



A CLOSER LOOK

by The Professor

In-depth analysis of races at The Meadows

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15

RACE 1 – NW 5 PACE

1 – HEZASHININGKNIGHT – Paced a quick first half then made a move to the outside in the third quarter, so it wasn't the easiest of trips last week. Draws inside today and would serve himself well if he can hold his position out of the gate.

2 – SCRUB HANOVER – Used some early speed last time but faded badly in the third quarter. He'll likely be a longshot in here today.

3 – PC'S EXPRESSO – Got away mid-pack then rallied late last time, a good effort for a horse that was coming back off a month off. He can be a factor in here today with the right trip.

4 – MR BILL G – Never got involved from an outside post last time. This week he draws a better starting spot, and finished third in this class a couple of starts ago. Has some gate speed, and may try to out-leave the inside three horses to grab a good spot out of the gate.

5 – BAY MEADOWS – Sat near the back of the back and rallied late last time with a good final quarter mile. Draws a better post today, and if he can pace a 28-second final quarter again this week, he can be in the mix for a top-3 spot.

6 – CIRRUS DE VIE – Finished 7th last week, but only lost by less than 5 lengths. While it wasn't a top effort, it was better than the previous week, with a better final quarter. Hopefully it's a positive sign for the coming weeks.

7 – MYKONOS – 2-for-2 since arriving at The Meadows, but both wins were in the 17,000 conditioned claiming ranks. He'll be put to the test this week, but he's certainly earned a shot at the tougher class. Post might hurt, as both of his wins were from much better posts.

8 – WINBAK WILLY T – Hasn't been worse than second in his last four starts. Still in very good form, but will have to contend with the outside post this week. He has plenty of early speed, but needs to avoid a speed battle in the first quarter.

SELECTIONS: 8-1-7-5

RACE 2 – HOLIDAY CLAIMING SERIES

1 – VODKA IS TERROR – Encountered some road trouble last week in a conditioned race, so that needs to be taken into consideration. The previous two starts were from outside posts. He's got a shot in here, but he is up in class a bit today.

2 – MISTER VIRGIN – Claimed last week and dropped into the series, he's put in some tough efforts and has been roughed up in recent weeks. He can win with a cleaner trip today.

3 – VALIANT IVY – Stablemate of #2, this one is always a factor. After moving up in class from conditioned claiming company, he has fit well into the 20,000 straight claimers. He rallied from 9th at the half last week to get third, and draws a better starting spot today.

4 – SILVERHILL BLAZE – Post hurt this one's chances last time at Northfield. Finished fourth in a lower level here two starts ago. He moves to a claimer today, but will likely be a price in here.

5 – MAYTIME TERROR – Has only had one two three finish since moving up to the 20,000 claiming level. May try to use some gate speed this week, something he didn't try last time.

6 – BEGINNER'S LUCK – Newcomer from Yonkers has bounced around to several different stables in recent weeks. Just missed by a neck two starts ago, then was parked for the mile from a good post last week. Has gate speed and will likely try to use it today.

7 – MARVALOUS ARTIST – Very sharp, coming off another win last week. He's now won four of his last five starts and should be a major factor again today. I don't think he'll want to sit at the back of the pack, so look for him to be using his gate speed.

8 – POACHER N – Hasn't raced since June 30. Qualified well on December 6, but can't really be expected to be in 100% top race shape this afternoon. Look for a conservative trip out of this one today.

SELECTIONS: 2-7-3-1

RACE 3 – 12,500-15,000 CLAIMING PACE

1 – P H KENNY – Moves to a claimer this week after a good win last time. Very sharp right now, with five straight top-3 finishes. Draws the inside post, so he should be able to make some noise in here.

2 – NATHAN FEELSGOOD – Came a long way to get second last time in his return to the Stratton Stable. Seems to enjoy being in that barn, as he has been successful in his last 2 starts in that barn. However, today he's moving up in class, so he'll be tested a bit more today.

3 – TERROR O – A good closer, he paced home in 28.4 last week and has put in two good efforts since returning from a 3-month layoff. He should be a factor again today.

4 – CARMENS BEST – Dave Palone was asked to drive 3 different horses in this race, and chose this one. The horse has the speed to win, but has now made breaks in 2 of his last 3 starts, making him a bit of a risky play.

5 – JUMPIN JAKE FLASH – Move to a claimer today after three straight starts in the bottom conditioned class. Hasn't won in a while, but he has been putting in consistent good finishes. He will need a slightly better final quarter to contend for the win.

