



2017

In Focus: Charles Town Classic Day



THE RACING BIZ.com

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The Racing Biz

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RACE 11 - CHARLES TOWN CLASSIC

Grade 2, Purse \$1.25 million, post time 5:35

Ninth running, 4yo and up, 1 1/8 miles

The field

#1 Stanford (8-5) – Defending champ arrives off a track-record effort in the Challenger at TAM and will have regular pilot John Velazquez up. The three to run back from that event all finished fourth in their follow-up. A repeat of his better efforts puts him in the mix, but note two-back defeat to Imperative, who's here, and with other speed types signed on, the trip looks a little more complicated than last year's did.

#2 Sunny Ridge (6-1) – Formful Jersey-bred brings his rider and enters in career-best form. Show horse from last won a G3 in follow-up while recording 119 Beyer. Pace scenario could work to this one's favor, with speed softened up, emphasizing his late kick. Will need best to win here, but price might be right.

#3 Gangster (10-1) – Almost two years since this guy won a dirt race, and last out eighth in the Big 'Cap doesn't give much to hang your hat on. But trainer O'Neill's no dummy, and like to see pilot Mario Gutierrez along, too. This feels like an awfully heavy lift, though.

#4 Matt King Coal (8-1) – Win machine Linda Rice's entrant figures to be a forward factor early and will need a huge effort to be there late. Karamanos stays aboard a runner who was life-and-death last out in the Harrison Johnson. Hasn't done much wrong in his career, and fourth-place finish in last year's Wood Memorial suggests he can compete at top levels.

#5 Imperative (3-1) – 2014 winner makes fourth straight CT Classic start and always runs well over the strip. Lack of pace in last year's event blunted his rally, but that seems unlikely to be a concern here. Last out was a train wreck in the Big 'Cap, but note that two back he pipped the favorite in the Poseidon. Look for him to run a good one here.

#6 War Story (5-1) – Well-traveled Northern Afleet gelding has never met a windmill he wouldn't tilt at: in his last 10 races, he's been 94-1 or higher three times and more than 40-1 on two other occasions. He won't be anything like those odds here, and note presence of ship-in rider Tyler Gaffalione. Will need a big one to compete here.

#7 Bodhisattva (15-1) – Oft-impatient trainer Jose Corrales switches riders here to CT veteran Xavier Perez, and if history holds, the plan here will be to take back, and then take farther back, and then unleash a run. This guy's best efforts are pretty good – including a recent win over Page McKenney in the Campbell – but a minor share likely to be his top end here.

#8 Cautious Giant (20-1) – Stretching-out sprinter figures to be another forward factor in this event, but best results in 24-race career have been allowance wins. Trainer Radosevich strikes at 26 percent first off the claim.

THE PICKS

1. **#1 - Stanford** - Defending Classic champ won prep stakes at Tampa Bay handily last month after gritty second-place effort behind Imperative in the \$400,000 Poseidon Stakes at GP. Has raced sparingly since winning this event one year ago, but brings solid 6-5-0 slate and \$1.3 million bankroll for trainer Todd Pletcher.
2. **#5 - Imperative** - Former Classic hero makes fourth straight appearance in this event and boasts one win, one second and one fourth-place finish in three previous tries. \$1.34 million earned in those outings represents 60 percent of his career bankroll from 37 starts. Edged Stanford in a thriller in the Poseidon Stakes but then was ninth in Grade I, \$750,000 Santa Anita Handicap for new conditioner Robert Hess, Jr.
3. **#2 - Sunny Ridge** - NJ-bred has opened the campaign with a pair of stakes victories over the inner dirt track at AQU for trainer Jason Servis and rates the best chance to upset the top pair. Captured the Grade III Withers Stakes over the Big A inner track one year ago, but only owns two wins in nine tries elsewhere.
4. **#4 - Matt King Coal** - Like Sunny Ridge, this Linda Rice trainee arrives in good form, having won two straight at Laurel Park while displaying speed and grittiness. Has trained well at Belmont Park leading up this event and will provide a speed presence early as he gets another serious test for class in only second graded stakes outing.



