario (a gelding) has now won two races and will have to move on before too long. He knew what to do with a pocket trip on 03/19 and would likely have been able to go a bit faster than 1:57 had he been pushed. He owes us nothing after that \$13.30 score so we'll roll the dice once again.

**5 HIGHALND DYNAMITE** didn't live up to the expectations of those who made her the 5-2 favourite in her first for a purse but she definitely made amends when requalified and back for a second shot at the NW1 class on 03/15. She was on top by such a wide margin that there was no need to go any faster than 1:58.2 with her own last quarter in 31. Her older sister Highland Top Hill needed a few starts before she got her act together but she went on to race in the Elegantimage, Bluegrass, Kentucky Filly Futurity, and Breeders Crown.

**7 KUIL DEVA** looked pretty good in the last quarter of her 03/12 race. Having said that, she did have a nice tow to the top of the stretch and she got by some tired horses on a track that had to be tiring judging by the amount of snow that had just fallen.

**1 SNARKY HANOVER** might fly under the radar now that she's facing three others who are coming off wins. She didn't have much of a chance when she got away 10th from Post 9 in her latest but just two back she made a race of it despite being parked every step. She's trifecta material with an outside shot at a win.

### ON THIS DATE...

1976 – MLB granted Labatt Brewing a Toronto franchise for \$7 million

2004 – It was announced that Jerry Silva and Sampson Street Stables had sold 10% of unbeaten trotter Cantab Hall for \$600,000, establishing the three-year-old's market value at an astonishing \$6 million.

## Race 8 Selections

## THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

**9 JENKINS CREEK** is the latest addition to the powerful Moreau barn and as such he must be considered. No doubt some will treat him as the one to beat! He was a private purchase on 03/13 but don't get the impression that the new connections will need some time to figure him out. He raced for this same owner and trainer Richard Moreau when he won a similar race on 01/29.

**6 SUNDAY POKER** has been reunited with the trainer who engineered his rather handy win on 03/12. Yes, it was Mike Weller had him for three races before losing him to Kody Massey – for the second time. This is actually Sunday Poker's third stint in the Weller camp so obviously the trainer likes him. He's not a high conviction play but I can see him being very competitive and likely a winner if Jenkins Creek doesn't bring his A game. As a bonus you get Trevor Henry who turned down the Vic Puddy-trained Rock N Fantasy. This seems significant as Henry generally takes the Puddy horses even when others look better on paper.

**1 SHIPPEN OUT** tussled with Sunday Poker on 03/12 and in the end he came up second best. The same thing could be said of his 03/19 race, only substitute Casimir Overdrive for Sunday Poker. He might have a little more fight in him now that he's had an extra week in the Shepherd barn.

**8 LISVINNIE** is awfully competitive for an eight-year-old who is generally entered at the upper end of this 8K-10K price range. He overcame this same post to win on 02/15 and he cracked the top three from this post on 02/22 and 03/19. More of the same seems possible.

### ON THIS DATE...

1974 – George Foreman knocked out Ken Norton in the second round of their heavyweight title fight in Caracas, Venezuela

1992 – NY Rangers clinched their 1st NHL regular season championship in 50 years



## Race 9 Selections

## THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

**6 ACHILLE DUHARAS** served notice on 03/03 that he would find his way to the Woodbine winner's circle before too long. It was his first start of the season and thus his first start with older trotters. He didn't do much in the early going but he did have something left at the end. The greatly anticipated win came a week later when he motored home in 28.2 to win the NW5 class in 1:53.3. The Win pool bettors jumped onto him last week only to see him jump it off at the start. He's risky but likely good enough to win if he behaves.

**5 FRENCH BASTILLE** didn't make much of an impact in his first two starts at this level so trainer Richard Moreau put a price on his head last week. The result was a solid second place finish behind Class Me Nice who benefited from a pocket trip and who simply got the jump on him. French Bastille may be in a bit tougher tonight but he must not be let go at the 34-1 and 59-1 that he generated when racing at this level in early March.

**7 MIGHTY NICKY** closed from a long way back to win his latest at a much easier level so he too is one to consider. He'll have to be a bit better to stop our top pick should that one stay trotting, but if there are any hiccups a horse like Mighty Nicky should be within striking distance in this field of seven.

**3 KAMERAN HANOVER** is in the position this week that Achille Duharas was in last week – that is making his second start as a four-year-old. Unlike Achille Duharas who raced exclusive with three-year-olds last year, Kameran Hanover did take on some older trotters in the fall and he did quite well. Unlike some of these, he did not race on 03/17 even though the class went with just seven starters.

### ON THIS DATE...

1992 – Henryk de Kwiatkowski purchased Calumet Farm for \$17 million at auction. He paid an additional \$210,000 for the Calumet name.

**7 PRINCE GIOVANNI** must be considered even though it's been a while between wins and it's his second look at the class. Anyone who watched him pace the fastest last quarter on the 03/05 program would probably agree that he's worth the \$2K premium that the Waxmans have paid to get him back in the barn (lost for \$12K, reclaimed for \$14K). His 03/12 mile was particularly good as he paced in 1:52.1 over a snow-covered track (which the judges deemed to be fast with no allowance).

**6 NINOSCREDIT** didn't seem to like the first-over approach on 03/12 so driver Louis Philippe Roy gave him an inside trip on 03/19 and he did manage to hit the board. His chances of winning were greatly diminished but at least he didn't drop back through the pack. We say "greatly diminished" as he was trapped behind The Roadies when that longtime leader began to falter in the stretch drive. He's not what I'd call a standout and he won't offer a huge price but I do think he's a better prospect than his 03/19 odds would have you believe.

**4 KINGSLEY B** has been pretty consistent since abandoning the NW9000L5 class and hooking up with claimers in mid-February. The catch is that he has now missed a week and he's still looking for the first win of 2018. At least he won't have to face Cobalt Man or Isitfridayet.

**9 BRANDONS GLORY** cannot be dismissed just because he has drawn Post 9. Okay, that's what we said last week when he had Post 8 and it turned out that he could have been dismissed as he took back and didn't advance until late in the mile. However, his 27.2 last quarter was the best in that race and he looked okay crossing the wire in sixth.

### **ON THIS DATE...**

2007 – Twin B Diva (Jody Jamieson / Jim Ainsworth) won the final of the Silver Reign Series at Woodbine.

2007 – The temperature in Toronto hit a high of 19C during the day and was 17C for the first race.