6 – INNOCENT VICTIM – Hasn't finished better than 6th in the last six starts, even after dropping to this class last week. He will be a longshot again.

7 – UNCLE COZ – Finished second last time, only missing by a head. Dave Palone chose off this one today but Shaw drove him to a second place finish last week. Has good gate speed, so he can overcome the post and get into a good spot early.

8 – I'M FEELIN GOOD – Has been steadily improving since returning from a lengthy layoff. Raced well last time, getting out of the gate and dropping in third, then holding that position coming home. He put in for a lower claiming price today but drew the outside post, which won't help.

SELECTIONS: 7-2-1-3

RACE 4 – HOLIDAY CLAIMING SERIES

1 – CLASS SIX – Newcomer from Philadelphia has been on the board in half of his starts, but none in the last four efforts. He's obviously not as sharp as he had been, but the switch to a new track could spur him to return to his previous form.

2 – LYONS KING – Good win last time, but that was in a lower level. Steps up in class today into the series, which could prove to be a difficult jump. He'll need to get out of the gate and try to secure a spot close to the front.

3 – GOLD SHOOTER – Newcomer makes only his second start after more than 7 months off. He was a high priced claim back in April but never raced for his new connections until last week. He'll likely be a couple of weeks away from his best effort.

4 – ZONE BLITZ – Moves to a claimer this week for the first time in recent history. Has been bouncing around in different classes with some success. He has tactical early speed and good closing speed, but I'm expecting a conservative trip this week.

5 – ONE BAD NIGHT – Placed the winner last week in a lower conditioned race. Moves up in class this week and faces a tough task here. He'll be a higher price.

6 – REGGIE RAIDER – His best races in recent weeks have been when he either gets out of the gate or gets involved early. From this post, he may have to leave the gate to have a shot to win.

7 – BELIEVEINTHESPIRIT – Finished 7th last time after a slow start. Has gate speed, and seems to be better when he uses it, but he has a bad post today and there is plenty of early speed to his left at the gate.

8 – TARPORT ANDY – Rawlings chose this one to drive last week over several other choices, but the horse took to the back of the pack and raced conservatively. Today he draws another bad post, and doesn't appear to have much early speed, so he'll likely sit at the back again today. However, I do expect him to have a little more punch coming home.

SELECTIONS: 4-2-1-6

RACE 5 – NW 3500 PACE

1 – STARHIMUP – Made a break near the half mile pole last week and was extremely far back at the 5/8 mark. Put in a huge rally in the final quarter mile to get third. If he stays on stride today, he should be a big factor with a chance to win.

2 – WARP FACTOR THREE – Crossed the wire first last time but was disqualified and placed fourth. Obviously he has the speed to win at a higher level, so he should be good with the drop in class this week.

3 – BROOKLYN FLIGHT – Has been putting in consistent miles lately but still hasn't won in a while. Was bet to 5-2 last time, but look for him to be a much higher price today.

4 – FOUR CARD MAJOR – Just missed in here last time, after battling first-over. He should be able to work out a cover trip this week and could be effective with the right route.

5 – R N NATE – Showed some early speed last time and raced well, closing late to get second at a price of 7-1. He may be a bit higher today in price, but has a chance to be just as competitive as last week.

6 – CRANKIN' IT UP – Picked up his first win in quite a while last time, and gets to stay in the same class this week. That was only his third start in the barn, so he is definitely now finding his best stride. Could easily repeat.

7 – FINDING TERROR – Hasn't been within 10 lengths of the winner in any of his last 5 starts, so he'll likely be a longshot in here.

8 – IMIDEAL HANOVER – Gets a class drop to the bottom level and should be good here, despite a poor post draw. However, Pantaleano chose off this one today in favor of #6, so that needs to be considered here. Still, I think this one can be a contender for the win.

9 – THREE RIVERS DELL – Comes off two straight good miles, but gets the worst of the post draw today. Seems to be better when he gets out of the gate, but the last time he had post 9, he took to the back of the pack.

SELECTIONS: 1-6-8-4

RACE 6 – NW 7500 PACE

1 – ROYALTYHASARRIVED – Drops in class today to the lowest level he's seen in a while. Needs a quicker start from the inside post, but even if he gets away mid-pack, he can still be a contender here.

2 – GD WESTERN JOE – Changed his racing style last time and raced from behind, putting in a strong closing effort and finishing third. The big question is what racing style he'll try this week. He's chased his stablemate Real Peace in two straight starts, and will face him again.

