

## GULFSTREAM ANALYSIS

By BYRON KING



**BEST BET: Itchy Toes (4th race)**

**First Race: 1. Cape Romain 2. Oistins Bay 3. Kiernan's Legacy**

CAPE ROMAIN is returned on short rest for a skilled trainer in Ian Wilkes, and should exhibit vast improvement off a sixth-place finish for \$20,000 here Jan. 22. This \$10,000 N3L race suits him much better. OISTINS BAY won a \$20,000 N2L claimer here via DQ, earning a good Beyer. He continues to move down the claiming ranks - no doubt in part because he has made just 7 starts early into his 5-year-old year. KIERNAN'S LEGACY dueled for the lead in a similar race here Jan. 10 before yielding late to be second to the favorite. A repeat of that performance makes him a major player.

**Second Race: 1. Access Code 2. A. J. Melini 3. Barley Sugar**

ACCESS CODE faces tougher open \$10,000 claimers after romping vs. \$10,000 N3L stock, but stars for winning connections and is fond of the mile distance. 8-year-old A. J. MELINI is cut in half from \$20,000 to \$10,000 after a fourth here Jan. 10. He won easily the last time he raced for \$10,000 at Calder. BARLEY SUGAR rallied for third in a longer race Jan. 8, and has winning connections of trainer Peter Walder and John Velazquez in his corner. His 64-3-5-10 career mark indicates he is prone to minor awards, though.

**Third Race: 1. Plenty of Green 2. R Little Nugget 3. Yuki's Ridge**

PLENTY OF GREEN is dropped sharply in class after showing speed and fading following a slow break at the maiden \$40,000 level. Having made just two starts, he is lightly raced and eligible to improve. R LITTLE NUGGET starts for different connections after finishing a close third as the even money favorite in his debut at the maiden \$16,000 level at Calder Dec. 8. Unraced since, YUKI'S RIDGE finished a distant second after setting a slow pace when matched against similar maiden \$15,000 runners here Jan. 14. Has the speed and form to suggest he can be a factor.

**Fourth Race: 1. Itchy Toes 2. Irish Gypsy Rose 3. Casupa**

ITCHY TOES is dropped from \$10,000 to \$6,250 by Catalano and Calabrese after showing speed and fading to seventh here Jan. 21. Much better expected in his second start following a two-month layoff. IRISH GYPSY ROSE has slowly rounded into form in recent starts, capped by a third here Jan. 8. A winner of four of 14 starts, she looms an off-the-pace threat. CASUPA outperformed expectations to finish sixth against starter \$10,000 runners Jan. 17 on turf and is now returned to race for \$6,250 on dirt. She was second under similar conditions Dec. 31 at Calder.

**Fifth Race: 1. Dazzler 2. O Wicked One 3. Echoes Resounding**

DAZZLER hasn't exactly dazzled in her four-race career, but she has been second in two of her last three in low-end maiden claimers. She has the benefit of a good race this meet and worked a maintenance half-mile here Jan. 18. O WICKED ONE is dropped sharply in class and moved from turf to dirt. She ran fourth on dirt in her debut at Calder in October, suggesting she can handle the surface switch. ECHOES RESOUNDING also drops in class after a couple of flat performances against richer maiden claimers in dirt sprints. Her better races have come on Polytrack, not dirt.

**Sixth Race: 1. Power Express 2. Secret Tracker 3. Zavabelle**

POWER EXPRESS faded to third after a making a bold bid to take a narrow lead in a \$25,000 race Jan. 9. Drop to \$16,000 level should result in a victory. SECRET TRACKER exits the same race as the top choice, having run fifth, five lengths behind POWER EXPRESS. That was her first race in a couple months, a race that should move her up. ZAVABELLE owns so-so Beyers and has been out of action since November, but has made all but one of her seven starts in non-claiming events, though often at easier tracks like Mountaineer and Hoosier Park.

**Seventh Race: 1. Slambino 2. Furthest Land 3. Twilight Meteor**

SLAMBINO ran a close seventh against similar following a short layoff Jan. 8 and looks capable of moving up in his second start off a layoff. His closing style suits this course and he proved his class last year with a couple stakes placings, including when beaten a nose by eventual G3 Discovery winner Wishful Tomcat in the Johns Gold Stakes. FURTHEST LAND has won two in a row off the claim by trainer Mike Maker and Ken and Sarah Ramsey. It's a big step up in class to go from a N2X into a N3X/optional claimer, though - as noted by all the horses in here with stakes experience. That includes two-time stakes winner TWILIGHT METEOR, who most recently was third in the Grade 3 Fort Marcy behind Silver Tree. He has not raced since April, however.

**Eighth Race: 1. Elusive Heat 2. Fools in Love 3. Devil by Design**

ELUSIVE HEAT, a close second in the Grade 3 Old Hat Jan. 4, is the obvious class of this first-level allowance. Tough to stop at a short price. FOOLS IN LOVE has hit the board in three stakes, though she has not run figures anywhere in the same league as those of the top choice. DEVIL BY DESIGN showed promise in two starts in Kentucky last fall when racing on Polytrack and turf. She has trained well at Palm Meadows and drawn outside, should be able to avoid dirt kickback and run to her potential.

**Ninth Race: 1. La Mousse 2. Kristi With a K 3. Venetian Causeway**

LA MOUSSE, fifth as the favorite earlier this meet, fell further off the pace than accustomed in that race and appears capable of better. Her grass starts in Kentucky last fall were very good. KRISTI WITH A K finished in front of the top choice when second Jan. 4, but figures to get pounded off a troubled trip that included a slow break and traffic difficulties. VENETIAN CAUSEWAY ran a close seventh in the Oct. 13 Pebbles, a strong turf stake, and should appreciate the drop into a first-level allowance. Proven fresh, having won off a layoff in September at Belmont.