

RACE BY RACE ANALYSIS



by *Ron Nicoletti*

FIRST RACE:

3 HER GREATNESS is a logical choice after dueling for the lead and finishing second vs. similar at the distance, which was her first race since she was facing entry-level allowance competition here last January & February. Trainer Manny Estevez has John Velazquez in the saddle. **5 BOX OF CHARMS** makes her first start since she used her front running speed to defeat a field of next-out winners in a fruitful \$35,000 Florida-bred maiden test about 11 months ago. Trainer Wayne Catalano, strong with horses returning from an extended layoff, tabs Jose Lezcano to ride. **7 TRIPPIN' EASY** is turning back to 5 ½ furlongs after rallying to finish second best vs. \$16,000 'two-lifetime' claimers at seven-eighths of a mile. Trainer Dave Vivian has Edgar Prado in the saddle. **6 ITOBE** debuts locally after a ground saving trip produced to third place finish vs. similar quality at 6 ½ furlongs on a 'good' Aqueduct main track.

SELECTIONS: 3-5-7-6

SECOND RACE:

5 CLASH OF ARMS shows back-to-back bullet workouts over the track in preparation for the first start since dueling for the lead and fading to finish third behind a pair of next-out winners, including Top Seed, who won the \$65K Inaugural at Tampa on December 27. **1 SAYERS** is turning back to three-quarters of a mile after setting the pace, from the tough inside post in the 7-furlong chute at Calder, and finishing second vs. \$40,000 starter allowance competition. **2 I'M IT WAYNE** will try claimers for the first time after following his maiden special weight win at Hawthorne with a chase-and-fade distant eighth place finish vs. entry-level allowance runners at Churchill. Trainer Wayne Catalano, 34% with the 31-60 day layoff, has Jose Lezcano in the saddle.

SELECTIONS: 5-1-2

THIRD RACE:

8 HOUSE QUEST, a 3-time turf winner last year, including a pair at 6 furlongs, turns back to five-eighths in the first start since Rick Dutrow Jr. claimed her out of a mile and a sixteenth \$35,000 event in which she was beaten a length as the favorite. Dutrow, 27% with new claims, has Edgar Prado handling the turnback. **3 DITE MOI**, a winner of 3 of 5 sprints on the dirt, makes her turf debut for a barn that excels with grass sprinters. Trainer Kirk Ziadie, 26% with his debut turf runners, has Jose Lezcano handling the surface switch. **2 ACQUIRED CAT**, a previous winner on the local turf, cuts back to five-eighths of a mile after a couple of well-meant turf sprints at 6 and 7 furlongs, respectively, on the Belmont sod. Trainer Frank Alexander has Eibar Coa atop the New York-bred.

1 FANCY STEPPER, a half sister to legendary campaigner Sir Bear, who was 5 for 18 on the turf in his storied career, shifts back to the lawn after finishing a troubled third (pinched back) vs. \$25,000 allowance optional claimers at 5 ½ furlongs on the Calder main track.

SELECTIONS: 8-3-2-1

FOURTH RACE:

1 MARL makes his first-ever start on a traditional dirt track after showing promise when competing vs. maiden special weight competition on both turf and the Keeneland Polytrack. Trainer Bobby Frankel has Edgar Prado handling the colt's first start in almost 8 months. **8 BATTLE PLAN**, a half to multiple Grade 1 winner and Breeders' Cup Distaff runnerup Surfside, makes his first start since his much needed debut in which he was fractious at the gate, keyed up early, and unresponsive during the stretch run. Trainer Todd Pletcher has John Velazquez in the saddle again. **2 DESERT FALCON** is shortening up to a 1-turn mile after threatening to break his maiden on sealed 'sloppy' tracks at a mile & 70 yards and a mile and a sixteenth, respectively. Trainer Joe Orseno, 20% with the 61-180 day layoff, has Carlos Marquez Jr. in the saddle. **3 CHIEF BEAR**, 2 for 4 'in the money' here last year before finishing a fading fifth vs. winners in the Grade 3 Holy Bull Stakes, stretches out after a useful return from a 7-month plus layoff in which he finished fourth vs. maiden special runners at 7 furlongs on the Woodbine Polytrack.

SELECTIONS: 1-8-2-3

FIFTH RACE:

12 DOTTIE BOOTH, a game winner vs. \$40,000 claimers on the Churchill turf, drops after finishing fourth vs. allowance optional claimers on the Turfway Polytrack. Trainer Mike Maker, 26% with the synthetic-to-turf angle, spots the mare perfectly vs. \$16,000 starter allowance competition. **3 ROLL THE DI**, consistent vs. allowance level competition on the New York turf circuit, turns back slightly to 7 ½ furlongs after failing to show much on a 'yielding' course vs. New York-breds in the Shopping For Love Stakes. **5 ENJOYABLE** is stepping up the competition after following her \$10,000 claiming victory at 5 ½ furlongs with a score vs. \$7,500 starter allowance runners on the Laurel turf. **10 IRISH COVE** is turning back to 7 ½ furlongs (3-0-1-2) after responding to a drop in competition with a \$12,500 'three-lifetime' claiming score at a mile and a sixteenth on the Calder turf.