3 – WELL OF FIRE – Newcomer has been facing similar fields at Harrah's Philadelphia in the last 3 starts, and comes off his best mile in the last 3 weeks. Won in a lower level, and appeared to be overmatched until last week, when he only lost by a half length. Has a shot in here for his new connections.

4 – REAL PEACE – Moved up to this class last week after a huge mile in a NW8. Repeated his strong performance with a 1:52.3 win on a sloppy track by more than 3 lengths. He's in the same class today and should be the favorite to win again.

5 – STIRLING ESCORT – Finished 5th in this class last week, following a 6th place performance the previous week. Shows two top-3 finishes on the card, but both were in a lower level.

6 – SAM HILL – Returns after a trip to Ohio, where he had a bad post and no real chance to win. Has a much better shot today. Look for him to try for the front early.

7 – KINGS BEACH – Raced well and picked up a win last time, but he jumps two classes this week. He'll likely be a longshot.

8 – SAND STERLING – Makes his second start for a new barn, and his first at The Meadows. He's drawn a tough post and doesn't have much early speed, so he'll likely sit at the back and try to see what he can get late in the mile.

9 – BOBBY K HILL – This one makes the race a bit tougher to handicap. He has the speed to contend for the win, but gets the worst post today. The big question is whether or not he will try to challenge early, which could not only push him a bit hard, but also push whoever he challenges.

SELECTIONS: 4-1-6-9

RACE 7 – 7000-8000 CLAIMING PACE

1 – MANOLITO MONTOYA – Not a bad effort last time, but still hasn't been in the top-2 in a while. Draws inside again this week, but the inside posts don't seem to favor him, as he has been getting away mid-pack at best.

2 – STARRY NITE TEEN – Hasn't been in the top-3 in his last four starts, and has lost his last two by a combined 36+ lengths. He'll likely be a longshot in here today.

3 – T'S ELECTRIC – Yet another fronrunning effort last week where he just got caught late. Hasn't been worse than second in a while, and there isn't much mystery as to how he's going to race each week. He's a factor once again for the win.

4 – FINAL JUSTICE – Only lost by 5 lengths last time, his closest finish in over a month. Drops to the 7000 level today and should draw some attention today.

5 – BERGERAC – Never got involved from an outside post last time. He's a closer, so having a better post will keep him closer to the action today. He deserves to be a high price, but could be on the superfecta ticket.

6 – DANCE LIFE WELL – Came a long way with a tough outside trip to get second last time and nearly won. Has some early speed as well, but seems to be better racing from the back. He'll be passing horses late once again.

7 – CABO REAL – Yet another long distance loss last time. Hasn't been close in a while, so he will be a high price.

8 – IT'S A DEW THING – Stayed with the pack and only lost by 3 lengths last time. Not a bad line, and shows a win in this class three starts ago. However, he moves to a bad post today, the worst he's drawn in a while.

9 – LOUIE'S THE SHARK – Finished second in this class three starts back, but his effort last time was not strong. He'll need a better final quarter today, and of course the post doesn't help matters.

10 – CAPITAL ACCOUNT – Another third place finish last time, his third in the last four starts. Draws the second tier, so he will need the inside horses to step out of the gate so that he can hold some position. He doesn't show racing on the outside much, so he may take a conservative inside route here.

SELECTIONS: 3-6-1-10

RACE 8 – NW 11,500 PACE

1 – NITRO SEELSTER – Hasn't picked up a win in over two months, but is always a factor thanks to his gate speed. He's won in this class several times this year, so you can't ever count him out.

2 – JD'S MACCA LODGE – Took about 6 weeks off and returns to today after a winning qualifier. Looked good in that effort, but may need a start or two to get back into top race shape.

3 – RUFFLE UP – Moves up in class this week, earning a shot against the tougher group after winning twice in the last three starts. Hasn't raced in this level for a while,

4 – UNLOCKED – Comes off a huge mile at Northfield, coming from 9th and nearly getting the win. Won in a lower level two starts ago, so he's in very good form right now. He's up in class a bit today, but has raced at the top levels before, so you can't count him out either.

5 – ATTA BOY DAN – Has won 4 in a row overall, and 5 in a row in this class. He's just too sharp right now to pick against. The only "negative" is that he didn't race last week, but he probably needed the week off and it shouldn't hurt him.

6 – ARTHUR PENDRAGON – Stablemate of #5, these two could easily take the top two spots today. This one is coming off a win in a lower level, but he raced in this level once and only lost by a half length, so he should be a contender here.

7 – KNOCKING AROUND – Finished second in this class two starts ago, then finished a very solid fourth in the top class last week. The outside post is the big obstacle today.

