

Handicapper's Journal – Doug McPherson
Sunday, April 28th 2024

Race 1

#2 Tapping a Rhythm

#1 Rosieposie

#5 Flip Floppin Fast

#3 Miss Waterloo

#2 TAPPING A RHYTHM ran better than it looks when finishing eighth on November 30, looking empty on the turn but coming back on in the stretch, then came back to be a credible third in a soft OS/\$40,000 event on December 14. She has shown some speed on occasion and could be in good early position. #1 ROSIEPOSIE earned a strong figure for this field when beaten a head against \$25,000 juveniles on December 16, an improvement after having a wide trip on debut. She looks logical in her three-year-old debut. #5 FLIP FLOPPIN FAST plunges in for \$25,000 after failing to threaten in three maiden special weight attempts last year, though her debut in a turf sprint was not terrible. Her lone Tapeta try was a route where she was in contention until the far turn where she was outclassed when the running started. #3 MISS WATERLOO had a rough break and was wrapped up in the stretch when closing out the season in disappointing fashion, but ran a couple of decent efforts prior to that and is not out of the question here.

Race 2

#6 Busta Groove

#4 Harper City

#2 Wetiko

#5 It's Me Mario

#6 BUSTA GROOVE ran most of his good efforts last year when getting to go the short five furlong distance, including a head-loss on December 8; this could be a good spot for him to kick off the campaign. #4 HARPER CITY had some traffic trouble but ran on to be a decent fifth on November 12. Despite not hitting the board in eight career tries he seems to try every time and has competitive speed figures for this group. #2 WETIKO was running on decently late when finishing sixth against \$15,000 juveniles on December 15. Blinkers are re-added for his three-year-old debut. #5 IT'S ME MARIO was a fringe player in a few similar events last year and is not outclassed on speed figures.

Race 3

#3 Silver Bullet Lady - Best Bet

#6 Souper Cop

#1 Sister Cousin

#2 T'pring

#3 SILVER BULLET LADY raced off of the rail in a race where all the movement came on the inside and kept on to run a game third on December 16. She looks very competitive with this group. #6 SOUPER COP failed to threaten in an OS/\$40,000 non-two on December 16 but had been in good form prior to that including a maiden win against \$25,000 boys. She could easily rebound after the winter freshening. #1 SISTER COUSIN has the

recency advantage, having raced at Penn National over the winter. She has speed from the gate in a race without many dedicated front runners. #2 T'PRING was able to break her maiden with a late push on December 14 in her 26th career attempt. Frequent check-earner should be able to earn a slice in her first try against winners.

Race 4

#5 Alicia's Kid

#8 Ghoul (BRZ)

#2 Master Spy

#1 Tomcat Black

#5 ALICIA'S KID returns from New Orleans where he ran some big efforts against solid company. He has the advantage of recency and the Tapeta is arguably his preferred surface. #8 GHOUL (BRZ) made a nice rally up the rail over a snow-covered surface when finishing third for \$5,000 on December 1, then came back two weeks later with a win for that price. Back-classy nine-year-old has been a solid five furlong horse for his whole career and is worth a look here. #2 MASTER SPY hit the board in nine of 12 starts last year. The 2020 Cup and Saucer winner showed a strong late closing kick when second behind Tomcat Black on November 12; hard to ignore. #1 TOMCAT BLACK had a beautiful trip when beating Master Spy on November 12, then came back on December 3 with a bit of an even fourth, though still finishing 4 ¼ lengths in front of the aforementioned foe. If he can return in the same form he is an obvious contender.

Race 5

#2 One True Gentleman

#3 Garofoli

#1 Super Sicily

#6 Society's Thunder

#2 ONE TRUE GENTLEMAN returns from a winter in New Orleans where he was able to break his maiden against allowance company on the turf. He has speed out of the gate and should prove tough against these OS/\$40,000 types. #3 GAROFOLI was not a win threat but tried to the wire when finishing fourth in the Clarendon which was a salty group of restricted juveniles. He shouldn't have much of a problem fitting with the older horses. #1 SUPER SICILY broke her maiden against allowance colts in September but failed to threaten in two tries against winners to close out the season. Though it would be preferable to see her run against fillies, her best speed figures are solid for this field. #6 SOCIETY'S THUNDER ran some good races at this level after being claimed for just \$15,000. He should show some speed from the outside.

