

Race 1 Selections

The Horseplayer's Journal by Garnet Barnsdale

#2 SOUTHWIND SAMBUCCA was claimed here for \$8,000 for Des Tackoor and his partner on August 3rd and he immediately produced a big mile in his first start for the new connections two weeks later when he jogged on the front end in 1:51 3/5. He was then protected racing in the lowest conditioned class in two straight miles, and he popped and stopped in both of them. Getting back into an \$8,000 claimer tonight gives this gelding a much better chance because he likely won't face the same kind of intense pressure in the third quarter that he did in his last two starts. He gets top billing to start up tonight's \$75,000 guaranteed early Pick 5.

#5 RYLENTLESS, like Southwind Sambucca, was claimed out of a race here On August 3rd. Also, like Southwind Sambucca, this one jogged in his first start for his new connections, but he did it at Grand River. He was even more impressive a week later when he rallied wide racing over a good track that was assigned a one second variant. He lowered his lifetime mark that night, and he couldn't be going much better right now. He is the other one in here that I would consider using on early Pick 5 tickets.

#9 FABRIZIO N was second for the entire mile when Southwind Sambucca won on August 22nd, and despite drawing wide, he should be able to get positioned close to the front early. If he can get an inside following trip the whole way, he should be part of the Tri.

#1 CAUGHTINALANDSLIDE was 0 for 14 on August 22nd and he broke the ice that night with an impressive rally to take his first win of the season. He fired back a week later and similarly rolled past the leaders in the stretch to win going away. He is in tougher here, but he is going well, and he should be able to close for a share tonight.

Race 2 Selections

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#2 TRASHNYOURDREAMS has only missed the board once in his first five starts and that came in his last mile where he took a shot in a Grand Circuit race. He was very aggressive in that mile despite being sent off as a 32 to 1 shot. He blasted off the gate and was the first leader, then he was soon overtaken. He got shuffled back to third by the time they reached the half, then he made a big first-over brush in the third quarter to take a clear lead for a few strides. He just couldn't sustain that move against those Grand Circuit types. Getting in much easier tonight gives him a good chance to take his second win of the year, and he gets top billing.

#6 CAPTAIN CAVALIER got a good trip on the lead three starts back to break his maiden then he raced in two straight Grand Circuit races and in both miles, he was facing Shalom Hanover, who is still unbeaten to this point. He could do no better than finish fifth in one of those miles, but he gets some things swinging his way tonight, Getting both post and class relief gives him a decent chance to take his second win of his career, but he will need to be faster tonight.

#3 STAY FRESH is only 1 for 17 lifetime and he is winless in 10 starts so far this season, but last week he dropped from a tough non-winners of three field into non-winners of two, and he raced better, but he also failed to convert as the 10 cents on the dollar favorite. He made a middle move to the front then got hooked in a protracted duel around the final turn that softened him up enough that the pocket sitter could chase him down along the inside in the stretch. He is one of the contenders in here, but I would be hesitant to take a short price here.

#8 CONTINUUM is one of two three-time winners in this non-winners in this field and he has landed in the Super in all of his last four starts including last week where he closed third here at Mohawk Park. He will offer a big price here starting from the widest post and he is worth a look for the bottom of the Tri and Super.

Race 3 Selections

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#6 THE BEAR A CUDA last won five starts back here on August 7th where he dominated a better field than he meets tonight racing in a non-winners of \$2,700 last four condition. Dropping to the bottom conditioned class gives him every opportunity to take his third win of the season, and starting from the best post, it seems very likely that he will get put into this race early by driver Louis-Phillipe Roy. I think once he makes front, he won't be caught, and he gets the nod to start up tonight's early Pick 4.

#8 PHOENIX is a classy nine-year-old gelding that has taken 31 wins in his career and earned more than \$389,000. He came off a layoff last week and he was raced aggressively, making front early before taking a mid race shuffle. He rallied late and he worked his way into second behind the blowout winner in the stretch before tiring late. He can be sharper tonight, and I can see him being an Exacta factor.

