

Race 1 Selections

THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

8 BEACH SPORTS was in deep when she faced Shes A Great Lady and OSS Gold starter Saulsbrook Raven in the 1st leg of the Harvest yet she managed to finish a respectable third and she might have been second if not so far back in the early going and completely buried at the top of the stretch. We're prepared to cut her some slack for the slow start as it was her first start since July and she wasn't exactly raging with pace in her 10/10 qualifier. This half sister to OSS superstar Century Farroh looks much better now that she has been through a tightener.

3 KENDALLS COUSIN is bound to get a lot of support and she might even be the favourite based on her 3-1-0-2 record and recent 1:55 win. She was running on fumes at the end of that mile but understandably so as she came under heavy pressure in the third quarter when even-money favourite Highland Salsa took a run at her. Our concern is that she seemed to be fully extended in 1:55 whereas Beach Sports had some late pace in 1:54.2.

4 WIGGLE DELIGHT isn't one that we can back with confidence but top three seems like a realistic goal for a filly who has paced right around 1:55 in each of her last three and who was only 1-1/4 lengths off the winner despite being shoved extra wide in her latest.

5 BUTTERFLY KISSES wasn't as fast as the above three when she finished third in her division of the first leg and in closing from eighth to third she did get by one who made a break and another who was checked severely. Still, a top three finish might be possible for a filly who has done just that in five of six starts to date.

MIKE'S SPOT PLAY: 8 BEACH SPORTS

4 PRINCESSPARTYPANTS was a very dominant winner in the opening round of the Harvest and at this point the word “sweep” comes to mind. She’ll have to stay trotting if she is to sweep the series and that’s by no means guaranteed given her antics in August and September. I do like the fact that she kept it together when the track was rated “good” on 10/02 and of course the way she drew off on the competition last week when bet down to 4-5.

1 GODDESS DE VIE is coming off a race in which she won for the second time and tied the 1:58.1 mark that she established in August when treated to a pocket trip. There was no pocket trip last week and she wasn’t 28-1 either. While she’ll likely have to drop a second or more to beat Princesspartyants (should that one stay trotting), she is a legitimate threat.

8 SHE MUST BE MAGIC looks much, much better in a series like the Harvest than she did when facing a worldly group in races like the International Stallion Stake at Lexington and the Peaceful Way over this track. Having said that, she does lose the services of Doug McNair who opted to stick with Goddess De Vie. At least Filion is a top notch replacement.

2 JAYPORT ECHO is a risky but interesting option now that she is about to make her second start with trotting hoppers. She got around without incident on 10/14 and will likely need a top-three finish if she’s to advance to the Harvest Series final.

ON THIS DATE...

1520 – Ferdinand Magellan and his fleet became the first Europeans to sail into the Pacific Ocean

1879 – Thomas Edison invented the incandescent electric lamp

1883 – Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite, born in Stockholm, Sweden

Race 3 Selections

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9 DOVUTO HANOVER has been off longer than all but one of the nine he'll face tonight and that stale date combined with Post 9 might scare off some of the backers who made him 2-1 as recently as two back. In his most recent he was let go at 5-1 in a race that saw the claimed Allstar Seelster pounded down to 6-5 – and race accordingly. How good was Allstar Seelster? Well, even in losing by 9-1/2 lengths, Dovuto Hanover still paced his own mile in 1:52.4 and that's right around what it will likely take to win this race.

6 YOUNG DRUNK PUNK didn't have a lot to offer last time out when he raced at the 15K-18K level so trainer Rachel Andrew has dropped him down to the 12K-15 class for this race. While this does appear to be an easier race, it should be noted that his last test was for non-winners of 91K lifetime and here he's facing unrestricted claimers with as many as 22, 28 and 39 wins and earnings of over \$700K in the case of our top pick.

7 BAROSSA BLUE GENES is set to make his first start for Wheelhouse Racing and trainer Carmen Auciello who generally does pretty well with new recruits. This one will have to hope for an easier trip than the one he got with a claimed entered on 10/10. Something along the lines of the pocket trip that enjoyed at Flamboro on 09/29 would be ideal.

2 PERFECT VISTA has been off even longer than Dovuto Hanover and he is coming off a race in which he had very little to over. At least he gets some class relief for this sixth start of the year and fourth start off a June to September holiday.

ON THIS DATE...

1918 – Margaret Owen broke the world record for typing with 170 words per minute

1928 – Whitey Ford, MLB pitcher, born in New York City

Race 4 Selections

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7 THINK AGAIN has some appeal now that he's set to make his first start for a new barn and his second start in the month of October. He had been off a full month before the 10/01 race in which he was parked to the half and still on top halfway down the stretch. Those with long memories might recall that Barrington had this horse for 10 starts between September and December 2018 and he did win five of those 10, including first-time off the claim.

