

THE 2016 TRIPLE CROWN

by Jean Derench

I am absolutely salivating! To have to wait thru 13 races on the Gulfstream Park program before the 14th race, the Florida Derby, is cruel and unusual punishment! But they are going to milk it for all it is worth, to be sure.

MOHAYMEN and NYQUIST...I am absolutely bursting with anticipation. My pick, Mohaymen. Liked him last year, loved him in the Holy Bull and he's just gotten better with each step onto the track. Junior Alvarado will be riding and Kiaren McLaughlin is the trainer, who I think is long overdue a Kentucky Derby win.

Others include Ohio-bred SAWYERS MICKEY (trainer P Walder and Jockey S Spieth). This bay son of Flatter is still a maiden and tho he is stakes placed, he hasn't done anything as far as I am concerned to even be in this field. But, I've been made a fool of before... Anyway, he was second in Thistledowns' Juvenile last year (against Ohio bred) and 3rd in the recent Battaglia which I am sure prompted the owners to push the trainer to push the horse. I get it, I really do. If I had a three year old with the slightest amount of talent, I'd be doing the same thing.

FELLOWSHIP has seen the backside of Moheymen in his last two starts but since he's won over \$450,000 he needs attention paid to him. (Jockey J Lezcano, Trainer Stanley Gold). He is a stakes winner in his own right, having won a restricted stakes last year and placing in a few others. The trainer has a way with turning out winners at Gulfstream so this son on Awesome of Course and this guy should be running at the end (the horse, not the trainer) and will be worth a bet for third.

MAJESTO (J Castellano, Jockey; G Delgado, trainer) broke his maiden in his last start at the end of February over this course and that was over a mile and a sixteenth in which he came on at the end to best Dig Deep who was well-fancied. Majesto is a son of Horse of the Year distance loving Tiznow. The dam was not raced.

COPINGAWAY (trainer J Mejia and jockey MA Vasquez) has started a whopping 14 times with a single victory to show for it. His one and only victory came last year and all of his starts have been at Gulfstream (or GP "West") and he comes into the Florida Derby off a 9th place finish in a turf starter optional claiming. Brother Derek is his sire. Not seeing any stars around this guy.

CHOVANAES broke his maiden on Feb 26th at Gulfstream and that was after 3 unplaced starts. He did have an excuse in each of those events, I guess, in that he was far outside His race was a claiming event and he was entered for \$50,000. He did win by 5 lengths on the front end and the race was a mile. (Trainer J Navarro, Jockey E J Zayas). The hope here I would guess is that he provides a quick pace. Colonel John is the sire with non-winner Joyance (by Pulpit) the dam.

TAKEITTO THEEDGE (jockey Tyler Gaffalione, trainer Dale Romans) whose only start was a month ago but he did win, running on the front end and being ridden out at the end of the 7 furlong event by just over 7 lengths, and he did get an impressive speed figure. Broken Vow is the sire and he was 9 for 14 in his career and could win graded stakes at a mile and an eighth. Dam is Nijinsky's winning daughter Wedding Vow. I'll pay attention to him.

FASHIONABLE FREDDIE (trainer Nick Zito and Jockey Nik Juarez). This is another son of Tizway and he's out of the graded stakes winning mare High Button Shows by Carson City. Zito knows the way to Churchill Downs and I would dearly love to see him back in the headlines with another good one, but I don't see it in this horse. He's 1 for 5 and the win happened last year at Delaware Park in a mile and seventy yard maiden event in which he lead from start to finish. Nice effort but it's been followed by 3 unimpressive races at Gulfstream over the winter. Last out he was 5th of 8 in an allowance event, behind winner Azar, a Todd Pletcher trainee. Pletcher amazingly has nothing entered in the Florida Derby.

ISOFASS (trainer F Abbott III and jockey Julien Leparoux) broke his maiden at Laurel last year, being up front most of the way in the mile and a sixteenth event. He's raced a total of 4 times and in his last start he was third to Pletcher's Battery in allowance optional claiming event at a mile and an eighth. He did race forwardly first wrestling for the lead with Fashionable Freddie and then with the eventual winner but when a chart says "gave way" I kind of think the distance ability isn't there. So for this horse, I went to the pedigree and found he's a son of graded stakes winner, the deceased Rodman (by Malibu Moon) who had front running ability. Adding up his pedigree and race record and current work outs, I came to the determination that he's running for a part of the purse but it's not going to be a win or a placing. That Julien Leparoux is aboard should help.

NYQUIST I have spoken about before. He leaves his home turf of California after upping his record to 6 for 6 when he won his first three year old start, an impressive San Vicente win, which was a graded event at 7 furlongs in which he defeated Exaggerator. You've got to respect the Eclipse Award he owns for his two year old season and he's training great. They could have stayed home and waited for the Santa Anita Derby but since there is a million dollar bonus offered to any Fasig-Tipton March graduate and Nyquist is one, that was the bottom line as to why he's here.

Lots of speed in this one even if the betting will come down to the top two, both unbeaten colts, Nyquist and Mohaymen. I see grey in front, what about you?

As a side note, one of my favorite jockeys has called it a career. Calvin Borel has announced his retirement. The rider of three Kentucky Derby winners in four years was an exemplary figure in racing with an electric personality and passion for horses. Street Sense, Mine That Bird and Super Saver gave him his Derby wins and he won the Preakness (over Derby winner Mine That Bird and with American Pharoah's daddy, Pioneer ofthenile in the beaten field) with an unforgettable ride on the filly Rachel Alexandra (who would be named Horse of the Year as well as Champion Three Year Old filly) as well as the Kentucky Oaks by over 20 lengths. Thank you, Calvin, for a long and successful career with character and pizzazz.