

Race 1 Selections

THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

2 TORRIN HANOVER is definitely a key player at this level but he'll have to bring his A game if he's to win it. He turned in a good effort last week when sent first-over but in the end the 26-time winner and class-dropping Physicallyinclined was just a bit better, as you would expect of a 1-5 shot. Physicallyinclined has returned to the Preferred level for tonight's 7th race while Torrin gets a second shot at NW16000L5. We'll give him the benefit of the doubt.

3 ROCKIN IN HEAVEN is one that could easily be picked on top since he too has some recent experience in the Preferred and when down to this level on 11/02 he came up with a win in the other half of the split class. He actually went a full second faster than Torrin Hanover and he too did it from first-over. Although clearly tiring at the end, he was a well meant winner. There's repeat potential here.

5 HERVEY HANOVER faced six other three-year-olds in his last race and he proved to be the best in 1:51.1. I was impressed with his quick turn of foot on the backstretch and will give him credit for holding on but I also suspect that things are about to get a whole lot tougher now that he's facing salty older horses like Torrin Hanover, Rockin In Heaven and Brodys Scrapper to name just three.

4 B STONEY turned in a pretty good effort last time out but came up second best to the game Hervey Hanover. He'll be likely be heard from in a slowing pace.

6 DRAGON TIME gets some serious class relief for this race and it's about time. He has a great on-the-board percentage but at 0-for-27 he obviously leaves something to be desired.

ON THIS DATE...

1858 – 1st performance of New York Symphony Orchestra

1799 – Napoleon Bonaparte became the dictator of France under the title of First Consul

2 ANGERS BAYAMA will be awfully tough to beat in this second leg of the Harvest Series and again in next week's final if he can just maintain his form. The Harvest was open to three-year-old pacing colts who were non-winners of \$30,000 as of 09/30. Angers Bayama landed in Ontario in mid-September with \$12,355 to his name and since then he has done nothing but win and win handily. And if he's anything like his older brothers Yaris Bayama (\$375K) and VIP Bayama (\$348K), he's likely just getting started.

5 EXCALIBER SEELSTER has picked up a cheque in eight straight races but not since he was priced at \$15K plus allowances at Grand River Raceway has he actually won a race. That's not the resume of a horse that figures to knock off the red hot Angers Bayama. Completing the exacta would be a good goal, however.

6 STRATEGIC THINKING racked up some early wins at Hiawatha and Georgian but in eight starts over this track the best he has done is third in last week's opening round. Another top-three finishes seems possible, especially in a field of six which is two less than he faced last time.

ON THIS DATE...

1620 – After a month of delays off the English coast and about two months at sea, the captain of the Mayflower spotted land (Cape Cod). On board were a number of my ancestors, including Henry Howland, Richard Warren, William and Mary Brewster and their children Love and Wrestling (honestly, just Google it), and Stephen and Elizabeth Hopkins and their children Constance, Giles, Damaris and Oceanus (who was born at sea).

Race 3 Selections

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4 PRESTIGE SEELSTER squandered more than a few opportunities before he finally won his way out of the NW2 class as the odds-on favourite on 10/21 but rather than move up to NW3 he found what should have been an easier spot in the first leg of this series. The only problem was that he drew in with Angers Bayama. He didn't appear to be a huge threat to that round one winner but at least he was a solid second, a full five lengths in front of third place finisher Strategic Thinking. I'll move him to the top of the list now that he has dodged Angers Bayama.

5 THE FIRST STEP turned in an eye catching performance on 10/04 when he fanned about five wide and circled the field to win "going away" in 1:52. He wasn't quite so handy when held up on stalled cover on 10/14 but part of the problem there was that he was up to the NW3 class and the race went a second faster at 1:51.1. Last week he returned to his winning ways when he got by some tired horses like Machdavid (first-over) and Thrilling Times (used on the backstretch).