#10 TALK SHOW HOST is another one that gets to take a class drop in this spot and it's only three races back where he beat a decent non-winners of \$6,100 last four at Grand River, but he did get a perfect pocket trip that night. It seems unlikely that he can work out that kind of trip starting from post 10 with a few expected leavers lined up to his left. If he drew better, he would be picked higher. Starting from out there, I'm inclined to use this gelding on the bottom here.

#2 WILDFIRE BLUE CHIP dropped to this bottom condition level last week, and he put together a nice rally to get up for second in a spot where he took a bit of action at the windows. Trainer Stephane Pouliot takes over the lines tonight, and this son of Six Pack will likely be passing horses late in the mile again. I don't see him beating The Bear A Cuda in this spot, though, and I'll use him underneath.

BEST BET: THE BEAR A CUDA

Race 4 Selections

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#6 FAITH STEP got a barn change last week, moving into Paul Reid's stable. She also got a class drop into a much better spot, but her fate was sealed somewhat at the post draw when she got the 10-hole. She typically isn't that fast leaving the gate anyway, and last week, she started near the back, making her chore very tough. She started a move on the last turn, and she got held up briefly when a rival stopped in front of her. That brief incident might have cost her a win, because she motored late once she found her top gear in the final eighth of a mile. She moves to the best post tonight, and she gets top billing to start up tonight's 20-cent Pick 6.

#5 R PEAKY BLINDERS is the obvious threat here getting a needed class drop tonight to a spot where he is likely to look to lead all the way. I thought he raced well from post 10 two starts back when he finished fourth behind Ungawa who led all the way. He broke last time, but he gets off the rail and draws one of the best posts now. If he behaves and makes front early, he may prove hard to overtake.

#7 SPRITE SEELSTER raced at this class level in two of her last three starts, and she was good in both of those miles. Three starts back, she worked out a winning trip after starting from the rail, which is typically no easy feat, and she scored as a 56 to 1 longshot that night. She closed well to get up for fourth last week when she dropped back down to this class. I don't see her as a win threat in this spot, but she should be able to close for a spot in the Tri or Super.

#1 GOOBER SMACK shipped into Mohawk Park last week coming off a couple of mediocre miles, but he was dropping in class that night, and he got bet like he couldn't lose, closing at 2 to 1. He made front early and left no doubt, and the money that was bet on him turned out to be smart. This is a different situation now with him stepping up in class and drawing the rail, and he is one that I prefer to use underneath.

Race 5 Selections

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#5 STABLE GENIUS got bet down to 3 to 5 favorite here seven starts back on July 26th, and he crushed his rivals that night to lower his season's best mark to 1:53-flat. He stepped back up to the \$30,000 optional claiming level for his next start, and he doubled up as the 6 to 5 favorite. He came back in the same class four starts back, and he didn't get the best trip as he got bottled up around the last turn when he got stuck behind a rival that was stopping. He got clear sailing in the lane, then broke stride. In his next start, he dropped back down to the level that he crushed at on July 26th, and he raced well in defeat. He looked like he had the race sewn up early in the stretch, then one rival came screaming down the middle of the track and edged past him late. He made no mistake on August 21st, then he stepped back up on August 30th and he doubled up, then he scored the threepeat last week where he lowered his season's best mark to 1:52 2/5 taking his fifth win of the season in his tenth start. He is in a bit tougher tonight, but he couldn't be any sharper. A fourpeat looms.

#6 PATRIARCH HANOVER was bet down to 4 to 5 last week starting from the best post needing to finish 1-2 to become harness racing's newest millionaire. He closed well in the back half, but he was probably just a bit too far back. He draws best again, and he can be a threat tonight if he gets better position at the start.

#1 MAXIMUM EXPOSURE was given and aggressive steer two starts back racing at tonight's class level, and he poked hi neck in front of Stable Genius in the stretch, but he couldn't quite seal the deal. He gets to drop back down in class tonight, and it seems likely that he will be able to find a live helmet to follow tonight starting from the rail. He is the third one in here that I would consider using on early multi-race tickets.

