

RACE BY RACE ANALYSIS



by *Ron Nicoletti*

FIRST RACE:

7 MR. DR. PROFESSOR plummets to the \$15,000 level after ending his freshman campaign with a disappointing performance, as the favorite, vs. \$50,000 maidens at Churchill Downs (Nov. 23). He's the obvious choice unless the huge drop has you reluctant to pull the trigger. **2 WYO BANDITO** drops, and turns back to a 1-turn mile, after encountering traffic on the first turn (bumped) and finishing a distant third vs. \$25,000 maidens at a mile and a sixteenth on the Calder main track. **11 HELICOPTER** cuts back to a mile hoping to improve on the recent spate of second place finishes and produce his first victory in 15 races. The gelded son of Three Wonders belongs on the ticket; I'm just not convinced he can win. **5 FOG ISLAND** is stretching out to 8 furlongs after recovering from a pokey start to finish third vs. \$12,500 maidens at 6 ½ furlongs.

SELECTIONS: 7-2-11-5

SECOND RACE:

8 FIUMES drops, and turns back to 6 furlongs on the dirt, after encountering trouble on the first turn (steadied) and finishing second vs. \$25,000 'three-lifetime' claimers at a mile and a sixteenth on the turf. Trainer Wesley Ward, 28% with the grass-to-dirt angle, has Elvis Trujillo handling the surface switch. **1 DIGNIFIED ESSENCE** will be outfitted with blinkers after surrendering a late lead to finish second - beaten a head - vs. \$10,000 conditioned claimers across town. **7 DELAWARE MANOR** will shift back to a traditional dirt surface after chasing the pace and finishing a vastly improved second vs. \$15,000 'three-lifetime' claimers on the Turfway Polytrack. **9 KIERNAN'S LEGACY** is hoping to get away from the gate in a timely fashion after breaking slowly and finishing fifth behind Dignified Essence last out.

SELECTIONS: 8-1-7-9

THIRD RACE:

4 UMBRA makes his 3-year-old debut after a promising, but frustrating, 3-race freshman turf campaign in which he finished second, as the favorite, in all three starts. Trainer Todd Pletcher has red-hot jock Eibar Coa trying the cure the case of seconditis. **11 FLORENTINO** makes his career turf debut without blinkers after dueling for the lead and fading in a monster 'key' race on the Keeneland Polytrack that produced four next-out winners. Trainer Kieran McLaughlin, 20% with his debut turf runners, has Alan Garcia atop the Japanese-bred son of Swept Overboard. **10 SOUL WINNER** is stretching out to a mile and a sixteenth after recovering from a stumbling start to finish third in his career turf debut at a mile. Trainer Phil Gleaves has Eduardo Nunez penciled

in for the return assignment. **6 CAFFE D'ORO** has trained well locally in preparation for his first start since finishing a willing fourth in his 7-furlong career turf debut at Belmont. Trainer Tim Hills has Javier Castellano in the saddle again.

SELECTIONS: 4-11-10-6

FOURTH RACE:

1 DISCREET TREASURE, a half to ultra fast Grade 1 winner Discreet Cat, has trained strongly at Palm Meadows in preparation for the first start since finishing second in a 1-turn mile at Aqueduct (Nov. 22). Trainer Stan Hough has Cornelio Velasquez in the saddle. **8 STEVIL**, still looking for his first win since breaking his maiden at first asking during October 2007 (10 races), turns back to a mile after coming within a neck of defeating entry-level allowance competition at a mile & 70 yards on the Meadowlands main track.

3 ROCK IN BAGE, Group 1 stakes-placed on the turf in Argentina, makes his North American debut for trainer Kieran McLaughlin with five Palm Meadows workouts, which includes a pair of bullets, showing in preparation for this assignment. **9 HALO'S WHO** is the unknown in the race when he steps up the competition after posting a 103 Beyer when he glided on a sealed 'sloppy' track to defeat \$25,000 'three-lifetime' claimers by 12 lengths. Trainer Kirk Ziadie tabs Jose Lezcano to ride.

SELECTIONS: 1-8-3-9

FIFTH RACE:

4 EXPANSION is expanding to 12 furlongs after coming within a head of defeating entry-level allowance competition at a mile and an eighth on the Aqueduct turf. Note that the colt showed he could handle this type of distance when he was beat a half-length in an 11-furlong maiden test at Saratoga. **2 NEW FANDAN**, 2 for 5 'in the money' at this marathon distance in Brazil, makes his North American debut for trainer Ken McPeck with both Lasix and blinkers added. The distance specialist has Kent Desormeaux in the saddle.

6 BARONIAL, bred to run all day, the son of Kingmambo stretches out after finishing a willing second vs. \$16,000 optional claimers at mile on the Calder sod. Trainer Shug McGaughey has Elvis Trujillo in the saddle. **3 CITY ON THE LINE**, beaten only three-quarters of a length at this distance in France, stretches out after showing some positive late interest in a trio of New York-bred races going shorter. Trainer Allen Jerkens has Jose Lezcano at the controls.

