

The Empire Report - Saturday, January 19, 2019 - Race Analysis

RACE 1

- 1 - GHOST PINE does his best work in THIS class, on the lead (where Dube figures to put him, tonight) - last week's tightener should have him ready for a big effort here, and he's a very logical candidate
- 2 - SETTLEMOIR is another that really thrives at this level, winning 3 straight before being stuck with Post 8, off a bad date - wasn't bad at all last week, and is a serious threat tonight with the move inside
- 3 - BLOW A CLOUD N was 1st or 2nd in 6 of 14 local tries last year, and this class is right in his wheel house - the concern is that he's missed a month (after a stopping effort), and may be a bit short - piece
- 4 - HORSING AROUND was just 1 for 27 here last year, although the lone win was a blowout, for THIS barn - seems light years from that form, however, and feels like an outsider off that last qualifiers
- 5 - STELLAS PHELLA remains overmatched, and very hard to consider
- 6 - REASONABLE FORCE did win his last (at Chester), but that was 38 days ago, and vs. softer - maybe can rally for a small piece, but unlikely to do more than that.
- 7 - GOTTA MINUTE N shows a couple of narrow misses here, but both were from inside posts, with pocket trips - suppose he's a possibility, but seems to be spotting the inside pair a serious tactical edge
- 8 - MIGHTY AMERICAN N will get our attention AFTER he drops back to NW5000 (next start)

RACE 2

- 1 - BETTOR ROCK ON had an excellent 2017 but was somehow winless in '18 (although he did have nine 2nds) - perhaps the time off can actually help him, but definitely prefer several others for tonight
- 2 - OURLITTLEGENERAL A couldn't quite overcome the hard used trip last week but he's beaten better than these in the past, has a ton of back class, and hails from an ever dangerous barn - have to consider
- 3 - GRIFFON HANOVER goes for a new listed trainer tonight but I don't think that'll matter much - overall recent (NJ) form is okay, but he does seem a bit cheap, and was empty in only local try - small only
- 4 - SPORTS COLUMN shows a dull qua. after missing 3 months, and wasn't all that great throughout 2018 - prefer to watch for now, especially since he's in line for a class drop NEXT week
- 5 - CATCHA LEFTY A just missed in NW20000 as the odds on choice on 11/17 then WON (at odds on) the next week - last Monti win suggests he's ready, and this field is well within his comfort zone - player!
- 6 - ITONLYROCKNROLL A was doing well towards the end of the year but he certainly looked short in his return - draws outside some tough foes, and is hard to like from this spot
- 7 - TJ BLAST has been a major disappointment since a six-figure purchase last year, but the ability is there and that qualifier is obviously encouraging - can't blame anybody looking to use him tonight
- 8 - MAJOR BUCKS perked up with a big effort to just miss at 27-1 to end 2018, then returned in equally fine form last week - unfortunately, draws another 8 hole and that figures to limit him significantly

RACE 3

- 1 - SHANE ADAM went a couple of big efforts when sharp back in Oct/Nov., but really hasn't been good since then - obviously a threat to grab a :58 half and just outrun these, but be careful at a very short price
- 2 - DEMOCRACY N hasn't looked any good in some time - may wake up one night, but I'll pass until then
- 3 - OH JONNY BE GOOD N will attract much attention from everybody who saw him get shuffled in last, but I'm not sure he was all that well meant anyway - another that has to be respected, but hard to "love"
- 4 - SPORTY SPOOK A picks up smaller pieces one level up but is a much more serious threat to win when down in this class - catches a couple of shaky favorites tonight, and may be able to pull off a mini upset
- 5 - SWELLEN DAM was all out in NW5000 to hold off a horse that never wins - hard to like moving up
- 6 - AMERICAN VENTURE was a useful 3rd off the bad date, hails from a pretty hot barn, and has been known to deliver powerful rallies when "in the mood" - will offer some value for longshot fans
- 7 - PRINCE OF POPS N was an easy front end winner over cheaper last week, but he's capable of going with a bit better, and as noted, there's a few questionable ones in here - willing to throw in underneath
- 8 - IDEAL TYSON A, on the whole, hasn't impressed so far - draws Post 8, and this seems like a tough assignment - will wait for a better scenario

