The Empire Report – Monday, May 13, 2024 – Race Analysis

RACE 1 – (4) ROCKIN JUKEBOX was razor sharp in a gutsy front end win 3 back – he came up a little short cutting the mile in his next, but charged home full of pace from an impossible spot last week – the right trip gives him a chance to spring the mild upset in tonight’s opener. (6) CHIMICHIURI N looked outstanding winning his first 2 local/U.S. starts (after missing a year!) but did prove mortal last week when 2nd best as the prohibitive 1/20 favorite – as long as there’s some honest pace up front, he’ll have every chance to make amends tonight. (3) SPEED MAN N was one of the barn’s THREE winners here last Monday (they added another on Fri. night), and the classy 10YO has to be taken very seriously at the moment – he’s also facing better tonight, and his trip could also be a bit tougher. (1) JIMMY CONNOR B has been very good, holding his form even as he’s risen back up the class ladder – could grab himself a decent piece with the move inside. (2) BENHOPE RULZ N is another that’s racing very well these days, but faces an uncertain trip, even with the good draw. (5) ULTIMAROCA had been very consistent for several weeks but does seem to have leveled off a bit – minor share? (7) WINDSUN RICKY seems buried out here.

RACE 2 – (1) SAN DOMINO A was just “ok” for an extended period but he’s definitely been much sharper lately, picking up a win and two 2nds from his last 3 starts in this class – he’ll likely be on the front end in this short field, and we’ll give him the narrow edge in this pretty well-matched field. (4) GINGER TREE PETE was outkicked for 2nd by the top choice last week in a mile that was probably just a bit faster than he’s comfortable with – he loves to win races, and a good price makes him worth a look tonight. (2) MAXIMUS RED A was caught in the back with no chance last week but prior to that he hit board in 7 straight starts, including 4 wins – hard to not give him a serious look here. (5) THRASHER is rock solid at this level, and helped by the short field – he’s also listed at 8/5 ML after missing 3 weeks (scratched sick) and others may be offering more value on top. (3) ON THE VIRG is feelin’ pretty good these days, and only listed at the bottom because he’s stepping up in class vs. other sharp ones.

RACE 3 – (5) THAT DOG WILL HUNT just missed to a pair of sharp foes in his last 2 starts – was claimed from his last, and his new connections have done well all year with fresh stock – may have landed in a winning spot right off the bat. (4) YS DO IT RIGHT also goes for a new crew tonight, and has been a steady player at this level for a while – a live trip boosts his chances considerably. (3) KB MAC is another that usually has some say most weeks, but he’s 0 for 21 locally (last 2 years) and that’s at least a bit concerning. (1) PINE BUSH LIFESAVER draws the pole dropping in class but he faltered as the favorite the last time he dropped in for $30K, and could be vulnerable at that 8/5 ML price. (2) QUATRAIN BLUE CHIP is 0 for 14 this year and 1 for 29 over the last 2 seasons – minor share only. (6) BIG SIR is always eligible to reverse form at any time but his recent efforts have been less than stellar, and he draws all the way outside.

RACE 4 – (6) HELLABALOU didn’t rest on his laurels after setting up in the Borgata (for the 2nd straight year!), instead venturing out to Ohio for a $100K Invitational (where he was 2nd to the speedy, talented CARBINE) – he loses Gingras tonight, but Mr. Bongiorno has certainly enjoyed his own success with this guy – has to get top billing, though wouldn’t label him a “cinch” against these. (4) ENERGETIC HANOVER is hitting on all cylinders right now, and displayed an impressive stretch burst to win this race last week – remains a very solid threat. (3) WHATS STANLEY GOT A sat last with no chance in his first start since the Borgata Final but figures to be able to have a much bigger presence with the move inside – would consider if the price gets juicy enough. (1) CAPTIVATE HANOVER earned his way back up to Open after winning 5 of 6 and certainly has held his own the last 2 weeks – could definitely land somewhere in the exotics. (5) BOILING OAR was on quite a roll before missing 3 weeks to his last – tonight’s draw may leave him waiting for a better spot to strut his best stuff. (2) NANDOLO N is probably more comfortable vs. a bit easier at this point in his career – always a chance he could rally for a small piece, though.