2 THRILLING TIMES is one that we jumped on last week when he made his second start under the Richard Moreau banner. He looked like the one to beat in that particular field based on the way he was used early and still game at the end of his 10/28 race (once he escaped the box). He might be worth backing one more time, especially if Roy is able to find him a helmet to follow for a bit longer.

1 MACHDAVID was getting cheques at NW2 before he moved up to NW3 for the 10/25 race that ended badly. We'll treat this race as the equivalent of a drop back to NW2 which puts him in the picture but not exactly a standout.

ON THIS DATE...

1888 – The body of Jack The Ripper's 5th and probably last victim, Mary Jane Kelly, was discovered in London

Race 4 Selections

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2 WINDSUN RICKY was bet down to 5-2 when he recently raced at this level for the second time in as many weeks and to his credit he did manage to win. He was one of the first horses to clearly benefit from Post 10 now being moved to the second tier. It's not hard to imagine him building on that win as he's just two starts into his fall campaign and presumably getting stronger with the extra conditioning.

8 LEGION SEELSTER should appreciate the return to NW3 after trying a 3YO Open race in each of his last two and making uncovered moves each time. He took a very aggressive approach for a 34-1 shot on 10/26 and that clearly registered with many bettors as he was bet down to 4-1 last time out in a race where the top two favourites finished one-two.

9 MC PAT wasn't a huge threat to Windsun Ricky when they last met on 11/02 but even that second place finish was a major accomplishment for Mc Pat who had been sidelined since August. His 27.4 last quarter was the best of any in that race and pretty good for a track that by the last race had been downgraded to fast-1.

3 CORTEZ THE KILLER has had three relatively tough trips in a row and despite being first-up in has two he did manage to finish neck and neck with the gritty Lyons Pegasus on 10/25. He's not over his head at NW3 – or at least he didn't seem to be when he won on the front on 09/21 – but an easier trip sure would be nice.

ON THIS DATE...

1801 – Gail Borden (land surveyor, newspaper publisher, inventor), born in Norwich, New York. In 1853 Borden developed condensed milk which meant that milk could be kept without refrigeration for the first time. Demand for the product soared during the American Civil War.

Race 5 Selections

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7 IDEAL JET rarely goes more than seven or eight starts without a win and at this point he's been shut out in six straight races. He also has a habit of winning back-to-back once he gets down to the right level and that just might be possible now that he fits NW5400L5 with earnings of \$4080 in that period. When last at this level on 08/10 he won by 3-1/2 lengths at a generous 9-2 and followed up with a win at NW7800L5 at odds of just 1-2. As the horse with the fastest record (1:49.1), most lifetime wins (31), and a tie for most wins in 2019 (7), this recent Preferred starter is a better pick than most who finished 10th last time out.

3 P L JACKSON didn't make it up the class ladder quite as high as Ideal Jet but he too is a fairly classy individual who could spring to life now that he is down to NW5400L5. His last win came in the Preferred-2 at Flamboro (a nose decision at 9-2) and his last WEG win was back in April when he dropped to NW17000L5 and connected by the same margin at the same odds.

9 WESTSLUCKY TERROR is coming off a 10/26 race at a slightly higher level in which he made two moves and wound up seventh. Just two back he faced some of these same horses and wound up third after being parked though the 25.4 quarter and then shuffled on the final turn. One setback came at scratch time for this race when Trevor Henry sided with Ideal Jet.

4 DRAGON STRIKER had to settle for eighth in his latest but had that 11/02 race been at the traditional one mile distance the outcome might have been different since he was challenging for the lead at about the one mile marker. He's definitely worth a look in his second start at the level.

ON THIS DATE...

1861 – 1st documented Canadian football game (at University of Toronto)

1907 – 1st game played by Edmonton Rugby Football Club, a loss 26-5 loss to Calgary City Rugby Football Club

1946 – Dave Wall, trainer-driver, born in Kincardine, Ontario

Race 6 Selections

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2 ON A SUNNY DAY rates a slight edge now that he is back from Flamboro and into the NW10700L5 class. None of these horses have significant experience at “added distance” races so we’ll turn to the back class angle and in that case an 18-time winner with \$666K in the bank looks as good as any. He was in pretty deep when he raced here on 10/28 but at a lower level on 10/17 he was never in doubt at just 55 cents to the dollar.

