



A CLOSER LOOK

by The Professor

In-depth analysis of races at The Meadows

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24

RACE 1 – NW 11,000 PACE

1 – ROYALTYHASARRIVED – Ignore last week's line due to post 8, and the fact that they came the last half mile in 55.1. He had no chance in that group, but has won in this level in the past, so he's a factor today from the rail.

2 – KNOCKING AROUND – Hard to argue with his recent success, and despite moving up 2 classes last week, he put in a very good mile. Had to make a 3-wide move in the third quarter, and was still passing horses late.

3 – ATTA BOY DAN – He's now won three in a row in this class, going back to October 13. That's a tough record to beat. However, none of the wins have been by much, so he's not invincible in here. Still, he's one of the major players.

4 – MATTAMERICAN – This one has to move up 3 classes today, as he found a much easier spot for his return to the races last week. He'll find this class to be considerably tougher, but he's raced at top levels for much of the last few seasons.

5 – NITRO SEELSTER – Broke last week, spotted the field some ground, and rallied late to only miss by four lengths. He shows no other recent breaks, so I'll give him a pass on that one. He should definitely be good in here, as he shows two straight second place finishes in this level prior to last week.

6 – MISTER VIRGIN – Won in a lower level two starts ago, but his most recent two starts in this class resulted in finishes of 5th and 4th. He just appears to be a step or two behind this group at this time.

7 – VAGUE TRACES – Won in a lower class at Northfield last time, but his most recent Meadows starts were all at the top level. He's got the early speed to overcome the post, and I think he's the one to beat today.

SELECTIONS: 7-3-5

RACE 2 – NW 1 PACE

1 – BYE BYE JOHN – Sixth last time, as he was parked for the mile. Still, it was a fairly strong effort, losing by just 7 ½ lengths after being roughed up. Draws inside today and could be a value in here.

2 – HIT IT MAESTRO – Raced very well in his career debut, finishing second as the favorite. Moved to an outside post last week and never got involved. Look for him to be better today with the move back to the inside. I'll just ignore last week's race.

3 – MARVALOUS FALCON – A 15-time winner in his career, all of them either on the PA Fair Circuit or at the short meet at Shenandoah Downs. Has gate speed and closing ability. He's the one to beat in here this afternoon.

4 – WESTERN FANTASY – Raced four times at the fairs this summer, but missed a month from August 28 to September 21, then took another 2 months off. He's a bit of a mystery, but the qualifier on November 15 wasn't bad.

5 – STONELAKE – Newcomer from Harrah's Philly is 0-for-27 lifetime, including 24 tries this year. May like the change of scenery today but will likely be a longshot.

6 – DING DING DINGER – Tried the front last week, but couldn't sustain the speed coming home, as he faded to 7th with a 31.1 final quarter. Has a few third place finishes this year, but would be a price if he hits the top spot.

7 – STARMAKER – Raced very well in his debut in the Yoder barn three starts ago, but since then has been dealing with poor posts. Gets another outside spot today and will likely be a price, but isn't out of the question to hit the ticket in here.

8 – MARVALOUS GEORGE – The Georges didn't draw well today, getting the two outside posts. This one has some early speed, but I'm not expecting him to use it today. He'll be a price.

9 – GENTLEMAN GEORGE – The other George gets the worst spot, and like #8, shows some early speed. I'm 50-50 on whether this one will try to leave the gate today, but even if he does, it's going to be a tough trip for him to get a win today.

SELECTIONS: 3-2-7-4

RACE 3 – NW 7500 PACE

1 – VALIANT IVY – Moves to a much tougher group today after winning his way out of conditioned claiming company. He'll need to find a home class-wise, and it's well worth a shot to enter him in this group today, off a strong final quarter last week.

2 – IMIDEAL HANOVER – Returns to action today after a 6-week layoff, and the qualifier was good. He could be ready to win at first asking in here today. He's had a very good season and has shown high speed, so don't overlook him today.

3 – I'M FEELIN GOOD – Has had two starts after a lengthy layoff, but last week had a poor post. Expect more out of him this week as he moves to a better starting spot.