RACE 5 – (6) JUST ENUFF STUFF wasn’t at his best 3 starts back but raced super in the start before that (and the two starts since), including last week’s victory at this level – draws Post 6 again, but still feels like the one to knock off. (2) GDS THUNDER GB was used a bit before getting away behind the top choice last week, then raced hard for the place spot – another good journey could land him another big chunk. (4) HOPNROLL HEAVEN was hard to gauge shipping in from Monti last week but raced “decently” to be 4th – playable on the bottom of exotics. (3) MY ULTIMATE BYRON A was the barn’s 3rd starter of the night last Monday and became their 3rd winner, using a perfectly timed brush to get the job done – he moves to a new barn tonight, MAY be facing a bit tougher, and does have a couple of questions to answer. (1) SHAKESPEARE has been away since a sick scratch on 4/1 but perhaps some time off will benefit him – on his best, he’d be VERY dangerous tonight…but hard to know what to expect.
here. (5) ADMIRAL HANOVER arrives from Delaware sporting a 3 race winning streak but it’s hard to say how he’ll fare facing these types – perhaps the tote board can offer some clues? (7) CLEVELAND B MIKI used an inside trip to pick up a 3rd last week but may have trouble replicating that from out here. (8) DONTLIKEITLEAVE could only manage a weak first over bid last week and now moves from the rail to Post 8.

RACE 6 – (2) SURFSIDE BEACH was never put in play by Stratton (Post 7) last week but still unleashed a strong final 3/8ths to rally for 3rd – look for a much more involved effort here, with a chance to come out on top. (6) TAKE A CLOSER LOOK has 4 wins and a nose loss 2nd from his last 6 starts (up in class from Post 8, in the other) – has to be feared once more, even with the poor draw. (4) CHIEF CORLEONE was pretty weak in his first 2 starts after the barn change but looked like a different horse in his last, charging home from well back to be a close 3rd at the wire – if he can bring that same effort tonight, he can be right in the hunt. (1) HIGH ON ROCKNRROLL wasn’t sharp at all in his last pair – even if willing to forgive those starts (and look for a better effort tonight), his 1 for 29 local slate makes it hard to consider him for more than a smaller share. (3) ON DAYBOO has NJ lines that suggest he’d prefer to be in cheaper – he also debuts tonight for the Super Siblings, and their ability to dramatically improve fresh stock is well documented– playful for those looking for a possible upsetter. (5) WHY TOMORROW RAY has out of town lines that suggest he may be a bit cheaper, and was well back in his lone local try this year (albeit vs. better) – leaning towards others. (7) FADE TO LIGHT draws poorly off 23 days and would probably look better in a bit easier. (8) BETTER OFF SINGLE was a little better last start but seems unlikely to threaten from out here

RACE 7 – Good race: (5) HUNTING ZONE may be worth a flier tonight – he drew Post 7 off a bad last week so we’ll give him a pass for that…but he’s gone a bunch of good miles already this year, and may be a good fit vs. a field with some question marks – a decent price makes him worth a stab. (6) OCEAN RIDGE N was overhauled late after cutting a very ambitious pace 2 back, then switched gears and raced from off the pace in his last, charging home to just miss at the wire – another good value play in a tough race. (1) JAHAN HANOVER is a very logical player from the pole but he just doesn’t seem to win as often as she should – respect his chances, but hard to take too short a price on top with him. (3) FORTIFY is a major question mark tonight – anything close to his best would make him very dangerous here, but anything like his last would make him an outsider – hard to know what we’ll get from him this week. (4) SEVEN HUNDRED felt like he was coming into a winning mile but disappointed off the pocket trip 2 back, then really faltered trying to cut the mile last week – another that’s tough to gauge right now. (2) TWIN B RISENSHINE was 0 for 20 in 2023 – he started this year as a low-level, mediocre Monticello horse but after moving to one of the sharpest barns in the Northeast, he instantly crushed the competition in 3 straight starts, including last week’s 1:49.3 romp in PA – is he “classy” enough to go with these…i guess we’ll find out! (8) ROCK THE BELLES gets stuck on the outside yet again, and may just elect to take a more conservative approach tonight, rather than risk another brutal trip – but couldn’t blame anybody still looking to use him at a big price! (7) PURPLE POET could really use an easier class, and better post

