

Handicapper's Journal – Doug McPherson
Saturday, July 12th 2025

Race 1

#5 Soulmate

#7 Hemlo Gold

#6 Media Sensation

#2 Sailor's Passion

#5 SOULMATE was hounded on the lead and gave way late to be fourth (placed fifth) when returning from a two-month break on June 22. He drops down from the N1X/\$32,000 level and could prove best this time. #7 HEMLO GOLD had nowhere to go in the stretch when finishing sixth and attracting a \$15,000 claim on June 13. He has the speed figures to compete at this level and should have better luck this time. #6 MEDIA SENSATION was beaten a neck in a conditioned \$25,000 starter at Gulfstream on April 24. Consistent check-earner raced well against solid company at Gulfstream over the winter; in the hunt. #2 SAILOR'S PASSION was a non-factor in an N1X/\$32,000 sprint when kicking off his season on May 29. He gets back to his preferred distance and gets class relief; worth a look at a decent price.

Race 2

#3 Royal Hudson

#4 Fanore (IRE)

#2 Chancel

#7 Yorkville

#3 ROYAL HUDSON hooked a solid group at the starter/optional \$15,000 level and never reached contention but did not race terribly on June 13. I do not see him being as far back early this time. #4 FANORE (IRE) rallied into contention, dueled down the stretch and proved best to win a \$15,000 non-three on June 27. He drops in value for his first start against wide-open company; arguably the one to beat. #2 CHANCEL made an early bid, dueled over a fairly deep track and was outkicked when ending up third in a \$7,500 sprint on June 13. Although winless on turf, he has had some good efforts over this course; speed factor. #7 YORKVILLE raced well to be third in his return from Gulfstream on May 11 but threw in a clunker 20 days later. He has not seen turf in a while but is a much better horse than the last time he got over it.

Race 3

#2 Rude Procedure

#3 Jupiter

#4 Fistfullofmoney

#1 Valley of Kings

#2 RUDE PROCEDURE made the lead easily and was never threatened in his impressive June 8 debut. Of the winners in this field I think he has been most impressive. #3 JUPITER put away another foe and kicked clear to win his debut on June 22. It will be interesting to see the tactics employed by him and his other stablemates who won on the front end. #4 FISTFULLOFMONEY tracked the pacesetter and went by easily to break his maiden at Presque Isle, but failed to rally after a bad stumble at the

start when going to Saratoga for the Sanford. He deserves a look for very capable connections. #1 VALLEY OF KINGS is by 12% juvenile debut sire Classic Empire, out of a mare who has yet to throw a debut winner. He comes into this tough spot off of a solid gate work.

Race 4

#4 Mighty Tanner

#2 Sipping History

#5 Wolfberry

#7 Ball of Yarn

#4 MIGHTY TANNER is by 13% juvenile debut sire Mo Town, and the second foal to race out of a mare who won on debut. He had a sharp gate work in company with a stablemate on June 21. #2 SIPPING HISTORY broke poorly in her debut but recovered to run second, then showed improved speed second time out and was run down late to miss by a neck. The dam only has one turf winner in four foals to try the surface, but she has the most positive racing experience in the field. #5 WOLFBERRY was nervous pre-race and raced evenly when debuting on June 21. She could improve if her mental game stays more solid. #7 BALL OF YARN is by 13% juvenile debut and prestigious turf sire Kitten's Joy, and the first foal to race out of a turf-winning mare. She has had a couple of sharp gate works in company with a stablemate.

Race 5

#5 Orion Beach

#6 Spirited

#2 Clearwater Beach

#3 Ratings Upgrade (IRE)

#5 ORION BEACH ran a very solid closing second in her debut on May 25, but had some trouble on the turn and had to settle for a midpack finish when returning on June 14. She gets out to a route now and should fare much better with a clean trip. #6 SPIRITED makes her first start in a year and a half now. She passed tiring foes when debuting over a mile on dirt at Gulfstream; daughter of Arrogate appears to have been training well coming into her return. #2 CLEARWATER BEACH was 1 ½ lengths ahead of Orion Beach when running on to be fourth in the June 14 race. She will shed the blinkers for her first try around two turns. #3 RATINGS UPGRADE (IRE) had a less-than-perfect trip in her local debut against OS/\$40,000 males on the inner turf, finishing a non-threatening third. She could step forward in her second start off of the extended layoff.

