



RACE BY RACE ANALYSIS

BY RON NICOLETTI



Sunday, March 19, 2023

RACE 1:

2 ROOT CAUSE, a half to \$700,000 earner Vertical Oak, is stretching out to nine furlongs in the first start since finishing second in her mile and a sixteenth debut at Saratoga. Chad Brown, 32% with the longer than 180 days layoff, adds Lasix and Irad Ortiz Jr to the equation. **4 SETTING STORM** is a daughter of Tonalist debuting for Christophe Clement with Lasix and a steady work tab showing on the Payson Park turf course. Tyler Gaffalione rides.

6 WHAT'S GOOD is stepping up the competition after setting the pace and finishing second – beaten a neck – vs \$50,000 maiden optional claimers going a mile and a sixteenth. Kent Sweezey will have Edgar Perez playing catch me if you can.

SELECTIONS: 2-4-6

RACE 2:

2 UPSTREET drops to the \$12,500 level on the main track after showing early interest and fading vs \$25,000 maidens going a mile and a sixteenth on the turf. David Fawkes is 19% with the turf to dirt angle.

5 MUTOLA is plunging to the \$12,500 level with Lasix added after failing to show much in her maiden special weight debut going a mile in January. Roderick Rodriguez has apprentice Angel Morales handling the major class relief. **8 DIXIE GROOVE** drops and returns to the main track after rallying to finish third vs \$16,000 maidens going a mile and 70 yards on the Tapeta.

SELECTIONS: 2-5-8

RACE 3:

5 NEOPHYTE moves to the red-hot Marty Drexler barn via the claim after rallying seven-wide to finish second vs this level of competition going five furlongs. Sonny Leon rides.

3 CHEERS FOR KITTEN has his claiming tag sliced in half after stepping up off the debut \$12,500 maiden victory with a chase-and-fade outing vs \$20,000 two lifetime claimers going a mile and 70 yards on the Tapeta. Saffie Joseph Jr has Edgard Zayas managing the combo dropdown/turnback.

9 HARRY'S ONTHEBEACH should be primed and ready to offer more after returning from the two-month freshening to finish a late closing third vs similar going five furlongs on the Tapeta. Victor Barboza Jr has Irad Ortiz Jr handling the stretchout to 5 ½ furlongs.

SELECTIONS: 5-3-9

RACE 4:

3 ALWAYS ROYAL will face winners on the Tapeta after responding to the addition of blinkers with a driving score vs \$35,000 maidens going a mile and a sixteenth on the turf. Bob Hess Jr, 19% with the surface switch, has Tyler Gaffalione going for two in a row. **5 MAJOR PRYCE**, who broke her maiden on the Tapeta by open lengths, is going back to the all-weather surface after showing improved speed vs \$35,000 optional claimers going a mile on the turf last out. Antonio Sano has Jose Ortiz overseeing the surface switch. **9 ZOSTEROP** is stepping up the competition after returning from the layoff to defeat \$16,000 maidens going a mile and 70 yards on the Tapeta. Ron Spatz has apprentice Angel Morales at the controls again.

SELECTIONS: 3-5-9

RACE 5:

6 DECISIVE PRIDE, now in the Ruben Sierra barn, the son of Decisive Moment, who is a half-brother to Warrior's Pride, who won both the Bob Umphrey and Texas Glitter Stakes sprinting on the GP turf, debuts on the grass with Junior Alvarado named to ride. Interesting longshot. **1 LAWFUL** goes from the outside (Post 10) to the rail after having to close six-wide when finishing fourth at this level and distance. Cherie DeVaux adds blinkers and Tyler Gaffalione for this assignment. **5 PORTOFINO** wheels back after responding to the surface switch with a game second-place finish going five furlongs on the turf. Joe Orseno has Jose Ortiz atop the one to beat.

4 MONET NEVER (IRE) was solid during his debut when disputing the pace throughout before weakening to finish fifth behind Portofino. Phil Antonacci has Luis Saez rationing the gelding's speed.

