



In Focus

Laurel Park stakes

March 21, 2015

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The Racing Biz

LaurelPark
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HANDICAPPERS' SELECTIONS

RACE		Ted BLACK	Gary QUILL	Derby Bill WATSON	Bobby ZEN
1	1	Stardust Lill	Stardust Lill	Stardust Lill	Stardust Lill
	2	Toby Who	Hugger of Trees	Joann's Girly	Toby Who
	3	Dancing Heiress	Toby Who	Sensible Shoes	Hugger of Trees
2	1	Woo Woo Warrior	Prince Leroi	Navy Blue	Royal Caviar
	2	Prince Leroi	Navy Blue	Katman Quick	Prince Leroi
	3	Royal Caviar	Royal Caviar	Handsome Senior	My Enigma
3	1	Spunky Cat	Queen Bee Teresa	Sarah's Big Day	Sarah's Big Day
	2	Skort	Spunky Cat	More Punch	Queen Bee Teresa
	3	Goodnight Angel	Sarah's Big Day	Goodnight Angel	Spunky Cat
4	1	Net Gain	Net Gain	Combat Diver	Combat Diver
	2	Combat Diver	Slick William	Slick William	Bodhisattva
	3	Slick William	Bodhisattva	Net Gain	Net Gain
5	1	Throwback	Tuckers Point	Double Whammy	Tuckers Point
	2	Causeworthy	Harlington Night	Causeworthy	Harlington Night
	3	Glich	Cythrean	Harlington Night	Glich
6	1	Hot City Girl	Gypsy Judy	By the Moon	By the Moon
	2	Gypsy Judy	Lake Sebago	Gypsy Judy	Gypsy Judy
	3	Lake Sebago	By the Moon	Hot City Girl	Country Mamma
7	1	Eddy Gourmet	If Not For Her	Jonesin for Jerry	Eddy Gourmet
	2	Printasticat	Printasticat	If Not For Her	Printasticat
	3	Jonesin for Jerry	Jonesin for Jerry	Eddy Gourmet	Jonesin For Jerry
8	1	Concealed Identity	Page McKenney	Souper Lucky	Mail
	2	Page McKenney	Adirondack King	Mail	Page McKenney
	3	Souper Lucky	A. P. Cino	Going to Market	Adirondack King
9	1	Aji	Silver Legend	Lestrade	Silver Legend
	2	Eltham	Aji	Rainbowappears	Rainbowappears
	3	Caylee's Song	Lestrade	Eltham	Aji

PRIVATE TERMS STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 4 (1:56), \$100,000 purse, 3yo, 1 1/8 miles
- **STORYLINE:** Miracle Wood runner-up Combat Diver looks to find the wire first -- and a route to Louisville.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** More than one runners used this event as a springboard to bigger things, like the Preakness starting gate. Who's next?

THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE FAVORITE -- Net Gain (9-5)**, a Bill Mott trainee just -- just! -- missed against Far From Over back in December, and all that runner did was turn around to beat graded foes while earning a 96 Beyer. Nothing wrong with his last, either -- a neck victory in which he pieced his way through traffic before finding a seam. None of five to run back has won. The talent's there, but 9-5 feels awfully short on a runner whose speed figs are modest, and who took five shots to break his maiden. Verdict: Vulnerable.
- ✓ **THE TOP CONTENDER -- Combat Diver (2-1)** didn't miss by much when second a nose in the Miracle Wood, and that day's winner, Savvy Street, isn't here. Gary Contessa trainee may have benefited from the bias that day, but had no answers for graded foes last out in the G3 Gotham. He's back here on just two weeks rest to try a distance -- 9 furlongs -- trainer thinks he'll like. Will be running late - - but will he have any pace to run at? Trainer's making Louisville noises, but it's getting late for this one to show he's that sort.
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE -- Boy, Slick William (12-1)** sure did a lot wrong in his last race: shuffled back at the start, running up on rivals on the backstretch, shifting leads back and forth during the stretch drive -- what a mess. Oh, and did we mention that he won? Not convinced what he beat that day to break his maiden, but the way he ran left you thinking there's a lot more to him than that; full-bro to stake winner Talk Show Man figures to be running late and hoping to pick 'em off. And then of course, there's his trainer, the red-hot Hamilton Smith, who's 12 of 34 in 2015.