10 E L WILD SPIRIT looked like a completely different horse when he returned from a five month holiday to absolutely trounce nine rivals in a similar race on 10/14. There's no arguing that he was in a league of his own in that race. Was it a freak performance or the opening chapter in a turnaround story?

8 FLAHERTY is definitely worth a look after leaving from Post 10 and leading for about 15/16ths of a mile. It was a solid performance and it took a tripped-out Outlaw Gunpowder to beat him. Both horses have some appeal but are also bound to get plenty of support. We're looking elsewhere for some value.

9 OUTLAW GUNPOWDER is bound to get a lot of support now that he has won two straight and hit the board in an outstanding 26 of 35 this year. We're going to downplay that last win as a few things went his way and there's no guarantee that he'll catch any breaks in a second start from Post 9.

4 TOXICITY is one we'll be watching closely now that he has dropped down a notch, drawn inside the main challengers, and will racing on Lasix for the first time. Depending on the price that is offered, he might be the best bet of the bunch!

MIKE'S SPOT PLAY: 7 THINK AGAIN

Race 5 Selections

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1 SUSIES LADY likely let out a sigh of relief when she learned that she won't have to face Princess-partyants in this second leg off the Harvest Series. She raced extremely well in last week's opening leg but was second best to a winner that was bet down to 4-5 and more than lived up to the hype.

6 TRINA didn't contest the first leg of this event so if she's to guarantee herself a spot in the final she'll have to come up with a good effort here. It's not hard to imagine her cracking the top three and a win might even be possible now that she has dodged some of the high profile fillies that she faced in OSS Gold races. Of course she'll have to stay trotting if she's to get anything.

2 MYBELLA ANGEL is like Susies Lady in that she too is coming off a runner-up finish in the first round of the Harvest. She actually finished much closer than Susies Lady but at 1:58.2 she was almost a second slower. It was definitely a step in the right direction for a filly who had previously faced Grassroots types with some success.

3 SHES KADABRA COOL should get a share if she stays trotting and finishes up as well as she did on 09/19 when she rallied by four in the last quarter to win a Grassroots race in 1:58.2.

ON THIS DATE...

1905 – Champion pacer Dan Patch went three Time Trials at the CNE grounds in Toronto while attempting to beat 2:07-1/4. He seemed to be off his game when clocked in 2:26-1/2 and 2:17 in the first two attempts. In the third mile of the afternoon he broke the track record with a mile in 2:06. Although he had previously raced in Windsor in 1901 and 1902, this would be his first and only appearance in Toronto.

1948 – Facsimile high-speed radio transmission demonstrated in Washington, DC

1956 – Carrie Fisher, actress (Princess Leia in the Star Wars films), born in Beverly Hills, California

Race 6 Selections

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2 SAULSBROOK RAVEN didn't have too much trouble holding off Ms Brampton Beast and the live but late Beach Sports when she won in round one of the Harvest so we'll turn to her one more time. This is a nice enough collection of Ontario sired fillies but the fact is that most had only marginal success in the Grassroots program whereas Saulsbrook Raven spent much of her time with Gold level fillies and an international cast that assembled for the Shes A Great Lady.

3 COCO BEACH DE VIE looks like she could be "best of the rest" if she minds her manners. Cross off the top line that includes a break while first-over on the last turn and you're looking at a filly who made it to the Grassroots Final and even played an active role in that \$75K contest. Five back she held it together despite a challenging trip and came away with an OSS win at Grand River.

5 FAITHFULS NOLA has the best win percentage of the bunch thanks to back-to-back wins when she launched her career at Leamington and then followed up at Grand River. She was held to fourth last week but did pace her own mile in 1:55 and there sure wasn't much separating the top four in that race, none of whom are joining her in this race.

6 MS BRAMPTON BEAST is trifecta material if she can avoid the demanding trips that she has suffered through of late. The "first-over" trip is generally considered to be the toughest and that's what she has dealt with in three straight races. One of these times!

ON THIS DATE...

1957 – Jailhouse Rock, starring Elvis Presley, opened in theatres. A Balanced Image filly by the name of Jailhouse Rock made \$492,523 in the early 90s for local trainer John Cecchin. She has since produced eight foals, including Hard Rock N Roll (\$499K), Jailhouse Joey (\$307K), and Jailhouse Jesse (\$262K), etc.

