



FULL CARD SELECTIONS

CHURCHILL DOWNS

Saturday, September 5, 2020

SELECTIONS

(In Order of Preference)

RACE 1

#2 SEVEN TRUMPETS

Set for a peak performance making his 3rd start off a 5-month layoff. Showed big improvement last time out at Ellis switching back to the dirt and cutting back to a sprint. Ran a 'better than it looks' 5th while compromised by racing off the pace and wide throughout against a speed inside bias. He's yet to win in 4 starts going 7f, but he does have a close 2nd place finish in a Grade 1 stake at Saratoga in 2018. What Seven Trumpets has going for him is that 4 of his 5 career wins have come at Churchill Downs. With an alert start, look for jockey Talamo to hustle hard to get the front or at worse sit right off the pacesetter.

#4 MIDNIGHT SANDS

Kentucky bred 4-year old has spent his career running in England and at Meydon in Dubai. Today marks his first start in the US and first time racing on lasix following a trainer change to Brendan Walsh. Midnight Sands showed little in his first 3 starts on the turf. Once switched to the main track, he's won 5 races in a row with 1 second place finish. Has tactical speed which will help in this small field which does not feature much early speed. Shows several sharp workouts for his return from a 6 1/2 month layoff. Gets Gaffalione who has had a lot of success hooking up with Walsh.

#1 HOME BASE

Improving form in his last 2 starts returning from a 2-month freshening. Despite a narrow defeat when 2nd last time out at Ellis Park, it was a career best effort. Made multiple moves chasing fast fractions and the eventual winner. Stretches back out to 7f today, the distance of his last 2 wins. 4 of his 6 career victories have come at this distance. Must overcome a tricky inside post. It appears that Home Base does his best running from an outside slot. To win here, rider Joe Rocco would probably be wise to ease him outside for the stretch run.

RACE 2

#7 KADRI

Ran into an easy winner who simply freaked on the sealed muddy surface in his debut at Indiana Grand. Made multiple moves to finish 2nd breaking from a tough inside post facing 10-rivals. Today Kadri draws a better outside post and gets a dry surface which he should prefer. Expect new rider G. Saez to have him more forwardly placed from the start. Saez and trainer Larry Jones have had success together on the Kentucky circuit. Shows a sharp 5f workout 5-days ago at Churchill Downs.

#4 PROUD VETERAN

Switches back to the dirt which he's bred well to handle following a very good 4th in his turf debut over a yielding grass course. Made multiple moves chasing quick fractions from the start. Had major excuses in his debut on dirt when he was fractious in the gate, off slowly and raced wide a good part of the way before angling to the inside late. Gets a major upgrade in riders to Lanerie. Has been working steadily at Churchill Downs.

#5 IDOL

Switches back to the dirt which he's bred well to handle following a very good 4th in his turf debut over a yielding grass course. Made multiple moves chasing quick fractions from the start. Had major excuses in his debut on dirt when he was fractious in the gate, off slowly and raced wide a good part of the way before angling to the inside late. Gets a major upgrade in riders to Lanerie. Has been working steadily at Churchill Downs.

#1 THRILL RIDE

Returns from a 4-month layoff following a good 4th in his debut at Gulfstream. Broke slowly, quickly finding himself far back of the early leaders. Steadily made up ground to finish 4th, beaten 2 1/2 lengths at today's distance in a race which has produced 2-next out winners. Thrill Ride has been working well for this, but as the 5-2 morning-line favorite, he could prove vulnerable.

RACE 3

#2 FASTLY

Beaten favorite in his debut as the 8-5 favorite running a 'better than it looks' 3rd following a very tough trip. Stretched out to 1-mile over a sealed muddy track at Ellis Park Aug 2. Rushed up into a hard dueling until fading slowly in the stretch to finish 4th. Turns back to a 1-turn mile today and back on a dry surface he will likely prefer. Has been working steadily at Churchill since mid-June for high % winning trainer Bret Calhoun.

#7 DYNACHARGE

Returns today as a NEW GELDING following 2 sharp and vastly improved efforts returning from a 9-month layoff. Closed from another 'zip-code' when narrowly beaten June 5 over this course at today's distance in his return. Stepped up from a maiden claimer into a MSW July 11 finishing a good 4th after making several moves from off the pace. Has worked 4-times at Churchill since that race.

#6 PIT BOSS

With all 4 starts going a distance of ground, Pit Boss has the most experience of any of his 8-rivals at a route. Turns back to a 1-turn mile today following a good 3rd over a sealed muddy track at Ellis going 2-turns. Has good tactical speed returning to the track he has been training over since mid-June. Bullet 4f breeze on Aug 27 was the fastest of 64 at the distance.

