



"NICK'S PICKS"

PENN MILE EDITION

JUSTIFY REIGNS BUT NEVER POORS

It's just not suppose to work this way. From his soggy skip along the rail under a three-inch cloudburst at Churchill Downs in the Kentucky Derby to his foggy duel with Good Magic up the Pimlico backstretch after five days of solid rainfall in Baltimore, nothing impacts the supreme performances of Justify. Should he win the Belmont Stakes for the Triple Crown, there's a chance he could become too valuable to race and retire with six races, all wins. As a two year old, Bravazo has started in as many races as Justify has in his career.

Much has been said, including by this poor horseplayer, about this three-year old finding a bottom, a bounce or a bad break. Slow closing Derby fractions and closing Preakness competitors finally ranging up in the Preakness may give rise to angles that Justify a gloomy ambush from one of the gathering adversaries awaiting him in New York. From a handicapping standpoint, you could understand trying to have luck find a way to beat him, yet in the end, great horses make their own luck. Luck, once defined for me, is when opportunity meets talent. He's proven talent, so all he'll need is opportunity. Don't expect the appearance of the sun to make a difference. Remember that before the Triple Crown he did race impressively in California.

I backed Chad's Brown-trained Good Magic in the first two legs of the Triple Crown, a thoroughbred that ran nobly against "the beast". I'm still waiting for 1250 pound-plus Justify to sink in the mud along Churchill's rail and/or breathe hard after the fierce backstretch Preakness duel. He bettered my excellent selection, first on the inside and then on the outside.

Justify's impressive outings could appear to make his Bob Baffert's training efforts appear as if he was a glorified caretaker. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Here's a fascinating fundamental truth about thoroughbreds. They can't talk. Any good trainer requires the ability to observe and sense the subtle characteristics, movements, eating habits and any other biologicals of their assignments. Baffert certainly has the gift of getting into his horses' heads. The bonus for the racing public is that Baffert conveys his horse's thoughts through the medium of wit and does that so very well. He could explain horsemanship to kindergardeners with success. He does it to the media all the time.

The Triple Drown has happened twice but not in this century or the last. One hundred twenty years ago in 1898, all three legs were run on off tracks. Weather also swept the three classic legs in 1885, a half century before the event was even named. In 1912, the Kentucky Derby and Preakness were run on off tracks when the Belmont Stakes wasn't run. The long range forecast at distribution time of the Nicks Picks calls for a 20% chance of precipitation in New York on Belmont Stakes day. A chance for reign is far better.

PENN NATIONAL FEATURING THE PENN MILE**RACE 1**

3	AMY'S EXCHANGE	Usually pass on veteran maiden claimers but Ami's been close.
2	C. VICTOR	
5	BATTLE OF DUNKIRK	

RACE 2

5	DATA DRIVEN	The two coupled entries here could make it tough for a New York soloist.
2	THEY SHOT SONNY	
3	HEARTFLIX	

RACE 3 - \$100,000 NEW START STAKES (PA)

7	SMOKINPADDYLASSIE	The plight of starters from NY is a feature to pay attention to thru the card.
4	BRONX BEAUTY	
5	VIOLENT TIMES	

RACE 4 - \$100,000 LYPHARD (PA)

9	GREAT SOUL	Three coupled entries face a proven winner trained by Proctor.
1	LINE OF MUSIC	
3C	IMPLY	

RACE 5 - \$100,000 DANZIG (PA)

2	MIGNIGHT POKER	PA-Bred sprint has three undefeated and five that won last start. Not bad.
4	SMOKIN NITRO	
8	SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS	

RACE 6 - \$100,000 PENN LADIES DASH

8	JUST TALKIN	Two classy lady turf sprinters send nearly all to double-digit odds.
6	MORTICIA	
4	ASSAIL	

RACE 7 - \$200,000 PENN OAKS

1A	THEWAYIAM	Motion filly scratched as Preakness day favorite seeks better spot.
4	RAUCOUS	
6	GOODTHINGSTAKETIME	

RACE 8 - PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNOR'S CUP

3	OAK BLUFFS	Eppler gelding back in 2 weeks to face BC sprinter ready for firmer going.
12	PURE SENSATION	
8	RAPID DAN	

RACE 9 - \$500,000 PENN MILE (G2)

3	MURAUD	Not going to get an 8-1 winner like Nicks Picks gave you Derby day.
6	HAWKISH	
8	HE'S BANKABLE	

RACE 10

5	POINT OF VISION	Have no idea on place pick name, I just like the horse.
8	GIZMOTHEMOGWAIJEDI	
7	EL CHAVO	

SELECTED SATURDAY STAKES**RACE 9 BELMONT - \$200,000 PENNINE RIDGE (G3)**

3	CATHOLIC BOY	J.Tom won 2 races Friday, and prepared to switch to turf. Analyze impressive.
4	ANALYZE IT	
2	HAWKISH	

RACE 9 SANTA ANITA - \$400,000 BEHOLDER MILE (G1)

6	UNIQUE BELLA	Redemption effort back at home for "Bella" after Oaklawn setback.
4	PARADISE WOODS	
5	VALE DORI	

RACE 7 SANTA ANITA - \$200,000 SNOW CHIEF (CA)

2	HARDBOOT	Two Acclamation sired face Hardboot now back south after Golden win.
1	TAKE THE ONE O ONE	
7	HUDDLE	

RACE 10 CHURCHILL - \$100,000 ARISTIDES (G3)

1	SMART SPREE	Look for better strategy from "Spree" in Count Fleet rematch with Wilbo.
3	WILBO	
5	MR CROW	

RACE 11 CHURCHILL - \$75,000 MIGHTY BEAU

3	LONG ON VALUE	First '18 start for veteran "Value". Hogy scratched Preakness weekend.
10	HOGY	
9	KID PERFECT	

RACE 10 MONMOUTH - \$60,000 TALE OF THE CAT

7	STRIKE ME DOWN	Lightly raced Motion colt a slight edge in deep, balanced nine horse field.
9	HAZIT	
5	ONE FAST RIDE	

RACE 5 ARLINGTON - \$75,000 ADDISON CAMMACK

3	GONEGHOST	VA-bred jockey Chris Emigh finds 6 furlongs a bit more viable.
2	RECOUNT	
6	DEVILEYE	

RACE 7 ARLINGTON - \$75,000 ISAAC MURPHY

6	PUNTSVILLE	Race named for Afro-Am jockey features '17 runner up and '16 winner.
8	DANDY GAL	
4	CHURCH ROAD	

RACE 8 WOODBINE - \$175,000 CONNOUGHT CUP (G2)

7	FORGE	Mott not likely to come north unless he liked Forge's Maker's Mile try.
2	CONQUEST PANTHERA	
1	CARIBOU CLUB	

LAUREL RACE 10 - FEATURE \$42,000 ALLOWANCE

2	BEST YES	Good field here, but frontrunning bug won't beat Bailes/Dowell here.
7	CLEVER TRIAD	
9	CHINQUAPIN	