7 BUZZ is another veteran who spring to life now that he has dropped in class for the second time in as many starts. He has enjoyed inside trips in many of his recent races. The one line that didn’t show up on the “five line” proofs but will be in the “six line” program is from 09/23 and it’s a pretty good indication of what he can do when he hits the right spot.

9 BIZET is the only starter in the field to have contested one of these 1-3/8ths mile races and he actually pulled off a 11-1 upset in that 11/01 race. He didn’t get off to a great start as he left from the second tier and to the right of the Post 10 starter who took his time going into the first turn. That didn’t seem to bother Bizet as he simply laid on the outside for every step of the extra long race and he still won! I doubt that 2:43 will hold up in this race but of course it’s possible that Bizet will be able to make a little more speed if he finds a shorter route.

ON THIS DATE...

1904 – 1st airplane flight to last more than 5 minutes

1909 – Wilf Paiement Sr., owner-breeder, born in Earlton, Ontario

1914 – Hedy Lamarr, actress, born in Vienna, Austria. Although Lamarr is best known as an MGM contracted movie star, she was also a talented mathematician who co-invented a technique for spread spectrum communications and frequency hopping which is still used in wireless communication.

Race 7 Selections

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7 EASY LOVER HANOVER is back to the weekly grind after a short post-Breeders Crown holiday and he could very well pick up where he left off. In that 10/12 race he was parked well past the quarter in 26.4 and completely in charge the rest of the way at odds of just 4-5. Three back he found himself hung up on stalled cover around the last turn and not even a 25.3 sprint through the lane was enough to take down Brave World who enjoyed a much cushier trip.

5 YOUAREMYCANDYGIRL is the lone mare in the field and a four-year-old at that so many will brush her off – just as they did on 10/19 when she made her own trip and took home third money in the company of a pair of \$1.4 million winners in Dorsoduro Hanover and Jimmy Freight. Needless to say, neither of those two are in this race.

6 ELLIS PARK is in top form at the moment so it wouldn't be a huge shock if he managed to win the Preferred. We're going to rank him third from the top but if the price was right he would still make a fun play to win it all.

2 NIRVANA SEELSTER is likely to have a say in how this race sets up and he's even a good bet to lead the field into the stretch. Whether he can go the distance is another matter. Easy Lover Hanover got by him in two of his last five and in the most recent it was Ellis Park who had the live legs.

ON THIS DATE...

1955 – Jim Whelan, trainer-driver, born in Alberton, PEI

1956 – Lou Thesz beat Toronto-based wrestler Whipper Billy Watson in St Louis, to become NWA champion

1983 – Fascination Grade, Nathalies Presto and Speedy Valiant finish in a triple dead heat to win at Rideau Carleton

1984 – "A Nightmare on Elm Street" premiered in the US

1984 – Larry Holmes TKOs Bonecrusher Smith in 12 for the heavyweight boxing title

Race 8 Selections

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1 ROYAL RENEGADE is still facing an extremely competitive bunch but we'll give him the nod now that he has dropped for the second time in three starts. After all it was just four lines down the page that he finished a competitive second in the Preferred! Since that 30-1 surprise he has had two good races at single digit odds and one clunker at 100-1. In his most recent he was looped late by Ellis Park but still closing under urging in a 1:51.3 mile.

4 EAST END is getting the same class relief as Royal Renegade only he was a half step behind in that 11/02 race with Ellis Park, Nirvana Seelster, Traceur Hanover and others of considerable ability. Although he didn't live up to the advance billing, bettors thought enough of him to send him off as the 2-1 favourite which says something. He's definitely worth another shot now that he has dropped down.

