The Empire Report – Friday, May 3, 2024 – Race Recap

Race 1 – UNEVERGONNAGETHIS sat 3rd until pulling first over to 3/4s (into a hot clip), pounced on the leader into the final turn then confidently wore that one down in the lane, a sharp winner in tonight’s opener – he’s been showing signs of coming around to top form recently, and it leads to tonight’s solid score. P C FREE WHEELING took command off turn one and rattled off a very sharp 3/4s, felt the winner applying major heat once into the final turn, battled hard right to the end but came up 2nd best to his very sharp foe – remains very sharp herself! FIX A DRINK yielded off turn one, tracked closely through the fast fractions, was outmuscled home by the top pair but still a very good 3rd, up in class and off a bad date (plus adding Lasix). MISSISSIPPI STORM sat 4th all the way and was unable to make any moves, following evenly for a 4th place check. KINDA LUCKY LINDY was well back most of the way, beating only a weak one to grab a 5th place check. GRINDER was gapping near the back from early on and never close at all. AIRMANS JACKPOT was off stride before the start.

Race 2 – SILK CLOUD A came out from 4th to race 2nd over to 3/4s, launched a wide move on the final turn and just exploded once into the lane, blowing right by the leaders and drawing off to a dominant win…as the longest shot in the field (she came into this sharper than she looked on paper, and clearly brought her best effort tonight)! LIT DE ROSE sat back in last (5th) all the way, kicking home powerfully for 2nd – went very conservative after her victory in the Matchmaker Final but still her usual sharp self. MC ANGEL made it clear (twice!) to COACHELLABOUND N that she wanted to cut this mile, rattled off a sizzling 1:23.2 for 3/4s and enjoyed a clear lead to the final turn, was simply no match for the very sharp to pair once into the homestretch but still did a nice job holding 3rd as she tried to take on the top mares tonight. DOUGS BABE A pulled first over from 3rd to 3/4s but was her typically sluggish self, was a closer 2nd on the final turn but clearly outfinished from there, never even going by MC ANGEL in the lane. COACHELLABOUND N tried for the lead a couple of times to the quarter before accepting that she would have to race from the pocket, started to weaken to 3/4s and just wasn’t on her game tonight.

Race 3 – ELISES DELIGHT joined the very live outer flow to race 3rd over to 3/4s, launched a wide move (from 2nd over) on the final turn and has just enough to get by at the wire for the 15-1 upset – she raced better for sure, but the race “falling apart” was probably the real key to victory. COMMANDER CATHY N got away 3rd, came out behind the hard used BETTER WATCH IT to race 2nd over on the back side, was up into 2nd to the top of the lane then collared the now-tiring (new) leader, but was then nipped herself at the very end – had a great trip, and really no excuses. BETTER WATCH IT began a VERY LONG first over move from 6th on turn two, was up close to the leader by turn three then nose to nose with that one to 3/4s, put that one away on the final turn and actually opened a clear lead at the head of the lane… but was just a bit tired from doing all the hard work and couldn’t handle the fresher legs of the top pair – very nice try for 3rd, though! HALLELUJAH HNAOVER was out 4th over in that live outer flow to 3/4s, followed wide from 6th on the last turn and found some decent late life to rally into 4th. GAME OF SHADOWS had the early lead then yielded off turn one, was behind the tiring leader on the final bend before finally shaking free, but was outkicked home for a better piece. COWGIRL LILLY sat last and was never involved tonight. CELIA B MONEY took command off turn one, grabbed a very slow half before meeting up with BETTER WATCH IT off turn three, gave way to that one on the final bend and folded badly – major clunker

Race 4 – STREET GOSSIP took off the gate and raced from 5th, came out 2nd over off turn three then moved wide on the final turn, rallied by the leaders like they were standing still and trotted home the easiest of winners. TOCCOA FALLS retook command from FANATIC to the quarter, grabbed very easy fractions from there but still proved no match at all for the winner once they turned for home, at least holding safely to 2nd – fails as the heavy choice yet again. BAZILLIONAIRE pulled first over off turn three and was up to apply pressure on the final turn, couldn’t fully sustain that move once into the stretch but did hold decently for the show spot. IN MY DREAMS sat last and was never involved, beating out weaker ones for 4th. FANATIC took command off turn one then yielded back to the winner, started to gap into the slow 3/4s as he looked like he was starting to sore up a bit, with nothing to offer once they turned for home. MUFASA AS sat in and was shuffled back, but certainly didn’t seem loaded

Race 5 – BIG BIG PLANS got away 3rd and sat there all the way, found a clear rail for the drive home and was able to rally on by a couple of big longshots for the win – definitely had things go her way tonight! ANNELIESE HANOVER drove on to seat BLUEBIRD GRAF off turn one then grabbed an easy :58.1 half, was able to extend her lead off turn three but then felt the tripsitter closing back in to the final turn, held that one off through the lane but both were no match for the winner once that one found room at the cones – almost pulled off the 14-1 upset!
BLUEBIRD GRAF left tonight but was forced to grab and drop into the two hole, started to gap off turn three but found a better stride at 3/4s and was right there by the final turn, took aim in the lane (at 35-1!) but just didn’t have enough at the end to deliver the form-reversing shocker – much improved, for sure. FEAR ABBY left but had to back off into 4th, sat the cones and beat the weaker ones only. SWEET ALI LOU did get a quick start but then decided to back off, came out from 5th on turn two to follow the VERY early moving SEZANA N, moved wide on the back side as that cover stalled but never did find a gear…and never got close to the leaders. SEZANA N was inexplicably moving from 6th before the quarter (maybe got jammed up?), never got close enough to be any kind of threat and was already tiring to 3/4s. NITE TIME DEAL came out 3rd over at the half, swung wide from 6th on the final turn but really flattened in the lane – terrible trip, but really no good herself. SWEETEST BELLE got away 4th then made a break on the first turn – 2024 struggles continue

