

The Empire Report – Wednesday, March 27, 2024 – Race Recap

Race 1 – ULTIMAROCA stepped around QUALITY BUD and rattled off a sharp :26.4 opener, was down to the half in :55.4 but still took on big heat from AMERICAN MERCURY while hitting 3/4s in 1:23.3, finally fended that one off as they turned for home and remained strong through the final 1/8th of a mile, winning in a seasonal best 1:52.2 – he can be frustratingly inconsistent, but he did bring his “A Game” tonight! WALKINSHAW N came out 3rd over before 3/4s, angled into the stretch and was full of pace to the wire, charging home to grab 2nd – sharp mile in just his 2nd start of the year! PURPLE POET came out 2nd over on the back side behind very live cover, tipped wide to the top of the lane and paced home very nicely for 3rd, even if outkicked by the top two. AMERICAN MERCURY had to drop in 3rd on turn one, pulled first over off turn three and was soon up to press the winner into the snappy 3/4s, battled to the head of the lane but failed to sustain his bid from there, weakening to 4th. QUALITY BUD yielded to the winner and chased from the pocket, worked hard on the final turn to stay close but did weaken once into the homestretch. OCEAN RIDGE N saved ground from 6th, faced traffic issues into the lane and never really had a chance to pace. BELMONT MAJOR N sat last and gapped to the final turn, pacing home evenly at the back

Race 2 – BRUE HANOVER worked around ROCK THE BELLES off turn one then yielded to heavily favored ADAM TWELVE, looked a little rough in the pocket on the final bend, looked destined for a 2nd place finish until the leader started to weaken into the stretch, then was able to nail that one nearing the wire – he was certainly a bit opportunistic but nevertheless a 16-1 winner for those willing to give him another chance after last week’s disastrous trip! ADAM TWELVE patiently made his way to the lead to the quarter, rated an easy half then accelerated nicely to 3/4s to avoid any pressure, looked home free turning into the stretch but was suddenly feeling some Bartlett urging as he began to weaken in the final 1/16th of a mile, collared late at 5 cents on the dollar – just wasn’t 100% tonight! OAKWOOD PADDY IR backed off at the start and ended up sitting 4th, pulled first over at 3/4s then angled into the lane, pacing very well to the wire – sharp try! ROCK THE BELLES left hard before yielding then was back to 3rd at the quarter, holding in well to the end to be a close 4th in a much better effort. PANETTONE HANOVER got away last and was struggling to turn three, never having any impact (though pacing okay at the very end).

Race 3 – WISTERIA HANOVER went right to the top, carved out very easy fractions on her own terms and had no trouble finishing the job, beating a soft bunch for her first victory of the year. TO MY CREDIT left and easily found himself a pocket seat, safely holding 2nd over others that were either dull, or broke. ENERGY KING got away in 4th, came out 2nd over on the final turn then trotted home steadily for 3rd in this slow mile. FULL SCALE was dull at the start, took over 3rd from a breaker on turn two, could only challenge for 2nd to 3/4s after pulling first over and was unable to sustain that bid into the lane, weakening to a disappointing 4th. A MAJORSMACKIN got away 3rd but was really gapping off turn one, got closer to the quarter but then broke on turn two. AIRBORNE broke at the start

Race 4 – THE BALLYKEEL DEAL didn’t leave all that fast but was able to rush up and take over to the quarter, rated an easy half then met with pressure from CASSIUS HANOVER to the final turn, kept digging in all the way from there and was able to prevail in what morphed into a 2 horse affair! CASSIUS HANOVER ended up sitting 3rd by the quarter, pulled first over to 3/4s and came right up to the winner on the final bend, raced as a team with that one right to the wire but was never able to go by, easily besting the others. ENERGYSOURCE was hurt by an early gapper while sitting 6th, got shuffled well back to the final turn then was able to come out to the top of the lane, offering a good late rally to gain the show spot – sharp tonight. TOMBSTONE sat a sluggish 4th most of the way, did a bit better once into the lane but was still outkicked for the show spot – just isn’t on his best game right now. I GOT THE TAB let the winner take over before the quarter but ended up squandering the trip, weakening as things quickened on the final turn before fading to 5th. CANDY BOMBER sat last all the way and was never in play. DARK MIND raced on and off the bit most of the way, only offering some occasional trot in spurts.