RACE 4



THE WIZARD'S CRYSTAL BALL (BEST BET)

#5 ESSENTIAL QUALITY

Trainer Brad Cox sent out a very impressive juvenile debut winner on opening day at Churchill. Cox appears to have another one ready to get his picture taken on Derby Day facing what appears to be a weak MSW field. Essential Quality is owned and bred by the powerhouse breeders' Godolphin. Sired by top stallion Tapit and is from a strong dam line as well. Essential Quality is bred to get better with racing experience and distance. I have to believe that Cox has her fit enough and he's well intended today following a series of 12-listed workouts, with his last 7 at Churchill. The 4f breeze on July 21, best of 46, certainly caught my eye. Gets Bridgnohan aboard who wins at a huge 34 % hooking up with this Brad Cox.

#10 COPLEY

Switches to the dirt for his 2nd career start following a 5th place finish as the 2-1 favorite on turf in his 'key race' debut at Woodbine. The top 2 finishers both came back to win. The 3rd and 4th place finishers returned to run 2nd next time out. Compromised that day by a troubled start and a wide trip. Blinkers come off today and jockey Corrales jumps aboard, which is a huge rider switch from the jock that rode him in Canada. The Ward & Corrales trainer and rider tandem score at a monster 39 %. Copley has worked well on the dirt, so I'm expecting an improved performance this afternoon.

#11 RYE SENSE OF HUMOR

Has the advantage of a recent good effort at today's distance. \$180,000 yearling purchase finished 2nd in his debut at Ellis Park after being bumped at the start and racing wide throughout. Trainer Ian Wilkes does better winning with 2nd time starters than with his debut runners.

RACE 5



THE WIZARD'S CRYSTAL BALL (BEST BET)

#5 SPANISH KINGDOM

Following his maiden win March 21 at The Fair Grounds, the 'light bulb' went off in this 3-year old's head. Since switching back to the turf for his last 2 starts after a failed experiment on dirt, Spanish Kingdom has run 2 back-t-back career best races. Trainer Joe Sharp stretched him out to 1 1/8 miles on May 30 racing over the Churchill Downs turf course for the first time. Spanish Kingdom showed improved speed chasing up close before inhaling the front runner, drawing off to a convincing 3-length victory. The 2nd place finisher returned to run and in a \$100,000 stake. Sharp thought so much of that performance, that he boosted him in class into a Grade 3 stake at Keeneland. Despite finishing 5th, Spanish Kingdom was beaten only 1-length, after chasing wide throughout and out-running his 26-1 price. He's been given 55-days to recover from that effort. Drops in class, draws a much better post and is back on firm going. Shows 4 very sharp workouts in preparation for this entry-level Allowance race, the same condition he won 2 starts back. The reason he can run in this race is that it's also for horses who have never won 2 races lifetime. Even though Spanish Kingdom has won twice, he was disqualified from purse money, when he broke his maiden back in February.

#8 ON A SPREE

Cuts back in distance from 1 1/2 miles to 1 1/16 miles making his 2nd start for Mike Maker following a private purchase. Finished 3rd last time out at Gulfstream to a winner who returned to take down top prize in a \$50,000 stake next time out. On A Spree's prior 8 starts resulted in 4 wins and 4 seconds. Has very good tactical speed and is probably best at today's distance. Gets an upgrade in riders to Gaffalione for a very dangerous turf trainer.

#10 PARKLAND

Has shown huge improvement in his last 3 starts switching to the grass. Following 2 sharp 2nds, Parkland ran a career best race last time out at Ellis Park battling 'tooth and nail' to prevail over Jolting Joe who returned next time out to win a \$100,000 NY bred stake at Saratoga as a maiden. It's never easy to repeat following your maiden win, but this 4-year old has some quality and enough tactical speed to overcome his outside post with good rider Geroux aboard for the 1st time.

#7 ATTORNEY TIM

Exits a career best race finishing with flourish to finish 4th, beaten a quickly diminishing 1 1/2 lengths in the same condition and at today's distance Aug 9 at Ellis Park. Raced very wide on the far tun and through the stretch while being compromised by slow fractions. Bejarano is back aboard who rode Attorney Tim to his 2 best races.

