



RACE BY RACE SELECTIONS

by Ron Nicoletti

Saturday, December 28, 2019

RACE 1:

8 KING OF CATS has his claiming tag cut in half after dueling for the lead and fading to finish 4th vs \$25,000 maidens. Trainer Bobby Dibona has Tyler Gaffalione named to ride. **2 MOUNTAIN TREE** is stretching out to 6 ½ furlongs after rallying to finish 2nd when facing similar quality going three-quarters of a mile. Trainer Antonio Sano has Irad Ortiz Jr in the irons.

6 BACKCHATTER plunges to the \$12,500 level after failing to show much in a fruitful state-bred special weight sprint won by next-out Buffalo Man Stakes winner Shivaree.

SELECTIONS: 8-2-6

RACE 2:

5 SALSA'S RETURN is turning back to a 1-turn mile after stalking the pace and finishing 3rd in the mile and a sixteenth Claiming Crown Iron Horse. Trainer Jorge Navarro has Emisael Jaramillo named to ride.

7 DIZZY GILLESPIE, an 8-time winner at the distance, turns back after failing to get untracked when facing tougher in the 8 ½-furlong Iron Horse. **4 QUENANE** is stepping up to the next level after shaking off early trouble to defeat \$10,000 starter optional claimers at the distance.

SELECTIONS: 5-7-4

RACE 3:

7 IZZY MONEY moved to the Jorge Navarro barn via the claim, and drops to the \$16,000 level, after stalking the pace and flattening out when finishing 3rd vs \$20,000 maidens going 6 furlongs at GP West.

5 CHARGE ACCOUNT drops, and stretches out to 6 ½ furlongs, after rallying late to finish 4th behind Izzy Money when they hooked up going 6 furlongs across town. **3 LA TRES JOLIE** is another getting some class relief after failing to show much vs \$25,000 claimers going a mile here last out. Trainer Antonio Sano has Edgard Zayas named to ride.

SELECTIONS: 7-5-3

RACE 4: THE JANUS

2 EXTRAVAGANT KID, 2nd in the race last year when stalking the pace, should find a better setup this year behind the abundance of speed in the field. Trainer Brendan Walsh has Tyler Gaffalione atop the Grade 1 stakes-placed 6-year-old. **7 PAY ANY PRICE** leaves little doubt as to what his running tactics will be when he makes his first start since using his speed to win an overnight stake here on May 27. The 9-year-old is working well for the return. **4 VISION PERFECT**, the defending champ in the Janus, is hoping to get back on track for trainer Jason Servis after back-to-back Grade 3 clunkers on the Parx turf; Paco Lopez rides.

SELECTIONS: 2-7-4

RACE 5:

9 NEW DAY DAWNING is debuting locally on the main track after showing speed and finishing 2nd when going a mile and a sixteenth on the Keeneland turf. Trainer Rodolphe Brisset has Irad handling the grass-to-dirt move. **1 FANCIFIED** is stretching out to a mile after ending her 2-race campaign at Churchill with a solid 3-place finish, from a tough outside post (12), going 6 furlongs vs maiden special weight competition. Trainer Ken McPeck has Julien Leparoux handling the added distance. **3 TOUCH OF NIRVANA**, bred to respond favorably to the distance, the daughter of Tapiture stretches out to a mile after getting and surrendering a late lead when finishing 3rd going 5 ½ furlongs. Red-hot trainer Ralph Nicks has Emisael Jaramillo handling the stretchout.

SELECTIONS: 9-1-3

RACE 6: THE ABUNDANTIA

4 GIRLS KNOW BEST, the defending champ in the Abundantia, is turning back to five-eighths of a mile after showing speed and fading late in back-to-back Grade 3 turf sprints going 5 ½ furlongs. Trainer Eddie Kenneally has Jose Ortiz atop the swift daughter of Caleb's Posse.

10 ESCAPADE, a perfect 2-for-2 sprinting on the turf here, returns after tracking the pace and finishing 6th behind Girls Know Best in the 5 ½-furlong G3 SK Maddy at Santa Anita; John Velazquez handles the rematch. **1 TRAVIEZA** has speed and the rail, is trained by Jason Servis, and will be ridden by Irad Ortiz Jr. Need we say more?

