

RACE BY RACE ANALYSIS



by *Ron Nicoletti*

FIRST RACE:

7 SHARP SONG is turning back to 6 furlongs after dueling throughout and getting nipped in the final strides vs. similar in a 7-furlong bottom level maiden test across town. **9 R LITTLE NUGGET**, now in the Larry Rivelli barn, stretches out an additional half-furlong after coming within a head, at even-money, to win his 5 ½-furlong career debut while under the tutelage of trainer Wesley Ward. **4 KING OF DREAMS**, drops to the \$15,000 level after following a fourth place finish behind local winner Keechi Bullet (Sat. Race 8) in a \$40,000 maiden test on Nov. 29, and fourth vs. \$25,000 types last out. **8 BEACHMONT FASHION** is hoping to find a little more for the stretch drive after dueling for the lead and drifting in the stretch when finishing third vs. \$12,500 maidens in a 5 ½-furlong test across town.

SELECTIONS: 7-9-4-8

SECOND RACE:

7 RUBY'S RED SOCKS, who posted a 103 Beyer when winning at this level and distance on Nov. 20, turns back after dueling for the lead and finishing second in another \$10,000 starter allowance contested at 7 furlongs. Trainer Kirk Ziadie teams with Jose Lezcano. **2 FEN**, who has shown in the past he can string together consecutive victories, will try to make it two in a row after drawing clear under a vigorous hand ride to defeat \$8,000 starter allowance competition at the distance. Trainer Henry Collazo has Edgar Prado in the saddle. **5 DEATH VALLEY**, a swift Illinois-bred son of Gulch, debuts locally for trainer Jimmy DiVito after using his speed to win four of his last seven races on the Chicago circuit. Jockey E T Baird will get him interested early. **3 SAFE PLAY**, third behind Ruby's Red Socks at seven-eighths last out, and second behind him when he posted the triple-digit Beyer on Nov. 20, renews the rivalry at a venue where he's won three of his four starts (4-3-0-0).

SELECTIONS: 7-2-5-3

THIRD RACE:

3 LUNAR FLEET is stretching out to 7 ½ furlongs after recovering from a troubled start (checked) to finish third, as the favorite, in its 5-furlong career turf debut at Calder. Trainer Marty Wolfson has Joe Bravo at the controls. **6 COPPER FOREST**, who proved he could win on the turf before he was disqualified and placed 10th in a 1-mile maiden special weight test at Arlington in August, returns to the grass after ending his 2008 campaign vs. better with a chase-and-fade performance on a sealed 'good' track at Hawthorne (Nov. 8). Trainer Wayne Catalano has E T Baird in the saddle. **5 HIT A HOMER** makes its career turf debut the first start since racing wide and finishing fifth in a 'key' 6 ½-furlong maiden test on the Churchill main track that has produced three next-out winners. Trainer

Helen Pitts has Julien Leparoux handling the surface switch. **11 FIVE STAR D J** is stepping up the competition after posting a competitive Beyer (67) when beaten a half-length vs. \$25,000 maidens on the Calder turf.

SELECTIONS: 3-6-5-11

FOURTH RACE:

8 REGAL BIRD will try 'two-lifetime' claimers after following her \$50,000 maiden score at Churchill with a press-the-pace-and-tire fourth place showing vs. multiple winners in a \$16,000 allowance optional claimer at Calder. Trainer Rebecca Maker has John Velazquez named to ride. **4 MISS SHANGAI** is returning to the main track after dueling for the lead and finishing second vs. \$20,000 'two-lifetime' claimers at 5 furlongs on the Calder turf. Trainer Wesley Ward is 28% with the turf-to-dirt angle, and 23% with the 31-60 day layoff. **2 GRANTED TIGER** is cutting back to three-quarters on the dirt after a solid outing vs. similar at a mile on the local turf in which she surrendered a late lead to get beat a length. Trainer Allen Jerkens has Shannon Uske handling the surface switch. **5 NOLA STAR**, who was facing stakes caliber competition in '06 and '07, drops into this 'two-lifetime' affair in her first start in 19 months. Trainer Ken McPeck, 6 for 18 with horses returning from an extended layoff, has Kent Desormeaux in the saddle.

SELECTIONS: 8-4-2-5

FIFTH RACE:

2 LATER GATER drops to the \$35,000 claiming level after a very useful return from a 11-month layoff in which he closed to get beat 4 lengths vs. a hard-knocking group of \$75,000 allowance optional claimers at Calder. The son of Cimarron Secret, who has red-hot jock Eibar Coa in the saddle, should sit a key second flight trip behind the speed, which includes **5 TRUE DANCER**. The 9-year-old gelded son of First and Only, who won here last February, makes his first start since dueling for the lead and getting beat a neck vs. \$25,000 claimers on the Aqueduct turf (Nov. 23). Trainer Rick Dutrow Jr. has Edgar Prado at the controls. **9 EXCHANGING KISSES**, another speed merchant, debuts locally after using his turn-of-foot to defeat \$35,000 'two-lifetime' claimers at 6 furlongs on the Belmont turf, and this level of competition at Aqueduct on Nov. 7. Trainer Pat Reynolds has Paco Lopez named to ride. **6 ONE EYED JOKER** showed he didn't forget how to win when he returned from an 11-month layoff to notch his third consecutive victory in a \$20,000 starter allowance on the Churchill turf (Nov. 19). Trainer Mike Maker is 28% with horses winning consecutive races.