4 – RUFFLE UP – This one struggled a bit right after being claimed, but has now put things together and comes off a win in a lower level. He finished 4th in this class two starts ago, so this level may be a bit of a stretch for him right now as far as a win, but he can definitely be on the ticket.

5 – MAYTIME TERROR – Tried this class last week and was unsuccessful from post 6 after getting a slow start. The prospects aren't great for today, off the last line, but you never know. Most of his success has come in the 12,500-15,000 claimers this year.

6 – ARTHUR PENDRAGON – I think this is the one to beat today. He returned from 3 months off and finished 2nd in a higher level two starts ago. Last week he jumped to the top level and was a solid fourth, but today he drops 2 classes and should be the favorite in here.

7 – DEW N DOUGHNUTS – Came off a scratch last time and did well to get 5th, but he'll still be a price in here today thanks to a move to a poor post.

8 – THE DARK SHADOW – Scratched last week, which leaves him as a bit of a mystery today. The outside post doesn't help, although he does have the gate speed to overcome it. He's been off 3 weeks, so he could be a step or two short today.

9 – FLASH LAUXMONT – Has won 2 in a row in Massachusetts, but it's difficult to know what those race conditions were and how this level compares. Regardless of the class, the post is a major obstacle to overcome today.

SELECTIONS: 6-2-4-8

RACE 4 – NW 3500 PACE

1 – TERROR O – Returns today after three months off. The qualifier was good, and so is the post today, so he could be ready for a solid mile in here.

2 – EAGLE FORD – Changes classes today, leaving claimers behind. Hasn't hit the top three in quite a while, so he'll be a price today. On the plus side, made a three-wide move last time, so he had some pace but didn't get a good trip.

3 – R N NATE – Likes to get out of the gate, but hasn't been able to get to the early lead in a while. Today he drops in class and I expect this one to try to set the fractions in here. Hasn't had a lot of success here this season, but that could change today.

4 – MARVALOUS TOWN – Hasn't been better than 5th in the last 5 starts, so this one has the look of a longshot today. Changes classes, dropping out of the 20,000 conditioned claimer, so perhaps the class change could be a spark for this one.

5 – CYRUS SEELSTER – I thought this one would make up more ground than he did last time, as it was a fast first half and a slower final half. He did rally a bit, getting 5th, but will need a better trip today to crack the top three.

6 – ONE BAD NIGHT – Has had bad posts the last 2 starts, and while today's post isn't great, it's still an improvement. He has some early speed, so this might be a decent spot to use it, as long as he doesn't get into a speed battle with #3.

7 – HILLBILLYFAIRYTALE – Finished in the top three in three straight starts in this class, then moved up to higher levels. Drops in class today and should be good in this group, despite the poor post draw.

8 – KINGS BEACH – Drops from a higher level today and I expect this one to fire out of the gate and try for the early lead. If he doesn't leave, he'll be far back but does have some closing ability. Ideally, he gets to the front quickly and someone else covers him up and he gets a pocket trip.

SELECTIONS: 8-6-7-1

RACE 5 – NW 5 TROT

1 – MEETMEINTHEHALLWAY – Consistent top finisher, held on for third last time despite a tough trip. Draws the inside today, which isn't the best spot for him, as he got away sixth from the rail two starts ago. If he can avoid another first over trip, he can possibly take the top spot.

2 – KRISTY'SGINGERGAL – She's a bit of a risk today due to last week's break from the same post. May take a conservative route because of the break, and try to rally late.

3 – JUST JOE – Here's a longshot with a chance. He had put in some very good miles through September, then in October had a bad post followed by an effort where he was parked. After that, he was scratched and missed a few weeks. Finished 7th in his first start after the scratch, then improved to third last time. He could be poised for a big mile today.

4 – BONE A FIDE BABE – Bounced back from a break two starts ago with a solid fourth place finish last time. Has gate speed and closing speed, so Brown can try either route with this one today.