RACE 6



THE WIZARD'S CRYSTAL BALL (BEST BET)

#3 COASTAL DEFENSE

Spent the winter and early spring down at Gulfstream and for some reason whether it was the track surface or the heat and humidity, Coastal Defense underachieved despite having some minor excuses in all 3 races. It was not until he shipped back to Kentucky for his last 2 starts following a 2-month freshening, that he finally began to live up to his \$800,000 yearling price. Only time will tell if Coastal Defense is even worth half that much, but a 2nd career win today for a \$100,000 purse would help. Broke his maiden in slop 2 starts back, but it was his neck defeat Aug 8 at Ellis that has the Wizard liking his chances to win at a price today. He was bumped at the break and then rushed up to stalk in perfect striking position. Coastal Defense poked his head in front at the top of the stretch, battling 'tooth and nail' to the wire only to just fall short. I love the cut back from 2-turns to 7 furlongs today. He had been training at Churchill since mid-June, but it's his last 2 workouts that have been very sharp. Trainer Dale Romans calls Louisville his home and he's always been dangerous scoring with price horses at this circuit.

#11 COWBOY DIPLOMACY

I find it very interesting that despite running a 'hole in the wind' and by far a career best race July 18 returning from a 15-month layoff, Cowboy Diplomacy returns today as a NEW GELDING. Ridden out to a 4 1/2 length win after forcing quick fractions, putting away the other speeds, and finishing up his final 1/8th in a fast :12 1/5. The 2nd place finisher returned to win next time out. Obviously it's very difficult to repeat your maiden win in Allowance company, especially stretching out in distance, but trainer Brad Cox wins a high % of races with this move. Cowboy Diplomacy has also run well twice at 1 11/6 miles, so it doesn't appear he will have any issues handling 7f today breaking from a good outside post.

#6 COOL BOBBY

Ships back to Churchill from Saratoga following a 'better than it looks' 2nd Aug 1 cutting back to today's 7f distance and back on a dry track. Beaten 2 1/2 lengths, but he would have been closer at the finish if he wasn't shuffled back on the turn losing valuable position and momentum. 2 horses who finished behind him both came back to win next time out. Scored 2 starts back in his only start at Churchill. Reunited with Bejarano today who was aboard in his Churchill Downs victory.

RACE 7

#5 TANK COMMANDER

With only 4 career starts, Tank Commander is one of the more lightly raced horses in the field, but clearly has plenty of upside. He's run 3-times on the dirt, with his lone defeat a rough trip 5th in his turf debut. Rallied from another 'zip code', circling a 10 horse field, in his maiden win going 7f first time out at Churchill. Beaten a head in a strong Allowance field stretching out to 1 1/8 miles in the slop last November in his final start in 2019. Tank Commander returned 7-months later, running a career best race June 18, scoring by 4 1/4 lengths, back at Churchill as the 5-2 favorite. In 3 starts here, he has a pair of wins and a head defeat stamping the 5-year old as a 'Horse for this Course'. He won with plenty left in the tank last out suggesting he should appreciate today's stretch out in distance. He's been given 79-days off to recover from his winning effort. Tank Commander has demonstrated he performs best fresh. With Joe Rocco Jr. back aboard, the son of War Front is a very 'live' long shot.

#9 AURELIUS MAXIMUS

It's always difficult to predict how a horse will return from a layoff following a career best race. This colt was last seen in early January at the Fair Grounds making his 1st start for Asmussen after being trained by Chad Brown in his first 4 starts. Aurelius Maximus drew off to a 2 3/4 length victory after a hard fought duel. His final time earned him a near 'triple digit Beyer speed figure'. If there's any trainer around who can get a horse to replicate a powerful performance off the bench, it's this Hall of Fame trainer. His workouts at Churchill indicate that he's ready to put forth another strong effort.

#10 BODEXPRESS

He's cross-entered in a Grade 2 stake on Friday where he's has zero chance to win, so I'm expecting he runs in this spot. Despite drawing post 10, Bodexpress is likely the 'one to catch' as he's the quickest of the speeds in here. His last 2 wins are back in the Fall of 2019 at Gulfstream Park West. One was at a 1-turn mile and the other going 1 mile 70 yards. In 5 subsequent starts, Bodexpress has been on or near the lead on comfortable fractions and has faltered each time. In his defense, all 5 races were in stakes, 4 graded. He faces softer opposition today which helps, but he's also likely to be over bet.