SELECTIONS: 5-6-4-1

RACE 9 – HOLIDAY CLAIMING SERIES

1 – DEALIN DAN – Moves into a claimer today for his third start back after time off. He has raced well in both starts, so he definitely has a chance here, especially with the inside post.

2 – NOBETTORPLACETOBE – Newcomer has had a long couple of years, as this is his 81st start in the last 2 seasons. He comes off an effort that can be excused by the outside post on a half mile track. He hasn't won in a while, but has been close in some of his recent starts.

3 – LOW CARD – Has had terrible posts the last couple of starts, so you can ignore both of those lines. Finished fifth in his first local start, but just hasn't been sharp since early November.

4 – STONEHOUSE ADAM – This one has been well traveled lately, as this will be the fourth track he's raced at in the last 2 months. Makes his second start for a new trainer today, and should improve a bit off last week's line, which wasn't bad.

5 – DOCTOR RJ – Comes off his best line in a while, a relatively easy win last week when he used some early speed. He'll likely try a similar route today and should be a big factor in here, especially if he races like he did last week.

6 – ALBIONKINGINFINITO – Moves back up in class after getting parked in the 7000 level from a bad post. Hasn't drawn inside post 6 in a couple of months, so he'll likely be a high price in here.

7 – DAFINATY – Moves to a claimer today for the first time. A recent purchase, he's now had 2 starts in the Burke Stable. Two weeks ago he put in a tough performance on the outside at Northfield, but last week he faded after cutting the 3/4. He'll need to improve a bit to win in here today.

8 – MADE WELL – Dropped to the 10,000 class last week but had a bad post. Made the most of it, with a 5th place finish, so he fits in this group well. However, he draws the outside post again today, so he'll likely sit at the back of the pack and see what he can get late.

SELECTIONS: 5-2-7-1

RACE 10 – NW 5 TROT

1 – TRAK – He's now won 3 in a row, including a win last week after moving up in class from the conditioned claimer. He could find this class to be a bit tough, but he's certainly in top form right now.

2 – MAYFAIR WELL – Finished 9th in his local debut, but then was scratched last week. He'll be a high price in here today.

3 – STRITCH – Both of his starts since joining the Stillings barn have been very good. He moved up to this level last week and only lost by a half length, so he's definitely a player in this group today.

4 – PERFECT SUMMER K – Last week's winner in this class, she gets to stay in and try for another victory. Gate speed always makes her a factor, and she could easily work out the same trip as she did last week, which got her to the winners circle.

5 – SCRAMBLE CAMP – A good closer, he came from 6th to get a strong second place finish last week. Has improved his finish each week in the last four starts, so he's definitely headed in the right direction. Charlino will drive this week, his fourth different driver in the last 4 starts.

6 – DANCE HALL BOUNCER – After being parked two straight weeks, I was expecting a strong effort out of this one last time, but even though he was able to stay to the inside last time, he still trotted home with a 31+ final quarter.

7 – RAILEEGOTAHOLDONME – Moves to an outside post this week, and may actually enjoy the move, as he can use some of his gate speed today, which is difficult to do from the inside post. He was bet to 3-1 last week, and should be a similar price today.

8 – JOHNY VICTORY – Has had some bad posts in recent starts at Northfield, and gets the worst post in here today. Both of his races have been good, so he's not out of the question here if the trip works out. He's a sleeper that could bring a decent price.

SELECTIONS: 5-7-1-8

RACE 11 – HOLIDAY CLAIMING PACE

1 – LIMA RAIDER – Has won four of five at Northfield and draws the inside post here. Should be a big factor and will take a lot of play showing all of those wins.

2 – FAIRYTALE PRINCE – Newcomer for the Burke Stable, has been racing out east with limited success. Shows a win at Yonkers two starts ago, but the other starts were 5th place or lower finishes. We'll have to see how he fits here.

3 – SIR JACK – Had a lot of success here a couple of seasons ago, but returns today and goes in for the claiming price. Hasn't raced in over a month so he's likely going to need a start or two.

4 – CATHERINE'SDIAMOND – Made a costly break in the first turn last week and was forced to race from behind rather than get to the front. That was in the 7000 level, so he's back up in class this week. This is his second start for the new barn, so expect improvement today.

5 – THISWAYORTHEHIGHWAY – Didn't fare as well in this level last week as he had been doing in the 7000 level. Still, he's worth another shot, especially given the fact that Rawlings chose to drive this one over #4.

6 – R T LANGE – Made an outside move last time but tired, which wasn't unexpected in his first start after taking 6 months off. Should be a bit stronger this week in his second appearance, but still may need another start or two.

