

Race 1 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#9 JK BLACK GOLD got a driver change to Doug McNair last week and last time he drove this gelding last September, he won two straight with him. It was expected with that switch that he would get a more aggressive steer, and McNair moved him first-over in the third quarter to chase after loose leader Captain Hurley. This gelding produced a 27-flat final quarter kick to get the job done and lower his season's best mark. He lands in this Pop Up Final positioned outside several horses that appear to want to make a dash for the front at the start. They typically race 'em hard in these finals, and shooting for a \$40,000 purse, things could get a little western in here. This Dave Menary trainee could be sitting in the best spot at the head of the lane, and I'll give him the nod to repeat in this opening leg of tonight's \$75,000 guaranteed Pick 5.

#6 CAPTAIN HURLEY was an impressive rallying winner of Leg 1 of this series on August 22nd in a mile where he sat in heading into the far turn and he looked like he was in a hopeless spot racing four back along the inside surrounded by a wall of rivals. Thanks to some adept Travis Cullen stickhandling in the lane, he found a way through, and he sailed past the leaders for the win. He was more aggressive in Leg 2, and he couldn't fend off JK Black Gold in the lane. Drawing best here, he will likely be another one that looks to stalk and pounce with so much early speed signed on. I'm inclined to look for closers the way the shape of this race looks on paper.

#3 FRANCO SANTANA N jogged on the front end in Leg 1 of this series, and he was good again in Leg 2, but the trip that rival Dad got was just too good as that rival enjoyed riding his pocket and eventually used that golden trip to edge past him late. He looks like one of a few that wants the front in here, and I think he is the one most likely to survive if a speed horse comes out on top.

#4 DAD raced well in both legs of this series, and he needed every inch of racetrack to get past Franco Santana N last week. I doubt he will get that same pocket ride tonight in this final, but I can see him getting an inside following trip then rallying to take a share.

Race 2 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#3 TOUCHEDBYANANGEL is one that I will side with in this small Grand Circuit field seeking out some value for the early Pick 5 seeing as he is quoted at 5 to 1 in the morning line. Leading up to his last start, he hit the board in four straight starts, and he had that streak broken on August 12th at Grand River through no fault of his own. He suffered interference from rival Strobe Lite as that one was clearing to the front at the half. And that interference threw this gelding off stride. He got a perfect tightener in for this Grand Circuit event on August 23rd when he was given an easy trip racing third most of the way before zooming past some decent conditioned horses. He will likely be more aggressive tonight in this short field.

#1 MOTHERS MONI ships north in excellent form and he certainly knows how to find the winner's circle being that he has visited it seven times in 13 starts. His Muscle Hill win on Hambletonian day was excellent and his 1:52-flat clocking that day represents the fastest mark in this field. He has shown on more than one occasion that he can take air and keep advancing, and that is a very valuable skill to possess. I imagine in this short field he will make an early move to the front and look to lead the way home from there. He is the one to beat.

#5 STROBE LITE made breaks at similar points of his last two miles which is a bit concerning, but both of those miles were raced over five eighths tracks, so perhaps that variable was a contributor to his gait issues. He gets back to the bigger Mohawk Pard surface, and he qualified well over this track on August 28th.

#2 DREAM FOR PEACE won a Gold race two starts back when Strobe Lite broke and affected Touchedbyanangel, who also broke stride. He subsequently broke himself in his next start. When all things are normal, he is likely a fringe player in this field.

Race 3 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#6 DALTON SHARD N was racing well here before he took a trip to the Maritimes where he just missed qualifying for the Final of the Gold Cup & Saucer. Three starts back on August 1st, he was in against speed merchant Century Komodo and starting from the six-hole that night he left well enough to land in the pocket early, then he ended up third along the inside on the last turn and after he took that shuffle, he closed stoutly, flying up the inside in 25 4/5 to finish a close second. His races down east were good, and he draws the best post again tonight from where he should be able to work out a good trip. He gets top billing here to start off tonight's early Pick 4.

#4 ALLSTAR MANIAC was ready to rock here for his first start of the season on August 8th, and he was super impressive passing eight rivals in the stretch to get up for the win. That's not a typical winning trip at this racetrack. He jumped up several class levels for his next two starts and he wasn't terrible; he just motored home in 26-flat to get up for third and he appears to be in a bit easier tonight. He draws decently and he should be a threat in the lane coming from the middle of the pack.

