

RACE BY RACE ANALYSIS



by *Ron Nicoletti*

FIRST RACE:

4 WELL POSITIONED will kick off his sophomore campaign after ending his 2-year-old season with a monster maiden win in which he responded to the addition of blinkers with a 14-length plus trouncing of 12 rivals in a 1-mile maiden special weight test at Aqueduct. **6 MASALA** makes his allowance debut after drawing clear on a sealed 'muddy' track to break his maiden with a professional stalk-and-pounce score at a mile. Trainer Todd Pletcher, who has two in the race (Take The Points), has Eibar Coa atop the son of Lion Heart. **3 CINNAMON ROAD**, the only multiple winner in the field (11-3-1-2), couldn't have been more impressive when he used his speed, and a vigorous hand ride from jockey John Velazquez, to wallop \$35,000 claimers by 14 ¼-lengths.

SELECTIONS: 4-6-3

SECOND RACE:

7 BANG BANG BANG, the king of the \$35,000 claimers on the New York turf circuit, debuts locally after notching his second consecutive victory when he defeated a pair of next-out winners in a 'key' \$35,000 claimer on the Aqueduct turf. Trainer Kiaran McLaughlin has Alan Garcia at the controls. **3 OPTIMER** gets some immediate class relief after failing to fire behind repeat winner Furthest Land in a money-allowance test at the distance. Trainer Rick Dutrow has Edgar Prado in the saddle again. **11 DON'TWAIT TOOLONG**, 2 for 2 'in the money' on the Gulfstream turf, drops to the \$35,000 level after finishing second vs. better in back-to-back races on the Churchill turf. Trainer Carl Nafzger has Calvin Borel named to ride.

8 MONASHEE GOLD drops a notch on the competition scale after rallying to get beat 2 ½ lengths in a 'key' \$50,000 claimer at Churchill that produced a pair of next-out winners. Trainer Dale Romans has Rene Douglas at the helm.

SELECTIONS: 7-3-11-8

THIRD RACE:

4 JUST A COINCIDENCE, who produced a couple of sharp efforts when sprinting at Saratoga and Belmont, turns back to 6 furlong after dueling for the lead and fading to finish a troubled fourth (hit rail) at a mile and a sixteenth on the Churchill main track. Trainer Nick Zito has Alan Garcia atop the \$200K son of Forestry. **9 MIGHTY SCORE** shows a 3-furlong bullet at Palm Meadows in a torrid :33 & 3 in preparation for the first outing since breaking slowly and finishing fourth behind impressive first-out winner Checklist, and next-out winner More Than Willing. Note that trainer Kelly Breen has a 32% win average with horses making their second start. **1 PRESTO CHANGE O** is a son of Grand Slam, and a full brother to Grade 3 stakes-placed per-

former Cool Spell, who has been training up a storm in preparation for his career debut. Trainer James Jerkens adds Lasix and Javier Castellano for this assignment. **12 GALLIGAN ROAD** is expected to show more after stalking the pace along the rail, against a perceived mid-path bias, to finish third behind impressive first-time starter Checklist.

SELECTIONS: 4-9-2-12

FOURTH RACE:

12 CHOOSING will depart from an outside again after breaking from Post 10, dueling for the lead throughout, and getting beat a head vs. similar at a mile and a sixteenth. The turn-back to a mile should help the Mott/Leparoux collaboration. **1 TIGER WITH A T**, a sharp winner vs. \$35,000 'two-lifetime' on Nov. 10, who broke her maiden on the Gulfstream turf last January, will depart from the rail after failing to finish her local return when Eibar Coa's saddle slipped and he was forced to ease her out of the race. **2 GIVE NO GROUND** is stepping up to the next level after surviving a stretch duel to defeat next-out local winners Granted Tiger and Delta Weekend in a fruitful \$35,000 'two-lifetime' claimer at the distance. **11 MILICAT**, 5 for 7 'in the money' on the turf, who clearly does her best running in the latter stages of the race, should be along to grab a share of the exotic wagers. Strong finisher Jose Lezcano should help the cause.

SELECTIONS: 12-1-2-11

FIFTH RACE:

2 NEXT ADVENTURE has his maiden tag sliced in half after breaking slowly from the rail and finishing seventh in a 5-furlong \$50,000 claimer contested at 5 furlongs on the Churchill turf. Trainer Mike Maker, 27% with the turf-to-dirt move, has main man Julien Leparoux in the saddle. **7 RAYMUNDO**, a model of consistency at 7 furlongs (4-2-2-0), albeit vs. \$10,000 to \$16,000 claimers, steps up the competition after a solid local debut in which he finished second at the distance. Don't let the hike in competition scare you off. **8 SHONE** plunges to the \$25,000 level after ending his 2008 campaign with a chase-and-fade performance vs. \$80,000 allowance optional claimers at Churchill. The gelding, 4 for 6 'in the money' locally, has Joe Bravo quarterbacking the return. **5 PUNTO FIJO** is dropping into a competitive spot after surrendering a mid-race lead to finish fourth behind impressive winner Cuba in a \$25,000 starter allowance test.