SELECTIONS: 4-2-6-3

SIXTH RACE:

6 I AM TROUBLE is cutting back to a mile after using his speed to defeat \$25,000 allowance optional claimers at a mile and a sixteenth, and receive a 87 Beyer for his effort. Trainer Bobby Dibona has Kent Desormeaux going for two in a row. **8 HIGH BRASS** drops into a competitive spot after following both a \$25,000 maiden score, and a second place finish vs. \$35,000 claimers, with a distant fourth place showing vs. \$50,000 types at Aqueduct. **2 REAFFIRMED**, 1 of 2 entrants in the race for trainer Peter Walder cuts back to a mile after finishing third vs. \$25,000 claimers in a mile & 70-yard test at Delaware. The gelding, 2-for-2 'in the money' at Gulfstream, has Jose Lezcano at the controls. **4 I'VE REPENTED** is stretching out to a mile after dueling early and drawing clear late to defeat \$16,000 claimers at 7 furlongs. Note that the gelding is 4-1-1-0 locally.

SELECTIONS: 6-8-2-4

SEVENTH RACE:

9 EL CRESPO makes his 3-year-old debut the first start since dueling throughout and finishing second in front of a pair of next-out winners in a very promising career turf debut at the distance. Trainer Rusty Arnold Jr. has Javier Castellano atop the regally bred son of A P Indy. **7 ZIFZAF**, a beautifully bred son of War Chant, makes his career turf debut the first start since closing strongly to finish third behind repeat winner Silver City and in front of a trio of next-out winners in a very fruitful 6-furlong special weight sprint on the Keeneland Polytrack. Trainer Kiaran McLaughlin has Elvis Trujillo atop this interesting proposition. **10 TREVELYAN** debuts locally for the productive trainer/jock combo of Pletcher and Coa after a pair of solid turf performances up north. The \$300K son of Fusaichi Pegasus has trained nicely at Palm Meadows. **1 LAMAR VALLEY** is another making his sophomore debut after showing promise on the turf in a pair up north. Trainer Barclay Tagg has Jose Lezcano guiding the son of El Prado.

SELECTIONS: 9-7-10-1

EIGHTH RACE:

5 KEECHI BULLET moved to the Steve Towne barn via the claim after an impressive \$40,000 maiden score at Calder in which he shook off early pressure to win by 8 widening lengths. Trainer Towne, 2 for 4 with new claims, has Elvis Trujillo in the saddle. **8 KID GUSTO** debuts locally after a consistent campaign in the Chicago area in which he broke his maiden for a \$40,000 tag at Arlington, and recently finished third vs. \$50,000 allowance optional claimers at Hawthorne (Nov. 22). Trainer Jimmy DiVito has E T Baird atop the New York-bred son of Wiseman's Ferry. **6 COWBOY CONNECTION** shows back-to-back bullet workouts in preparation for the first start since responding to the addition of Lasix with a \$32,000 maiden score at Calder. Cornelio Velasquez rides. **3 KISSING CODE** will try to make it two in a row after responding to a considerable drop in competition with a \$25,000 maiden win at Calder. Trainer Allen Jerkens has Shannon Uske in the irons.

SELECTIONS: 5-8-6-3

NINTH RACE: THE FT. LAUDERDALE

1 BUFFALO MAN, who won the Grade 3 Appleton Handicap here last January, returns after solid performance in the Grade 3 Knickerbocker in which he finished third - a neck behind Strike A Deal, who won the Grade 2 Red Smith in his next start, and in front of Dry Martini, who won the Stuyvesant in his next race. **5 PICK SIX**, 2 for 2 'in the money' on the Gulfstream turf, makes his first start since he was nipped at the wire by front running Buddy's Humor in the \$68K Four Bases at Aqueduct. Trainer Shug McGaughey readied the son of Dynaformer for this performance with a 5-furlong bullet drill over the local turf. **3 MAMBO MEISTER** had his recent triple-digit Beyer (103) victory validated when both the second and third place finishers in that \$50,000 optional claimer came back to win in their next start. **7 SILVER TREE**, a yearly fixture at Gulfstream, who is 7-4-2-1 on the local sod, turns back to a mile and a sixteenth after disputing the pace and yielding to get beat 4 lengths in the Grade 3 Tropical Turf Handicap at Calder. It's the old horse-for-course angle.

SELECTIONS: 1-5-3-7

TENTH RACE:

4 QUALITY ROAD has been burning up the track at Palm Meadows in preparation for the first start since he posted a 101 Beyer at Aqueduct when he broke from Post 10, went right to the lead, and increased his advantage to win by 2 3/4 lengths. Trainer Jimmy Jerkens has Alan Garcia going for two in a row. **5 OBLIGINGLY** is stretching out to seven-eighths of a mile after blowing the doors off the competition when he broke his maiden at Calder, as the odds-on choice, by 11 1/2 lengths. Trainer Todd Pletcher has Chris DeCarlo going for two in a row. **12 JET SET VINNY** added credence to his debut maiden victory in the 'mud' at the Meadowlands when he stalked the pace and finished second vs. entry-level allowance runners, at this 7-furlong distance, on a 'fast' Calder main track. **10 TAR BEACH**, who came from 'off the pace' at Saratoga to break his maiden at the distance, returns to the dirt with the ideal patient running style needed to capitalize on the sizzling pace scenario expected. Trainer Ken McPeck is 34% with the grass-to-dirt angle.

SELECTIONS: 4-5-12-10

MINEBENDER BEST BET: RACE 2 - 8 FIUMES

LONG SHOT: RACE 9 - 2 MUSEEB