#2 PEMBERTON is a classy 22-time winner that would smoke this field on his best day. He comes into tonight's mile off two okay qualifiers and starting from an inside post, he will likely get raced from the back in this return race. I could see him closing for a small share.

Race 6 Selections

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#8 READY FOR LANDING ships north from Pennsylvania with some good form, having taken two wins in his last three starts racing in a class similar to the one he races in here tonight. He changes barns and races with a \$60,000 claiming tag, and he is no stranger to Mohawk Park. He broke his maiden here in February of 2024. He gets Trevor Henry in the bike tonight, and he will likely get an aggressive steer here. I'll side with him to start up tonight's late Pick 5.

#10 EUROBANK HANOVER dropped to tonight's class level last week showing a bit of a stale date having missed close to three weeks of action. He made a nice late charge to get up for fourth, now he returns in a week where he should be sharper. He looks like one of the main contenders in here, but he hasn't tried to leave hard in several starts, so I'm not sure we can expect him to push forward leaving the gate tonight. He will be a threat if he is close enough at the three quarter pole.

#2 GRIFF chased some fast fractions in his last start when he was racing in the pocket while Fashion Frenzie led the way, and he popped out at the head of the lane and he eventually got past the leader, but he was overtaken by two fresh closers in deep stretch. He can get another good trip in here, and he is on that I can see landing in the bottom of the Tri or Super.

#5 RICKY RESOLVE rolled up late two starts back and he just failed to get the job done racing in tonight's class, then he drew wide last week, and he just had too far to come and too many horses to pass. Getting a post on the middle of the gate tonight should mean that he will get positioned closer to the front leaving the gate which can facilitate him closing to take a slice.

SPOT PLAY: READY FOR LANDING

Race 7 Selections

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#7 STICKEMINLETHIMGO raced well in three straight starts in June where he took a win and was a close second in his other two miles. He then got an impossible trip in the Pop Up Series Final on July 4th, and he plummeted to last. He was much better five starts back. He blasted to the front from post eight then gave up command to the second choice passing the quarter. He gapped out a bit around the last turn as the leader sizzled to the three quarters in 1:21 3/5. Then he re-rallied along the pylons in the stretch, and he took a clear inside the eighth pole, but he was unable to fend off a fresh rival that flew down the middle of the track and collared him a stride before the wire. He finished a clear second and he was expected to win his next start, but Wannabeabigstar was huge that night and the best this gelding could do was get second. He fired right back to take two wins in a five day span, including a decision over Wannabeabigstar on August 15th. He drops back down to take that rival on again tonight, and he gets top call to start up tonight's late Pick 4.

#6 WANNABEABIGSTAR got hot here in late July and early August, taking consecutive wins and lowering his lifetime best mark first to 1:49 1/5 when he swept the field, then to 1:48 4/5 when he went to the front early and bottomed out the field. He comes off a decent effort where he rode the pocket and finished second to the top pick in here. He projects to get a similar trip tonight, but Stickitinlethimgo has a recency advantage on him, and he will need to get past that rival in the lane. Your call.

#5 CODE CRACKER was sitting a nice pocket trip last week when he was popped out on the final turn, but that move didn't work because he soon backed up and missed getting a cheque. He draws best here, and he gets a driver switch to Jody Jamieson. He can get another good trip and likely a better drive in this spot. I'll use him underneath.

#8 LAMBORGHINI LOU sat a nice trip and prevailed to take a new lifetime mark last week, now he draws worst and faces tougher. He will likely get raced from the back tonight, and I could see him passing enough of these to work his way into the bottom of the exotics.

Race 8 Selections

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#6 DAHLQUIST HANOVER got bet down to even money in a recently concluded Popup series but starting from the widest post proved to be his undoing that night. With several of his rivals looking for position leaving the gate, he got pushed five wide briefly heading into the opening turn. He decided to drive on, and he was held up while a rival in front of him idled to work his way into the four hole at the quarter. This gelding's goose was cooked at that point, but he continued to drive on, and he eventually worked his way up to second. He held on for third money in a good effort, now he draws best. He should be a threat to lead all the way at a price tonight, and he gets top billing.

