

Handicapper's Journal – Doug McPherson
Sunday, December 1st 2024

Race 1

#5 Huntingcoco

#2 Genius of Love

#3 Magical Trick

#4 Chipotle Pepper

#5 HUNTINGCOCO tired after forcing the pace over a closer-friendly track in Indiana when last racing in August. Her best speed figures have come on turf and she appears to have been breezing well on the Tapeta prepping for her local debut. #2 GENIUS OF LOVE dropped in for this tag on November 7 and finished nicely to be second by $\frac{3}{4}$ lengths. She looks competitive with this group. #3 MAGICAL TRICK was a good second when racing for this tag on October 3 but raced evenly when rising back up to the OS/\$40,000 category on November 3. She has been consistently picking up checks this season. #4 CHIPOTLE PEPPER is potentially the lone speed in this field. She was able to make the lead in her first start off of the claim but faded to be fifth in the same race Genius of Love exits; we'll see if she can sustain her speed this time.

Race 2

#1 Blue Spirit

#6 Linda's Opal

#7 World Showcase

#4 Madam Gwen

#1 BLUE SPIRIT stumbled at the start and threw in a clunker when last racing on November 9. She drops in for \$25,000 here; she typically breaks well and could be tough if she can run back to her first two efforts. #6 LINDA'S OPAL was $2\frac{1}{4}$ lengths better than Blue Spirit when finishing a non-threatening fourth on November 9. She has had some good efforts this year; she will race with blinkers for the second time. #7 WORLD SHOWCASE exits a non-threatening third-place effort at this level on November 2. She has been picking up checks at this level since arriving back from Florida and figures to be competitive once again. #4 MADAM GWEN showed finishing interest when finishing sixth for \$10,000 on November 14. She has not hooked the toughest of groups for this rise in class.

Race 3

#7 Ironsides - Best Bet

#5 Arashi

#3 War in Charge

#1 Jo Daddy

#7 IRONSIDES did not have the best of trips when making his local debut in a tough N1X/\$32,000 two weeks ago. He should be very competitive on the drop in to face \$25,000 non-threes. #5 ARASHI has been in good form since the summer, most recently closing to be a good third in a sprint on November 15. He is capable over either surface and any distance but seems to always come up just a bit short. #3 WAR IN CHARGE exits a decent fourth on the inner turf, $1\frac{1}{4}$ lengths behind the runner-up, Arashi. He has been able to show some speed in the past; gets on the Tapeta for the first time this year.

#1 JO DADDY set a moderate pace but was outkicked by No More Options and faded to be fourth in the Lake Ontario two weeks ago. He will likely try to stalk from the inside.

Race 4

#3 Tricky Magician

#8 Determined Fury

#5 Legal Attack (GB)

#4 Big Time Louie

#3 TRICKY MAGICIAN ran a big third when racing forwardly over a closer-friendly track two starts ago, but failed to fire when returning 15 days later. He could rebound with a good trip. #8 DETERMINED FURY took the drop in to face conditioned foes for this tag on November 8 and was able to kick clear for a win. The outside draw does not help his cause but he looks very live in this attempt to double up. #5 LEGAL ATTACK (GB) came up empty when taking on some decent starter/optional \$15,000 types on November 1 but rebounded with a good second for \$7,500 two weeks later. He is not particularly consistent but his best efforts put him in the hunt. #4 BIG TIME LOUIE did not fire when returning from Fort Erie on November 16, but gets slight class relief this time. It is tough to discredit a 13-time winner.

Race 5

#3 Highland Blue

#1 Quiet Knight

#7 Pin Boy

#2 Bee Me

#3 HIGHLAND BLUE got squeezed at the start but recovered to find tracking position en route to a fourth-place finish against some solid maiden special weight foes on November 15. He should be tough dropping back in for \$40,000. #1 QUIET KNIGHT ran an okay third as the favourite around two turns on the inner turf on October 18. He ran a big race when sprinting over this course two starts ago and looks logical here. #7 PIN BOY came up empty in the same maiden special weight race that Highland Blue exits but has gotten the better of that foe in the past. He was beaten just a half-length at this level two starts ago. #2 BEE ME exits a good third-place effort behind a pair of respectable foes for \$25,000 and could earn a share rising back up to the OS/\$40,000 level.

Race 6

#8 Stratus

#7 Mopharra

#1 Crucial Taunt

#6 Shinigami

#8 STRATUS ran a solid third behind eventual Clarendon Stakes-winner Mansetti on debut, but has not been able to repeat that effort in two starts since. We know there is ability there and this does not look like an impossible group. #7 MOPHARRA swung wide and showed finishing interest when finishing sixth against maiden special weight company on debut, missing place by three lengths. He drops in for \$40,000 for his second attempt and goes for a barn that has been live all season. #1 CRUCIAL TAUNT had a wide journey and came up

empty when dropping in for this tag on November 14. He draws a better post and could be a speed factor. #6 SHINIGAMI was the best horse in the race when missing by a neck after an uncomfortable trip on November 15, attracting a \$25,000 claim on that day. We'll see how he fares cutting back to a sprint.