RACE 4

- 1 - CAPOZZO was sharp for almost all of 2018 and returned in similar form to start the new year, a sharp 2nd best to the well meant winner - looking at another good trip tonight, and figures to be right there again
- 2 - SHADY CITY was a bit short off the layoff, but that seems to have been the theme throughout his barn - was very good to end 2018, and could easily be primed for a much better effort here - include in exotics
- 3 - MR HASANI N ended the year in sharp form and his 2019 return was VERY good as well - might be a notch below a couple of these, but another decent piece is within reach with a similarly sharp performance
- 4 - JOHNNY DISCO A has some excellent Down Under credentials but he was conspicuously ignored in the wagering at Fhd., and weakened badly - unless the board says otherwise, I'll probably pass tonight
- 5 - PERFECTLY CLOSE came up short off a live trip last time, but he's raced well enough times here in the past to consider for 3rd/4th, assuming he's a pretty good price
- 6 - VEGAS ROCKS had an abbreviated 2018 season but was sharpening at the end, and his win here last week was VERY impressive - trainer/driver combo is on fire, and might be able to take another in here
- 7 - BLAISE MM HANOVER was sharp off the hiatus but moves out to Post 7 (while moving up in class) and it just doesn't seem like a spot he's going to enjoy - wait for a better situation
- 8 - HEEZ ORL BLACK N has been good since the claim, but this seems like a hopeless spot - pass for now

RACE 5

- 1 - CARRACCI HANOVER seemed to benefit from the winter break as he finished up his last with good interest - won 12X last year, and may be given an aggressive steer by Holland tonight - include in exotics
- 2 - ALBERTO CONTADOR N had an inconsistent 2018 but ended the year well, and finished alertly from an impossible spot last week - good draw puts him in play for a decent piece tonight
- 3 - TEXICAN N had a couple of disappointing Nov. losses and his win on 12/8 was off a dream trip - was ready to "write him off", but his 2019 return wasn't bad....Stratton bails, though, and that will hurt
- 4 - SPORTSKEEPER looked dead short last time - license to improve, but I'll just be watching, for now
- 5 - DON DOMINGO N got Stratton over to Monti to qualify him, was impressive in that upstate win then exploded past the field (once clear) last week, rewarding his backers who were no doubt very concerned at the 3/4 pole! Stratton sticks with him (over his main client, #3) and that says a lot - very possible repeater
- 6 - TULLOW N worked a beautiful trip last week and that put him right there at the end - steps up now, may not get that same sweet journey, and would need to be a pretty long price to get my attention now
- 7 - IMAROCNROLLEGEND N impressed when he was able to actually run down SHADY CITY from behind 3 back, then was trapped too long the next week - seems like a pretty nice horse....use in exotics
- 8 - CITY HALL had a tough 2018 but came around strong in the last couple of months - returned sharp for his 2019 debut, but will need some major racing luck to get involved from out here

RACE 6 - Tough race!

- 1 - CHRISTEN ME N really had no excuse in last, unless the winter break affected him a bit more than others - at some point, the description "been knocking on the door" becomes a negative...avoid short price
- 2 - BELLOWS BINGE is now 4 for 4 for his current connections, and he added "Open Winner" to his resume last week - obviously can take another, but the price will be lower, and the trip MAY not be as good
- 3 - ASTON HILL DAVE is an interesting bomb tonight - got shuffled inside last time but at the end, he was pacing as well as any of these - is it possible that he can light up the board if the trip goes his way?
- 4 - AIR STRIKE comes in TWO versions - the "front end" model that has been impossible to pass, and "everything else" - have to believe Holland will get the top here at any cost...and the price should be decent
- 5 - LETSCHASETHEDREAMN has been VERY impressive in his 3 U.S. victories, even if vs. much easier than these - his \$400K bankroll suggests the class is there, and it would be no surprise if he beat these too
- 6 - GREAT VINTAGE got the job done last time, but was all out vs. lesser - obviously has the ability to beat these too, but we'll have to see how the barn does now that Mr. Takter is officially "retired"!
- 7 - SICILY gave it a big go upon arrival last week but the trip was too tough and he eventually weakened - looking at another tough journey from the same bad post, and is hard to endorse tonight
- 8 - BETTORS FIRE N used a live cover flow to outrace his odds and grab 4th last week - stuck with yet another 8 hole, and may not get that same live journey - prefer others

RACE 7

- 1 - MCSPIDEY is probably a bit below a few of the "main" players in here, but he's looking at a close up, easy trip and that could be enough to at least land him a spot on the bottom of the gimmicks
- 2 - MIGHTY MR SHARKEY N had an erratic beginning to his U.S. career but he certainly put it all together in last week's impressive 1st over victory - if he can replicate that effort here, he can be a player
- 3 - HEREHECOMESAROCKIN was a winner in his local debut (11/19) and he's done excellent work ever since (2nd to Bellows Binge, just missed to Great Vintage) - very dangerous here with a live trip
- 4 - STORMONT CZAR A never looked all that "strong" for most of the mile last week but was able to collar the tiring leader and score the victory - moves up here, and I suspect he's looking at a smaller piece
- 5 - BLAYDE HANOVER can be a pretty tough horse when he makes the top and last week was a perfect example - decent chance he can get there again tonight, and a repeat performance is very possible
- 6 - COOPERSTOWN was actually very good in his last few starts here, and should benefit from last week's qualifier - draws outside his main foes, however, and that figures to limit him to just a smaller piece tonight
- 7 - SOHO LENNON A drops from the Open tonight, but has also missed 5 weeks (while drawing Post 7) - most likely scenario is that he uses tonight as a tightener, before dropping another class NEXT week
- 8 - BLACK CHEVRON N was very tough once allowed to quarter move to the front last time - faces a tougher bunch now, and is stuck all the way outside - will need some luck just for a smaller piece