RACE FACTS

- ✓ 26th running
- ✓ Race has been contested at 1 mile, 1 1/16 miles, and current 1 1/8 miles
- ✓ Fastest running at 1 1/8 miles: Dr. Best, 1:49 (1997)
- ✓ Named for millionaire Private Terms, who won the 1988 G1 Wood Memorial and later the G2 Massachusetts Handicap. He stood stud in Maryland for several years.

TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ Just 4 races contested at the 9-furlong distance in '15, with two winners from the outside, two from the inside.
- ✓ Last weekend there was an extreme outside bias at all distances for most of the weekend -- did it slacken on Sunday?
- ✓ There were five two-turn races at Laurel last weekend (1 1/16 miles); all winners at least 3 wide most of the trip.
- ✓ Pay attention to Thursday, Friday, and early Saturday races for bias info.

✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG** -- Big effort last out from **Bodhisattva (3-1)** against the bias when fourth in the Miracle Wood at double-digit odds and when showing new, front-running dimension. Versatile sort rates a long -- and we mean long -- look... **Now We Are Free (20-1)** made his last start 2 1/2 months ago and was beaten by 49 lengths in the G3 Jerome. Granted, the winner that day, El Kabeir, is much superior to what he'll see here, but still -- hang your hat on his perfect two-race ledger locally, or trainer Michelle Nevin's outstanding record bringing horses back from two-to-four month layoffs (18-for-54), if so inclined, but remember: he needs a big step forward to compete... Let's draw a line through the G3 Hutcheson for **Bridget's Big Luvy (5-1)** and see what we have: a runner who ran behind some awfully tough customers in his first two before breaking his maiden with a 79 Beyer at Belmont. The problem: that Hutcheson, in late January, is his only start since October 24, he's never been beyond 7 furlongs, and Laurel's been playing deep and tiring for the most part this meet. Half-brother to stake winner Mystic Love is a tough call here...

OUR HANDICAPPERS SAY:

1. **Net Gain** may be young and green but he has too much talent to deny here -- by the narrowest of narrow margins.
2. **Combat Diver** ran well enough to win the Miracle Wood but didn't. Look for more of the same here.
3. **Slick William** takes a big step forward as his mind begins to catch up to his talent.
4. **Bodhisattva** probably deserves -- but will not get, our 'cappers say -- a better fate than this.

LOCAL FLAVOR

Three of the six in the field are Maryland-breds. Both Combat Diver (Line of David-Safe Journey, by Flatter) and Bridge's Big Luvy (Tiz Wonderful-Memories of Mystic, by Dixie Union) were bred by Dark Hollow Farm. And Slick William was bred by his owner, veterinarian Dr. Michael Harrison.

CAESAR'S WISH STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 6 (3:27), \$100,000 purse, Three-year fillies, 1 mile
- **STORYLINE:** Grade 1 winner By the Moon looks to rediscover her winning ways in her second start of '15.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Everybody not named By the Moon is running for second -- aren't they?

THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE FAVORITE -- By the Moon (7-5)** won the Grade 1 Frizette at long odds (and in the slop) last August which, by itself, gives her a class boost over this group. She also ran second in another G1 event and most recently was fifth in the G2 Forward Gal, and two of her rivals that day returned to win stakes. This'll be mega-class relief for the Indian Charlie filly, and Michelle Nevin brings her in off a two-month break. If right, she'll be a handful in here.
- ✓ **TOP CONTENDER -- Gypsy Judy (7-2)** -- Took three tries for the light bulb to come on, but now the daughter of Kitalpha has won two straight by a combined 11 lengths, most recently winning the Wide Country comfortably. Owns a front-running score at the trip but proved she doesn't need the lead last out, shows a bullet work in the interim, and carries the colors of the hot barn of Robin Graham. If By the Moon falters, she's the main threat to get the money.
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- Trainer Linda Rice has made Laurel Park her personal playground of late -- five wins in her last 13 starts here, including five straight in the exacta -- and **Hot City Girl (6-1)** rates a shot to extend that streak. City Zip filly was a more than credible second in the Wide Country -- her first try against non-NY-bred runners -- in which she was on the lead and the rail on a dead-rail day. The one-turn mile shouldn't be an issue -- she's won going 1 mile 70 at AQU -- and the outside post gives her and top local rider Sheldon Russell a chance to pick their spot.