SELECTIONS: 6-1-5-4

**RACE 6:**

2 SHORT CIRCUIT, who was sharp defeating \$10,000 claimers on the Tapeta two starts back, is returning to the all-weather surface after stepping up off the claim by Jack Abrams and finishing a prompt-the-pace-and-fade sixth vs \$16,000 claimers going a mile on the turf. Leonel Reyes rides.

9 MACHISIMA is turning back slightly after rallying to finish second – beaten a nose – vs this level of competition going a mile and a sixteenth on the Tapeta. Mike DePaulo has apprentice Angel Morales in the saddle again. **11 KHOSEA**, fourth behind Short Circuit two starts back, and fourth behind Machisima last out, will try to reverse those outcomes with an outside stalking trip. Bobby Dibona has Sonny Leon at the controls.

SELECTIONS: 2-9-11

RACE 7:

6 GRAPE NUTS WARRIOR moves to the Mike Maker barn via the claim and adds blinkers, after rallying to finish fourth vs this level of competition going a mile and a sixteenth on the turf last out. The barn, 22% with new claims, has Tyler Gaffalione named to ride. **8 INDY LYON**, a four-time turf winner, is going back to the grass after finishing fifth in a productive \$35,000 optional claimer on the Tapeta that produced impressive repeat winner Crothers and next-out winner Alley Oop Johnny. Shamir Maragh has Jose Ortiz overseeing the surface switch. **3 INVECTIVE** is stepping up the competition after showing major improvement with blinkers when he rallied to defeat \$20,000 two lifetime claimers going a mile on the turf. Jane Cibelli has Luis Saez named to ride.

SELECTIONS: 6-8-3

RACE 8:

7 BEST DEFENSE is dropping to the \$35,000 level after stepping up off the \$50,000 claim by Mike Maker to finish a set-the-pace-and-tire fifth vs \$50,000 starter optional claimers going 5 ½ furlongs on the Tapeta. Tyler Gaffalione rides.

9 D COLDEST moves to the Claudio Gonzalez barn via the claim after stalking the pace throughout and finishing second – beaten a neck vs \$35,000 claimers going 5 ½ furlongs on the Tapeta. Jose Morelos gets the riding assignment.

3 BOURBON THERAPY is turning back after stepping up off the \$16,000 claim to finish a rallying third behind D Coldest last out. Jose Garoffalo has Luis Saez managing the rematch.

SELECTIONS: 7-9-3

RACE 9:

6 HOPE IN HIM, an absolute monster sprinting on the Tapeta, proved he could turf at this level when he set the pace but had to steady late when finishing third – beaten a neck last out. Barry Croft has Jose Ortiz returning on the swift gelding. **1 HIGH FRONT** is making his four-year-old debut for Jonathan Thomas after the promising sophomore campaign in which he broke his maiden here at first asking by 6 ½ lengths and ended his season with a fourth-place finish behind superstar Big Invasion in the \$100,000 Paradise Creek. Joel Rosario rides.

7 BIZ BIZ BUZZ is wheeling back after rallying late to finish second in front of Hope in Him last out. Mike Trombetta reunites the gelding with Irad Ortiz Jr, who rode a heck of a race last out to get second.

SELECTIONS: 6-1-7

RACE 10:

11 MR. RHODIUM, listed as a gelding, is going back to the main track after finishing third vs \$50,000 maiden optional claimers going five furlongs on the Tapeta. Ed Plesa Jr adds second-time Lasix and Paco Lopez. **5 NIGHT RIDE** is certainly eligible to show more after shipping in from Presque Isle and finishing fourth in his first-ever trip on the dirt. Kevin Rice has Jose Ortiz returning on the son of Ride On Curlin. **2 INSTINCTUAL** moves to the Saffie Joseph Jr barn via the claim and is turning back to six furlongs after chasing the pace and fading vs this level of competition going a mile. The barn, 24% with new claims and 25% with the turnback move, has Edgard Zayas at the controls.

SELECTIONS: 11-5-2

BEST BET: RACE 9 – 6 HOPE IN HIM

LONGSHOT: RACE 5 – 6 DECISIVE PRIDE