Race 6

#2 Norma No

#4 Two Sip Sally

#7 Maximum Fifty

#5 Saucy Name

#2 NORMA NO made a strong rally to be third when sprinting on debut, but returned in a route two weeks later where despite finishing third she was quite even. If she

has pace to run at she could catch the eye late. #4 TWO SIP SALLY was second best behind a perfectly tripped debut runner while attracting a \$30,000 claim at Turfway on March 9. Her speed figures fit; very logical option. #7 MAXIMUM FIFTY looks like the biggest speed threat in this field, having worked on the lead before fading to fourth in both of her tries last year. If she can secure control early she may prove very tough to catch. #5 SAUCY NAME was the beaten favourite in each of her last three starts last year. She has yet to miss the board and looks as good as anyone in this field.

Race 7

#1 Gold Magic

#5 Hallie's Hero

#6 Long Lance

#2 Giant Teddy

#1 GOLD MAGIC looked like a world beater when winning on debut at Gulfstream in February 2023 but unable to live up to expectations in two starts after that and was put on the shelf in the summer. He has since been gelded and figures to be stalking the more speedy types; we'll see what we get in his return. #5 HALLIE'S HERO had a terrific 2023 campaign, winning twice for \$25,000 off of a \$15,000 claim in June and proving he can hang at this level with a runner-up finish on November 12. Five furlongs is somewhat uncharted territory for him but he is a very genuine horse and if the pace falls apart he will be a main contender in the stretch. #6 LONG LANCE raced very wide throughout, made the lead in the stretch but was run down by a deep closer when routing at Turfway in February. He beat solid competition in a 5 ½ furlong dash at Golden Gate in December 2022. #2 GIANT TEDDY is rapid out of the gate, though he may have some early company from Blackteca or Aim for the Sky. He trained in Florida all winter and should be very fit for his 2024 debut.

Race 8

#2 Midnight Mascot

#4 Tunechi

#6 Naptown

#1 Adios Now

#2 MIDNIGHT MASCOT forced the pace before fading when trying a route in the Grey, then came back in the Clarendon where he made a strong rally to miss by a neck to Frac Dancer, who returned to win the Texas Glitter at Gulfstream. After a winter in Ocala he should be ready for a solid three-year-old debut. #4 TUNECHI took a couple of starts to figure things out but started to get good at the end of his juvenile season, running credible fourths in the Summer and the Grey. He may be a little overlooked. #6 NAPTOWN was washed out and ran an okay fourth as the second choice in the Coronation Futurity after an impressive maiden win sprinting four weeks prior. Fair Hill-based colt may appreciate turning back to a sprint for his three-year-old debut.

Race 9

#3 Old Chestnut

#1 Silent Reserve

#2 Step Forward

#4 La Belleza Negra

#3 OLD CHESTNUT ran too good to lose when facing starter/optional \$50,000 types at Gulfstream on February 1, missing by two noses with a late surge. He made his presence felt in a number of Stakes events last year; tough to knock. #1 SILENT RESERVE will be trying to blast to the lead from the rail and if he is not hounded by La Belleza Negra he could be tough to catch. His success has come on the inner turf though his only two Tapeta tries were his debut at two and his first start as a three-year-old, and it may be unfair to judge his ability on the surface off of those efforts. #2 STEP FORWARD was put on the shelf after a disappointing effort on turf in August, but had previously been racing well, with a third place effort behind eventual Connaught Cup-winner Dream Shake. Lightly-raced five-year-old has solid speed figures; figures to be coming with a big late run. #4 LA BELLEZA NEGRA was able to clear from the 14 hole to a golden rail when winning an N1X/\$32,000 in October, then returned to be beaten a nose at this level on November 12. His return at Turfway was disappointing; we'll see if he can match the speed of Silent Reserve.

Race 10

#2 Highland Life

#5 Fast Boat to Skye

#8 Amber Light

#4 Gatling Gun

#9 Always a Way

#2 HIGHLAND LIFE has form that looks hit and miss but there are several excuses littered in there and his best efforts are in line with these. He has speed from the gate; worth a look. #5 FAST BOAT TO SKYE took the drop in for \$15,000, made a three-wide move into contention but was outkicked when finishing third at Turfway last month. He figures to be forwardly-placed; we'll see if he can run back anywhere close to his January 12 win. #8 AMBER LIGHT decimated \$5,000 company on November 3, nearly scored at this level 20 days later but came up empty while attracting a claim on December 17. The winter freshening should have done him some good; expect him to be prominent early. #4 GATLING GUN is offered for \$25,000 for the first time since his turf win in August. He is capable on the synthetic and should be more at home with these. #9 ALWAYS A WAY began his Florida campaign with a big closing effort over a sloppy sealed track and ran a couple of less-threatening thirds before going off form. He gets class relief after facing Florida-bred N1X types; may appreciate returning to the Woodbine surface.