RACE FACTS

- ✓ 28th running, begun at Bowie in 1978.
- ✓ Transferred to Pimlico in 1986 after the closing of Bowie in 1985.
- ✓ Mothballed after the 2004 running, returned in 2013 at Laurel.
- ✓ Contested at 3 distances, from 7f to 1 1/16 miles. Saturday will be its third running at 1 mile.
- ✓ Named for 1977-78 champion Maryland-bred filly Caesar's Wish, whom trainer Dickie Small considered "the fastest horse I've ever had."

TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ 38 races contested at 1 mile in 2015.
- ✓ No particular bias overall: horses from 1-6 win at a 13.2% clip, versus 14.3% outside of post six.
- ✓ 8 races conducted last weekend at the distance -- only one (on Sunday) was won by a horse on the rail..
- ✓ Pay attention to Thursday, Friday, and early Saturday races for bias info.

✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG -- Been Here Before (6-1)** had a rugged trip last out in the Busanda, and the Tapit filly, trained by Kiaran McLaughlin retains plenty of upside... **Mytrack Marie (30-1)** looks to be in way over her head after beating \$16,000 maidens, and you have to wonder if trainer Jose Corrales might just have second thoughts prior to post time... **Country Mamma (15-1)** has a shot to outrun her odds. Ollie Figgins-trained WV-bred has only one loss in five tries -- to the very good Harlan's Destiny in the Eleanor Casey, a runner who wouldn't look out of place here... Might be wisest to draw a line through the last for **Lake Sebago (9-2)**, whose last was a disappointing seventh at 6-5 odds in the Wide Country; runner who'd won two stakes by closing while wide caught a day where that was the ticket to riches -- and found herself up near the pace while buried inside. Look for improvement here...

OUR HANDICAPPERS SAY

1. **Gypsy Judy** pulls the upset, as a formful local denies a G1 shipper for the second time in a month.
2. **By the Moon** appreciates the class relief -- but long ship, two months off, new-to-her racing strip prove too much to overcome.
3. **Hot City Girl** ran big against the bias last out, delivers another boffo effort against better today.
4. **Lake Sebago** rallies into fourth, but you have to wonder if, at this point, others have passed her by.

LOCAL FLAVOR

Three of the runners in the Caesar's Wish are based at Laurel -- Mytrack Marie (trainer Jose Corrales), Lake Sebago (Jerry Robb), and Gypsy Judy (Robin Graham). Farther afield, Country Mamma is based at Charles Town with trainer Ollie Figgins, III.

CONNIVER STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 7 (3:31), \$100,000 purse, Fillies and mares 3yo and up, Maryland-breds, 7 furlongs
- **STORYLINE:** Lightly accomplished but well-matched batch of state-breds could make for interesting betting.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Hopeful up-and-comer? Or formful ex-claimer? That's how this one shapes up.