5 – RAINBOWINTHEWEST – Zendt had a choice between this one and #6, and went with this one today. Last week she left the gate a bit, was shuffled, got into the outside flow, and came on late to get the win. Steps up in class one notch today, but has the ability to handle it.

6 – TROT'N GLIDE – Gets a new driver this week, but there's little mystery as to how she races. She doesn't seem to have any early speed, so she's usually left to a closing route. Has plenty of late speed, so if Merriman get her into the outside flow with cover, she can be good in here today.

7 – TOM CATTIN – This one has plenty of gate speed, and has used it to his advantage the last couple of starts. He's in very good form right now, and will get one of the first calls out of the gate today.

8 – PERFECT SUMMER K – Jumps two classes this week after an easy win in the NW3 level. Put in a very good mile two starts ago, closing from the second tier to get second. He was a bit overmatched in stakes, but has done well since dropping to non-winners company.

9 – SOME MORE PRINCE – Has been racing well, but today will have to deal with the worst post. Hasn't left the gate from any spot outside post 5, so I'm not sure what route he will try this week.

SELECTIONS: 4-7-3-1

RACE 6 – 12,500-15,000 CLAIMING PACE

1 – LYONS KING – Won his way out of conditioned claimers two starts ago and is now looking for the right class. Was a bit overmatched last time, and takes a significant step down in class this week. Also moves to an inside post. Has plenty of early speed from the inside, so he can be a factor off the gate.

2 – ALLIE’S CRUISER – Hasn’t been in the top three in a while now, and has just one victory this season. He will likely be one of the longer shots in here today.

3 – V I P BAYAMA – Makes his debut for the Rhoades barn this week. He was claimed on the 12th, entered on the 17th but scratched, so that leaves him as a bit of a mystery today.

4 – CARMENS BEST – Comes off a very easy win last time, despite racing from behind rather than his usual frontrunning style. Was claimed back by the Davidson barn, and today bumps up out of the 10,000 level. They wouldn’t have claimed him back if they didn’t believe he could do well at this level.

5 – NATHAN FEELSGOOD – Parked last time, so you have to discount that effort. Gets a better post today, so hopefully he can work out an easier trip. He’s had 2 recent starts in this class, but has had tough trips both times, so it’s hard to tell how well he fits in this level.

6 – HICKORY LITTLE RED – Double jumps in class this week after a win in the 7000 level. It’s an ambitious jump, so he will likely be a higher price.

7 – SUPERFICIAL – Made his local debut last week off a claim in Indiana, and finished a solid second. Got passed in the third quarter but didn’t let anyone else by in the stretch. Moves to a tougher post today but has good early speed. However, he may have to deal with #4 to his left out of the gate.

8 – UNCLE COZ – Joins a new barn this week after a claim, and moves to an outside post. Hasn’t won in a while, but has been finishing in the top spots, so he’s still in good form. Post could be an obstacle today, however.

9 – VODKA IS TERROR – Drops in class this week, but goes in for a higher price than the others, so he gets the outside post. Hasn’t shown much gate speed, but if he does have some, today might be the day to try to use it, not to get to the front, but to get away a little closer than 9th. Otherwise, he’ll be pretty far back in the early going.

SELECTIONS: 4-3-5-8

RACE 7 – 20,000 CD CLAIMING TROT

1 – PIPE DREAM EXPRESS – Newcomer is a bit tough to handicap due to the classification system at Vernon Downs. He's up in class, but just how far up is difficult to tell. We'll learn more about him today.

2 – PEMBROKE MORGAN – Finished a strong second last time, his best finish in a while. I'd like to see a quicker final quarter mile this time, but I still think he can win, nonetheless, especially with another good post.

3 – WHEELS A TURNING – Had no chance last time due to post 10, and this week he moves to a front row starting spot. He likes to use his early speed, and can do it from this post today.

4 – DOUGLAS HANOVER – Came a long way from 9th at the half to finish 4th last week, so he's still in good form. Improved his finish in this class last week in just his second start, and can be a factor today with the right trip.