Race 7 Selections

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2 RED HOT TORCH is bound to get a lot more attention in this NW2 contest than when he faced the likes of Judge Ken and Cool Clifford in OSS Grassroots action. And it's not like he was a complete bomb in stakes company as he did hit the board in the Grassroots Semi Final and he picked up good cheques along the way. The inside post, class relief, return of McClure and the trainer's .401 average are positive signs.

5 WINGS OF SPEED might need a start until he's back to tip top shape as he has been sick since he finished off his 09/28 race with a 30.1 last quarter. Just prior to that parked-out debacle he did make front a little easier and go on to win by open lengths in 1:55.4 which ranks right up there with the best times on this page.

7 WHILE YOUR UP isn't quite as appealing as either of the top two picks given that he's coming of a break and failed to close the door in a 1:56.4 mile a recently as two back. On a more positive note he did make two moves in that 09/26 race and there wasn't much to separate him from a winner who has since missed by a neck in 1:55.4.

8 WARRAWEE ULTRA has superfecta appeal but at 1-for-23 over two years we're reluctant to call for anything but a bit part.

3 GALAXY SEELSTER was 0-for-23 going into his 10/04 race with fellow maidens so it's just not realistic to expect another win in his first crack at NW2. He might play a role but he's not on our radar in terms of a likely winner.

MIKE'S SPOT PLAY: RED HOT TORCH

3 KIT is one we'll go back to even though she went down to defeat as the even-money favourite one week ago. She deserves credit for cutting that mile and lasting as long as she did even though she was clearly running on E at the end. She has been as fast as 1:54.1 when planted on a helmet and was race-timed in 1:53.4 on the 07/08 line that has now dropped from her last six. There's still hope.

1 SEX APPEAL might be able to double up in this second leg of the Harvest but we must caution that her "strong" finish last time out was a bit of an optical illusion. In reality she may have been going slower at the end of that 10/14 mile than at any point in the mile. The fact that others around her came to a walk simply made it look like she was "flying" at the end. It also didn't hurt that only eight started and two took themselves out of it with breaks.

4 MIA CULPA won't go another 10 starts without a win if she continues to race as well as she did last week when she was liveliest of all in a 1:55 mile. Look back to the 09/02 line and you'll see that she gave Kit something to think about in a race that came down to a 27.3 sprint through the last quarter. Christoforou will have a better idea of what's under the hood at this point and if possible I'm sure he'll try to have her a bit closer in the early going.

6 CENTURY GIANNA elected to stay inside when the field raced up the backstretch on 10/14 but by three-quarters she had angled wide and was in the process of gearing up. I like the fact that she handily beat the even-money favourite even if she did wind up third to horses that were 2-1 and 24-1. She won't face race winner Kendalls Cousin tonight but she is reunited with longshot runner-up Mia Culpa.

Race 9 Selections

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8 MACHPAPERSCISSORS was good enough to win at this level on 09/10 even though he was unraced since June and he managed to hit the board in three subsequent starts so we'll call on him for the win now that he has dodge the likes of Angers Bayama and Lyons Pegasus. Those two were willing and able to pace miles in 1:50-1:51 and Machpaperscissors was only able to follow along at that clip. This looks like a much easier test as there are no 1-5 shots in the mix.

2 PRESTIGE SEELSTER looks like a great candidate to win if you only had the 10/11 chart line to go on. And while it's true that he was a close second in a 1:50.4 mile, it's also true that he's 1-for-27 lifetime and his next win will put him out of the class. Machpaperscissors is a bit different in that he has already won twice and he'll soon win his way out on purse earnings whether he picks up a win or several seconds and thirds.

5 EXCALIBER SEELSTER showed enough in his 10/11 return from Flamboro that we must take him seriously as well. He appeared to have some steering issues in that last mile but otherwise his overall time was good and he was gaining on a 1-2 winner.

3 STRATEGIC THINKING racked up some early wins at Hiawatha and Georgian but in six starts over this track the best he has done is fifth. Perhaps the improved post will be enough to put him into the superfecta in a race with several cross-offs.

ON THIS DATE...

1975 – Elton John was given a star in on the Hollywood Walk of Fame

1973 – The Four Seasons performed for racing fans at Monticello Raceway

1980 – Kim Kardashian, television personality & model, born in Los Angeles, California

Race 10 Selections

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6 ROCKIN WIZARD was never really a factor in his 10/10 race with Allstar Seelster but as recently as 10/01 and 09/23 he did finish second at this level, losing each time to the popular Racemup who was claimed in six straight races before heading off to London for tonight's Preferred-3. Need more? Rockin Wizard did actually win at this level on 09/17 when he beat Racemup off a pocket trip.

