PLEASE Join me and others for #WoodbineLive on Sunday from 4:30 to 6 pm eastern time covering the Queen’s Plate and Dance Smartly. You can find the live stream on any device by clicking on either of these links for Facebook and for YouTube.

Win Contenders:
#6 Munnyfor Ro – minimum win betting odds – 3/1
#7 Riptide Rock – minimum win betting odds – 3/1
#1 Safe Conduct – minimum win betting odds – 4/1
#11 Avoman – minimum win betting odds – 6/1
#8 Keep Grinding and #4 Take a Chance round out the contenders for exotic bets like the exacta and trifecta

Exacta: 6,7 over 1,6,7,11
Box 1,6,7,11
6,7 over 1,4,6,7,8,11

Trifecta: 6,7 over ALL over 6,7 (In combination with the exactas above, this trifecta wins if the two top contenders finish first and third while the exacta covers first and second).

Talk of a short Queen’s Plate field given the Plate Trial Stakes three weeks ago drew only four horses was quickly put to rest this week when 13 entered this year’s race, which is what was logical to happen when owners and trainers see $1 million in purse money dangled for their enticement. Both the winner of the Plate Trial, Avoman, and the winner of the Woodbine Oaks, Munnyfor Ro, will go as well as a few very interesting horses and a completely new face at Woodbine.

With fillies having captured four of the last 10 editions of the Queen’s Plate, the first thing to do is to size up this year’s Woodbine Oaks winner when handicapping the race. Munnyfor Ro could be the fifth filly to win in recent history, based on the strength of her Oaks win and the fact she’s on a very recognizable three race pattern. She changed barns (to Kevin Attard) and surfaces (to all-weather) before her July 10 start in the Selene Stakes, in which she finished second with a 92 Equibase Speed Figure (a number enabling us to compare time among many different tracks and surfaces) and improved to 100 winning the Oaks, which is the best last (fastest) last race in the field, BY FAR. Stein remains aboard and sons and daughters of Munnings (also the sire of Take a Chance) perform well at this level on all-weather. With a square pace to run into provided by Take a Chance and others, Munnyfor Ro should be able to run as well or better as she did in the Oaks and win this year’s Queen’s Plate.

That being said, there’s a case to be made for Riptide Rock posting the mild upset. The gelding debuted on turf at Woodbine last fall and won at first asking, then took time off and went south to run at Oaklawn this past winter and spring, running only fair to poor in his three starts there on conventional dirt. Following a really poor sixth place effort in the Jersey Derby in May, Riptide Rock, like Munnyfor Ro, changed barns, and more importantly surfaces, entering a sprint on the all-weather in July at Woodbine for Sid Attard. Rallying from last of six, Riptide Rock not only got up in time but was drawing off at the end. The 94 figure was nearly a career-best and as he stretches out to two-turns and makes his second local start even better is expected, not to mention his two workouts since raced have been superb. As such, and as three year olds often do, Riptide Rock could take a big leap forward and run well enough to win this race.

The new face mentioned in the opening paragraph is Safe Conduct, an Ontario bred colt who has done all his running (six races) in New York. Winner of two of the six, both around two turns on turf, he has every right to run well on the main track at Woodbine given sire Bodemeister has sired a couple of all-weather stakes.
winners including Clayton, who won the 2020 Plate Trial and then finished third in the Queen’s Plate. Irad Ortiz, Jr., the second North American leading jockey this year, takes off an entire day at Saratoga to ride Safe Conduct. When Safe Conduct won around two turns on turf in May, he earned a 99 figure which if repeated would put him squarely in the picture with the top two contenders. One of his starts since is irrelevant as it was moved to dirt and the other, his most recent, was a poor eighth place finish in the Belmont Derby. However, that field was star-studded including top European runners Bolshoi Ballet and Tokyo Gold, who ran one-two. With the rail, Safe Conduct can either lead early if no other horse wants to, or take up a great stalking position and that gives him a chance to succeed.

**Avoman** won the Plate Trial but much more slowly as compared to Munnyfor Ro, on the same day at the same distance. His Equibase figure was 85 compared to 100 so although he has a lot of heart he could come up short today unless he leapfrogs considerably over his career best effort, although it must be pointed out he is on the right pattern as this will be his third start following seven months off.

Honorable mention goes to longshot **Take a Chance**, who led from start to finish to earn his first win last month over the track and who might get brave on the lead in this situation, and to **Keep Grinding**, who is also making his third start off a layoff and finished second with a 92 figure in the Marine Stakes in his most recent effort.

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