SELECTIONS: 12-3-5-10

SIXTH RACE:

2 CHEROKEE BULL is turning back to 6 furlongs after encountering double-trouble (steadied backstretch, checked turn) when beaten a length vs. maiden special weight runners at 7 furlongs on the Calder main track. Trainer Frank Alexander has Eibar Coa penciled in for the return assignment. **10 FROSTY DIAMOND**, who finished a well-meant second at the distance vs. \$100,000 maidens at Saratoga (Aug. 27), returns to the claiming ranks after rallying to finish second best vs. a group of maiden special weight runners at Calder on Oct. 25. Trainer Henry Collazo has Alan Garcia atop the son of Medaglia d'Oro. **8 TRUE ALLY** will compete for the \$70,000 tag in this event after dueling for the lead and weakening to finish sixth in a 'key' 6-furlong dash at Delaware that has produced three next-out winners. Trainer Bobby Dibona teams with Cornelio Velasquez. **11 BIG FLIRT** shows back-to-back bullet workouts over the track in preparation for the first start since finishing a troubled sixth (bumped, steadied 3/16th) vs. special weight competition at Churchill.

SELECTIONS: 2-10-8-11

SEVENTH RACE:

9 RESCUE SQUAD, a beautifully bred son of Dynaformer, who is a half to Grade 3 winner Criminologist, makes his allowance debut after defeating three next-out winners, including Swinging Bernie, when he shook off trouble at the 1/8th pole to win his career turf debut at a mile and a sixteenth. Trainer Shug McGaughey has Edgar Prado at the controls. **6 TIRE KICKER** is back on the turf after following his impressive 6-furlong career turf debut victory with an ambitious outing on the dirt in the Grade 3 Nashua at Aqueduct on Nov. 2. The sharp work tab at Payson Park indicates a top performance is expected. **8 SWINGING BERNIE**, sixth behind Rescue Squad in their respective career debuts, renews the rivalry after making a 3-wide bid to break his maiden on the Aqueduct turf (Nov. 22). Trainer Todd Pletcher has Eibar Coa going for two in a row. **5 GRAND CASH** must be respected after becoming the only multiple winner in the field when he got up in the final jump to defeat \$25,000 starter allowance competition on the Calder sod (8-2-1-1).

SELECTIONS: 9-6-8-5

EIGHTH RACE:

1 ON BOARD AGAIN and **1A FIDELIO** are a pair from trainer Bobby Frankel who merit the call whether they run coupled or uncoupled. The former, a son of Awesome Again, cuts back to 7 furlongs (3-1-0-1) after a couple of sharp efforts at a mile vs. this caliber of competition on the New York circuit while the latter stretches out to seven-eighths (3-2-0-0) after dueling through the stretch and getting beat a half-length vs. \$80,000 allowance optional claimers at 6 1/2 furlongs on the Churchill main surface. **3 DRAGON FI** was sent south after failing to show much in a \$100K optional claimer at a mile on the Aqueduct inner track. The son of Gulch, certainly competitive

from a speed figure standpoint, is conditioned by Bruce Levine, who has a 25% average with horses going from a route to a sprint. **2 LUCKY JAMES** is stretching out an additional furlong after responding to the addition of blinkers with a commanding score vs. New Jersey-breds in \$25,000 allowance optional claimer at three-quarters of a mile.

SELECTIONS: 1-1A-3-2

NINTH RACE:

5 UNACCOUNTABLE makes his 4-year-old debut after ending his sophomore campaign with an eventful outing vs. similar on the Aqueduct turf in which he broke through the gate, was reloaded, and proceeded to run second - beaten a half-length for the whole enchilada. **4 ITAGLIO** is expected to show more after taking the overland route and finishing a wide third behind Unaccountable last out. Trainer Barclay Tagg has go-to jock Eibar Coa handling the rematch. **9 D' WILDCARD**, a full brother to Grade 3 Swale Stakes winner D' Wildcat, who was beaten a length in both previous turf outings at the \$45,000 level, returns to the lawn after finishing fourth in a race moved from the turf to a mile on a 'good' Aqueduct main track. **2 RAPID MON** is stretching out around 2-turns on the turf after showing speed and fading late when facing maiden special weight competition in a series of sprints on the main track. The son of Maria's Mon, bred to respond favorably to both the surface and the distance, should be a major player in the pace scenario.

SELECTIONS: 5-4-9-2

BEST BET: RACE 5 - 12 DOTTIE BOOTH

LONG SHOT: RACE 7 - 4 SAFETY SQUEEZE

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