Handicapper's Journal – Doug McPherson Saturday, May 31st 2025

Race 1

#2 Patches O'Houlihan

#3 Simcoe

#2 PATCHES O'HOULIHAN dominated the Thorncliffe Stakes in a track record-setting performance to begin the campaign. He has scared off a lot of competition here. #3 SIMCOE wintered at Turfway where he was able to win two high-level allowance events comfortably. Highly thought of as a younger horse, he finally seems to be flourishing and finding his best.

Race 2

#7 Heat Merchant - Best Bet #6 Embrace My Uncle #1 Fighter in the Win #2 Yorkville

#7 HEAT MERCHANT got his confidence up with a couple of wins at Fort Erie and returned to Woodbine in improved form, closing out the season with a runner-up effort for \$25,000. He catches a field with little early speed and could have a pace advantage. #6 EMBRACE MY UNCLE rallied smartly down the outside to be second behind the lone speed Classic Dancer when kicking off his season on May 11. He got into very good form late last year after being claimed back by these connections and seems to be picking up where he left off. #1 FIGHTER IN THE WIN plunged in for \$15,000 and closed out the season with a dead heat win while attracting a claim. Back-classy colt has had a couple of sharp breezes and may have appreciated the winter off. #2 YORKVILLE proved his improved form at Gulfstream was not simply due to the dirt when running a strong third, a half-length behind Embrace My Uncle in a spot that was much tougher than what he was racing in late last season; definitely a contender.

Race 3 #3 Veery #1 Crevalle d'Oro #4 Hurricane Claire #6 Perhaps Tonight (IRE)

#3 VEERY steps up in class for her first start of the season after a very strong 2024 campaign. Speedy mare should be able to get loose on the lead here. #1 CREVALLE D'ORO has had a couple of midpack efforts in a similar class at Gulfstream before returning to Woodbine. She draws well and should find this company a bit easier than what she has faced recently. #4 HURRICANE CLAIRE had a very nice three-year-old season highlighted by a win in the Wonder Where. She is one-for-one over this turf course; blinkers come off for the first time in a long time. #6 PERHAPS TONIGHT (IRE) was given time off in the winter after finishing fourth in a starter allowance at Tampa in December. Although winless last year she did have some good efforts against high quality company earlier in the season; could be live after some time to reset.

Race 4
#8 Bold Ripasso
#5 Snatched
#2 Codicia Por Vida
#4 Tandhoneywithane

#8 BOLD RIPASSO raced wide throughout and ran a solid third in a similar spot on May 10. If she can get more early cover this time she could have the late kick to come out on top. #5 SNATCHED swung wide and narrowly missed by a head in the same race that Bold Ripasso exits. That was her best effort to date; we'll see if the move from two to three has improved her. #2 CODICIA POR VIDA showed some speed when debuting for \$25,000 but was outkicked and finished a distant third. There is not much pace in this race; we'll see if she can improve with a start under her belt. #4 TANDHONEYWITHANE broke badly from the 12 hole and never got involved when kicking off her season in a tough maiden special weight event. Her form last year suggests she is capable of much better; blinkers are added for this drop in for \$40,000.

Race 5
#1 Out N Out Disgrace
#8 Pierre
#3 Bowman's Run
#5 Compton

#1 OUT N OUT DISGRACE had a wide trip and ran an even fifth when cutting back to seven furlongs on May 10. He gets back to his preferred surface and will hopefully be able to save some ground from the rail post. #8 PIERRE forced the pace, had some trouble at the top of the stretch and emptied out when making his first start since the Prince of Wales on May 10. He drops in for a tag for the first time; blinkers come off. #3 BOWMAN'S RUN had a couple of clunkers but overall had a solid three-year-old campaign with a maiden win for this tag and a couple of good maiden allowance efforts behind good foes on this surface earlier. Draws well and looks logical. #5 COMPTON forced the pace and was able to hold off Out N Out Disgrace to break his maiden and now makes his first start since that win in October.

Race 6
#2 Frosted Over
#3 Justintimeforwine
#11 Bring Me a Check
#4 J P Hellish

#2 FROSTED OVER briefly hit the front in deep stretch but was picked up at the wire when racing for \$35,000 over the Gulfstream turf on April 11. He catches a field with a few legitimate speed types to his outside and could land a perfect trip. #3 JUSTINTIMEFORWINE was claimed for \$16,000 at Tampa in January and was able to win for that price two starts later before running a respectable third in a starter allowance behind the very classy Tidal Forces. He is probably up against it here but is a winning horse with speed who may go overlooked on the tote board. #11 BRING ME A CHECK has been in very good recent form at Gulfstream, most recently finishing second in a similar class behind Nantasket Beach who came back to win an N2X/\$80,000 at Churchill. He has speed out of the gate and has a long enough run into the turn to find some decent position

from the outside draw. #4 J P HELLISH was a very game fourth by just a half-length in an N2X/\$62,500 at Gulfstream last time and now drops back in for \$32,000, a price he was able to win easily for these connections in November. The other speed in this race could work against him but he is tough to ignore.