Race 6

#3 Mikelle

#2 Hibiscus

#8 Workout Affair

#9 North York

#3 MIKELLE was sidelined after her very promising debut last year. She was nervous and did not have a great trip when running flat in her return on June 7. There is a lot of speed in this race and I can see reason to expect a better effort today. #2 HIBISCUS had a wide trip from the 13

hole and had to settle for fifth when sprinting on June 14. Blinkers are being added; although her debut in a route did not go well I would not let that deter you from giving her another chance. #8 WORKOUT AFFAIR has hooked tough company but has raced well in all three of her starts at the meet. The turf is a new question but she has the speed to find position from an outside post. #9 NORTH YORK rallied to be third when taking on older foes over this course on June 21. Hopefully she can work out a trip from this post.

Race 7

#2 Secret Load

#1 Kitten's Romance

#3 Weehawken

#6 Sharp Flame

#2 SECRET LOAD rallied to be second behind the racing-fit and speedy Garnet and Gold when kicking off her season on May 17. A winner in her only start on turf, she is a super honest runner who is tough to discredit. #1 KITTEN'S ROMANCE took the lead in deep stretch but could not hold off the closing Cozy Curlin Kitten on the inner turf on June 14. The winningest horse in this race, she looks very logical against these. #3 WEEHAWKEN had a very wide trip and did not fire in the Royal North. She had a pair of dominant wins over this course last year against comparable company; arguably the one to beat on the big drop. #6 SHARP FLAME had traffic then ran on to be third at this level on the main track on June 22. She has hit the board in half of her eight turf attempts.

Race 8

#6 Adbul

#2 Thank You Amy

#3 Pageant Queen

#5 Pina Colada

#6 ABDUL is by elite sire Tapit, who hits at 13% with debuting two-year-olds, and the first foal out of an unraced mare. The worktab looks very impressive; intrigued. #2 THANK YOU AMY dominated her competition when debuting against the boys at Presque Isle. Presque Isle speed figures often come back low and she still managed to post a good figure; the Potts barn have had luck shipping up here before. #3 PAGEANT QUEEN responded to a challenge and burst clear to win her debut on June 21; the pace will likely be quicker this time. #5 PINA COLADA is by 14% juvenile debut sire Quality Road, and the first foal to race out of Grade 3-winning mare Great Island. She threw a bullet work out of the gate on June 25.

Race 9

#8 Sultana - Best Bet

#6 Blitz

#3 Smudge

#7 Princess Anastasia

#8 SULTANA had a poor break and was nearly last of 13 down the backside but was still able to win when debuting at this distance on May 31. She looks like she could be any type. #6 BLITZ was eased up in a race that had to be declared a no contest at Gulfstream in December, then

came up empty in her return in March. Her best effort to date was her only try on the Tapeta. #3 SMUDGE made a circling rally to finish second behind impressive stablemate No Time. She is drawn well and looks primed for another solid effort. #7 PRINCESS ANASTASIA took off on the turn when rallying from last to win a seven furlong sprint on June 14. She gets out to a route for the first time here; we'll see if she can sustain that pronounced rally.

Race 10

#6 Ever Dangerous

#2 Tiz Romantic

#5 Roscar

#1 Junipero Serra

#6 EVER DANGEROUS dropped in for \$32,000 and overtook the pacesetter to win easily on June 15. I don't think he will have any problem bumping back up to this level off of that win. #2 TIZ ROMANTIC was claimed for \$32,000 when finishing second behind then-stablemate Ever Dangerous. Super back-classy son of Tizway rarely runs a bad one and should be competitive once again. #5 ROSCAR was a bit closer to the pace than he probably wants to be before going on to be fifth at this level on the Tapeta on June 22. The Breeders' Stakes-winner should appreciate getting back to the turf. #1 JUNIPERO SERRA came up empty after a poor break in a 12 furlong allowance on the Gulfstream Tapeta in February. He has done his best running at more standard distances like this; we'll see how he fires off of the break.

Race 11

#8 Starship Serenity

#1 Texas Holiday

#5 Call Me Kaykay

#4 Serenading Kitten

#6 Salmiakki

#8 STARSHIP SERENITY has shown finishing interest in a pair of maiden special weight events so far this season. She should fare very well with the drop in for \$40,000. #1 TEXAS HOLIDAY raced well in two starts for \$75,000 at Gulfstream but has not fired in two tries since being purchased by these connections. She drops back in for a tag and should be more competitive. #5 CALL ME KAY KAY ran on to be fourth in a race that has already produced a next-out winner on June 14. She has been breezing on the turf and is by a sire who has had some success with turf runners. #4 SERENADING KITTEN raced well to be fourth in her first start for these connections. She was beaten a neck in her only try over this course last year. #6 SALMIAKKI was a non-threatening fourth behind two next-out winners in her first start of the season on May 31. She had a wide trip and was flat in her only previous turf start, her career debut.