RACE 8



THE WIZARD'S CRYSTAL BALL (BEST BET)

#4 FIELD PASS

Ships back to Kentucky following a 7th place finish in a \$500,000 stake going 1 3/16 miles just 3-weeks ago. Despite being over-matched, Field Pass was only beaten 3-lengths after being bumped hard leaving the gate. Raced in traffic a good part of the way which also helped compromise a closer finish. Field Pass reeled off 4 wins in his 5 prior starts, with all 4 coming in stakes races, including a pair of Grade 3 victories. Saturday will mark the first time that he will be running in a Grade 2, but the Wizard feels he will be up to the task to take down top prize. What Field Pass has going for him most, is the race and pace set up. There's a ton of speed in the Gr. 2 American Turf. Field Pass has speed, but his preferred style of running is to rate a few lengths back of the leaders and attack on the far turn. These are the tactics which will be employed by Gaffalione, who won aboard him 3 starts back, and was on last time out. Field Pass has hit the board in all 3 turf races at Churchill, including a win. Today's distance of 1 1/16 miles suits him best. Trainer Mike Maker is deadly winning these types of turf route stakes.

#5 SMOOTH LIKE STRAIT

The 8-5 morning-line favorite, and clearly the horse to beat, ships back to Churchill following a decisive win in a Grade 3 stake at Del Mar returning from a 2 1/2 month layoff. Smooth Like Strait was stretching out to this distance for the first time that afternoon. His connections shipped into Churchill from the west coast to win a \$100,000 stake 2 starts back in his only start over this turf course defeating Field Pass who finished 3rd. In all 4 of his wins, Smooth Like Strait basically had the lead early on or soon after. Similar tactics are expected today but there could be plenty of company to occupy him. He will likely have to run hard all the way to fend of the other speeds. This pace scenario could take its toll on him in deep stretch and for that reason, he could prove vulnerable at a short price.

#8 FANCY LIQUOR

Uncoupled stable-mate of my top selection Field Pass, both trained by Mike Maker, has never been off the board in 5 career starts, 4 which have been run on the turf. He's run 3rd both times he faced off with Field Pass, but 2 starts back, the result was just a neck defeat in a Grade 3 stake at today's distance. Reunited this afternoon with Geroux, who has been aboard this colt 3-times. My main issue with Fancy Liquor is he's one of several in here who shows a preference for preferring the front end. Post 8 also doesn't help. The 'key' to his success in the American Turf is if Geroux can get Fancy Liquor to relax stalking a bit off the front runners, while not losing too much ground into the first turn, and on the backstretch.

#1 TAISHAN

He's the 'wild-card' at double digit odds in this Grade 2 stake. He's only 1 of 2 horses in this field who will be making his turf debut. I feel if Taishan can move up on the grass, he can be very dangerous. His sire Twirling Candy is a great turf producer. There is grass blood on his dam side as well. Benefit's by drawing the rail and has tactical speed to sit a good trip with new rider Leparoux aboard.

RACE 9

#5 DIGITAL

There are several reasons I feel that Digital can be very dangerous in the Pat Day Mile at double-digit odds. Following his maiden win sprinting in the mud last December, Digital stretched out to 2-turns for the first time on Jan 18, improving dramatically to finish 2nd in fast time. His connections stepped him way up in class into a Grade 2 stake 4-weeks later. Despite a 5th place finish, Digital ran well showing good speed throughout. He did not care for the slop in a \$200,000 stake at Oaklawn on April 11, but he rebounded with a narrow defeat to Echo Town back at Churchill on May 25. Digital faces off with that rival today, who returned to run 2nd, and then win in 2 straight Grade 1 stakes. Echo Town will be in the vicinity of 3-1 today whereas Digital will be closer to 15-1. Last time out Digital was sharpened in a sprint on the turf pointing for this spot back on dirt and stretching out to a 1-turn mile for the first time. Trainer Bret Calhoun wins a high % of races with both the turf-to-dirt and sprint-to-route move. His workouts at Churchill have been outstanding. Digital also gives me the impression that he will love the 1-turn mile.

#9 RUSHIE

With the exception of a 6th place finish sprinting in his debut last October, in 4 subsequent starts going a distance of ground, Rushie has hit the board each time, winning 2 races. He's run back-to-back 3rd place finishes in both the Gr. 1 Santa Anita Derby and Gr. 2 Blue Grass showing little punch in the final stages of each race. Last time out in the Blue Grass, both the winner Art Collector and 2nd place finisher Swiss Skydiver returned to win impressively next time out. Rushie will no doubt prefer the turn back in distance to 1-mile. Has tactical speed and draws the right post to sit a perfect stalking trip.

#2 ECHO TOWN

Even though Echo Town will be attempting to stretch out to 1-mile for the 1st time, his consistency, sharp form, versatility and his trainer Steve Asmussen, are all reasons he is a major player in the Pat Day Mile. He was very impressive upsetting the field at 7-1 in a Grade 1 stake at Saratoga August 1. Echo Town can be placed anywhere in the early going and he does have a nice closing kick.