Race 7

#6 War to Remember

#1 Chambers

#2 Michael's Gift

#3 Golden Truth

#6 WAR TO REMEMBER had the advantage in midstretch but was run down late by a previously started stablemate when debuting on November 3. He has speed and should be tough in his second attempt. #1 CHAMBERS had some trouble on the backside when finishing a non-threatening third on debut in the same race as War to Remember. Blinkers are added for his second attempt. #2 MICHAEL'S GIFT is by 12% juvenile debut sire Cupid, out of a mare who has had one winner in three foals to race, the 10-time-winner Fortune Cookie. He had a solid gate workout in company on November 17. #3 GOLDEN TRUTH has shown speed in both of his starts to date, last time getting caught in a duel before tiring in the stretch.

Race 8

#4 Dreams and Schemes

#1 Pemberley

#5 Our Flag Flying

#7 Sarah's Dancer

#4 DREAMS AND SCHEMES took the lead on the far turn but could not hold off Mason's Music when finishing second at this level on November 17. She could have a pace advantage in a field full of deep closers. #1 PEMBERLEY is getting major class relief after spending the majority of the season at the N2X/\$50,000 and N1X/\$32,000 levels and looks like the one to beat against this level of company. #5 OUR FLAG FLYING was an even fifth in the same race that Dreams and Schemes exits but has run some strong races this season and could be a factor with one of her better efforts. #7 SARAH'S DANCER has raced well in both of her starts since returning from a layoff, most recently closing to be third, 1 ¾ lengths behind Dreams and Schemes on November 17.

Race 9

#5 Proctor Phantom

#3 Arabian Prince

#6 Roi Soleil

#2 American Decision

#5 PROCTOR PHANTOM had to alter course a couple of times while rallying to finish a decent sixth in his local debut 16 days ago, his first start since 2022. Returning on short rest while racing protected seems like a positive sign; we'll see if he can step forward in his second go over the surface. #3 ARABIAN PRINCE finished well to finish second behind Babbo in the same race that Proctor Phantom exits. Talented son of Mshawish is unfortunately a notorious second-it-is type; arguably the best horse in the race but hard to endorse on top. #6 ROI SOLEIL

rallied to win at this level in a five furlong inner turf dash two starts ago but came up empty after racing wide in a tough N2X/\$50,000 on November 15. He could rebound getting back to an easier class. #2 AMERICAN DECISION rallied to be third in an N1X/\$32,000 on November 14 and should be finishing up well.

Race 10

#3 Verdejo

#4 My Sunny Valentine

#6 Veery

#2 Mi Corazon

#3 VERDEJO won an N1X/\$32,000 early in the season and has been putting in consistent good efforts against the N2X/\$50,000 level. She is pace dependent but very honest and could run them all down late. #4 MY SUNNY VALENTINE is looking for her fourth consecutive win, being claimed from her third N1X/\$32,000 score 16 days ago. Versatile-type could be close to the pace; it's tough to knock consistency. #6 VEERY has won two in a row at the N1X/\$32,000 level going gate to wire around two turns. She is a capable sprinter and could be the main speed threat from the outside. #2 MI CORAZON is at her best sprinting on the Tapeta and will get that chance here after three turf routes. She has not run in 43 days; might fire fresh.

Race 11

#8 Alberta Be Mine

#9 Crafty Oaks

#7 American Gamble

#3 Sweet Serenade

#6 Freret

#8 ALBERTA BE MINE took a bit of a shuffle but ran on well to be fourth at this level 10 days ago and could be a value player. #9 CRAFTY OAKS looks like the main speed in this field. She drops in for bottoms after being run down and finishing third behind the very tough Make No Mistake for \$10,000 on November 15; the one to beat. #7 AMERICAN GAMBLE found a seam in midstretch and was able to get up to win for this price on October 31. She comes in off of a win and a little more fresh than the main threats. #3 SWEET SERENADE is an interesting wild card dropping in class on the heels of a strong effort where she narrowly missed second in a starter/optional \$10,000 turf route on November 2. She prefers a route but was able to win sprinting at Fort Erie in September and has not had a bad effort since being claimed by these connections. #6 FRERET threw in a clunker when racing for \$7,500 nine days ago but had a good third-place effort behind American Gamble prior to that and could pick up a minor share.