

# The Wizard's Spotlight Play

February 7, 2009

## Fair Grounds Race 3

**Allowance Optional Claiming, 4yos and up, state-bred, 6 furlong, dirt**

**(# 8) BARUFF** Makes his 3rd start off a layoff following 2 vastly improved efforts. Prior to his layoff, Baruff had won 3 races in 6 starts, all at Evangeline Down, which is a third tier track. Rightfully so, you have to downgrade these victories when shipped to a major league venue like Fair Grounds. But once in awhile, you must not overlook a race that was better than it looks. This came Aug 14. Right from the start, Baruff went to the front and was hooked immediately, dueling through very fast fractions and was still able to prevail in quick time. He was placed on the shelf following that hard fought effort, resurfacing Dec 29 at Fair Grounds in a State bred claimer. Sent off at 5-2, Baruff stalked a lively pace in 3rd then moved up to 2nd entering the turn. He was never able to run down a very sharp rival, falling 3/4 of a length short. Top Cajun trainer Frank Leggio knew he was sitting on a sharp and much improved horse, so he elected to boost Baruff way up in class to a high priced allowance race. He ran 6th that day, but his race was "much better than it looks on paper". Breaking from the rail, Baruff moved up quickly to force the pace of 2 other speedsters. He steadied while in tight midway on the turn and was forced to drop back a bit. He was swung outside for the stretch run, then finished evenly, but galloped out strong past the wire suggesting there was plenty left in the tank for this race. What is important to note is that the field included winner Mr. Barracuda, winner of 12 starts, as well as several other hard knocking older gladiators.

This is a "hidden" drop in class today. Baruff must overcome an outside post, but if able to drop in a bit so as to not be hung out very wide through the turn, I expect a solid performance by a horse who should be a bit of a price.