#1 CEZANNE

It's nearly impossible to not consider any horse shipping in from the west coast by Bob Baffert for a big race. Cezanne certainly is worthy of serious consideration in the Pat Day Mile, but he gives me the impression that he will be over bet and is vulnerable breaking from the tricky rail post at this 1-turn mile. Cezanne has done little wrong in 3 career starts, stretching out in distance each time. He won his first 2 starts as the 1-9 and 1-5 favorite, but was not overly impressive in both races. Last time out, Cezanne tired slowly to finish 4th, after racing up close throughout at Del Mar. He gives me the impression that he will enjoy this 1-turn mile, but he will likely have to rally from further back than he's shown he can do.

#7 NO PAROLE

He's the dominant pacesetter in here and if he's able to relax early on and the main track is speed favoring, No Parole is capable of taking this field a long way at a generous price. He faltered badly in a Grade 1 stake August 1 as the 2-1 favorite, the race which Echo Town won. I must put a line through that race because his win in the Gr. 1 Woody Stevens in his prior start was excellent. No Parole returned to work a bullet 4f at Churchill for this stake on Aug 19 followed by a sharp 5f breeze 10-days ago.

RACE 10

#10 THERIDEOFALIFETIME

Has been installed the 7-5 morning-line favorite and deservedly so following 3 solid races including a strong 2nd in a Grade 2 stake at Saratoga on August 7. If this Grade 3 stake was run at 6f, he would be a standout. The only question this son of top stallion Candy Ride must answer is can he be as effective stretching out to a 1-turn mile for the first time? Therideofalifetime is certainly bred to handle the stretch out in distance. He draws a perfect outside post, has good tactical speed and a top rider in Geroux. Not one of his rivals in here has run as fast as he has, but a mile is a whole different ball game than running at 5 and 6 furlongs.

#8 MIDNIGHT BOURBON

Even though he exits a decisive maiden win going 1-mile at Ellis, today he will be going the same distance but around 1-turn not 2. He's only 1 of 2 horses in this stake who has run this far and he's done it twice. Last time out, top speed rider Corrales jumped about for the first time. He positioned Midnight Bourbon up close from the start before busting the race wide open with a strong move on the far turn. Draws a good outside post today for the always dangerous Steve Asmussen barn.

#2 SITTIN ON GO

Stretches out from 5f to 1-mile, but the manner in which he broke his maiden at Ellis Park suggests he should have no problem handling the stretch in distance. Even though his final time was not that fast, it was the manner in which he blew by his 7-rivals as if they were 'tied to a pole'. Sittin On Go also galloped out very strong past the wire suggesting 1-mile is well within his scope. Will be double-digit odds today with new rider Lanerie aboard. He's not to be dismissed in your wagers.

#4 ULTIMATE BADGER

Stable-mate of Sittin On Go, but both are separate betting interests with trainer Dale Romans conditioning both colts. Exits a very impressive debut win at Ellis Park going 5f in the mud. Like his mate, Ultimate Badger kicked away from his 7-rivals with ease and continued to gallop out strong past the wire suggesting a 1-turn mile is well within his grasp.

#5 DREAMER'S DISEASE

I find it interesting that trainer Diodoro has opted not to run him back on turf following an impressive front running victory breaking his maiden in his grass debut. He ran dead last in his debut sprinting on the dirt, but I'm willing to toss that race out after a slow start and a wide trip before being eased. He's worked very well on dirt and Diodoro wins at a huge 31 % going turf-to-dirt.

#7 PICO D'ORO

There's no reason not to include this improving colt who exits a career best and decisive maiden win stretching out to 7f at Ellis Park. Trainer Bill Morey wins a high % of races and today this colt will be getting a rider change to Castellano.

RACE 11

#4 NEWSPAPEROFRECORD

Looms the odds-on favorite and if able to replicate or even improve on her last 2 wins returning from an 11-month layoff, Newspaperofrecord will be awfully tough to run down. Following 3 straight blow-out front running victories to begin her career, she offered very little resistance in her next 2 starts, both 2nd place finishes at odds of 1-5. Newspaperofrecord ran last of 9 as the 8-5 favorite in there Gr. 1 Belmont Oaks stretching out to 1 1/4 miles to conclude her 3-year old campaign and then was sidelined. Trainer Chad Brown knew that if this talented 4-year old was going to regain her form that stamped her as a world class middle-distance turf horse, 1-mile was the distance that hits her right between the eyes. Newspaperofrecord exits a pair of decisive front running victories at 7f and 1-mile. Today she returns to Churchill at the distance which resulted in an 'eye opening' 6 3/4 length win in the 2018 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf. She's the main speed in this field, and if able to get a breather along the way, new rider Castellano should be able to ration out her speed to perfection helping notch her 6th win in 9 starts.