7 ALLSTAR SEELSTER didn't leave much room for error when he took the 10/10 edition of this class but at least he did dig down deep to hold off a 5-2 shot who had just changed barns. We didn't have him listed top-four in that race with the hot favourite Racemup but we'll definitely reconsider in light of that win from first-over.

5 JAYDENS PLACE is set to make his 72nd start and it will be his first with claimers. This is a long overdue move for a horse that is 71-3-15-10 but until he does actually stick a nose in front we're going to treat him with caution.

3 P L IDAHO has a better overall record than Jaydens Place and a history of hitting the board at this level so he too must be considered if you're looking to round out a trifecta or superfecta ticket.

1 CHEAPSKATE HANOVER is coming off back-to-back wins by big margins but he's also moving back up the claiming ladder to a level at which he was a well beaten fourth on 09/23.

ON THIS DATE...

1984 – Lustras Big Guy (Trevor Ritchie / Robert McIntosh) won the \$78,500 Sophomore Series final at Mohawk in 1:56

1988 – Leah Almahurst (Bill Fahy / Gene Riegler) won the American–National for 3-year-old filly pacers in 1:55.2 at Sportsman's Park

10 ST JAMES GATE goes to the top of the list now that he has dropped to the bottom of the barrel. Overcoming Post 10 might be tricky but this guy is clearly the one to beat after his summer vacation, one decent qualifier, and three tune-up races against better. The clincher for me came on 10/07 when he made a first-over move on the chalky Head Turning Jag before tiring halfway down the lane. Sure, he missed a cheque, but he did drive a win off the bottom of his last five and that paved the way for this serious class drop.

1 ALEXUS EH wasn't up as far as St James Gate for her last two but she too is dropping in class and at least she has drawn an inside post. St James Gate must now contend with Post 10 and Alexis Eh knows all about that spot as she took back from the outside post in two of her last three (and once finished a close fourth).

4 HETTIES COMMANDER gets a second shot at the NW3000L5 class despite winning on 10/04. This is possible only because he fits the AE clause that opens the race to horses not averaging \$1000 per start in 2019. He's obviously a threat from a mid-gate start, especially in a race with so many low percentage winners, but I just don't see him beating the top two if either of them bring their best game.

ON THIS DATE...

1994 – Incredible Abe made his final start, winning the \$400,000 Breeders Crown Three-Year-Old Colt Trot at Garden State Park for Italian driver Italo Tamborrino

1994 – Hardie Hanover (Tim Twaddle / John Burns) won the \$325,000 Breeders Crown Three-Year-Old Filly Pace at Garden State Park in 1:51.4

1995 – Beach Of Faith (Jerv Clinton / Gord Remmen) won the \$118,720 Western Canada Pacing Derby at Northlands Park in 1:55.3

Race 12 Selections

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8 PERFECT STORM isn't one that we can get too excited about but someone has to win this edition of NW2 and she has the most encouraging record at 3-1-1-1. She's now one start removed from her maiden-breaking win and she was good enough to hit the board in a 1:53.2 mile last time out. We're banking that a Somebeachsomewhere filly from millionaire Strike An Attitude will win the NW2 class before too long.

7 WHITEHAVEN BEACH did finish a very close second in her most recent and it was her first start off a qualifier so there's definitely potential here. It just comes down to what price you are willing to accept on a filly that is 1-for-28 lifetime.

3 LYONS GIRLHANOVER has shown some potential from off the pace and even in her most recent she got away well but stayed inside which left her in a jam at three-quarters. Driver James MacDonald is back for round two and he might work out a different trip this time.

4 IM VERY SPECIAL had never raced here at Mohawk prior to the 10/11 race that saw her sprint from third to first in the their quarter and open about three at one point in the stretch drive. She drifted wide at the end and had clearly had enough. Still, it was a decent showing for a 10-1 shot.

ON THIS DATE...

2000 – Magician (David Miller / Earl Cruise) won the \$171,500 American-National Open Trot at Balmoral Park in 1:53
2000 – Firms Phantom (Gilles Barrieau / Danny Romo), Kilkerran Rebel (Mike MacDonald / Stephen Morton), Seawind Alpha (Ken Arsenault / Doug Hill) and Dustylane Connie (Garry MacDonald / Ronnie Gass) won Atlantic Breeders Crown events at Exhibition Park Raceway

2003 – Twelve-year-old Goodtimes made his final career start, winning the lowly NW2/25000 class at Kawartha Downs for trainer-driver John Bax. Goodtimes retired with a record of 244-50-42-38 and \$2,243,416 in purses.