5 – MEME HANOVER – Moves up in class after an upset win last week at 12-1. Used some early speed last time to get away third, but found himself shuffled to 7th by the top of the stretch. It took a big rally to get the win, and he made it happen. Shows one recent start in this class and only managed an 8th place finish, but he appears to be much more sharp now than he was in late October.

6 – MASSIVE RISK – Found herself too far back last time, sitting 10th at the half. Only lost the whole race by less than 6 lengths that time, so it wasn't a bad mile, just a bad trip. Needs to stay closer to the action this week.

7 – MARACANA' – An upset winner last time, but he never should have gone off at 14-1. Won at 20-1 three starts ago in this class, and finished third the next week, so he's been racing well and deserved more play last time. Stays in the same class today, so he's definitely a factor in here again today.

8 – FANTASY ROCKET – Finished third last week, after using some early speed. Not sure if he will leave today from an outside post with a different driver. If not, he'll be far back early.

9 – BAD RENTORS – Draws a bad post for the third straight week. Hasn't tried leaving the gate in a while, so the prospects for getting out of the gate aren't great, but I think there's a chance that Merriman may try to hustle him out just to shake things up this week.

10 – BUCKEYE REESE – Returns after a couple of trips at Northfield, including a 2nd place finish last time. He'll need to work out a trip this week, and will need a quicker final quarter than he's been showing.

SELECTIONS: 2-6-7-3

RACE 8 – PREFERRED PACE

1 – LORD OF WINTERFELL – Comes off a win at Northfield last time, but returns home to a jump in class. Gets the inside post, which doesn't hurt, but he hasn't seen the top class here in several months. This will be a big test for him.

2 – IDEAL ACE – Hasn't finished higher than 4th in this class, so he'll likely be a longshot again. Just appears to be a bit overmatched in this class.

3 – HE'S A POPPER – Up in class this week off a win in the highest conditioned level, an 8-1 upset victory. The rail isn't the best post for him, as he usually gets away mid-pack, as he did last week. May try to step out a bit today, ahead of the two inside horses.

4 – HAWK'S RED CHIEF – Yet another one up in class this week, he's moving up two classes after a very good win from post 9. He's been in this class many times before, and appears to be in very good form right now.

5 – PHOENIX WARRIOR N – He has post advantage among the "big three" today with the outside posts. He was sitting 6 lengths back, and the last half mile came in 55 seconds, so he paced home right around 54 last week, on the outside. It was a very strong mile, and he definitely can win today.

6 – ANYTHINGFORLOVE A – Always likes to move forward out of the gate, so look for him to get one of the first calls off the car today. Hasn't won in this class locally yet, but he's always a factor.

7 – WINDSONG LEO – Picked up his 17th win of the year last week, but had the better post and was able to control the mile. This week he gets the outside, and I won't be shocked if he takes back at the start and tries to race from behind in order to avoid a speed duel.

SELECTIONS: 5-7-6

RACE 9 – NW 8 PACE

1 – HAPPY TRIO – Was bet to 7-2 last time, but made a break at the start that resulted in broken equipment. He shows no other recent breaks, so give him a pass on that line and try him again today.

2 – REAL PEACE – Has finished second in this class in back to back starts, including last week from an outside post. Moves to the inside today and can definitely be a factor.

3 – GD WESTERN JOE – Last week's winner in this class, he's likely going to be the one to beat today. He was sent off at 1-2 last time, and paced his last half in 54.4, but they still nearly caught him. There is some good competition in here again this week, so he's far from a lock.

4 – HUDSONANDBERNARD – Finished fourth to #3 last week, more than 8 lengths back. He's been racing well, and his times have been reasonably consistent, but I'm not sure that he's going to be a factor for the top spot in here today.

5 – BOBBY K HILL – Auction purchase joins the Corey Stable this week. He hasn't raced in over a month, so he's likely to be a step short. He was purchased more than 2 weeks ago, so they've had time to get him ready, but this is still a tough spot for him this afternoon.