#3 JULIET FOXTROT

Set for a peak performance making her 3rd start off a layoff for trainer Brad Cox. Cuts back to 1-mile following a game 3rd, beaten just 1 1/4 lengths, to the top class Rushing Fall, who returned next time out to win a Grade 1 stake at Saratoga. Expect Gaffalione to place Juliet Foxtrot in perfect striking position from the start and make a well time move to attack the favorite approaching the stretch. Juliet Foxtrot has a win at Churchill as well as victory at 1-mile.

#2 DADY IS A LEGEND

I'm willing to put a line through her well beaten 9th place finish as the 7-5 favorite Aug 2 at Ellis Park. She was running over sift turf returning from an 8-month layoff. Daddy Is a Legend clearly disliked the footing and racing too close to the lead in the early going. She's back on a firm turf course and expect Geroux to return to rating tactics which she clearly prefers. An inside post will only help.

#1 SHE'SONTHEWARPATH

Has been a gem of consistency since switched to the turf and stretched out in distance. In 11 grass starts, she's won 6 races. Several of her wins have been in lesser stakes races. She will certainly have to run a career best race on Saturday to be a major danger, but it could certainly happen at huge odds. Drops significant weight for this Grade 2 stake and draws the rail which only helps going a 2-turn mile.

#6 BEAU RECALL

The main reason to include her as a contender is her love for this 1-mile distance. She's run 9-times at a mile, with 3 wins and 4 seconds. One of those victories came over this course and distance in a Grade 2 stake in May 2019. she did run a good 2nd to today's favorite 2 starts back in a Grade 1. Gets a rider change to Franco who has won with 27 % of his mounts hooking up with trainer Brad Cox.

RACE 12

#10 CE CE

With the exception of a 4th place finish back in June 2019, Ce Ce has been a gem of consistency. In 8 career starts, she's hit the board 7-times with 4-wins. 2 of her victories have come in Grade 1 stakes at Santa Anita and Oaklawn. Last time out, Ce Ce was returning from a 2-month freshening in a Grade 1 at Del Mar which clearly served as a 'prep' for this Grade 1 at Churchill. She was compromised that afternoon at Del Mar following a troubled start and racing wide throughout against a speed inside bias. Today Ce Ce will be cutting back to 7f after running around 2-turns. I feel she will love the distance and will be getting an upgrade in riders to John Velazquez. Obviously Serengeti Empress is the one she must run down, but I feel if Velazquez can have her in perfect striking position in mid-stretch, Ce Ce can post the mild upset. I loved her 4f work on Aug 28 at Churchill and also love her outside post.

#8 SERENGETI EMPRESS

I never thought she would run as well as she did wiring the field in the Grade 1 Ballerina at Saratoga on August 8. Serengeti blitzed the field laying down very fast fractions and still was able to 'gut it out' late to a 1-length victory cutting back to today's 7f distance. Once again, she's the dominant speed over a track where she won last year's Kentucky Oaks and a Grade 2 stake as a 2-year old. My main reason I took a shot against her, is for one, she will be a prohibitive favorite and it's been a long time that she's put back-to-back wins together. I also worry that Serengeti Empress may have 'emptied out her tank' in the Ballerina win. If she faces intense pressure late in today's race, will she be able to hold on. I respect her chance greatly, but I've picked Ce Ce as the most logical alternative to out finish her.

#4 BELL'S THE ONE

If there's 1 filly in here who can win this at a big price if there's a pace melt-down, it's Bell's the One. She has a strong closing punch and the fractions will be fast enough to help set her up. I also love Lanerie aboard who likes to save ground and make 1 well timed late run. Shows 5 solid workouts at Churchill in preparation for this stake.

#9 BELLAFINA

Rarely does Bellafina not put forth a solid performance. She's hit the board in 13 of 17 starts with 7 wins. She fell a length short of defeating Serengeti Empress in the Ballerina stretching back out to 7f. Bellafina is very tactical and today will be getting a rider change to Mike Smith. My main issue with her is that she's likely going to be over bet and has only won 1 race in her last 9 starts.

