

GULFSTREAM ANALYSIS

By MIKE WELSCH



BEST BET: Stirrup Excitement (6th race)

First Race: 1. Kellys Rx 2. Early Release 3. Borra Mis Huellas

KELLYS RX and EARLY RELEASE may vie for the major prize in the opener. Former lost best chance when off slow in his last. Drops below level of recent claim but put two pretty good races back to back at the end of '08 including sharp try behind Forbidden Colony and Max's Beau under a \$10K tag on 12/13. Repeat of either effort could make him good enough to handle these. EARLY RELEASE a little tough to figure. Toss last on the grass. Stepped up with huge effort under a \$14K tag following big CRC finale when defeating win machine Louis Le Grand for a nickle and like the preferred choice a repeat of either of those makes him a tough cookie as well. BORRA MIS HUELLAS winless in the U.S. after being dominant in his native South America but fairly consistent with this kind. Perhaps capable of running on late for a minor award.

Second Race: 1. Black Russian 2. Tadisha 3. Serenity Girl

BLACK RUSSIAN comes off a sharp 3yo bow when chasing home only odds on speedster Pink Gloss under first level allowance conditions and not meeting that kind on drop into starter allowance ranks. May have to outkick TADISHA who already owns a win over the track and a young filly continuing to improve with every start. SERENITY GIRL beat slightly softer starter foes in her 2yo finale and perhaps the controlling speed if away running from the rail in a relatively paceless affair. Might get brave if she can relax on the front end.

Third Race: 1. Bold Vindication 2. Schleprock 3. Mellow Johnny

BOLD VINDICATION drops to weakest level yet for return to the turf. Showed enough against MSW opposition over Belmont sod in September to earn top billing with this kind despite tough starting slot. SCHLEPROCK another returning to the lawn where he ran with a modicum of success at 2. Kin to \$517K grass winner Aly's Alley. MELLOW JOHNNY adds blinkers, drops to weakest level yet and perhaps the one to catch if showing improved speed with the shades on.

Fourth Race: 1. Thenputitback 2. Miss Catrina 3. Babylonian

THENPUTITBACK back to the main after getting hung wide, holding in gamely in her turf bow 13 days earlier. Keeping a busy schedule of late, this being her third start of the meet, but seems to be holding form well enough to take the measure of this relatively weak lot with another good performance. MISS CATRINA in dangerous hands off the claim after earning diploma in her 3yo finale. Wouldn't have to improve much to take another. BABYLONIAN has held own with better but those races all on synthetics at Woodbine. Remains a question mark at what figures to be a short price trying conventional dirt for the first time today.

Fifth Race: 1. Grand Cash 2. Cheeks Malone 3. Cat 'n Fiddle

GRAND CASH hard to look past even at the short price after rallying to beat better in each of his last two. Should get sufficient pace to run at once again. CHEEKS MALONE changes barns, adds blinkers for her 3yo bow. No match for preferred choice in their previous meeting but an improving sort who could be capable of springing the upset if moving forward with the equipment change. CAT 'N FIDDLE had little chance stepping up to MSW level in his local bow after closing out 2-year-old season with big effort on the grass behind next out N1X runnerup Cape Royale. Dangerous if he sneaks in off the AE list.

Sixth Race: 1. Stirrup Excitement 2. Proper Causeway 3. Cruzatte

STIRRUP EXCITEMENT, the day's best, takes sharp plunge in class for high percentage winning barn. Shows three local works in preparation for his return and capable of rating off what figures to be a hotly contested pace scenario. Should be up in plenty of time with these. PROPER CAUSEWAY better on synthetics and grass but did show enough over the main at Mountaineer to merit much respect back against conditioned claimy types. Another with the right running style to fit the profile of this event. CRUZATTE turned in a nice effort behind 9-5 Access Code under similar conditions in his local bow but must overcome tough inside post.

Seventh Race: 1. Plenty Coups 2. On Fire 3. Solitaire

PLENTY COUPS has shown a good deal of promise in both previous turf outings, winning his maiden impressively in N.J. before getting less than the best of trips from tough post three weeks later at Aqueduct. Training lights out for his return and looks like the controlling speed if he leaves running. Hard to catch if able to set up shop on the front end ala graduation day. ON FIRE knocking at the door at this level but a late running sort who always takes the worst of it in these big fields. Needs help up front and a little cleaner run than on opening day when forced to fan extremely wide with his bid into the stretch. SOLITAIRE an improving sort who has held own with stakes competition and exiting a well graded maiden win at Belmont in his 3yo finale. Been away more than three months but training forwardly for his return at PM.

Eighth Race: 1. Bold Start 2. Gold Trippi 3. Talent Search

BOLD START gets tepid nod in a very competitive and classy main event. Tossing disappointing try over quirky Tampa strip. Back to one of his favorite tracks and stretching to a distance at which he's been perfect to date. Should trip out nicely behind the speed of TALENT SEARCH and Knights Cross. GOLD TRIPPI another who has run well locally in the past and dropping to a bit softer spot after taking on some fast ones in pair of stakes to close out '08 campaign. Another who would benefit from sharp pace scenario. Talent Search has held his own with the big boys but with only a single start under his belt since Nov. of '07. Yet to win at the trip. Perhaps vulnerable at a short price.

Ninth Race: 1. Strike Again 2. Whata Tough Knight 3. Riboletto

Lots of question marks in the finale. Looking at the new faces and beginning with STRIKE AGAIN who is a half to Euphony, a winner of two of his three starts on grass. Barn can have one ready off the bench. Sent out Candle Maker to impressive debut win here on over same course in Friday finale and like the fact Desormeaux signs on. WHATA TOUGH KNIGHT by Alphabet Soup out of a mare who won five times on grass. Worked a bullet for this over Calder main. Exits another barn demanding considerable respect at this time. RIBOLETTO a \$1 million yearling purchase by Unbridled's Song out of a G1 winning mare although she won just once in six starts on turf. Works ordinary on the surface but must respect the breeding enough to merit some attention in this extremely wide open affair.