7 – TWIN B WRANGLER – Made a big move last time but couldn't clear the leader, then faded to fifth in the stretch. Still, only lost by 3 lengths despite the outside trip. Gets a new driver this week, as Palone opts to drive #2 over this one.

8 – LOUIE'S SO BOSSY – Hasn't finished higher than 6th since being claimed, and today he drops in class from the 12,500 level to the 10,000 ranks. Should fit well in here, even with a bad post.

9 – JK ONAROLL – Claimed last week, and now joins his fourth barn in as many starts. Draws the outside post this week, so he'll likely be a longer shot.

SELECTIONS: 1-2-5-4

RACE 12 – NW 3500 TROT

1 – CLAIRE AND KENNY – Moves to a much better post this week, so that's in his favor. Hasn't been better than 6th in a while, hopefully he can improve his finish with the better post.

2 – FIREBALL'S PRAYERS – Has tried the front end in two straight starts, but hasn't been able to hold on in the stretch. Needs a quicker final quarter. Last week he backed the half off to 1:00.1 and still got caught late.

3 – WHAMBAMTHANKUMAAM – She was a top-level trotter earlier in the year but has struggled in recent weeks. Last week was her best effort in a while, so hopefully it's a sign that she has turned the corner and will be back in top form soon.

4 – UPFRONT CHARLIEBOY – Ignore the last start due to a second tier starting spot. He finished second in this class two starts ago, so he's definitely still a factor in here, thanks to a better post today.

5 – BREEDLOVE – Drops in class from the NW5500 level, where he had a bad post last week. Finished third in the higher level two starts ago, and was just a neck away from a win in this class three starts ago. He deserves a lot of play in here today.

6 – CHIPARIFFIC – Put in a very good closing effort last time. His last three starts have all been good, so he's definitely one to consider in here this week. Mostly races from behind, so he'll be looking to get to the outside and draw some cover at some point today.

7 – ROCKEFELLER LINDY – Hasn't been better than 6th in his last four starts, but has taken a lot of air on the outside the last two weeks. May try for the early lead this afternoon from this post.

8 – ICE HOCKEY HANOVER – Showed some late trot last week, rallying to get third. Today, he gets yet another outside post, as he's had no luck with the post draw lately. He'll likely sit at the back again this week and see what he can get late.

9 – HA TAYLOR – Has some gate speed, but may be hard-pressed to get to the front today from post 9. If he sits at the back, he'll have too far to come to get there, so the prospects aren't great today thanks to the post.

SELECTIONS: 3-5-7-2

RACE 13 – 7000-8000 CLAIMING PACE

1 – BETTER TO BELIEVE – Kind of a mystery today, coming off a scratch last time. Has been off since November 26, and takes a drop in class from the 17,000 conditioned claimers to the 7000 straight claimer today. Could fit well here.

2 – INCREDIBLE DRAGON – Gets a better post this week but will likely be a longshot once again, as he hasn't been in the top-5 in quite a while

3 – DRUNK ON YOU – This one was used twice during the mile last week, leaving the gate and then making a second move in the third quarter. Wasn't able to pass anyone in the final quarter, but didn't let anyone pass, either. It was a strong effort, given the trip. Should have a better chance this week from a better post.

4 – LUCKY MILLIONAIRE – Another double-digit loss last week, so this one will be a high price once again.

5 – COLOSSAL – Comes off a good win last week, wire-to-wire. Stays in the same class this week, so logically he's going to be a big player in here today. May want to control the mile again because of his success last week. Note that Wilder chose this one over #10.

6 – EAGLE FORD – Finished 9th last week in a higher level, drops in class this week. This will be his first start in the bottom level, so we'll get an idea today of how he will fit in this group.

7 – HICKORY LITTLE RED – Drops back to the 7000 level this week after a decent 4th place effort in a higher class. Won his last start in this class, back on November 17, but that was from a better post. Hasn't fared well from outside posts, even in this class

8 – TSM CRUSIN USA – Drops to a claimer this week. Has been struggling in the bottom conditioned class in recent weeks, so hopefully this drop will allow him to find some success. Draws poorly, so he'll likely still be a bit of a price in here.

9 – SKULL OF ROSES – Should improve a bit today in his second start back after a lengthy layoff. However, he draws the worst post, which will not make things easy.

10 – EPIC UNION – Dropped to this level last week and instantly went to the winner's circle, despite a very tough outside trip. It was a strong effort, and if he can work out the right trip today, he can repeat the victory.

SELECTIONS: 5-10-3-7-9