#1 D A LETS BOOGIE steps up off a loss in a Popup series final, but that was a rare loss for this gelding who came into that race on a six-race win streak. He is obviously in tougher here, but he did lower his lifetime mark to 1:49 4/5 two starts back, and all he does is win. He has taken victories 13 times in 30 starts over the past two seasons, and he is in with a shot here.

#2 JACK PANIC gets needed class relief here and he will likely get positioned close to the front at the start of this mile and ride a good trip to a spot in the bottom of the Tri or Super. He is probably a good one to use underneath in this spot.

Race 4 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#9 LOGAN PARK was a confident winner of the Earl Rowe Memorial two starts back for his seventh victory of the season in his eleventh start and fifteenth win of the past two seasons. At eight years old, he just keeps going, and he isn't slowing down much. He then raced in the Maple Leaf Trot elimination against some of the superstars of the older trotting division in North America, and that was just a bit too tough for him. He no doubt will look to blast to the front early here and control this race, and he is the one to beat.

#3 MONSERRATE has only taken three wins from his past 25 starts over the past two seasons, but he has regularly faced the best older trotters on the continent. His last win racing for a purse came here at Mohawk Park in May, and it was an impressive win in the Graduate Series where he made two moves. He comes into tonight's race off a decent effort, and he is the other one that I would consider using on early multi-race tickets.

#6 MAJOR VELOCITY was good here two starts back racing in this Open level where he finished second to Dame Good Time. He faced a bit easier last week, and he got bet down to 4 to 5, and he delivered impressively. Once he took over the lead in the second quarter, the result was never in doubt. He is in tougher now, and if one or both of the top two picks bring their A game, he will likely be racing for a share.

#1 GAINES HANOVER is only a one-time winner so far this year, but he comes into tonight's mile off two decent efforts where he showed early speed. He will likely once again leave well from the rail to get position close to the front, and from there, he should be able to stick around for a share.

Race 5 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#6 FRANCENT N shipped in off some big winning miles at Yonkers last week, and she was bet like she couldn't lose in her elimination for this Milton Stakes Final. She showed why she was a Grade 1 winner in New Zealand when she converted and lowered her lifetime mark to 1:48 1/5, scooting up the pylons in deep stretch to outsprint both Twin B Joe Fresh and a closing Rodeo Drive Deo. There is a chance that she will be even sharper tonight, and I expect that she will get an aggressive drive starting from the best post. She gets the call to repeat.

#9 TWIN B JOE FRESH kicked off her six-year-old campaign here at Mohawk Park in the Grade 1 Roses Are Red elimination and final, and she wasn't very good in either one of those miles. After getting a perfect second-over trip in the elimination and spinning her wheels to finish fourth, she raced first up in the final and floundered to finish ninth. Since those two sub par miles, she has thrived, taking three wins and in six starts and finishing second in two miles to her outstanding stablemate Miki And Minnie. She raced okay last week when third behind the top pick in here, and let's remember that mile was a prep for this Grade 2 Milton Stakes Final. I don't think it will surprise many if she finds her way back to the winner's circle tonight.

#8 RODEO DRIVE DEO is having a bit of a subpar season for her, but she has shown signs that she will excel in the latter parts of this season. She comes into tonight's race off two nice efforts where she got second, and she was driven differently in those two miles. She looked good closing to get past Twin B Joe Fresh last week, and she should be passing some rivals again tonight to take a slice.

#3 LOUIES GIRL raced well in defeat last week and she lacked room in the stretch at a critical point of that mile. She will likely look for another covered trip racing close to the front again and she should be able to work her way into the Tri or Super.

Race 6 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#6 D A ALLJOKESASIDE cost only \$18,000 at the London Classic Sale, and he is the seventh foal from his dam. His six siblings have all been winners, the best of them being Mighty Mary (18 wins, \$90K, 1:56 H.). He debuted here last week, and he raced great when you consider his trip. He suffered interference heading into the first turn when a rival couldn't handle the turn and veered right in front of him. He was far back to the last turn, then he started to find his best stride coming off the last turn. He eventually angled to the far outside, and he flew late to win the race for place. He drew better for his second start and his odds dropped from 69 to 1 to 8 to 5. He was a predictable winner that night and he fired home quickly to get the job done. He draws best now and he still has some upside. He does make his stakes debut here, but I'll side with him to start up tonight's middle Pick 5.