SELECTIONS: 2-5-9-6

SIXTH RACE:

10 STOMP makes his first start since showing tons of promise when finishing a well-meant second in back-to-back sprints at Saratoga last summer. Trainer John Terranova has the son of Put It Back training sharply at Palm Meadows.

3 STRATEGIC DECISION, a half to Grade 1 stakes-placed Dr. Pleasure, shifts to a traditional dirt surface after making a 5-wide bid to finish a distant third in his 6 ½-furlong career debut on the Turfway Polytrack (Dec. 12). Trainer John Ward, 25% with the 31-60 day layoff, has Edgar Prado in the saddle. **9 PRIMARY WITNESS** is a son of Hennessey that has been burning up the stamina enhancing Payson Park training track in preparation for his career debut. Trainer Mark Hennig, who has a \$3.46 return of investment with first-time starters, has Kent Desormeaux in the saddle. **7 INDY'S SPELL**, a \$350K son of A. P. Indy, will be treated with Lasix after closing late to finish sixth vs. maiden special weight competition at Churchill on Nov. 29.

SELECTIONS: 10-3-9-7

SEVENTH RACE:

5 ARNAUDVILLE is shortening up to a mile after setting the pace and getting caught late to finish second at a mile and a sixteenth on the Calder turf. **3 EMPIRIOR**, bred to respond favorably to the turf, the \$300K son of Empire Maker makes his first start since threatening to break his maiden on the Belmont main track last summer. Trainer John Kimmel has Eibar Coa handling the surface switch. **9 JUSTENUFFHUMOR**, a half to both superstar filly Dreaming Of Anna, and multiple stakes-placed Lewis Michael, debuts on the grass after losing all chance when he broke poorly in his 7-furlong career debut on the Keeneland Polytrack. Trainer Kieran McLaughlin has Alan Garcia in the saddle. **7 MASK AND WIG** is turning back to 8 furlongs after weakening late to finish third behind Arnaudville at a mile and a sixteenth. Trainer Barclay Tagg has Jose Lezcano penciled in for the return assignment.

SELECTIONS: 5-3-9-7

EIGHTH RACE:

10 FOREST COMMAND shows a 5-furlong bullet workout over the track in :59 flat in preparation for the first start since following a third place finish in the 9-furlong Grade 2 Super Derby at Louisiana Downs with a speed-and-fade third place finish the 1-mile Grade 3 Ack Ack Handicap at Churchill. **1 Z HUMOR**, part of a Todd Pletcher entry, races without blinkers after setting the pace and yielding late to get beat only a head in the \$74K Pass The Tab on a 'good' Aqueduct main track. Eibar Coa rides. **3 SONG SHAN**, a half to Stronach Stables superstars Awesome Again and Macho Uno, makes his first start since finishing second here at this

level and distance last April 19. Trainer Brian Lynch, 27% with the longer than 180-day layoff, has Javier Castellano atop the lightly raced son of Golden Missile. **7 DREAM MAE-STRO**, 5 for 5 'in the money' at Gulfstream (5-1-2-2) returns after finishing second to winning machine Finallymadeit it back-to-back stakes at Calder. Trainer Bill Kaplan has Juan Leyva at the helm.

SELECTIONS: 10-1-3-7

NINTH RACE:

7 STACIE'S SMILE, a daughter of Lemon Drop Kid, makes her first start since showing promise in her career turf debut at Churchill. Red-hot trainer Ken McPeck has Julien Leparoux named on this half of his uncoupled entry, while Kent Desormeaux guides **10 TRIQUETA**. The daughter of Yankee Victor, beaten only a half-length in her 1-mile career turf debut at Churchill, should have no problem handling the additional 16th of a mile. **3 PROVEN RIGHT** makes her first start since finishing a troubled sixth (steadied first turn) in a maiden special test at Saratoga, which was won by Dream Empress, who won the Grade 1 Alcibiades in her next start. **6 DEPUTY EMPRESS** should move forward after a promising turf debut at Aqueduct in which she recovered from a slow start to finish fourth - beaten 2 ½ lengths - vs. similar at Aqueduct.

SELECTIONS: 7-10-3-6

MINEBENDER BEST BET: RACE 6 - 10 STOMP

LONG SHOT: RACE 7 - 11 DUKINFIELD

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