Race 1: Here we go on a special Labor Day Monday card at Gulfstream Park. The day begins on the right foot for sure, given the turf-bound maiden special weight field in the 12:05 ET opener. I like the Lisa Lewis-trained High Deff for the win as this Sea The Stars (don’t have many by that powerhouse Euro sire in this part of the country) colt returns off an impossible debut trip in late July. It’s hard for me to articulate just how tough a trip High Deff endured, from his lack of position to his 5 to 6 wide slog around the far turn. Todd Pletcher, meanwhile, sends out Precise, a Quality Road firster with Victor Lebron. Precise’s dam went 1 for 5 on the turf and he has two older turf winning siblings.

Race 2: I’ve mentioned a couple of times in this space that the Wholebodemeister maiden race from July 11 is a field worth following. And to date, that race has produced a whopping four next-out winners – two won on the dirt while Fouzia and I am the Boss scored over turf. Here’s to a fifth winner from that race as Maystart returns for trainer Kelsey Danner in Monday’s 2nd. This Upstart filly broke legitimately slow and was basically outrun till the homestretch. She showed a tad bit of interest in the final furlong and should improve in her second career start for an excellent barn.

Race 3: I believe Monday’s 3rd race is the first one mile dirt affair for two-year-olds in SoFla for 2020. Naturally, the four fillies with raceday experience are all stretching out in distance: three return off a six-furlong race August 8 while Happy Constitution, my selection, exits the seven furlong Con Lima race July 31. I like that Happy Constitution ran well in an all-out chase behind the 3/5 favorite Con Lima (she returned Thursday and was second in the PG Johnson Stakes at Saratoga.) I prefer Village Queen of the rematch fillies from 8/8. Village Queen never factored behind perfect-trip winning Dauntless Gal but I love the way she finished in the last furlong or so (she started to motor too late.) Highland Moon didn’t run that well as the big odds-on favorite and returns for a barn that is 0/5 with their second-time starting (sprint to route) stretchouts over the dirt. Lovin Livin broke slowly from the rail en route to an outrun sixth. She retains leading rider Edgard Zayas (check mark) and returns for Ken McPeek, a trainer whose young horses tend to improve with experience.