



In Focus

Laurel Park stakes

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The Racing Biz

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FRANK WHITELEY, JR. STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 6 (2:58), \$100,000 purse, Three-year-olds, 7 furlongs
- **STORYLINE:** Maryland's march to the Preakness kicks off with this 7-furlong event, to be followed on the Laurel stakes schedule by the one-mile Miracle Wood and the 1 1/8 mile Private Terms.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Talented Golden Years has the best credentials -- but with trainer Rodney Jenkins saying he may be a bit short, do you look elsewhere?

RACE ANALYSIS

1. **Sizzling Quatorze (20-1)** -- Hector Garcia trainee ran a distant second to Golden Years last out in the Marylander and shows a lone, middling workout in the meantime. DQed from an allowance score in the race prior and as a result, owns just a win against maiden claiming company. Angel Serpa comes in to ride, but this guy needs to take a big step forward to win.
2. **Bodhisattva (4-1)** -- Overmatched in the G2 Remsen, this son of Student Council hasn't done much else wrong, with six in the money finishes from seven starts. Latest effort for the Jose Corrales trainee was a neck win after a stretch-long slugfest over Savvy Street, who won his next. Shows a pair of works since that December 18 try, including a bullet five furlongs on January 10. Jevian Toledo, who rode him three times to show finishes is back in the irons.
3. **One More Time (20-1)** -- John Casey trainee has finished behind his more talented stablemate, Hear the Chatter, on four separate occasions. The problem? Hear the Chatter was nearly nine in arrears of favored Golden Years when the two met in December. Regular rider Erick Ramirez ships in on this longshot.
4. **Savvy Street (7-2)** --Fifth-place finish in the Elser looks better now than it did a couple months ago, what with two next-out winners and Nasa's second-place finish in the G3 Jerome. Just missed against the slightly more seasoned Bodhisattva two back but responded nicely with an open-lengths win against allowance horses -- though that was just two weeks ago.

RACE FACTS

- ✓ 3rd running
- ✓ Stakes record: Ore Pass, 1:24.3
- ✓ Named for Hall of Fame trainer Frank Whiteley, a Maryland native, who trained Ruffian, Forego, Tom Rolfe, and Damascus, among others.

TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ 11 races contested at 7f so far in 2015.
- ✓ Only one has wired the field (on speed-favoring day, 1/9).
- ✓ Only 2 have won from the one-hole.
- ✓ 5 winners broke from the 5-hole or farther outside.
- ✓ Median horse was 5th at 1st call, 4th at pace call.
- ✓ Winner's avg. lengths behind at 1st call: 5.25.
- ✓ Only 2 winners made the lead by the pace call.

5. **Golden Years (9-5)** -- Absolutely nothing to criticize in his four starts to date, which include three wins, two in stakes company. But trainer Rodney Jenkins had this to say about him: "He might be a hair short for this one." Couple that with his December comments about stretching the horse out, and you're left with the impression that this might be much more of a stepping stone than a target -- worth considering when making your bets.

6. **Measured (15-1)** -- A win and a third from two starts ain't bad. Set a moderate early tempo in his last, against allowance foes, but had no answers for Savvy Street, who won by four. Still, that may have been better than it looked; runner

appeared likely to finish fifth at the head of the lane, battled back to be third, missing second by a nose. If he posts -- that last was just two weeks ago -- he's a runner who may offer some value, and the son of Curlin still has plenty of upside.

7. **Governmentshtutdown (3-1)** -- What do you do with this Jerry Robb trainee? Exchange Rate gelding won at second asking with a gaudy 83 Beyer, won the Rollicking Stakes at Pimlico easily -- then was beaten 27 while earning a 12 Beyer in the G3 Bashford Manor at Churchill. Away since the end of June, he returns off a series of solid works. Robb is 6-for-35 over the last five years in bringing horses back from 180-day-plus layoffs -- but has won with four of his last 12.

8. **Notional Debt (10-1)** -- The other Robb horse will have Sheldon Russell in the irons and has a win and a near-miss fourth from two starts. Hasn't raced since November 20 but has been training nicely since, including a bullet six in 1:13 1/5 on January 17 -- a second faster than stablemate Governmentshtutdown on the same day. Don't be fooled by the moderate 71 Beyer he recorded in that maiden score -- four runners have come out of that race to win, including next-out stake winner Ghost Bay. Rates a shot in here.

9. **Gypsy Judy (30-1)** -- It's not every day you see a filly in a boys' race -- especially when there's a similar filly tilt on the card. Trainer Robin Graham presumably looks to the added furlong in this event as the key after this Kitalpha filly recorded an ultra-impressive win over maiden foes at one mile -- bursting clear of a tight pack at the quarter pole to win by nearly eight while under wraps. That was a strange race, where a quarter of 25 2/5 and a half of 50 2/5 left her with a narrow lead. Those fractions won't get her within hailing distance of the leaders in this event.

SELECTIONS

1. **Savvy Street** -- 4 consecutive improved Beyers say this guy gets the money -- if he posts.
2. **Notional Debt** -- Light Beyers mean a big price -- but he beat 4 next-out winners in maiden score.
3. **Golden Years** -- Favorite comes up short here -- but preps nicely for bigger game down the road.