#3 GOGO GADGET kicked off his career with four straight wins although the fourth one – a victory in the Battle Of Waterloo Final – was really a loss but he got elevated when the winner was tossed for going inside several pylons. He wasn't as good in the last Gold Leg in his fifth start where he tired in the stretch to finish fourth. He adds Lasix now which might explain that stretch fade. You will know him early, and he could lead all the way and get his fifth win in his sixth start.

#5 KERPLUNK is still looking for his maiden win as he makes his sixth start, but he might be worth a look in here because he comes in off one of his best efforts. In that Grand Circuit race, he trailed to the top of the stretch where he cut the corner and started to look for room. He had to zig and zag before he found full clearance, and he finished with plenty of pace. He did pace his own back half in 53 1/5, and I could see him scoring the upset here if he lays a bit closer early.

#1 TH BENEDICT tried racing first-over against undefeated Shalom Hanover last week, and that was a trip that was never going to work. He gets in easier tonight, and I don't mind the rail for him in a short field. He is still looking for his second win, but he did take a Gold victory on debut, and he is another that is capable in a compact yet competitive field.

Race 7 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#6 HUNTINTHELASTDOLAR tried to close from the back in a 1:47 mile in his Canadian Pacing Derby elimination last week, and that was never going to work. He also got a tough trip against better horses than he meets tonight two starts back in the Dan Patch Stakes. Getting both post and class relief should hit him right between the eyes tonight, and I would expect that he will get an aggressive steer starting from the best post tonight. He gets top billing here.

#5 FUNTIME BAYAMA comes to Mohawk Park in razor sharp form. Consider that in his last start, a winning effort in an Open Handicap at The Red Mile, he raced first up and powered away from his rivals with a 26 1/5 final quarter. He is certainly no stranger to Mohawk Park; he has taken eight of his 14 lifetime wins racing over the Campbellville oval. Dexter Dunn chose him over the #1 horse, and it seems likely that he will get an aggressive steer starting from the center of the gate.

#7 DELRAY BEACH couldn't be any sharper coming into tonight's mile having taken two straight wins where he worked out a great trip for himself then outsprinted the leader late. He will no doubt be firing off the gate again tonight, but he will probably have plenty of company. I'm not sure he can find the pocket this time, so I'll use him underneath.

#3 SUGAR MAN tried to bottom out the field in the Gold Cup N Saucer, and he perhaps went a bit too fast in the third quarter (26 3/5) while he tried to bottom out the field. In the end, the two rivals that followed him around the track and got inside trips got past him at the wire. He will probably look to sit a following trip this time, and he can get a piece of this.

Race 8 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#2 SUPER CHAPTER had a tremendous season last year at three, taking nine wins from 14 starts while only missing the board once and earning more than \$1.7 million. He just missed in the Breeders Crown Final here in late October when he raced tough first-over and was probably the best horse. He got picked off right on the wire by a tripped out longshot. He has also been terrific this season as a four-year-old taking four wins and two narrow defeats in six starts while earning more than \$488,000. Two starts back, he raced first up and just kept grinding away until he raced Lexus Kody into defeat in the Cashman Memorial on Hambletonian Day. He came right back last week, and he once again raced first over and was an easy winner, much easier than the half length margin would suggest. He had put the field away when Emoticon Legacy gained ground late. There was never any danger of him getting beat. He is the clear top pick here in this year's renewal of the Maple Leaf Trot.

#3 EMOTICON LEGACY was last year's Kentucky Futurity winner, and he had a bit of a late start to his four-year-old campaign, but he has shown improvement in his past two starts including a good closing second to Super Chapter last week. It took him a while to find his top gear though as he couldn't get latched onto Super Chapter's cover and he only closed in after the winner had been decided. Still, he is starting to find his best stride, and he can be an Exacta factor again tonight.

#6 FRENCH WINE has earned more than \$1.9 million, and his biggest win came racing here last season when he beat Lexus Kody and others in the \$822,000 Breeders Crown Final. He found his best stride in the lane last week when he exploded off cover to win going away and he is obviously peaking right now. He draws best but he faces tougher tonight, and I prefer to use him underneath tonight.