#1 MIA MISCHIEF

She's been a gem of consistency throughout her career. In 23 starts Mia Mischief has hit the board 19-times, winning 10 races. She has won 5 races in 9 starts at Churchill and loves 7 furlongs. The question is if she will have enough left in the stretch after chasing Serengeti and then having to hold off the closers breaking from the tricky rail slot.

RACE 13

#4 DIGITAL AGE

After winning his first 3 starts in 2019, all going long on the turf, including a Grade 2 stakes win over this turf course, Digital Age lost 5 in a row before being sidelined for 7-months. He returned June 20 at Belmont finishing very strong for the place spot behind a next out winner. Last time out, Digital Age finally broke through the win column with a determined win in an optional claimer which was comparable to a graded stake. I feel Chad Brown has Digital Age in peak form ready for a career best race which will be needed if he's to upset this field in a Grade 1 race which has more I feel of a Grade 2. He stretches out to 1 1/8 miles, a distance I feel he's ready to tackle again with success this time. Today Digital Age will be ridden for the 1st time by Castellano for Brown's main client Klaravich Stables.

#8 SACRED LIFE

Chad Brown has 3 entered in this Grade 1 stake, and all 3 have legit shots at winning, not one at a short price. Sacred Life steps up in class today into a Grade 1 stake following an impressive off the pace 4-length victory at Monmouth. Even though he blasted away from weaker opposition with giant strides in the stretch, I loved how he did it and there appeared to be 'plenty left in the tank' when he was unsaddled. Paco Lopez was aboard for the first time that day and he's back on this afternoon. Sacred Life has run well in Grade 1-2 stakes last year, so he does have the class to compete successfully at this level.

#1 FACTOR THIS

Clearly a major player in this Grade 1 as he attempts to win his 5th straight race. All 4 wins have come on the front end and he's done so showing grit and determination while pressured most of the way in all 4 races. Factor This is also 3-4 at today's distance and breaks from the rail, which only ensures that rider Bridgemohan will send hard to get the lead and secure the rail. He could face some intense pressure from the outside 2 horses, especially Somelikeithotbrown. With 11 career victories in 30 starts, Factor This knows his way to the winner's circle, but in this spot, he could be over bet.

#3 ROCKEMPEROR

The 3rd Chad Brown entrant who is still looking for his first win in the US in 5 starts. Cuts back in distance after falling a nose and a neck short of winning in his last 2 starts, a Grade 1 and Grade 2 stakes on both coasts. Each of those races were run at 1 1/4 miles. Today Rockemperor cuts back to 1 1/8 miles, a distance he's won at in the past. He will have to rally from further back than he was in his last 2 outings, but if the pace is quick enough, Rockemperor all be moving very well late.

#6 MR DUMAS

Returns to Churchill Downs, the scene of 3 of his 4 wins over this turf course, including a victory at today's distance. Exits a solid 2nd when narrowly defeated in a Grade 2 stake at Saratoga. That performance was a career best race and it's clear from his form this year as a 4-year old, that Mr Dumas has improved noticeably from his 3-year old campaign. Has good tactical speed and Franco back aboard for the always dangerous Mike Maker.

RACE 14

#16 HONOR A.P.

This year's Kentucky Derby features an 18 horse field (17 if King Guillermo scratches, which is possible, because he did not go to the track on Thursday and the trainer indicating something was amiss). The Derby really boils down to 2 major players, a fringe player and a couple horses who are not likely winners, but could land in the exacta/trifecta or superfecta at monster odds. There's no way I can select Tiz the Law as my top selection as the odds-on favorite. Yes- he's the most likely winner, especially if he comes close to replicating his 'eye opening' win in the Travers at the Derby distance of 1 1/4 miles. Nevertheless, The Wizard is siding with Honor A.P., whom I feel has more than a 'punchers chance' of upsetting the favorite and one that has the breeding and running style to love 1 1/4 miles at Churchill Downs on the first Saturday of September.

Honor A.P. has run 5-times, winning twice and placing in 3 others. His victory in the Gr. 1 Santa Anita Derby was terrific. Last time out, Honor A.P. was narrowly beaten at odds of 2-5, but on closer inspection, his performance was far better than it looks. There was a ton of trouble leaving the gate, which put the eventual upset winner Thousand Words on the lead. Honor A.P. was taken out of his game and forced to chase moderate fractions throughout. That's not what he wants to do. In the Derby, Mike Smith will take him back, maybe as far back as in the second half of the field in the early going, and look to save some ground. The fractions are going to be lively, which will help set up his late run when Smith calls on him. Trainer John Shirreffs is a master at pointing a good horse to a marquee race. Shirreffs has an uncanny way of developing routers, and they usually get better with distance and experience. His greatest work came with possibly the best filly we've ever seen in Zenyatta. There's also no better 'money rider' in the game than Mike Smith. I'll take my chances with a horse who will be in the vicinity of 5-1 over the 3-5 Tiz The Law.