RACE 9 – \$85,000 ROBERT HILTON MEMORIAL STAKES

3yo, 7 furlongs, post time 4:28

THE PICKS

1. **# 3 - Cool Arrow (9-2)** - Triple Crown nominee perhaps did not like added distance of two previous stakes against three-year-olds this season at TP and FG, including 10th-place effort in Grade II Risen Star won by likely Kentucky Derby starter Girvin. But Joe Sharp trainee ended freshman campaign with sharp score in the \$300,000 Springboard Mile at Remington Park and appears to have found a good spot to regain his winning ways.
2. **# 1 - Poseidon's Prize (6-1)** - Homebred arrives off sharp score in two-turn allowance against state-breds for trainer Ollie Figgins, III, and draws the rail for his second try against open stakes foes after modest fifth-place finish in Miracle Wood at Laurel Park in February. Owns three wins in five starts over the track - more than his rivals combined.
3. **# 9 - High Roller (7-2)** - Maryland-based colt reverts to sprint after two fourth-place efforts in open stakes at Laurel Park in route races. He edged O Dionysus in the Frank Whitely Stakes at Laurel Park at this distance and was fourth in the Miracle Wood, one spot and two lengths ahead of Poseidon's Prize.
4. **# 7 - Power Walker (10-1)** - One thing Charles Town fans know is to pay close attention to anything that trainer Tom Amoss sends here. This son of Stroll arrives off a solid maiden special weight score at Delta Downs and makes his stakes debut in a tough spot, but Amoss did not send for the workout.

RACE 10 - \$100,000 SUGAR MAPLE STAKES

Fillies and mares, 4yo and up, 7 furlongs, post time 4:58

THE PICKS

1. **# 4 - Mia Torri (8-5)** - Makes second appearance over the strip having been a solid second in the G3 Charles Town Oaks last fall and exits the Grade 2 Inside Information at GP at this distance. Captured the \$100,000 Sunshine Millions Distaff two starts back and previously won ALW race at GP in her first start for trainer Jorge Navarro.
2. **# 3 - Lake Ponchatrain (15-1)** - Displays a fondness for the local strip, with seven wins in 16 tries here. Has won both of her starts this year for trainer Ernest Haynes, one locally. Most of her success has been at 6 1/2-furlongs, but has one win and second-place finish in two tries at this distance.
3. **# 6 - Kinsley Kisses (7-5)** - Daughter of Congrats won her seasonal debut at Gulfstream Park in sharp fashion for trainer Todd Pletcher and owns two wins in four tries at the distance, although this will be her first start over the strip. Finished seventh in the Grade I Test Stakes last summer at Saratoga and was third in three other graded stakes outings.
4. **# 1 - Riveter Gloria (12-1)** - Local distaffer owns a 6-3-9 slate in 27 starts over the track and has never raced anywhere else. Won latest local allowance in wire-to-wire fashion and will likely try similar tactic here. Finished modest fifth in Handicap won by Lake Ponchatrain here in January.



Charitable Annuity. Photo by Coady Photography.

RACE 12 - \$50,000 CONFUCIUS SAY STAKES

WV-bred, 3yo and up, 7 furlongs, post time 6:10

THE PICKS

1. **# 8 - Charitable Annuity (7-2)** - Former West Virginia Breeders Classic champion returns to his home track where he has won 12 of 19 starts for trainer James W. Casey and owner Mark Russell of Russell Road fame. Has spent much of the past eight months in route races in Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia and cuts back to a two-turn sprint distance where he owns three wins in six tries.
2. **# 9 - Slip the Cable (3-1)** - Last year's West Virginia Breeders Classic hero makes his seasonal debut in a tough spot but off a series of sharp workouts for trainer Jeff Runco. Owns seven wins in 10 starts over the track and is 5-for-6 at this distance and could be poised to prevail off the bench following a quartet of "bullet" works.
3. **# 3 - Hear the Chatter (6-1)** - Talented homebred for former jockey Kristy Petty has won 10 of 21 starts over the track and sports solid 3-2-2 slate at this distance. John A. Casey trainee won his most recent outing here against allowance foes in solid clocking but gets acid test against top pair.
4. **# 10 - Follow the Notion (5-1)** - Owned, bred and trained by Gary Williams, Jr., this talented homebred has stellar closing kick and used it to

capture the Onion Juice Breeders Classic here last fall at this distance. Sports seven wins in 17 local tries, but has won six of nine starts at this distance although he was later disqualified from one of those scores.

\$100,000 GUARANTEED PICK 4

- Race 9 - 1 & 3
- Race 10 - 3 & 4
- Race 11 - 1, 2 & 5
- Race 12 - 8 & 9
- \$48 cost on a \$1 wager

OTHER STAKES SELECTIONS

Race 2 - Russell Road Stakes

Nicaradalic Rocks, Shaft of Light, Rockinn On Bye

Race 3 - Handicap

Roman Officer, War and Thunder, Woodland Walk

Race 5 - Handicap

Nay's Back, In Mid Heir, Sarge's Daughter

Race 6 - Coin Collector Stakes

Aaron's Tap, Cuttin Edge Tech, Hot Mic

Race 7 - It's Binn Too Long Stakes

Moonlit Song, Lies and Scandals, Unaquoi

Race 8 - Original Gold

T Rex Express, Charitable Heart, Meemaw's Heart

Cover photo by Coady Photography.