#4 LEXUS KODY scored an upset win in this race last year then he went on to have a terrific fall campaign. He got a good trip on the lead in his elimination, but he didn't have much punch in the stretch. He will certainly offer a much better price tonight if you still like him, and trainer Burke is always capable of getting one to bounce back, but he seems to be going the wrong way right now and I'll play to beat him out of the Tri this time.

BEST BET: SUPER CHAPTER

Race 9 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#7 WAVES OF FORTUNE turned a corner when she took her maiden win on August 6th despite having missed 17 days coming into that race. Despite that absence, she still managed to rally in 26 1/5 to get her maiden win as the 1 to 5 favorite. She returned 11 days later in an OSS Gold race, and she was bet down to 1 to 9 – with good reason. After taking over the lead in the second quarter, she cruised to her second win, and she lowered her lifetime mark to 1:51-flat. She drew widest in the Grade 3 Eternal Camnation last week, and that was no problem at all because she flew home to win easily. This race on paper looks like a battle between her and Twin B Copacabana, and this Tony Beaton filly gets top billing in the first leg of tonight's late Pick 5.

#2 TWIN B COPACABANA caught the eye on debut here on June 25th. The \$90,000 London Classic Sale buy was racing sixth on the inside rounding the last turn, needing racing room. She stayed along the pylons into the stretch and began to close while racing in close quarters, and she paced up to get third without ever getting full clearance. She closed in 26-flat, and she crossed under the wire with plenty of pace. Flash forward to her race in Gold Leg 1, she sat third to the last turn and she pulled first-over at which point the pocket sitter popped out and forced her three wide. She paced strongly to the wire to finish a narrowly beaten third in a good effort. She raced evenly in her third start, then she converted 17 days later. She parlayed a good trip to an upset score in a Gold race two starts back, then she was a brave front end winner in the same Grand Circuit race where the top pick won the other division last week. She will likely be the one to catch when these Gold fillies turn for home.

#1 MONEY CARLO got the best trip last week sitting behind second half speed battle and she had dead aim and clear sailing in the stretch, but she couldn't get past Twin B Copacabana. She gets the added challenge of also facing Waves Of Fortune tonight, and I'll use her underneath.

#5 TWIN B MAYREAU was sitting a nice pocket trip last week when she was pulled on the last turn to attack the leader. She stayed game but that trip didn't work. She draws well here and I expect that she will be driven more conservatively. She can be part of the exotics.

Race 10 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#6 PRINCE HAL HANOVER is having a great season so far having hit the board in every start, He has taken five wins and eight slices from 13 starts while earning close to \$648,000. He was outstanding in his elimination for this Canadian Pacing Derby final. Starting from a wide post his only intention was to make front, and he was driven with supreme confidence by pilot Todd McCarthy. It took him well past the quarter to clear and once he did, he took no breathers. He had challengers coming from everywhere in deep stretch and he fought them all off. He draws the best post now, and it seems reasonable to expect he can get a slightly easier trip. He gets top billing to start up tonight's late Pick 4.

#9 ERVIN HANOVER rarely gets beat on home soil and heading into last week's mile, he was three for three here at Mohawk Park so far this season. He put in a workmanlike effort to take a win here on July 25th, then he was a vet scratch at the Meadowlands on Hambletonian Day. He popped the pocket on the final turn, and he chased Prince Hal Hanover home, and he just couldn't reach up last week. Can he be sharper and turn the tables this week? Sure he could. He would be no surprise here.

#7 AYEAYE CAPTAIN DEO usually races only one way, and his modus operandi is to drop to the back then rev up on the last turn and try to pass them all. Those tactics worked here on lowered his lifetime mark to 1:47 3/5 racing at this track in Leg 1 of the Graduate series in late may where he closed in 25 1/5. His connections paid the \$40,000 supplement to enter this race, and he was motoring last week late to finish a narrowly beaten fourth. He will be coming late again, but I prefer to use him underneath tonight.

#5 FOR ONCE INMY LIFE was bet like he couldn't lose last week, and he sat the best trip then had no problem pacing past Best Chip in the lane. He will have several other in here that will likely be leaving hard with him, and I'm not sure he can get that same golden trip. I'll play to beat him as a likely underlay tonight.