MARSHUA STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 8 (3:57), \$100,000 purse, Three-year-old fillies, 6 furlongs
- **STORYLINE:** It's an intriguing matchup with two stakes winners squaring off against a the top Beyer runner, who's only won a maiden.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Is Eloquent Tribute the real deal? Can Lake Sebago threepeat? Is Rockin Jojo ready to compete with this sort? These questions and more will find answers on Saturday.

RACE ANALYSIS:

1. **Lindisfarne (15-1)** -- Rudy Rodriguez brings two to this event, but all eyes will be on his other runner. City Zip filly does own a comfortable score over the strip, but it wasn't the greatest group of allowance foes she faced that day. Victor Carrasco will ride; she'll need to step it up here.
2. **Rocky Policy (20-1)** -- Late-running Bobby Leaf trainee hasn't had the best fortune in her last two, most recently finishing sixth -- but beaten less than three lengths -- in the Maryland Juvenile Filly Championship. The Beyers look light -- 55 when second in the Maryland Million Lassie, 50 in the Championship -- but the Lassie produced four next-out winners, two in stakes company. She'll need some pace help but figures to be running late.
3. **Pistolina (20-1)** -- Throw out the lone turf try, and her four other races, two wins, are nothing to sneeze at. Won her first two for trainer Dane Kobiskie, but none since, and has this negative: has already been beaten by Lake Sebago (twice) and Darling Sky.
4. **Truth in the Lies (20-1)** -- Louis Linder trainee owns two wins against claiming company, none outside of it. Speedster is likely to be on the engine early, but it would be a surprise to find her in the mix late.

RACE FACTS

- ✓ 28th running
- ✓ Race has been contested at four different distances, from 5 1/2 to 7 furlongs.
- ✓ Named for Marshua, a top distaff runner from the foal crop of 1962, won the Selima Stakes at Laurel to cap her juvenile season.
- ✓ Fastest running at 6 furlongs: Gator Prowl, 2010, 1:09.1

TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ 27 races contested at 6f in 2015.
- ✓ 4 winners broke from the rail; 9 from outside the 4-hole.
- ✓ Each of the 5 inside posts had 4 or 5 winners.
- ✓ 5 winners wired the field -- BUT 4 of those were on 1/9 and 1/10.
- ✓ 7 winners had made the lead by the pace call.
- ✓ Median winner was 3rd at 1st call, 2nd at pace call.
- ✓ Winner's avg. lengths behind at 1st call: 3.2

5. **Eloquent Tribute (7-5)** -- Big Beyers -- 83 in her last-out win against Aqueduct maidens -- make this Rudy Rodriguez runner the fave here. But this is no easy spot for the \$175,000 daughter of Tapit to face winners for the first time. Ran second in October maiden event to Overprepared, who was a well-beaten third at 2-5 in the Smart Halo, almost 4 behind Lake Sebago. Ability to stalk and pounce should be useful here, and Rudy Rod has won with five of 16 horses moving from maiden to stakes company.
6. **Comforter (12-1)** -- Rail, slop, and perhaps seven furlongs made the Gin Talking a bridge too far for Nobiz Like Shobiz filly. Drawn outside today, and cutting back in distance, the Scott Lake trainee may have the chance to spy the speed before making her move. Jockey Victor Carrasco jumps ship -- to Lindisfarne -- and Roimes Chirinos picks up the mount. Runner was a good third in Monmouth's Sorority back in August against a salty crew, enters off a sharp work on January 3, and an improved effort here would be no great surprise.
7. **Rockin Jojo (4-1)** -- Street Magician filly kicked it into gear late to win the Blue Mountain Juvenile Fillies for PA-breds in November; one of four to run back from that has won. She was a near-miss third in the Maryland Million Lassie and has a win and a third from three tries at the distance. Bernie Houghton trainee looks like a live runner here.
8. **Darling Sky (8-1)** -- Best Beyers for this Sky Mesa filly are going six or shorter on ground rated fast -- the conditions trainer Butch Reid is aiming for here. Was no match for Lake Sebago in the Gin Talking but gave a good accounting of herself, and perhaps the cutback in distance will come to her aid. Not inclined to judge her last -- a distant fourth in the Ruthless at Aqueduct -- too harshly as that day's winner is a G2 winner. She'll need her A game, but conditions might make that a possibility.
9. **Lake Sebago (5-2)** -- Jerry Robb runner closed sharply to score at 27-1 in the Smart Halo, proved it was no fluke with decisive win in the Gin Talking at 7 furlongs. Addition of blinks prior to Smart Halo has made all the difference for the late-running daughter of Munnings, but the cutback in distance may help others more than it does her. Shows a couple solid works in the interim, and the track has been playing to her strengths. Has beaten several of these already and rates a solid chance to score the threepeat. Sheldon Russell takes over the steering from the injured Trevor McCarthy.

SELECTIONS

1. **Lake Sebago** -- Cutback a concern but everything else points to a threepeat.
2. **Comforter** -- Shortening up in distance and moving outside move her into contention at a price.
3. **Eloquent Tribute** -- No question about the talent -- but not buying at 7-5 just yet.