Race 6 – GOLDEN QUEST N was kept wide by DELITFULCATHERIN N into the first turn and had to drop in 3rd, pulled first over from the 5/8ths and blew past the leader like she was nailed to the floor, suddenly had a big lead on the final turn and turned this into a laugher – she seemed a bit overbet, but may have been an OVERLAY after seeing tonight’s demolition! ROCKN PHILLY yielded for the two hole trip but found herself behind the tiring leader to the final turn, managed to slip out from 4th to the top of the lane and offered good late pace for the place spot, even if well off the winner. FORGOT THEWALLET A gave the winner a seat then got away 4th, tried to follow that one’s back side blitz but was left uncovered (and struggling a bit) at 3/4s, finally took over 2nd to the top of the lane and was lucky just to hold on to the show spot – a little disappointing, considering the pretty nice trip! EASY TO PLEASE got shuffled badly inside to the final turn, found a clear lane into the stretch and paced home steadily at the end, not far off 3rd. DELITFULCATHERIN N avoided getting looped by the winner then took over command to the quarter, could only watch the winner rip past her to 3/4s and really faded from the head of the lane. REC TIME gapped cover from the back to the final turn, never finding her usual late gear this week. TWIN B SUNKISSED came out last on the final turn, finding her best stride way too late to make any impact

Race 7 – ULTIMATE SPEED was away comfortably in 4th, flushed out ARCO N to race 2nd over from turn three, angled off live cover to the top of the lane and found enough late to get up at the wire. FAVORITE BEACH kept a couple of leavers wide into the first turn, got the top from ARCO N then seated PURAMERI behind her, faced major heat from ARCO N on the final turn and battled all the way home, holding that rival off but collared late by the perfect trip winner – excellent try. ARCO N yielded off turn one then was soon back to 3rd, got flushed out uncovered from turn three and was closer in 2nd to 3/4s, really turned up the heat on the final bend but just never could get by the stubborn leader, staying on very gamely for 3rd in her YR debut. MISS DOTTIE MAE was caught very wide on the first turn and had to retreat back to 5th, moved out 3rd over before 3/4s and did pace home well in the lane for 4th – not bad at all considering the trip. MORNING HAS BROKEN sat last before coming out on the final turn, pacing home well from an impossible spot. PURAMERI was caught three wide into the first turn but did find herself a pocket tuck, gapped a bit to 3/4s then tired to last in the lane

Race 8 – HELLO YES HI made a pretty easy lead then cut an easy half, faced only mild pressure thanks to a sharp :27.3 third panel, felt a couple of foes coming at her in the lane but she was very game right to the end, refusing to lose as she picked up her first victory of 2024. OKINAWA BEACH A pulled first over from turn three but was then caught out into the fastest part of the mile, never would in and kept battling right to the wire, coming up a nose shy at 8-1 (probably deserved a better fate)! UPTOWN HANOVER got away 4th, flushed out ultra-live cover as she raced 2nd over, angled into the lane with dead aim but never found enough to go by – definitely NOT on her best game if she was unable to beat these off such a perfect trip! A GIRL THAT TWIRLS saved ground from 6th as three others pulled, faced heavy traffic into the lane and definitely had pace. CHERYSLS SHADOW made the top on turn one then yielded to the winner, sat the two hole trip but came up empty late, with no visible excuses. MAN DONTFORGET ME took no $, got away last and made no moves tonight. OAXACAN DREAM N was outleft and away 5th from the pole, ended up racing 3rd over but just never fired at all

Race 9 – INFINITY STONE stepped right around FOR A DREAMER, enjoyed a clear lead around the track as he rattled off almost unbelievable (for him) fractions, slowed down a little at the end but still won by open lengths, in an eye popping 1:55…about 2-3 seconds faster than he paces almost every week! FOR A DREAMER got away right behind the winner, had to work hard just to chase the sizzling clip and just wasn’t able to make a dent in the lane – just caught an insane winner and had to settle for 2nd best. QUIKSLVR BLUECHIP chased from 4th, came out on the final turn and finished well for 3rd in this wild mile! WILY WALLY sat 3rd all the way, hung in there to the
final turn but was pretty tired once they hit the homestretch. VOYAGE TO PARIS had no prayer, edging out SCUBADAN for the final paycheck

Race 10 – WARRIOR ONE had the best speed and made the top on turn one, rated a modest half but got tested by the tripsitter from the 5/8ths, looked to be in serious trouble as they turned for home but the earner of over $700K wasn’t done yet, and summoned up some of that class to dig in and prevail to the wire! HOOLIE N HECTOR got away in the pocket, popped out with 3/8ths remaining and really took it to the winner, looked like he’d go by in the lane but just never did, still a neck back in 2nd as they hit the wire. BARRY BLACK got away 3rd, came out behind the challenging HOOLIE N HECTOR on the final turn, couldn’t really gain to the wire but did trot home solidly for 3rd (off a bad date). NO DRAMA PLEASE was outleft and away 4th, came out on the final bend but just wasn’t nearly as sharp tonight (barnmate MISSISSIPPI STORM came up flat tonight as well). THE LAST CHAPTER took off the gate tonight, sat the cones in 6th and trotted home decently for a minor check – wasn’t bad. FULL RIGHTS sat last and was never in the hunt this week. KASHA V broke from 5th on turn three