SELECTIONS: 4-10-1

RACE 7: THE TROPICAL PARK OAKS

7 BALON ROSE, a \$1,600,000 million daughter of War Front, is stepping up to face winners after using her speed -in hand - to break her maiden going a mile on the Aqueduct turf. Trainer Chad Brown has Irad Ortiz Jr named on the regally bred sophomore.

4 OUR BAY B RUTH will face straight 3-year-olds after defeating older horses is her consistent 2019 campaign in Chicago and Kentucky (6-3-1-1). Trainer Eddie Kenneally has Tyler Gaffalione in the irons.

5 DEVANT (FR), a Group 3 winner in France, is stretching out to a mile and a sixteenth after the promising North American debut in which she rallied to finish 3rd going a mile vs \$62,500 allowance optional claimers on 'good' Churchill turf.

SELECTIONS: 7-4-5

RACE 8:

9 FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT, an \$850,000 son of Uncle Mo, is debuting locally after dueling for the lead – on a sealed sloppy track – and finishing 3rd going a mile at Churchill. Trainer Dale Romans has Luis Saez at the controls. **6 BASIE** will turn back to a 1-turn mile on the main track, and wear blinkers, after failing to mount a rally when trying special weight foes going a mile and a sixteenth on the Aqueduct turf. Trainer Chad Brown, over 25% with both the turf-to-dirt, and first-time blinker angles, has Jose Ortiz named to ride.

10 GIMME SOME MO is a \$400,000 son of Uncle Mo debuting for trainer Todd Pletcher with Lasix, and John Velazquez named to ride. The concern is the tough outside starting slot (Post 10).

SELECTIONS: 9-6-10

RACE 9: THE TOPICAL PARK DERBY

14 A THREAD OF BLUE, a perfect 3 for 3 on the Gulfstream turf, which includes victories in the Dania Beach, and the Grade 3 Palm Beach, is turning back to a mile and a sixteenth after setting the pace and getting nailed late when 2nd in the 9-furlong Grade 2 Hill Prince at Belmont. Trainer Kiaran McLaughlin has Luis Saez handling the outside post.

6 TEMPLE is making his local return for trainer Mike Maker after dueling throughout and holding sway to win the \$150,000 Gio Ponti at Aqueduct. Irad rides the winner of 3 of 4 races on the local turf. **7 SCRAPS** is stepping up the competition, and will try to parlay both his current form, and fondness for the local terrain, into an upset victory. Trainer Stanley Gold has Jairo Rendon in the saddle.

SELECTIONS: 14-6-7

RACE 10: THE VIA BORGHESE

5 RAINING LEMONS is stretching out to a mile and three-sixteenths after rallying 5-wide to finish 2nd in front of logical choice Chipolata going a mile and a sixteenth on the Aqueduct turf. Trainer Michael Matz has Tyler atop the upset special.

2 PIVOTAL CONNECTION (GB) is turning back a mile & three-sixteenths after fighting on gamely to finish 4th – beaten three-quarters of a length – in the 11-furlong Grade 3 Long Island last out. Trainer Bill Mott has Edgard Zayas named to ride. **1 CHIPOLATA (FR)**, a Grade 1 stakes-placed 4-year-old, is stretching out after returning from a freshening to finish a screw-tightening 3rd in a \$100,000 optional claimer contested at a mile and a sixteenth. It's Christophe and Irad!

SELECTIONS: 5-2-1

RACE 11: THE H. ALLEN JERKENS

3 AMERICAN TATTOO (ARG) is debuting on the turf at 2 miles after showing a fondness for running long when finishing a well-meant 3rd on the dirt in the mile & three-quarter Grade 2 Marathon at Santa Anita. Trainer Todd Pletcher has Jose Ortiz handling the grass debut. **6 SALUTE THE COLONEL**, the local distance specialist, will try 2 miles after a solid summer campaign in which he won both the 12-furlong R H Lee, and the Home of the Brave, and followed that with a score in the mile & three-sixteenth Copingaway. Trainer Joe Orseno has strong finisher Luis Saez at the helm. **7 CAROM** is heading to uncharted territory when he tries 16 furlongs after the victory in a 9-furlong optional claimer. Trainer Mike Maker has Irad at the controls.

SELECTIONS: 3-6-7

BEST BET: RACE 9 – 14 A THREAD OF BLUE

LONGSHOT: RACE 10 – 5 RAINING LEMONS