SELECTIONS: 2-7-8-5

SIXTH RACE:

8 ACE OF SPADES, bred to be fast at 5 furlongs on the turf, the son of Elusive Quality may have signaled his intentions when he worked a half-mile bullet at Palm Meadows in preparation for his career turf debut. **6 ECHO IN ETERNITY**, a \$240K son of Lion Heart makes his career debut for leading trainer Ken McPeek with a series of strong Palm Meadows workouts showing. Trainer McPeek adds Lasix and jockey Kent Desormeaux for this assignment. **9 PAUL'S ACE** will shift his focus to the turf after showing speed and fading late on the dirt in 2 of 3 sprints vs. New York-breds. Trainer Tim Ritvo, 18% with his turf sprinters, has Eibar Coa in the saddle. **11 DANCIN' DEACON** is a son of Hennessey, out of the Unbridled's Song mare Serene Ditty, who is bred on both sides to respond favorably to the turf. Trainer Phil Serpe adds Lasix and Rene Douglas for the debut.

SELECTIONS: 8-6-9-11

SEVENTH RACE: THE HOLY BULL (G3)

2 DANGER TO SOCIETY makes his stakes debut after keeping his record unblemished when he drew away to defeat allowance competition in his local debut at this 9-furlong distance. Trainer Ken McPeek has Robby Albarado going for the hat trick on the \$300K son of Harlan's Holiday. **10 WEST SIDE BERNIE** shows a trio of bullet workouts in preparation for the first start since his impressive freshman campaign in which he hit the board in 3 of 4 races, which included a victory in the Grade 3 Ky. Cup Juvenile at Turfway Park, and a second place finish to Big Drama in the Grade 3 Delta Jackpot on Dec. 5.

11 BEETHOVEN, clearly one of the rising stars on the Florida Derby trail, has to deal with the ultra tough Post 11 when trying to notch his third consecutive victory, and first score since winning the Grade 2 Kentucky Juvenile Cup at Churchill (Nov. 29). **8 IDOL MAKER** is hoping to find a little more for the stretch run after finishing fourth in consecutive races at 9 furlongs, including the recent 4 3/4-length defeat at the hands of Danger To Society.

SELECTIONS: 2-10-11-8

EIGHTH RACE:

10 DUBINSKY signaled he was ready to compete with the top 3-year-olds on the grounds when he responded to the addition of blinkers with a keyed-up second place finish behind impressive winner Alma d'Oro. Trainer Pat Reynolds readied the son of Toccet for his second outing at the distance with a couple of sharp local workouts. **4 NICANOR**, the full brother to Grade 1 2006 Florida Derby and Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro, makes his much-anticipated debut with a series of consistent works showing at Palm Meadows. Trainer Michael Matz, who trained Barbaro for Lael Stables, adds Lasix and jockey Edgar Prado, who guided Barbaro through his heart-wrenching sophomore campaign. **2 BIG FLIRT** has been tearing up the track in preparation for the first start since ending his freshman campaign with a troubled outing (bumped, steadied) in a 7-furlong maiden test at Churchill. Trainer Wesley Ward, who has two in the race (Boyhood Dream), has Paco Lopez atop the son of Macho Uno. **1 UNBRIDLED CARDINAL** is hoping the second consecutive start from the rail will be better after breaking last and finishing a distant fourth behind Dubinsky last out.

SELECTIONS: 10-4-2-1

NINTH RACE: THE DONN HANDICAP (G1)

10 EINSTEIN, the winner of the Grade 1 2008 Gulfstream Park Turf, showed he could compete at the same level on the dirt when he finished second to Horse Of The Year Curlin in the Grade 1 Stephen Foster, and used his tactical speed to win the Grade 2 Clark Handicap last out. However, he'll need to overcome the tough outside post (10) to beat this stellar field.

7 ARSON SQUAD is stretching out to his most accomplished distance (5-3-0-0) after following his victory in the 9-furlong Grade 2 Meadowlands Cup with a troubled fourth place finish (forced out) in the Grade 1 Cigar Mile. Trainer Rick Dutrow has Edgar Prado in the saddle. **2 ALBERTUS MAXIMUS** is stretching out after shaking off traffic on the turn to win the 'key' Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile - not on dirt - but on the Pro-Ride surface at Santa Anita. Trainer Kiaran McLaughlin has him training beautifully at Palm Meadows. **5 A. P. ARROW**, beaten a half length in the 2008 Donn, who is now in the Ken McPeek barn, gets the blinkers back after failing to fire sans the shades in both the Grade 1 Woodward and Jockey Gold Cup Handicaps.

SELECTIONS: 10-7-2-5

TENTH RACE:

6 WITTY WOMAN is stretching out to a mile and a sixteenth after rallying late to come within a neck of exiting the maiden ranks at a mile on the Calder turf. **4 TENACIOUS**, a respectable fourth in her career turf debut at Saratoga, returns to the lawn after stalking the pace and fading in a 1-mile affair on the Belmont main track. The full sister to Grade 3 winner Watchmon has John Velazquez handling the surface switch. **10 SEALED BID** was given some time off after an inconsistent 3-race turf campaign in which she ran good at Saratoga, and not so good at Churchill on Nov. 19. Trainer Rusty Arnold has Julien Leparoux atop the daughter of Langfuhr. **8 WATCH SMARTLY**, a daughter of Smart Strike, makes her first start since she finished second here at this level and distance last February. Trainer Bobby Ribaud has Cornelio Velasquez handling her first race in 11 months.

SELECTIONS: 6-4-10-8

BEST BET: RACE 7 - 2 DANGER TO SOCIETY

LONG SHOT: RACE 2 - 1 MAN ABOVE

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