

Handicapper's Journal – Doug McPherson

Saturday, May 17th 2025

Race 1

#4 Bennys Jets

#5 Backonthechaingang

#1 Temple Hall

#6 Happy Quad

#4 BENNYS JETS threw in a clunker when kicking off his season two weeks ago at the OS/\$40,000 level. He takes a drop for his second start off the bench; last year he ran a similarly poor race on debut before immediately improving in his next start. #5 BACKONTHECHAINGANG was only 2 ¾ lengths better than Bennys Jets when offered for a tag for the first time on May 3. He will go with blinkers for the first time while taking another drop. #1 TEMPLE HALL has speed and figures to be a front-end threat. He showed potential in his first two starts at the maiden special weight level before regressing in two starts for \$40,000; blinkers will be removed. #6 HAPPY QUAD picked up a few checks last year; he has some speed and is worth a look.

Race 2

#2 People Are People

#5 Alpha Kadin

#7 Castle Harbour

#3 Big Lew

#2 PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE loomed a threat but did not kick on when finishing a decent fourth in the first race of the year. The winner of that race came back to run a good second against OS/\$40,000 non-twos; this one should be live on the drop in for \$15,000. #5 ALPHA KADIN showed speed and prevailed in a battle for the place spot for this tag on December 15. He could be in a good tracking spot behind Hard Reload early. #7 CASTLE HARBOUR broke slowly on debut but showed some tactical speed and ran a credible fourth, three lengths behind People Are People on December 13. Lightly-raced five-year-old goes without blinkers here. #3 BIG LEW had run some quietly decent speed figures before running a solid third, a length behind Alpha Kadin on December 15; minor player.

Race 3

#1 Magic Modie

#3 Worry Less

#2 Ain't No Lady

#6 Ondine Lady

#1 MAGIC MODIE hit the board in six of eight starts last year. She has had some quick breezes since moving to the Tiller barn for the new season; could be a pace threat.

#3 WORRY LESS had two close runner-up finishes to close out 202, both at this level. Her speed figures are solid; another who figures to be forwardly-placed. #2 AIN'T NO LADY had some time to train in Ocala before throwing in a disappointing effort over the Tampa turf on May 4 after a couple of times being vet scratched before that. She has run her best races on synthetic both here and at Presque Isle; cuts back in distance for her second start off of the bench. #6 ONDINE LADY was more forwardly-placed than expected in an OS/\$40,000 race on opening day and ran a decent fifth; she should find this spot more to her liking.

Race 4

#2 Classy War

#8 Big Screen Boss

#4 Springer

#5 Lasting Silence

#2 CLASSY WAR raced evenly against three and up for \$50,000 on the Churchill dirt last time but had a good run over the Gulfstream Tapeta two back, encountering a bit of trouble going into the turn that is not mentioned in the footnote. He adds blinkers for his return to a synthetic surface. #8 BIG SCREEN BOSS was purchased for \$75,000 at the 2023 CTHS Yearling Sale and will debut here. Big Screen is not a particularly strong debut sire but the dam has produced three debut winners in 13 foals to race, including Stakes-winners Cooler Mike, Cruden Bay and Sav. He worked well with company from the gate on the training track on May 9. #4 SPRINGER was claimed for \$40,000 on November 24 and will waive the tag for his return to the races for the new connections. He has had poor luck at the break but has raced well in both of his tries over the Tapeta. #5 LASTING SILENCE picked up a check in three of five starts at two with competitive speed figures and looks competitive.

Race 5

#3 Verdejo

#6 Breezero

#4 Haley's Honor

#5 Give Me the Boots

#3 VERDEJO had just one win in 12 starts last year but put in a number of solid efforts against tougher company than this. Hard-knocking six-year-old could have some pace to close into for her first start off of a claim at the end of last season. #6 BREEZERO was a chasing third behind restricted Stakes-winner Little Teddy and rapid stablemate Miss Vyvyanne when making her local debut on opening day; figures to be stalking the pace here. #4 HALEY'S HONOR secured the lead and spurted clear to break her maiden against allowance company on April 27. If she doesn't get softened up by Give Me the Boots

early she could easily double up. #5 GIVE ME THE BOOTS threw in a clunker against N2X/\$50,000 on May 3. She was able to win at this level on December 14 in a race where she got an easy lead; she will likely have to tussle with Haley's Honor here.