6 POINTOMYGRANSON didn't contest the same race as the above two on 11/02 but his race for a considerably lower purse actually went more than a second faster and he was "right there." In fact he would likely have won it had he got rolling just a few strides earlier as he was definitely liveliest of all and he did get by the winner just past the wire.

7 MONGOLIAN HERO N is back for a second shot at the class after getting away slowly and then rallying for fourth in his latest. He'll face one fewer in this field of seven so a top-three finish is a real possibility.

5 SANDBETWEENURTOES is a classy individual to be sure but until she beats the boys at this level we're prepared to sit back and watch. She last faced mixed company on March 5, 2016!

ON THIS DATE...

1985 – Twin B Playboy (Dave Wall) and Young Spirit (Rick McNeill) won divisions of the OHHA Stake (3CP) at Mohawk

Race 9 Selections

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2 PEDRO HANOVER gets a new driver in James MacDonald. We normally pay attention to the driver changes at scratch time but in this case we're discounting Jonathan Drury's decision to drop Pedro Hanover as he will instead drive Bettor Ops for his main client, Carmen Auciello. Both are extremely competitive but it's Pedro Hanover who is getting a bit of class relief while Bettor Ops N moves up off a near miss. Pedro should appreciate the fact that he's no longer facing the well meant Rockin In Heaven or the fast closing Pointomygranson.

4 BETTOR OPS N was a full second slower than Pedro Hanover when he raced earlier on the same 11/02 program and he didn't even win. What he did do was put up the half and three-quarter times before drifting wide and tiring in the closing strides which allowed an opportunistic Lisburn to slip up the inside.

5 LISBURN might be able to duplicate the trip that he had last week as he did use his excellent gate speed to make that trip rather than just luck into it. He even managed to carry Real Surreal for a good portion of the backstretch before giving way, taking the inside path around the last turn, then advancing on the pylons for the win.

3 AMERICAN VIRGIN looks better here than he did in the NW16000L5 class with Physicallyinclined and Torrin Hanover but I'm still not 100% sold on the 32-time winner. He might find his way into an easier class before too long, in which case we'll definitely reconsider.

ON THIS DATE...

1996 – Evander Holyfield upset Mike Tyson in 11th-round knockout in Las Vegas to regain WBA heavyweight boxing title, becoming just the second boxer, after Muhammad Ali, to win a heavyweight title 3 times

1996 – 1-9 favourite Moni Maker (Wally Hennessey / William Andrews) won the \$169,000 Matron Stakes (3FT) at Pompano Park in 1:57.4

Race 10 Selections

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5 NICKLE BAG looks as good as any now that he has driven a win from his last five starts and dropped down to NW8000L5. Although it's safe to call him "class conscious" at this stage of the game, none of his last five wins came immediately after dropping down. Instead he often takes a week or two to settle into the new class before pouncing.

4 WALTER MITTY was scheduled to contest the same 11/02 race as Nickle Bag until he was scratched on a technicality. He's in with a much easier crowd tonight and set to make his debut for trainer Bill Budd who has replaced Rod Boyd. Both trainers win their fair share and each use top rated drivers. There's not much to separate these top two picks so near post time odds should be considered.

10 REGAL SON is just one start into his fall campaign and it was a solid third place finish despite a middle half shuffle. No wonder Filion opted to give him another try. He's the kind of horse who should do some good at this level, although this is a particularly tough group of NW8000L5 horses so he may need another start before he connects.

3 MAJOR HILL is moving up in class after failing to hit the board in four straight races so I can see why many will give him the cold shoulder. This could be a huge mistake as he did look good in the closing stages of his latest and he would likely have hit the board if he just had some momentum.

ON THIS DATE...

2013 – Captaintreacherous (Tim Tetrick / Tony Alagna) won the \$265,000 American-National Stake (3CP) in 1:49

2015 – World Anti-Doping Agency recommended that the Russian Federation be banned from athletics competitions for running a "state-supported" doping programme

2015 – Justin Bieber released "Love Yourself" (Billboard Song of the Year, Grammy Song of the Year)