Race 5 – GAMBLINGTERROR flew to the top and opened seats for a couple of other leavers, crawled a half in :58.2, before making all the others work hard with a :27.2 third panel, had to deal with the tripsitter through the lane but had enough left to safely hold that one at bay – the :58.2 half combined with the invisible 1/10 favorite allowed him to pull off the upset! LEVINE left fast and dropped right in behind the winner, had every chance in the lane but couldn’t get to his sharp rival, an excellent 2nd himself. DELIGHTFUL DUDE N was able to find a spot to drop in 3rd off turn one, came out uncovered to turn three but was stuck out into the fastest part of the mile, couldn’t kick home with the top pair but to his credit, was able to hold 3rd despite a difficult trip! HES SPECIAL got away 4th, saved ground and had no excuse not to pick up the show spot. KOMODO BEACH was sent off at ten cents on the

dollar (after last week's 7 hole jogburger) but never looked to leave and got away 6th, came out to the half and gained cover from DELIGHTFUL DUDE N, was still well back in 4th when he finally was sent wide on the final turn, kicking home evenly at best for a 5th place check (triggering some big show prices, as the bulk of that pool was wagered on him) – definitely left a lot of folks scratching their heads! VIVA LAS VEGAS N got away 6th and was no factor, hitting the wire decently from an impossible spot. VENIER HANOVER got away last, pacing evenly at the back from a hopeless spot. R J SPORTS IMAGE was taken well off the car, ended up 3rd over in the terrible “flow” but was all done himself by the final turn – major woes continue

Race 6 – FREAKY took a pit stop in the pocket before taking over to the quarter, rated a very soft half but then met with a major test from WISHYOUWEREMINE to 3/4s, continued to battle to the top of the lane then was able to put that one away for good, extending her lead to the wire to make it 4 for 4 to start her career. WISHYOUWEREMINE got away patiently in 3rd then was cut loose on turn three, put in a big rush to 3/4s and was soon all over the favorite, fought to the top of the lane but started to stall out once into the lane, needing to dig in late to hold 2nd – was well supported for her seasonal debut and put in a nice move before coming up a bit short. NIRVANA HANOVER sat 4th most of the way, came out to the top of the lane and finished well for 3rd, not top far off 2nd (liked the easy trip). OAKWOOD DYNASTY IR was well off the car and sat the cones at the back, was up into 5th to the top of the lane and did finish with good life for 4th – encouraging try after a couple of rocky starts to begin her U.S. career. FANSBABY flew (surprisingly) to the top then let the winner take over, was ok to the final turn but struggled in the final 1/8th of a mile. GANDY DANCER came out from 6th to the final turn and was quickly empty

Race 7 – SOUTHWIND ONYX blasted to the top and forced DAAMERICANSKY to drop in behind him, built himself a nice advantage to the final turn and was clearly in charge as the turned for home, got a little leg weary late but was still a safe winner – scores right off the claim for a barn that's been heating up of late! LIBERTY N FREEDOM saved ground from 5th, found a seam between horses into the lane and was able to kick home nicely for 2nd, gaining late on the winner (who was his barnmate, until this week)! MAJESTIC KIWI N got away 4th, was able to slip out 2nd over to 3/4s, angled into the lane and finished well for 3rd, not far off 2nd – back to back good efforts. DAAMERICANSKY wanted the lead but was forced to sit behind the winner instead, was clinging to 2nd on the final turn as the top one started to edge away then weakened for good into the lane, holding on to the 4th slot. ART SCENE saved ground from last, slipped out from 6th to the top of the lane and was pacing well when he hit the wire – could be on the upswing. PRIVATE SCOTT was outleft and away in 3rd, pulled first over on the back side but could only challenge for 2nd to 3/4s, stalling out before they turned for home – he didn't look great in his last start (in NJ, 4 days ago!) and was definitely overbet tonight. MACHLICIOUS got shuffled back inside, ended up wide from last on the final turn and just had no prayer. ATLANTIS was moving from 7th to the half, ended up 3rd over to 3/4s but was empty by the final turn – another dud.