Race 11 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#6 BIG D ENERGY is a homebred Control The Moment gelding that is related to four that earned more than \$100,000, the best of which is Boiling Oar that has won 58 races and has earned more than \$957K from 242 starts to date. This gelding got a conservative drive on debut, and he looked good closing in 54 2/5 and passing horses. He was more aggressive in Leg 2 of the Grassroots, and he was an impressive driving away winner in 1:52 1/5. He then broke at the start in his third race, but he bounced back well in his first OSS Gold try on August 16th, racing first-over and hanging in there for third. He got every penny he could last week in the Grade 3 Nassagaweya Stakes when he closed for second because no one was beating undefeated star Shalom Hanover. He draws best in this short field, and I think he will get a more aggressive steer tonight. I'll give him the nod to register the upset.

#2 ATLAS ROSS is the obvious colt to beat in here as he hits the track boasting an unbeaten record. He worked his way up from Grassroots to Gold quickly, and he is the obvious one to beat here in a spot where he most likely will look to control this mile on the front end.

#1 CATTLETRACKS is an improving Doc Moore trainee that comes in off two straight win and moves up from the Grassroots to the Gold division. He has raced only one way in his first four starts, and that is on the engine playing come and get me. He might have to give up the front to Atlas Ross this time, but he still should stick around for a share in this first Gold try.

#3 YES I AM HANOVER finished just a half length behind Big D Energy last time after setting the early pace then chasing Shalom Hanover home. He will likely be denied the front early in this mile, but he should be able to sit a trip and land in the Tri or Super.

Race 12 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#5 ODDS ON VALHALLA is going to be the top pick in here based on trip notes made from last week's mile. He followed inside to the lane where he started to look for room, and it looked like he found clear sailing along the inside when a rival dropped down in front of him and closed his lane off. He eventually found a seam between horses in deep stretch, and he was motoring late, but it was too late. He gets a good post to work from tonight, and I think he will get an aggressive steer. He gets top billing.

#6 BOOTHILL HUDY is a logical contender based on last week's mile where he closed for third and finished ahead of Odds On Valhalla. He gets the magic six hole now, and four starts back when he drew the best post, he was driven aggressively, and he absolutely jogged and he lowered his lifetime best mark to 1:50 1/5. He almost surely will get another aggressive steer here in this Popup series consolation, and he would be no surprise.

#1 LIVINTHEBEACHLIFE was out of position in both of his last two starts after drawing wide posts, now he draws the rail from where he almost won three starts back. He will likely look to sit that same kind of following trip tonight, and it's possible that he could score the upset if everything shakes out his way. He is worth a price look for deeper Pick 4 and Pick 5 tickets.

#2 SNACK ATTACK took a shuffle then came on late to get the smallest cheque last week and he flashed home in 26 4/5. He moved widest in the lane, and he had to check up briefly in mid stretch to make sure he could avoid a breaker. Starting from the inside tonight, he should be in mid pack early again. If he can get a slightly better trip, he can be part of the Tri or Super.

SPOT PLAY: ODDS ON VALHALLA

Race 13 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#4 DUBLIN DASHER took a big drop in class last week, but that race was a mandatory High-5 race that featured a 12-horse field. When he drew into the second tier following his stablemate that typically has no gate speed, he had absolutely no chance. Somehow, he still got bet down to 4 to 1, and as expected, he was at the back early. He would have needed to pace a sub-52 back half to be part of the win photo, and that wasn't going to happen. He did pace a 53-flat back half to stay sharp, and he gets right back into the same class starting from a much better post. His chances are greatly improved tonight, and he gets top billing

#5 UNCLE SHANK A drew the best post last week, and as expected, he was sent on an all-out speed mission. He gapped out a lot of the field for most of the mile, and that was good news for pocket sitting Vandimen Bluechip because that rival could sit and wait until deep stretch before he edged past this ridgling. He is always a threat at this level, especially when he draws in the middle of the gate.

#10 WAFFLE BLUE CHIP gets to drop a few levels tonight and he comes of two decent efforts against non-winners of \$25,000 last four company in his last two starts. His best game is speed, and he will need to get past Uncle Shank A if his intent is to blast to the front. If he can land on the lead at some point, he could very well prove to be tough to catch.

#1 BRUE HANOVER is another class dropper in here that is obviously worth a look. He hasn't taken a win for a while, but that is probably down to the company he has been facing. He could get a good trip here starting from the rail, and he is another one to consider in a competitive field.

#6 RBSTENACIOUS T is yet another one getting class relief in here, but he faces some tough looking rivals. He is in a bit deep, but I do see him rallying for a small share in this spot.