RACE ANALYSIS

- ✓ **THE FAVORITE** -- Apparent miracle worker Claudio Gonzalez has turned former nickel claimer **Printasticat (5-2)** into the Beast of the East with three straight wins. Six-year-old has made 43 career starts -- and her five best Beyer speed figs have all come in her last six races. She's won her last three -- two against starters, one against first-level allowance foes -- by more than 21 lengths combined, and also owns a win in the Maryland Million Distaff Starter. Versatile sort can wire 'em or stalk 'em, and pickup of Victor Carrasco in the irons unlikely to hurt
- ✓ **TOP CONTENDER** -- **If Not For Her (4-1)** acquitted herself well last out against third-level allowance types, running up close to the lead, backing out, then rallying to be third in a five-horse photo for the win. Improving sort isn't a world-beater -- it's taken her at least two tries to take each successive step -- but has three wins from nine starts and owns a recent win over second-fave Jonesin for Jerry. Terrible weather's played havoc with everyone's schedules, and she hasn't raced in two months but shows a busy enough interim work tab at Fair Hill and a recent local bullet.
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- Let's be honest: **Turf Craze (12-1)** is not likely to win this race. On the other hand, this isn't a \$6,250 claimer either, despite her last race. Daughter of Freud went from stakes company to bottom claiming *in just two races*, which is just about as quickly as you can devalue a horse. Owns three wins and has earned nearly \$90,000 in her brief career and has run reasonably respectably in three different stakes outings. Hot trainer Wayne Potts will slip the saddle on for the first time after registering the claim.

RACE FACTS

- ✓ 48th running, begun at Bowie in 1969 and moved to Laurel in 1985.
- ✓ Contested at 4 distances, from 6 1/2 furlongs to 1 1/16 miles.
- ✓ Named for Maryland-bred Conniver, who was nation's top handicap mare in 1948.

TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ 39 races contested at 7f in 2015.
- ✓ Overall, the track has played relatively fair with a slight preference towards horses on the inside.
- ✓ The only two races at the distance last weekend were won by horses well wide throughout.
- ✓ One winner wired the field, while the other stalked the early pace.

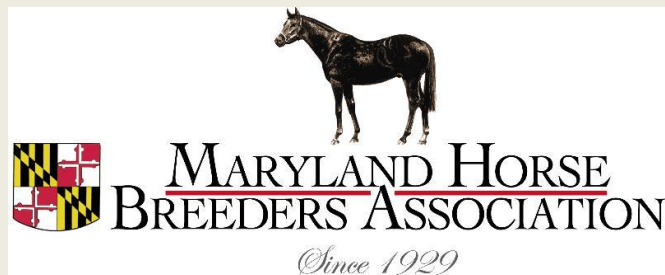
- ✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG --My T Swift (5-1)** gets blinks, enters with a good work tab, and toils for the too-hot-to-touch Ham Smith barn, all of which makes her a horse well worth considering -- plus, don't judge last too harshly; winner She's Ordained had just run second to next out G2 winner Lady Sabelia... Productive Pimlico '14 meet feels like a long time ago for **Coco Punch (20-1)**, and, indeed, Two Punch mare hasn't been close or registered a Beyer above 62 since. Does own a win at the trip and comes out of the sharp Robin Graham barn... That sure was a nice-looking win last out for **Eddy Gourmet (4-1)** against allowance foes, but the challenge is she has recent defeats by both Jonesin for Jerry and If Not For Her... A year ago **Celtic Katie (30-1)** ran second in this race and then won the Geisha next out at Pimlico -- but she's lost six straight since and showing no particular recent signs of life... **Jonesin for Jerry (7-2)** has a stake win and three other stakes placings to her credit, and enters with good form -- though she's been away since the beginning of January and may prefer a tad shorter than this trip.

OUR HANDICAPPERS SAY

1. **Eddy Gourmet** is going well now, improved with blinks, and keeps ace rider Sheldon Russell.
2. **Jonesin for Jerry** is up close early and stays on to the late stages in a strong effort.
3. **Printasticat** sure is going well right now, but our 'cappers wonder, "Who have you beaten?"
4. **If Not For Her** runs credibly, needs another crack or two to take the likes of these.

LOCAL FLAVOR

This race is restricted to registered Maryland-bred fillies and mares.



HARRISON JOHNSON MEMORIAL STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 8 (3:50), \$100,000 purse, 3yo and up, 1 1/8 miles
- **STORYLINE:** Solid group of older runners includes five stakes winners, plus improving Souper Lucky.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Can one-time promising youngster Mail, making his second start since late '13, control up front? Or will relentless closers like Page McKenney prove too tough?