#17 TIZ THE LAW

This NY bred has won 6 of his 7 starts with his lone defeat coming in the slop at Churchill in his only start running over a wet surface. Even though Tiz the Law was impressive winning the Florida Derby and the Belmont Stakes, it was his win in the Travers that I finally became a believer that this is one legitimate top class 3-year old. A major feather in his cap is that he's the only 3-year old in this field with a win at the Kentucky Derby distance, and that came last time out, which was his career best performance by far. Tiz the Law has superb tactical speed and is ridden to perfection by Manny Franco. I'm not at all concerned with him drawing post 17. There's plenty of time for Franco to work out a trip and have him forwardly placed and free of trouble in the early stages of the race. Favorites have done remarkably well the last several years in the Derby. Tiz the Law is likely going to be the shortest price of them all if he wins. He's no doubt the most likely winner, but in my opinion, his main adversary Honor A.P. has legitimate credentials, the breeding and connections to pose a major threat to Tiz the Law. He's worked twice since the Travers and both drills at Saratoga have been outstanding.

#18 AUTHENTIC

He's done little wrong in his 5 races career, winning 4 times, including a Grade 1 and Grade 2 victory. Authentic wants the front end and if King Guillermo is a late scratch, this defection would only enhance his chances. Authentic defeated Honor A.P. in the San Felipe, but that rival upset him in the Santa Anita Derby. There are many skeptics who watched his win in the Haskell at Monmouth by only a neck over NY Traffic as a reason to toss him in the Derby because if he faltered so badly in the final 1/8th of a mile after looking home free only to win by a nose at 1 1/8 miles, then how can Authentic carry his speed 1 1/4 miles. I'm looking at it another way. The reason Authentic tired late in the Haskell is when he built what looked like an insurmountable lead late, both Smith but especially the horse, lost interest and both were geared down. When Smith saw that he was shortening stride a bit in deep stretch with NY Traffic bearing down, he went to work. In the shadow of the wire at Monmouth Park, Authentic called on his reserves and just held on. He's still a work in progress and there is a question about staying there distance on Saturday. With new rider John Velazquez aboard and no better trainer in the universe than Bob Baffert to get horses to win the Derby, I must respect Authentic's chances enough to consider him a major player.

#13 ATTACHMENT RATE

If there's one horse in this field, who if he is to win, will pay over \$100 for a \$2 bet, it's Attachment Rate. Obviously it's a stretch, but I will include him on EVERY bet I suggest. The Wizard has legitimate reasons to respect his chances, especially at 50-1 on the morning-line. True he has only won 1 race, which was a maiden victory in the slop. If you dissect his defeats, especially his last 2, there's no doubt that Attachment Rate will handle the 1 1/4 miles better than many of his opposition. In the Blue Grass Stakes, he was bothered leaving the gate. He ended up finishing 5th, but did beat 8 horses. He really never got going until the race was basically over. Past the wire, he galloped out past the winner Art Collector and the high quality filly Swiss Skydiver, both whom came back to repeat. Last time out in the Ellis Park Derby, Attachment Rate showed improved speed chasing up close to Art Collector, while making several moves at the odds-on winner. It was a career best race, as he finished 5 1/4 lengths in front of the 3rd place finisher. Once again, he galloped out in front of Art Collector soon after the wire. Trainer Dale Romans is a trainer you never want to fall asleep on, especially in big races and at a big price.

#2 MAX PLAYER

Makes his first start for trainer Steve Asmussen after being conditioned in his 5 previous starts by Linda Rice. The reason for the trainer change is that the owners wanted Max Player to train at Churchill and Rice is based in NY. I would have done the same, especially pointing an improving horse with an outside shot for a race like the Kentucky

Derby. Max Player was soundly defeated by Tiz the Law in both the Belmont Stakes and Travers, finishing 3rd in both races. It's not going to be easy to make up those lengths on the favorite Saturday, but what I do like about Max Player is not only the upgrade in trainers, but I feel he's a horse who handles 1 1/4 miles just fine, whereas many in here are questionable at the distance. He gets Amsussen's main go-to rider Santana and draws an inside post which will ensure a ground saving trip before Santana makes his move.

Any questions or comments can be sent to: wizardpublications1987@gmail.com

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