RACE 8 – (2) NONE BETTOR A picked up a 5th in the Aria Invitational last Sept. then went on the shelf – his first start back last week was very encouraging, as he sat the two hole (in the Invitational) and was only a length and half back in 3rd at the wire – could be very dangerous tonight with that start under his belt. (3) BURNHAM BOY N has been solid for weeks, and might have been even closer in his last if not trapped behind a quintet to the top of the lane – as noted, his barn is on fire right now, and a mild upset is not impossible. (1) LEONIDAS A has been an iron horse here for so long…making it hard to believe that he’s started off 2024 with an 11-0-1-1 record…we’ll see if 3 weeks off (and the class drop) may help him perk up some. (5) ANOTHERMASTRPIECE N sharpened nicely as he recently won 3 straight climbing back up the class ladder – he did flatten a bit in the lane 2 back, then was a no threat 5th last week – he’d be no surprise here at all (class drop, short field)…but the 9/5 ML price is definitely unappealing. (4) EUPHORIA N was a little disappointing 2 back but bounced back last week, charging home from a very tough spot (almost 3rd) – not sure he can find a winning trip vs. this group, however

RACE 9 – (4) DUNKIN was the winningest horse in N. America last year then shipped in for the Borgata Series and showed that he had CLASS, as well – he wasn’t all that serious in first post-series start last week, but was still flying at the wire…guessing he’ll be more aggressive now, so we’ll give him the edge over the very talented (5) IT’S A ME MARIO. The latter has looked super in all 8 starts this year, and it’s easy to see why Bartlett takes him every week – he MAY end up with the tougher of the trips tonight, but he’s the one that could give DUNKIN all he can handle. (2) NAUTICAL HANOVER started the year off at the bottom level but has remained sharp for months, and comes into tonight off a solid closing 3rd place finish – an easy trip could land him a decent piece. (1) ALL ALONE was going some big miles for a while but feels like he may be slipping a bit lately – we’ll see if he can
bounce back tonight and grab a piece. (3) NIGHT HAWK was a big earner as a youngster but then went winless as a 4YO – he’s looked much better so far in 2024, already compiling an 11-3-2 record…another that can grab a share with a good trip. (6) FULTON was no factor (NJ) in his first start back at 4, and lands outside for his YR debut – leaning towards others right now

**RACE 10** – (3) BARON MICHAEL picked up back to back wins 5 and 6 starts back – was invisible in his next pair but he did rally late in his last couple, finishing a close 3rd and 4th – there MAY be enough of a battle up front tonight to allow this guy to come charging late for the upset. (6) DANCE ON THE BEACH’s last 5 starts in this class have produced 3 wins and a pair of 3rds – he has to be considered a major threat, but he did weaken on the lead as the prohibitive choice last week – a fair price makes him worth including, but be careful if he ends up way overbet. (5) NOWHERE CREEK A tired off an easy pocket trip 2 back but was a different horse last week, coming first over and going on #6….at 16-1 (one of the barn’s 3 winners that night) – has to be respected, but this could be a tougher spot and his price will surely come down considerably. (2) ARTIST BEST has been 2nd in 4 straight starts, and 5 of his last 6 – he’ll get over the hump one of these weeks, but it’s getting harder to accept shortish prices on top. (4) GLAC IS is always eligible to rally for a piece but he’s notoriously camera shy, and needs to be a good price to use on top. (1) ROSE RUN X CON continues to draw inside but is yet to be 1st or 2nd in 11 starts this year – minor share only. (7) PRETTY HANDSOME probably needs a much better draw to be a serious player with these

**RACE 11** – (1) JUST BET IT ALL recently returned (in PA) for his 4YO campaign after banking $142K at 3 – he does appear to be sharpening, and ships in to YR off a close 2nd at PcD– may be ready for a big try tonight. (2) SEMI TOUGH came into the Borgata Series riding a 4 race winning streak but his form continued to weaken all the way through – his last start (NW15000, at Chester) wasn’t all that encouraging and while he deserves plenty of respect, he just may be a bit vulnerable at the moment. (3) VENIER HANOVER finished well for pieces in his last couple and is always capable of popping off a big mile – worth considering if the price is juicy. (5) GREG THE LEG gets a free ride in the class off last week’s easy front end score but he does face a somewhat tougher field tonight, and perhaps a more uncertain trip – definitely possible, but would need a fair price to use on top. (4) SLING SHOCK beat softer 2 back, then was a close 3rd last week – steps up another peg, but just seems more likely to end up with a smaller piece, rather than a bigger one. (7) THE REAL ONE continues to climb the ladder without the benefit of a win, rallying nicely every week for a good piece – the 14YO feels close to a win…but may just have way too far to come tonight. (6) KIMBLE A is probably sharper than he looks on paper, but may be hurt badly by the draw – good bomb for 3rd/4th. (8) HEISMAN PLAYER is the outsider, both literally and figuratively.