# Handicapper's Journal – Doug McPherson Sunday, July 20th 2025

Race 1 #3 Crimson Nights #4 Ima Beast #6 Ala Turka #5 Sloans Sky

#3 CRIMSON NIGHTS passed tiring foes when facing N3L allowance types at Fort Erie on May 27. Her runnerup effort against Gizmo's B F F would be enough to win this. #4 IMA BEAST nosedives in for bottoms after failing to fire against N1X/\$32,000 types back in May. She has back class but is obviously a red flag. #6 ALA TURKA has shown finishing interest in a pair of starter/optional \$10,000 events and now takes the drop back into the conditioned \$7,500 level; should fare well. #5 SLOANS SKY stalked the pace and kicked clear to an easy win against \$7,500 non-twos on June 27. The runner-up came back to win in Fort Erie.

### Race 2

- #7 Big Screen Boss #3 Bee Me
- #2 Captivating Name
- #6 May and June

#7 BIG SCREEN BOSS has had two solid runner-up finishes in as many starts so far in his career. He catches a manageable looking field here; blinkers are being added. #3 BEE ME has raced well in all three of his starts this season, finishing second in two of them. He is drawn well and will be forwardly-placed. #2 CAPTIVATING NAME was flat when going two turns on the inner turf on June 20 but has had quite a few good efforts on the main track and is a rebound candidate. #6 MAY AND JUNE kicked off his season two weeks ago, setting the pace before giving way to be fifth, 2 ½ lengths behind Bee Me. He can move forward with a start under his belt.

### Race 3 #2 Kokomo - Best Bet #5 Botta Swing #6 Blazing Bucchero #4 So Delicious

#2 KOKOKO has been outfinished after dueling on the lead in his two most recent starts at this level. Blinkers are being added; he could be the quickest of the quick this time. #5 BOTTA SWING raced very well in her last two starts last year but was put on the sidelines in the summer. Closing type clearly has ability and could benefit if someone is able to wear down Kokomo early. #6 BLAZING BUCCHERO has been picking up checks against Florida-bred optional claimers on the Gulfstream Tapeta. You can make a case that a straight non-two could be a little easier than a race like that; we'll see how he handles the turf. #4 SO DELICIOUS broke his maiden on debut for \$25,000, then was able to outfinish Kokomo for place when bumping up to this level; another one trying turf for the first time.

### Race 4 #2 Tiernan #3 Four Strong Winds #6 Criminal Intent

## #5 Dontgobackonurword

#2 TIERNAN swung wide and finished evenly when kicking off his season in May. He has been breezing fairly steadily since; should be close to the pace. #3 FOUR STRONG WINDS was caught in a four-horse duel in his return to the races on May 29 then came back with a much better effort despite looking for a path in the stretch when dropping in for this tag on June 29. A repeat of that effort puts him in the hunt here. #6 CRIMINAL INTENT was second-best behind the speedy Bankingonamiracle on July 6. He looks like in his third start off of the bench. #5 DONTGOBACKONURWORD slipped up the rail for a good looking debut score but regressed when racing wide against N2L allowance types on June 29. He clearly has some ability and should be given consideration returning to OS/\$40,000 company.

# Race 5 #1 Pine Knoll #6 Hanlan #3 Giant Teddy #7 Split Strike

#1 PINE KNOLL chased the rapid Western Whirl throughout when last competing on June 8. Although his last couple of wins have come for \$25,000, he has knocked on the door at this level and could break through here. #6 HANLAN is three-for-three this season and in search of his fifth consecutive victory. After winning his non-three for \$25,000 they aggressively put him back in for \$15,000 where he outkicked Walter Me Lad: this seems like the right time to take a shot at this level. #3 GIANT TEDDY ran two credible runner-up finishes behind pacesetting winners at the start of the season. He was given some time and now makes his first start since May 18; been breezing sharply and looks like a factor. #7 SPLIT STRIKE chased Silent Reserve and was outkicked for place when making his local debut on the inner turf. He has raced well against easier company on the Gulfstream Tapeta.

