

Handicapper's Journal – Doug McPherson
Friday, June 6th 2025

Race 1

#6 Admiral Nelson

#1 Bourbon North

#7 Crucial Taunt

#2 Miah Said

#6 ADMIRAL NELSON has shown nothing in recent experiments with dirt and turf and now gets back to his preferred surface. He has not lived up to the potential he showed in his first couple of starts but should be live at this level. #1 BOURBON NORTH finished second in his first start of the year but did not fire second time out and now takes the drop from the OS/\$40,000 level. He should be a pace factor from the inside. #7 CRUCIAL TAUNT chased the pace but faded when kicking off his season for \$25,000 on May 3. He could land in a good stalking spot if the top two choices hook up early. #2 MIAH SAID was a distant fourth for \$10,000 in his first start off of the bench and looks like a fringe player.

Race 2

#7 Hey Cue

#1 Spring Mountain

#6 Life Is Hard

#4 Bet N Win

#7 HEY CUE ran a decent third while attracting a \$7,500 claim on May 4 in his return from Gulfstream. He catches a field without much pace and could have the early advantage. #1 SPRING MOUNTAIN went off form in the summer but returned to good form after a couple of confidence-boosting wins in Fort Erie. He had a decent seven furlong race to kick off his 2024 campaign and does not look out of place here. #6 LIFE IS HARD has not shown much in two starts at Oaklawn since being a voided claim in December. He had some strong Tapeta efforts last year; we'll see if he can rebound. #4 BET N WIN slipped up the rail and outfinished Hey Cue to be second on May 4 but did not fire two weeks later when moving up to the starter/optional \$10,000 level. He is not super consistent but is good enough on his best day.

Race 3

#1 Mid Day Image - Best Bet

#5 Jamiesta

#4 Determined Fury

#2 Enchant Me

#1 MID DAY IMAGE dueled on the lead and gave way to be fourth while attracting a \$7,500 claim at Oaklawn on April 27. He has been dying to get back to the turf, the surface 13 of his 15 lifetimes wins have come over. #5 JAMIESTA stalked the pace but finished evenly in an N1X/\$32,000 on May 29. He should appreciate the class relief here and had some big speed figures last year that could make him tough. #4 DETERMINED FURY found a split and got through to win for \$7,500 to kick off his campaign on May 16. He takes on tougher here but is a genuine horse and may be able to re-ascend the class ladder. #2 ENCHANT ME was empty when kicking off his season in a tough \$25,000; could earn a small check with a start now under his belt.

Race 4

#7 Restoring Order

#9 Ontario Holiday

#3 Ok Speedy

#2 Back River

#7 RESTORING ORDER rallied to be fourth in a race where Sparklet drew off on the lead on May 11. He drops in from the \$15,000 level and could be tough if the pace is a bit more honest. #9 ONTARIO HOLIDAY has had two runner-up finishes at the meet, both at this level. He was outgamed by the speedy Sehr Schoen on May 18; figures to be competitive here. #3 OK SPEEDY had a poor start and never factored when facing \$15,000 company last week. He has reason to improve in his second try off of the bench. #2 BACK RIVER ran on to be third in the same race that Ontario Holiday exits; needs some improvement to be a win threat.

Race 5

#3 Temple Hall

#7 Shinigami

#5 Lasting Silence

#2 Arami's Speightster

#3 TEMPLE HALL was pressed on the lead and gave way to be third in a five furlong dash on May 17. He could be able to secure the early lead while setting a much more comfortable tempo at this distance. #7 SHINIGAMI raced wide and threw in a clunker when heavily favoured in his return from Turfway on May 11. He is clearly capable of better and could rebound with the class relief. #5 LASTING SILENCE raced evenly in a 5 ½ furlong dash at the OS/\$40,000 level on May 17. The added distance should be beneficial for his second start off of the bench. #2 ARAMI'S SPEIGHTSTER set the pace but faltered to be sixth, 5 ¾ lengths better than Shinigami on May 11. He will likely be outsprinted by Temple Hall for the lead here.

Race 6

#2 Mannix (IRE)

#6 Master Spy

#4 Ask in My Name

#7 Valyrian Sky

#2 MANNIX (IRE) had a wide post and never got into contention when kicking off his season on May 18. He catches a field with some speed to close into and should be able to show more this time. #6 MASTER SPY made a wide rally and briefly hit the lead but was outnodded by the perfectly-tripped Determined Fury on May 16. With the right trip he is the type who could fire a huge effort at any time. #4 ASK IN MY NAME stalked the pace and prevailed to beat Valyrian Sky in a similar spot on May 18. He could foreseeably land a very similar trip this time. #7 VALYRIAN SKY dueled on the lead and could not hold off Ask in My Name on May 18. Both of his efforts since returning from Penn National have been strong and he should be given some consideration.

Race 7

#2 Red Sneakers

#10 Stylish Gent

#6 Uncaptured Moment

#7 Told It All

#1 Today

#2 RED SNEAKERS probably needed a start when finishing fifth on May 23 in his first start in nearly a year and a half. He could improve with the drop down from the \$15,000 level and could be a price given his lower Beyer figures. #10 STYLISH GENT was claimed from an open race for this price and is now eligible for this conditioned event due to the non-winners of a race since clause. Quick gelding should find this company easier and could step forward in his second start off of the bench. #6 UNCAPTURED MOMENT was beaten a nose at this level by Florida-invader Bella Future on May 18. He is not super consistent but the 73 Beyer he earned for that effort stands out here. #7 TOLD IT ALL had a poor break but rallied from last to be a non-threatening fourth, 8 ½ lengths behind Uncaptured Moment on May 18. He figures to close for another share. #1 TODAY finished last in the aforementioned May 18 race but did close out 2024 with a win and could improve to a midpack finish in his second start off of the bench.