#7 WHAT ABOUT ELMO takes a big class plunge tonight and he rightfully will get lots of support at the windows. He took his last win here six starts back when he made a bold first-over move to get the job done. He doesn't have to face the likes of Logan Park or Dame Good Time in this spot, and he should be right there vs. these.

#3 RIGHT HERE HANOVER was a good winner here four starts back where he raced first-over and he took his first victory of the season. He didn't show much in his next start, but racing in the non-winners of \$9,000 last four class on August 30th, he produced a nice closing effort to get up and take the smallest cheque. He got bet down to 8 to 5 last week, and he parlayed that good closing effort into a front end win. He steps up one class level now, but he is sharp, and she should be a threat to score the repeat win.

#4 MR BLUEBIRD takes a big class drop tonight, and looking back six starts, he worked out a good trip and jogged racing one class lower than tonight's. That was a sharp winning effort considering he had a few miles earlier in the year where he seemed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. He isn't one that I would trust at a short price, but he obviously should be a threat racing at this level tonight.

Race 9 Selections

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#6 PRIVATE ACCESS takes a massive class plunge here from a Grade 1 Grand Circuit stake to this non-winners of \$31,000 last four class. Some of his recent efforts stand out on this page such as his third-place finish in the Vincennes on Hambletonian Day where he flew home in 26-flat, and his third in the Maple Leaf Trot elimination. He gets the best post and the leading driver, and he should prove tough to beat in this spot, especially if he gets sent to the front early as expected.

#5 SAFE CONDUCT is a classy veteran that makes his third start back tonight and draws another good post tonight. He should be sufficiently sharp now, and he is one that I expect to get sent for position leaving the gate in this spot. It's possible that he could ride in Private Access' pocket, and that makes him a potential upsetter to consider for late multi-race tickets.

#4 STORMONT BEAUTIFUL was only a one-time winner so far this season when she lined up behind the gate on August 23rd, but she was coming off a sharp mile where she trotted a 54 1/5 back half and a 26 2/5 final quarter. She got class relief and she converted as the 3 to 5 favorite, then she stepped up to tonight's level last week, and she flew home in 26 1/5 to get up for third. She will be passing some of these late in this mile, and she could provide some exotics value in this spot.

#3 GAINES HANOVER raced well in two straight starts before he broke stride last week. Assuming that he stays flat tonight, he should get a good trip racing near the front, and he is a good one to use underneath because he rarely gers bet.

Race 10 Selections

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#9 ROXIE HART is always risky – and especially starting from an outside post – but she takes a big class drop tonight, and she has to improve by default in this spot. Consider that she recently faced the likes of Private Access and Stable Genius, either of whom would be a big favorite in this spot. This mare will likely drop to the back leaving the gate so she can fall victim to pace and trip, but she might just be that much better than these that she sits last to the three quarters and circles the field and wins anyway.

#6 VERACRUZ gets several factors in his favor tonight. In addition to getting a class drop and drawing the best post, he also gets a positive driver change to Jody Jamieson. It makes sense that he is rated as the 3 to 1 morning line favorite tonight. The only concern is his gait issues in his last start. If he stays flat tonight, he can be a big speed threat.

#7 SHESAMANALISHI has been right there in both of her last two starts including last week's mile at tonight's class level where she led most of the way and eventually got picked off by the 2 to 1 favorite. She is in peak form now and her tactical speed should put her in a contending position leaving the gate again. She should be in the mix to get another good share tonight.

#5 TYRONE BOW TIE dropped and popped in a strong effort last week, overcoming the rail post to get the job done for his second win of the year. He is in tougher now, but he is sharp and drawing one of the best posts gives him a decent chance to land in the exotics.

#2 CRYSTAL BALLER rallied well to get second at this class last time as a 20 to 1 longshot. He faces a few tougher ones in here, so I prefer to use him on the bottom in this spot.