# Race 6 #2 Gimme a Nother (SAF) #5 Venecia (FR) #4 Ready for Shirl #6 Scarlet Poppy (IRE)

#2 GIMME A NOTHER (SAF) ran two very good runnerup finishes in her first two North American tries, but failed to fire over the yielding going at Saratoga in the New York. Champion South African mare should be able to rebound off of that disappointing effort. #5 VENECIA (FR) has not run a bad race this year, most recently finishing a closing fourth in the Mint Julep. She was 2 ¼ lengths behind Gimme a Nother in the Hillsborough; speed figure are solid. #4 READY FOR SHIRL maneuvered her way through traffic to finish second in the Nassau on June 28. That effort was aided by the fact that several of the favourites were very flat; she has seemed to have taken a big step forward this season, however. #6 SCARLET POPPY (IRE) exits a runner-up finish in an N2X in New York on June 13. I would not be surprised to see her be the pacesetter in a closer-heavy race.

### Race 7 #1 Northern Invader #4 Kehoe Beach #8 Cruden Bay #2 Shards

#1 NORTHERN INVADER went gate to wire in an N3X/\$100,000 over the Churchill turf on May 29. A Stakes-winner with multiple Graded Stakes-placings on his resume, he has drawn well and should like the cutback to seven furlongs. #4 KEHOE BEACH takes on the boys here after giving way as the pacesetter to be fourth over the yielding turf in the Jess a Game at Saratoga. Grade 2-winning mare was dominant in her only turf sprint attempt against N1X company at Kentucky Downs last year; we'll see if she can do it against the boys. #8 CRUDEN BAY makes his first start in 11 months here. The defending champion of this race was able to win when coming off of the layoff last year; will be hoping for a serious pace to run into. #2 SHARDS is a bonafide sprinter in a race where the favourites are milers cutting back. He was beaten just 1 1/4 lengths in the Elusive Quality at Aqueduct two starts ago.

# Race 8

# #2 Scorching #10 Notorious Gangster #5 Regal Guest #1 Call Me Sue

#2 SCORCHING faced many hurdles in the first half of the year but was able to return to the races in the Marine, where he broke slowly but was able to recover to be beaten a length by the speedy Mansetti. After being taken off of lasix last time he is going back on for this race; drawn well and could be the one to beat in his second start off of the bench. #10 NOTORIOUS GANGSTER sat midpack and was able to get up late to win the Queenston. An easy winner of last year's Coronation Futurity, he is proven at the distance, but will need to work out a trip from the 10 hole. #5 REGAL GUEST set the pace and fought gamely but could not hold off Notorious Gangster in the Queenston. The full brother to Pink Lloyd figures to be on the lead again in his route debut. #1 CALL ME SUE had to hustle from the 11 hole when routing for the first time on the inner turf on June 21. Second behind Mansetti in last year's Clarendon, he could step forward a bit in his second start off of a twomonth break.

### Race 9 #1 War Signal #7 Reveler's Row #11 Winterberry #10 Aristella

#1 WAR SIGNAL took on the boys in the Marine where she set the pace and gave way to be sixth in deep stretch but was beaten just two lengths for everything. She could go for the lead or opt to let the other speed types get in front of her from this post. #7 REVELER'S ROW was a debut winner in a sprint, then stretched out to today's distance in an N1X/\$32,000 where she set the pace and was run down late. She is unlikely to be on the lead this time: could have a bit more in reserve late. #11 WINTERBERRY tries a route for the first time after going gate to wire in the Fury. She is arguably the most talented of the Casse entrants here but has a tough post to overcome and is a bit prone to wasting some energy prerace. #10 ARISTELLA made a bid on the turn but did not finish her best when fourth of five in the Fury. The Princess Elizabeth winner should be happy to get back out to a route for her third start off of the bench.

## Race 10 #1 Niagara Skyline #2 Gas Me Up #7 Gilt Edge #9 Paintthetownsilver #10 Arabian Prince

#1 NIAGARA SKYLINE drops in for \$50,000 after an even effort in the Highlander. Talented turfer had some very good efforts against super classy company last year; the one to beat. #2 GAS ME UP was beaten just two lengths when travelling a mile at this level in his first start of the season on June 1. He won his non-two in an EP Taylor sprint and should be live in his second start off of the bench. #7 GILT EDGE was able to get covered up early, split foes and was able to edge clear in late stretch to win a \$40,000 non-three on July 6. He had some respectable efforts at this level last year; needs a trip. #9 PAINTTHETOWNSILVER was a good closing third behind the very talented Junior Hot Shot when kicking off his season on June 29. I think he is a greatly improved horse since the last time he was on turf and will run better than his turf record indicates, provided he is not stuck too wide. #10 ARABIAN PRINCE nosed out next-out winner Lucky Score to win at this level on June 15 but could have a tough time repeating from the outside draw.