Race 8 – MYCROWNMYKINGDOM drove on to seat ENOLA then was helped as that one went offstride, rattled off hot fractions from there while enjoying a clear lead, got over 3/4s in a hot 1:25.4 and was the easiest of winners, despite slowing just a bit in the final quarter – big overlay at 8-1! YOU GOT IT sat 3rd most of the way, finishing well enough to collar the favored tripsitter for the place spot. BONATI DEGATO S would have lost the pocket had ENOLA not made a break off turn one, struggled a bit to stay close in the pocket all the way, was clearly not going to be a threat from the final bend and lost the place spot before the end – just wasn't at his best tonight (as the 3/5 favorite). DYLADEMAR sat 4th all the way, offering some mild late trot (though unable to gain any positions). CAL MILES N SHELL chased from 5th, offering steady trot to the wire (no threat). FIX A DRINK sat 6th and was never in play – could be a useful start off the bad date? DIAMANTE TRIP IT broke at the start and lost all chance. ENOLA left fast but couldn't get the top from the winner, then broke trying to drop back into the two hole

Race 9 – ROCK MY SOCKS dropped in 4th, sat patiently then came out 2nd over to the final turn, tipped wide to the top of the lane and paced on by the tired lead under her own power to score in her 2024 return – landed on a dream trip and was ready to cash in! CANNERY ROW moved up to be a closer 3rd over from 6th to the final turn, swung widest of all and finished with crisp pace to follow the winner home for 2nd – good tonight! SHOWMEMAGIC blasted right to the top, was able to fend off COALFORDSNSHINE GB to the top of the lane but could only watch the top pair roll right on by once into the lane. LAZIN ON THE BEACH got away in the pocket, was behind the now tiring leader into the lane but didn't really have much even after finally shaking free. CLEAR THE WAY stepped around an empty one turn two but was still 7th to the final turn, kicking home with alert pace after the fact. COALFORDSNSHINE GB got away 3rd and as under a good hold to the half, was cut loose uncovered from turn

three but couldn't go by the leader on the final turn, flattening at the top of the lane then tiring in the stretch – another disappointing effort. JAVA didn't function for her new barn

Race 10 – IMABEACHBOY made the lead easily (lone leaver), rated a very comfortable half and faced only mild pressure to the final turn, was driven confidently through the lane and had no trouble polishing off the solid wire to wire victory. LYONS PRIDE pulled first over off turn three and grinded closer to the final bend, continued to pace strong into the lane and was an excellent 2nd best – came into this 10-0-0-1 at Yonkers but perhaps better things are to come? PROVOCATIVEPRINCEN came out 2nd over off turn three, stalled by the top of the lane but was still bale to get 3rd, helped by a breaking CAMPORA N in the lane. MAGRITTE sat in 5th then was outkicked for the show spot after avoiding the stretch breaker up the cones. CAMPORA N was content to race from the pocket, tracked the winner all the way but started to look a little hard to steer into the lane, eventually making a break (DQ to 6th). SPORTSKEEPER sat in 6th and was never in play, perhaps in some traffic near the end. MISTER SPOT A raced 3rd over from 7th to 3/4s but was all done before they turned for home. MINGO JOEL was ok in his last couple but never close tonight (Post 8)

Race 11 – STOP STARING was fastest off the car and right to the top then made sure that CAPTAIN T HANOVER dropped in behind him, got tested by that same tripsitter on the back side but was able to fight him off by the final turn, enjoyed a clear lead to the top of the lane and safely held off BRUSHING UP to seal the deal – another winner on the night for a hot barn! BRUSHING UP got away 3rd then took over the pocket to 3/4s after CAPTAIN T HANOVER popped out to challenge the winner, had his chance in the lane but just lacked the pop to rally on by the softened winner. MISSILE SEESLTER saved ground all the way, finishing well for 3rd at a big price. TWIN B FIGHTER didn't leave hard enough and made a brief bobble when caught wide into the first turn, grabbed up and retreated to the back, saved ground then had good pace in the lane for 4th, making a big recovery after losing all chance. IM J BEE N was outleft and had to drop in 4th, pulled off turn three then gained cover from the tripsitter, gapped on the final turn and squandered a pretty good trip! CAPTAIN T HANOVER was caught 4 wide on the first turn but able to rush up into the pocket past that bend, took a big gamble popping out of the two hole on the back side and came after the leader, was repelled on the final turn and tired in the lane. KEYSTONE DASH ended up racing 3rd over to 3/4s, swung wide from the back on the final bend but was quickly empty