Race 7
#6 Maps a Breeze
#5 Megalodon
#2 Faber
#3 Times a Breeze

#6 MAPS A BREEZE took a bit of a shuffle on the turn and had to alter course as a foe was bumped in front of him when kicking off his season over seven furlongs on May 10. He gets out to his preferred distance and should benefit from having that start under his belt. #5 MEGALODON was outclassed when facing Grade 1 company in the American Turf on Kentucky Derby day but had been in great form on the synthetic before that, finishing second in the Rushaway at Turfway on March 22; looks to have a bright future. #2 FABER was beaten a neck when facing three-year-olds at Turfway on March 6. He ran a solid fourth in the Coronation Futurity in November and is definitely worth a look in his return to Woodbine. #3 TIMES A BREEZE showed more speed than normal when stalking the pace and proved best to break his maiden on October 17. Although that is the only race where he has hit the top three, his only truly bad performance came when trying turf.

Race 8
#2 Toupie
#8 Earhart (FR)
#10 Gal in a Rush
#3 Freedom Speaks

#2 TOUPIE has never finished out of the top four in a turf sprint. Grade 3 winner has Beyers that can rival Earhart and is proven on turf, unlike the presumed favourite. #8 EARHART (FR) got back to the winner's circle after a somewhat disappointing though by no means bad third place effort at Turfway with an easy front-end score in the . Whimsical. French-bred filly has tremendous talent and should not have any trouble transitioning to turf. #10 GAL IN A RUSH was a non-threatening second behind Earhart in the Whimsical. She gets on turf for the first time since last June; she has a very strong turf record and is just a neck away from being a Stakes-winner on the lawn in New York. #3 FREEDOM SPEAKS gets a cutback in distance after being beaten 3/4 lengths in an N2X/\$62,500 around two turns on the Gulfstream turf on April 12. Blinkers are being added; she is a Stakes-winner at this distance at Kentucky Downs.

Race 9

#1 Possiblemente #6 Stanley House #3 Get Smokin #7 Webslinger

#1 POSSIBLEMENTE chased the pace but could not sustain when turfing in the Tampa Bay Stakes on February 1. Although he has more wins on turf than synthetic, his synthetic form comes against far better competition and he looks like an interesting option in his

debut for the Drexler barn. #6 STANLEY HOUSE was wrapped up on in the stretch after bearing out in the Canadian Turf at Gulfstream on March 1. Although he has never won a Stakes race he has been a very solid member of this older handicap division and would not come as a surprise. #3 GET SMOKIN wired the field in the 12 furlong Valedictory to close out 2024 and will now make his return to the races. He has earned over \$2 million and has had good efforts against Grade 1 company in the past. #7 WEBSLINGER will make his synthetic debut here in his first start since a runner-up effort in the Colonial Cup in September. Multiple Grade 1-placed stayer looks as good as anyone if he is ready off of the layoff.

Race 10

#1 Dana's Beauty #2 Caitlinhergreatness #4 Literate

#9 Fashionably Fab

#1 DANA'S BEAUTY had a fantastic 2024 which has continued into 2025, winning the Latonia at Turfway in her most recent start on March 22. 12-time winner has a shot to wire them from the inside. #2 CAITLINHERGREATNESS made an early move to the lead before fading to fourth in the stretch in the Maple Leaf. The King's Plate winner has been firing bullets coming into her four-year-old debut and looks ready for a good effort. #4 LITERATE looked good when pulling off an upset win in a high-level allowance at Gulfstream on March 13 but could not reproduce that effort in the La Troienne on Kentucky Oaks day. I still believe the synthetic is her best surface and expect a better effort out of her here. #9 FASHIONABLY FAB is the defending champion of this race. Ontario-sired mare loves to win with a 10-for-17 record in her career but will have to overcome an outside draw and some tough company here.

Race 11
#5 Mo Argento
#4 Quality Presence
#9 Serenading Kitten
#10 Nicki is a Breeze
#2 Workout Affair

#5 MO ARGENTO did not show the same speed here that she did in her debut at Colonial, running on to be an okay fourth. She is still gaining experience and could be live stretching out to a route. #4 QUALITY PRESENCE knocked on the door a few times last year. Four-year-old hooks a field of mainly three-year-olds and has the speed figures to be a factor here. #9 SERENADING KITTEN was a close second when kicking off her season in a short field at this distance on May 11. Second-best in half of her eight starts, she figures to be competitive once again. #10 NICKI IS A BREEZE was nervous behind the gate but was beginning to gain momentum far too late and galloped out well when kicking off her season in a six furlong race on May 4. She raced well around two turns last year and could step forward in her second start off of the bench. #2 WORKOUT AFFAIR finished a nonthreatening third, 5 1/4 lengths ahead of Nicki is a Breeze on May 4. We'll see how she handles the stretch out to a route.