6 – BLAKEMMORE – Didn't use his gate speed last week and wasn't able to make up much ground thanks to a 54.4 final half mile by #3 GD Western Joe. I'm not sure if he will try to challenge early this week, because there is plenty of speed to his left at the gate.

7 – ARTISTS RUFFLES – This one has gate speed, but isn't likely to use it today. Last week he came from the back of the back in a lower level and did well to get third, but he will be chasing faster horses this week.

SELECTIONS: 3-1-2

RACE 10 – 10,000-12,500 CLAIMING TROT

1 – CATCH THE BOUQUET – Drops back to 10,000 claiming level today. Raced here on October 30 and finished a solid third. Definitely can be a factor, as she does have gate speed from the inside post, which most trotters do not.

2 – DRIFT AWAY – Broke at the start last time for his new barn, so ignore that mile. Returns to his former barn today, and was a winner in this class 3 starts back. He was parked the following start, so you can pitch that line as well. He's likely the one to beat today.

3 – WHOTOOKSAM – Finished 5th last time, but only lost by a length and a half, by far his best effort in a while. He still hasn't finished higher than third since 2016, so he's likely to be a high price once again.

4 – MON RIVER ROSE – Won her only other appearance in this class, which was 2 weeks ago. Stablemate of #2, this one could help the Marashian barn to a 1-2 finish in this class. Made a big 3-wide move last time and earned the win, and certainly could do the same today.

5 – JS FOXY LADY – Returns from 6 weeks off and drops into a claimer. Only raced twice after being purchased, and wasn't close in either effort. The qualifier was on a sloppy track, so don't read too much into the final time. The big knock on this one is that she's on at least a 51- race winless streak.

6 – COUNTRY PROPHET – Came a long way to get second last time, finishing right next to #4 Mon River Rose. Will likely be coming from behind that one again this week, so he will need a big closing kick to get the win, but certainly comes off a good line.

7 – PHOTO MASS – Has been hot and cold lately, with two good lines, two weaker lines, and one break. He's a little hard to handicap, but if he's at his best, he will likely head to the front and try to hold off the pack.

8 – MUTINYONTHEBOUNTY – Won in this class two straight weeks, then tried a higher level last time. Made a break, so we never got a chance to see how he would fit in that group. Today he drops back to where he won, but gets a tougher post. He's still one of the main contenders.

9 – INVESTED IN LINDY – Moves to this class last start and raced well, losing a couple of positions but gaining ground in the final quarter. He'll likely try for the front again this week, but there is plenty of speed in here, so he needs to avoid burning up too much energy in the first quarter.

SELECTIONS: 2-4-8-1

RACE 11 – NW 3500 PACE

1 – P H KENNY – Back-to-back good efforts in this level, getting closer to a win each week. Today could be his day, especially with the inside post.

2 – TSM CRUSIN USA – Draws a much better starting spot today, and comes off his best mile since returning to The Meadows. However, he still hasn't cracked the top-5 in here, so he'll still be a higher price.

3 – DEALIN DAN – Returns from long layoff, and the qualifier wasn't overly strong. He'll likely need a start or two.

4 – INDIGO ART – I think this is the one to beat today, coming off a good third place finish in a higher level. He has missed a couple of weeks since that time, and has only raced once in over a month, so he's not a lock by any means.

5 – CRANKIN IT UP – Joins a new barn this week, his third in the last couple of months. Took a very fast mark earlier this season, but just hasn't been able to put it all together in quite a while. We'll see if another barn change is the answer.

6 – STARTHIMUP – You can't count him out, thanks to a ton of closing speed. As always, he needs someone else to cut fast fractions so that he can pass tired horses late. That's what happened last week, with a 55.4 first half and a 58.1 last half.

7 – BROOKLYN FLIGHT – Moves to a tough post today, after a tough trip last week. He's still in good form, but will need the trip to work out perfectly today to end his winless streak.

8 – FINAL JUSTICE – Comes off an 8th place finish last week, and hasn't been in the top-3 since mid-October. This is also the worst post he's drawn in quite some time, but he's changing classes this week, which could help.

