



RACE BY RACE SELECTIONS

by Ron Nicoletti

Thursday, February 27, 2020

RACE 1:

8 RED MULE is dropping to the \$16,000 level after returning from the layoff for trainer Jorge Navarro and finishing a sightseeing 5th vs \$40,000 maidens at the distance; Emisael Jaramillo rides.

7 SWEET RIDE is making his first start since showing speed and weakening when finishing 6th vs \$40,000 maidens going 6 furlongs on the Aqueduct turf. Trainer Jorge Duarte Jr, 27% with the 61-180 days layoff, has apprentice Cristian Torres named to ride. **4 NOTHIN BUT NET** was solid in defeat when he rallied to finish 2nd – at 26-1 – in his career turf debut at this level and distance.

SELECTIONS: 8-7-4

RACE 2:

7 BIBIANA is dropping to the \$50,000 level, and stretching out to three-quarters of a mile, in the first race since finishing a 5-wide 4th in a 5-furlong maiden special weight sprint moved from turf to the main track. Trainer Saffie Joseph Jr is 33% with this type of layoff, and over 25% with similar class drops.

6 FANCIFIED is turning back to this distance after responding to the addition of blinkers with a 2nd place finish vs this caliber of competition going 6 ½ furlongs. Trainer Ken McPeek has Julien Leparoux named to ride. **8 PANAREA** is dropping into the maiden claiming ranks after following a 3rd place finish behind classy Tonalist Shape and Bibiana in her career debut with a poor showing vs special weight runners at the distance. Trainer Antonio Sano has Edgard Zayas named to ride.

SELECTIONS: 6-7-8

RACE 3:

2 SOGLIO, a multiple graded stakes placed performer on the local turf, albeit at distances from 12 furlongs to 2 miles, drops to the \$16,000 level, and turns back to a mile and a sixteenth, in his first race back from an 8-month layoff.

Trainer Mike Maker has Tyler Gaffalione handling the suspicious dropdown. **1 COWBOY CULTURE** is dropping to this level after rallying to finish 10th – but beaten only 2 lengths – vs \$40,000 claimers at the distance. Trainer Jorge Navarro, who claimed him 2 starts back, has Edgard Zayas handling the inside post. **4 FACE OF VICTORY** is another dropping into a competitive situation in the first start since prompting the pace and weakening late to finish 6th vs a solid group of \$25,000 starter optional claimers going a mile. His speed must be respected in this wide-open head scratcher.

SELECTIONS: 2-1-4

RACE 4:

2 UNSHAKEN, a half-brother to Grade 1 stakes-placed Penwith, now listed as a gelding, makes his first start since finishing a troubled 4th in his maiden special weight debut going 6 furlongs at Keeneland last April. Trainer Kieran McLaughlin has John Velazquez atop the son of Tapit.

6 QUICK STEP ED, who showed tons of promise here last year, makes his 4-year-old debut the first start since finishing 2nd – beaten a neck as the 3-to-5 favorite – going a mile here last May. Trainer John Vinson has Tyler Gaffalione atop the son of Two Step Salsa. **1 COSTAL DEFENSE** is an \$800,000 son of Curlin, and a half-brother to a pair of Grade 1 winners, is debuting for trainer Dale Romans with Lasix, and Rajiv Maragh named to handle the always interesting inside post.

SELECTIONS: 2-6-1

RACE 5:

3 AZNAVOUR is dropping to the \$16,000 level, and debuting on the turf, after getting bumped hard at the start when finishing 4th in a \$25,000 maiden sprint moved from the grass to the main track.

8 NICE ADVENTURE, who finished 2nd in front of Aznavour in that rained out sprint during January, drops after showing some early interest and fading vs state-bred special weight competition going 6 furlongs on the dirt.

4 BUSINESSINDUBAI is dropping to this level, and turning back to five-eighths of a mile, after prompting the pace and tiring to finish 7th and last vs \$25,000 maidens going 7 ½ furlongs on the turf.

SELECTIONS: 3-8-4

RACE 6:

4 SHANGHAISWEETHEART is stepping up to the next level after drawing clear to defeat \$6,250 '2-lifetime' claimers at this 1-mile distance. Trainer Victor Barboza Jr has Cristian Torres named to ride, as Tyler Gaffalione moves to **2 STRONGER KAT**. The latter stretches out to a mile for the first time after finishing a closing 4th vs this level of competition going 6 furlongs. **3 A SONG FOR SUE** is hoping to find a little more firepower for the stretch drive after rallying in the slop to finish 2nd – beaten a length at 48-1 – at this level and distance last out.

SELECTIONS: 4-2-3

RACE 7:

5 DIRECT APPROACH is cutting back to his best distance (4-1-1-1) after rallying to come within a head of defeating \$16,000 '2-lifetime' claimers going a mile and a sixteenth on a 'good' turf.

10 UNCLE CURLY moved to the Larry Bates barn via the claim, and hopes to end up in the winner's circle, after crossing the wire first before being disqualified and placed 3rd for swerving out in the stretch vs similar quality last out. The new connections tab Paco Lopez to ride.

6 HARD COUNT moved to the Jorge Navarro barn via the claim after drawing clear to defeat \$20,000 maidens – as the odds-on choice - by 5 widening lengths; Emisael Jaramillo rides.

SELECTIONS: 5-10-6

RACE 8:

3 BALANDEEN, stakes-placed at this distance last year, debuts locally for trainer Scott Becker after returning from a layoff at Hawthorne and finishing a strong 3rd behind next-out stakes winner Dugout in a \$50,000 optional claimer at the distance. The 6-year-old has been firing bullets over the track in preparation for this assignment.

8 CAJUN FIRECRACKER is back locally in the first start since shipping up to Tampa and finishing 2nd to Jackson in a 7-furlong overnight stake, the latter coming back to win the Grade 3 World of Trouble Sprint Stakes here on Saturday. Trainer Saffie Joseph Jr has Tyler named to ride.

5 STONE HANDS is turning back to 6 furlongs after stalking the pace and finishing 3rd – beaten a length – vs \$50,000 claimers going seven-eighths of a mile. Trainer Liz Dobles has Victor Lebron named to ride.

SELECTIONS: 3-8-5

RACE 9:

9 SASSY JUSTICE is stepping up the competition after cruising through her claiming conditions on the turf in winning fashion. Trainer Kent Sweezey has Javier Castellano trying to notch her 4th consecutive local turf victory. **7 HOTTY TODDY** is stepping up to the next level after rallying to defeat \$14,000 claimers at the distance with a perfectly timed ride by Paco Lopez, who goes for 2 in a row. **6 YAKO** is stepping up to face open claimers after splitting horses and getting up to defeat \$16,000 '3-lifetime' claimers at the distance. Trainer Antonio Sano sweetens the deal with John Velazquez in the irons.

SELECTIONS: 9-7-6

RACE 10:

4 SWEET GIANT has been knocking on the door at this level and distance, and merits the call after finishing 2nd last out. Trainer Juan Avila has Edgard Zayas in the saddle. **10 WAR ACT** will depart from the outside after responding to the addition of blinkers with a narrow defeat at this level 2 starts back, and a 3rd place finish behind Sweet Giant last out. Trainer Antonio Cioffi has Jairo Rendon handling the rematch. **5 BULKCARRIER** is making his local return the first start since returning from a 15-month layoff at Tampa and finishing 2nd vs \$10,000 maidens going 5 ½ furlongs.

SELECTIONS: 4-10-5

BEST BET: RACE 9 – 9 SASSY JUSTICE

LONGSHOT: RACE 7 – 5 DIRECT APPROACH