Race 6

#5 Secret Load

#4 Gloriannia

#3 Super Sicily

#8 Anam Cara

#5 SECRET LOAD never missed a check in 10 starts last year, winning twice and running a very close third in the Ashbridges Bay late in the season. Closing filly may not have an ideal pace scenario but looks worthy of respect in her four-year-old debut. #4 GLORIANNIA closed out the 2024 season with a pair of runner-up finishes behind the ultra-consistent My Sunny Valentine. She made a start at Turfway on March 22, finishing well to be fourth at a similar class level and looks like a logical contender. #3 SUPER SICILY gets a bit of a class test here after closing out 2024 with a gate-to-wire win against \$25,000 non-threes on December 12. She could potentially be the lone speed here. #8 ANAM CARA was a chasing fourth when kicking off her season on April 26. She was able to win in her second start off of the bench last year.

Race 7

#2 Somethinabouter

#9 Brindi (IRE)

#4 Shotgun Wedding

#1 Madame Obey

#2 SOMETHINABOUTHER angled out and tried to launch a bid in the stretch run of the Bourbonette Oaks but got in tight at the $\frac{1}{8}$ pole and finished evenly. It was a better effort than it looks on paper and she already has a Stakes win over the Woodbine surface to her credit. #9 BRINDI (IRE) responded to a challenge on the front end and kicked clear to win the Star Shoot on opening weekend. She looks like the quickest of the quick; dangerous if she gets clear. #4 SHOTGUN WEDDING was a credible third behind a pair of four-year-olds in an N2L allowance on April 26. She showed she has some Stakes class when finishing third in last year's Catch a Glimpse. #1 MADAME OBEY was able to beat winners on debut on December 15 before running a credible third against allowance company at Turfway on February 13. She clearly has some ability and is worth a look in her Stakes debut.

Race 8

#3 Zo Lee - Best Bet

#2 Bolt Enoree

#7 Uphill Dance

#6 Liam's Gift

#3 ZO LEE broke very sharply but was outsprinted, raced wide and finished evenly after some early stretch bumping at Keeneland on April 10. She has had success racing on the lead and may find herself there in this paceless affair. #2 BOLT ENOREE closed out 2023 with an N2L allowance win routing. She only finished worse than fourth once last year and should have no problem cutting back to seven furlongs for her four-year-old debut. #7 UPHILL DANCE had no luck for Bill Mott after being privately purchased last year and is now returned to the Rachel Halden barn. Her only recent one turn races have both been on dirt which is not her ideal surface; would not be surprised to see her form turn around here. #6 LIAM'S GIFT made just one start last year but it was a winning one, a perfectly-tripped N2L allowance on turf. She has never run a bad race at Woodbine but does not race very often and I would not take too short a price on her.

Race 9

#2 Night Striker

#1 So Called Vacation

#7 Audax Minor

#4 Contrivance

#3 Legs Like Gizmo

#2 NIGHT STRIKER was flat when adding blinkers for his final start of the 2024 campaign. He has done his best running without the blinkers; though he probably prefers a route he looks like he could get a good pace setup following some cheap speed here. #1 SO CALLED VACATION was beaten a head in his first start off of the claim for these connections on December 8. He has hit the board in half of his 20 starts to date. #7 AUDAX MINOR had no success racing on dirt at Oaklawn this winter; his synthetic speed figures are fine and he should have a fitness edge over most of his competition. #4 CONTRIVANCE dueled on the lead and gave way to be third against non-twos on May 4. He will be going for the lead here; hopefully he does not get worn out by Legs Like Gizmo. #3 LEGS LIKE GIZMO had no success in three starts last year and now returns for a new low tag; he has speed but never leaves anything in reserve.