RACE ANALYSIS

- ✓ **THE FAVORITE** -- That was one monster win by **Souper Lucky (5-2)** last out against allowance rivals in the mud, earning a flashy 110 Beyer. But you have to think he caught a track he loved and bias in his favor that day, and he'll need to bring it here. In good form now with five wins in eight tries, but two of those defeats are pretty ordinary efforts against stakes company. He'll be tough to love at a short price, on short rest, against an accomplished field.
- ✓ **TOP CONTENDER** -- All **Page McKenney (3-1)** does is run good races -- six 2014 wins for \$308,000, and he began '15 similarly, with a narrow score in the John B. Campbell last month, beating today's favorite and A. P. Cino, who's also here. What you know is that he'll run his race and come on late. What backers will have to hope is that there's some pace pressure on Mail early, and it's not clear whether that'll be the case.
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE**-- Toss that last -- on the turf against graded foes -- and **Adirondack King's** 6-1 odds look plenty enticing on a runner whose last three tries in similar circumstances are certainly good enough to get a slice, perhaps even the whole pie. Dead-heated for the win in the Auld Lang Syne with Sailor's Revenge (next out: fourth by less than a length against Page McKenney in the Campbell), and they were 10 clear of the rest. Prior to that, he was second a length to the solid Stormin Monarcho. He has the tactical speed to work out a good trip, and regular rider John Bisono ships from Philly to hop aboard.

RACE FACTS

- ✓ 30th running.
- ✓ Contested distances from 1 mile to 1 3/16 miles.
- ✓ Prior winners include '06 Preakness place horse Sweetnorthernstaint, who won it in '07.
- ✓ Named for trainer Harrison Johnson, who perished in a 1985 plane crash at age 45. He trained 1973 Maryland-bred champion 2yo Gusty O'Shay.

TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ Just 4 races contested at the 9-furlong distance in '15, with two winners from the outside, two from the inside.
- ✓ Last weekend there was an extreme outside bias at all distances for most of the weekend -- did it slacken on Sunday?
- ✓ There were five two-turn races at Laurel last weekend (1 1/16 miles); all winners at least 3 wide most of the trip.
- ✓ Pay attention to Thursday, Friday, and early Saturday races for bias info.

- ✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG --Turco Bravo (4-1)** has run in six stakes since arriving from Chile and placed four times without a win. Like that he's been busy, but need the Contessa trainee to deliver the goods before taking 4-1 on him... "Live at a price" candidate **Mail (6-1)** won an AQU stake back in late '13 but has just two starts since. Came off the shelf after a year to win in his last against Parx allowance runners and may be able to control the pace here; good test for him in his second time back... It's nearly four years since **Concealed Identity (15-1)** carried the Eddie Gaudet banner in the G1 Preakness -- and more than two since this guy found the wire first... **A. P. Cino (20-1)** seems to deliver his best races when you least expect them: second at 80-1 in the Campbell, second at 50-1 in the Swatara. We doubt that anyone will expect much from him Saturday. Just sayin'... **Going to Market (10-1)** has had some in-and-out form of late, enters off a front-running score at the N2X level. Gaudy Beyers say there's more to this horse, but repeated failures above N2X suggest that might be the limit.

OUR HANDICAPPERS SAY

1. **Page McKenney**, as honest and hard-hitting as they come, rallies late to get the money -- yet again.
2. **Mail** looked like he might be something back in '13, takes a solid step here with good second against legit rivals.
3. **Souper Lucky** bounces a bit off monster effort, still good enough to be in the money.
4. **Concealed Identity** hasn't won in a dog's age but still finds his way onto the board often enough, does so again.

LOCAL FLAVOR

The most accomplished of the regionally-bred contingent is Pennsylvania-bred Page McKenney (Eavesdropper-Winning Grace, by Yarrow Brae), who was bred by Dr. James Bryant and Linda Davis. There are also two Maryland-breds, Concealed Identity and Going to Market, and a Virginia-bred, Mail.