9 – THREE RIVERS DELL – Gets the worst of the post draw today, and hasn't finished higher than third all season long, so he'll likely be a longshot.

SELECTIONS: 4-5-1-7

RACE 12 – NW 4 PACE

1 – I'VEGOTAGIRLCRUSH – Big switch to the inside post for this one today definitely has to help. Passed a few horses in the stretch last week, so he definitely had some pace coming home.

2 – HEZASHININGKNIGHT – Gets a new driver this week, as Merriman opted to drive a different one. The post may not be that great for him, as he shows good early foot from outside posts but not from the inside. He finished second in this class three starts back, but has been roughed up two straight times since.

3 – CIRRUS DE VIE – A 10-time winner this year, this one finished 7th in this class three starts ago before heading east for a couple of efforts. Finished third the first time around, but never got involved last time. He seems to be much better when he stays closer to the front early.

4 – NAILED IT – Newcomer has been a consistent top finisher in recent starts, but all have been in claimers. He shows good speed on the larger track at Hoosier, but it's hard to get a read on how he'll be in this level today on the smaller track.

5 – WINBAK WILLY T – Last week's winner in this class certainly has to be respected in here this afternoon. Drew clear by nearly 5 lengths last time after getting a 30-second, 2nd quarter. He may get pushed a little more today in the first half.

6 – SCRUB HANOVER – Comes off a decent fourth place finish last time, his best finish in a while. Moves to a slightly tougher post today but it's not a terrible spot. He shows no "bubbles" on his card, meaning that he mostly stays to the inside and doesn't get into the outer flow.

7 – SIN CITY BOOGIE – Had no chance last time due to post position, but still rallied late to finish 5th, not a bad line at all. He's still in decent form, but the post draw has worked against him for the second week in a row.

8 – ROCKNROLL CHARM – Won in a lower level two starts ago but faded to an 8th place finish last time. This class may be a bit too tough for him right now.

9 – MCFLY – Makes his second start since being purchased, but has another bad post today. He'll be a longshot in here once again.

SELECTIONS: 5-4-1-7

RACE 13 – NW 5100 PACE

1 – STIRLING ESCORT – Won in this class two starts ago, from the same post. Last week he had a tough trip in a higher level, so logically you have to give him a serious look today.

2 – FOUR CARD MAJOR – Finally draws a decent post, but he is moving up in class this week. Has been a beaten favorite three times in his last four starts. I don't think he deserves to be the top choice this week, but I do think he can be on the ticket, despite the class bump.

3 – SILVERHILL BLAZE – Took a couple of months off and has returned with two strong efforts. Last week he got away mid-pack from the rail and rallied late, nearly getting the win. He's in the same class today and has a good post, so he should be a major player in here this afternoon.

4 – GOODY TWO SOCKS – Finished 9th in his local debut last time, after taking a couple of months off. I'd look for another conservative trip, and while he should improve today, I wouldn't be looking for a win from him quite yet.

5 – INNOCENT VICTIM – Comes off his best mile in the last month, and gets his best post in a while. Those are a couple of positive factors, but he'll still likely be a longshot in here today.

6 – LIL STEVIE ONEDER – Ships in from Indiana, where he put in some good miles in conditioned races. The last line wasn't as good, facing tough claiming horses, but he paced a strong final quarter. He could fit well in this group today.

7 – REGGIE RAIDER – Tough trip last time, pacing a fast mile and holding on for third. The post works against him today, however.

8 – A TRUE ROCK STAR – Newcomer from Hoosier Park was a recent purchase by the Burke barn. He's been racing in lower levels, but has shown sub-1:52 speed this year. Despite the post, I think he's the one to beat in here today.

9 – FINDING TERROR – Gets the worst of the post draw today. Hasn't shown much gate speed in Ohio, so look for him to be racing from the back this afternoon.

10 – ZONE BLITZ – Post 10 will make it a little tougher on this one today, but he has decent closing speed and isn't out of the question if the trip works out. He's back down in class and can definitely be a factor in this level.

SELECTIONS: 8-3-1-2-7