RACE 8

- 1 - CASH ME OUT has always thrived at YR but he may be a bit past his "Open" days - winless in 9 local tries here last year (5X 2nd/3rd), and is probably looking at only a smaller share again
- 2 - WESLYNN DANCER seemed to be over her bad habits to end 2018 but the new year started off on the wrong foot - definitely a bit "iffy" after her last, but the price will also be better - tough call
- 3 - LILYS SWAN POND has taken three in a row, but will be facing MUCH tougher tonight, and his barn has REALLY struggled for most of this week - definitely looking elsewhere
- 4 - WINGS OF ROYALTY is technically "moving up", but that was an Open trotter that beat him last week - figures to be even tighter now, has plenty of back class, and likes Yonkers....possible!
- 5 - DYNAMIC EDGE enjoyed a terrific 2018 season, his barn is actually going pretty well now, but this just seems like a spot that he's going to struggle with - willing to wait for a better scenario
- 6 - MOSTINTERESTINGMAN was ultra conservative off the hiatus but was full of trot finishing, right there 3rd at the wire - comes off a \$236K season, and he didn't make that money by accident - live player!
- 7 - SMALLTOWNTHROWDOWN clearly benefited from the time off and was almost able to wire 'em right off the bench - not the most "reliable" trotter these days, but certainly capable on his best - possible
- 8 - ANDY RAY banked \$175K last year, and started THIS season with a victory - can never be counted out, but this will be a tough spot to overcome....insist on a pretty good price if using on top

RACE 9

- 1 - STOLEN CAR caught a very fast mile in his 2019 return but was a still a solid finishing 3rd - moves all the way inside and he'll be cutting the mile tonight - catch him if you can
- 2 - ACE OF CLUBS was racing well to end 2018 and really wasn't bad in last week's return tightener - figures to sit 2nd (or 3rd) here, and that puts him in play for a decent piece.
- 3 - ROYAL HEART seems to be ambitiously placed in for \$40K but he did come alive at the end of '18, and his trainer has been sending out lives ones so far this meet - still prefer others, but 3rd/4th is possible
- 4 - TYBER TYKE's only recent win came off an easy pocket trip, but he's continued to pick up plenty of pieces whenever the trip is decent - hard to not include him underneath
- 5 - CHEYENNE JEFFREY was definitely short off the layoff last week, but he never seems to go very long before rebounding with big efforts - not sure this a great spot, however, even if he's tighter this time
- 6 - HURRICANE BEACH tries to find his proper level - not sure what is, but I don't think it's 40s
- 7 - ADONIS BAY was racing well every week at the end of '18, and his return mile is better than it looks (hidden :55 back half in fast mile) - loses Stratton and draws Post 7, but still worth including underneath
- 8 - SAULSBROOK LANNY did some fine work here this summer but was scratched on 7/28 and away ever since - solid Q's for very hot barn, but suspect that he won't be fully cranked from this brutal spot

RACE 10

1- LOCKTON LUCK A just missed to KHUN RATHA A up at Monti, but was able to get his picture taken here last week, a game first over winner - license to be even sharper this week, and a repeat performance is certainly possible

2- KHUN RATHA A was way overbet in his YR debut (2/5) and unable to deliver, partially because it seemed that Stalbaum had trouble keeping him on the bit at times - he'll be a better price tonight, and it may not be a bad idea to stick with him - import clearly has ability

3 - BLATANTLY BEST worked out the pocket trip off the class drop last week but could never find the room he needed to really stretch his legs in the drive home - remains dangerous at this level

4 - STARS ALIGN N threw a clunker to end the '18 season, and has missed 5 weeks since then - would expect him to bounce back from that effort, but too many others would seem to have a conditioning edge right now - may just watch this week

5 - CONTROL TOWER had a terrific 2018 season, is a very hard hitter, but his barn sent out a bunch of really poor performers to start out the week - unless they do better on Friday (and tonight), I'd probably pass on this guy...at least for now

6 - OUR ZAK WHITBY A is another that has been away for 5 weeks, and that puts him at a disadvantage against a bunch of these - will keep a close watch for future consideration

7 - ABERDEEN HANOVER has missed time, draws poorly, and seems unlikely to ever get close tonight

8 - NITRO GLISTENING seems absolutely buried here, is 9-0-0-1 locally AND draws Post 8. 'Nuff said