



# In Focus

Pimlico stakes  
Black-Eyed Susan Day  
May 15, 2015

*For more, visit [www.theracingbiz.com](http://www.theracingbiz.com)*

# GRADE 3 MISS PREAKNESS STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 8 (3:23 EDT), \$150,000 purse, 3 yo fillies, 6 furlongs
- **STORYLINE:** *Enchanting Lady*, having the same owner, trainer and jockey as KY Derby third place finisher and Preakness starter, *Dortmund*, tries to make amends for the clunker (9<sup>th</sup> by 14 lengths) she tossed when sent off as the 5-2 betting choice in the G3 Eight Belles at Churchill Downs on KY Oaks Day.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** There's no shortage of early speed in here as 9 of the 11 fillies entered have had the lead at the 1<sup>st</sup> Call in at least one of their career races. Caution! With a quick early pace, the winner could emerge from the back of the pack.

## THE SCOOP

- **THE TOP CONTENDERS** -- The aforementioned **#1 – Enchanting Lady (3-1)** looks to bounce back but will need an alert start breaking from the rail. It's fair to draw a line through her G3 Eight Belles race, if that's what we can call her "dull effort" via past performance comment line... **#3 - Miss Ella (4-1)** is a perfect 2 for 2 in her young career and a pleasant surprise for trainer Graham Motion. There was no buzz on the backstretch prior to her debut, as she was sent off at 16-1, yet won easily in gate to wire fashion. She's the only graded-stakes winner in the field, as she won the G2 Beaumont at Keeneland in her second/previous start, again rewarding her backers handsomely (paid \$21.40 to WIN)... **#6 – Divine Dawn (5-1)** chased *Miss Ella* in the 7 furlongs G2 Beaumont. Cutting back to 6 furlongs could be what the doctor ordered since her only race at that distance was a winning one in her career debut... **#11 - Huasca (8-1)** can boast the best Brisnet Speed Figure (99) out of her most recent 4 length winning effort at Gulfstream Park where the runner-up came back to win. One would think this daughter of *Tiz Wonderful* would relish going longer, but she has proven while sprinting that there's no quit in her.
- **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- **#2 – Windy Forecast (10-1)** gets 52 year old Hall of Fame jockey Gary Stevens in the irons for the first time in her 6<sup>th</sup> career outing. Blinkers come off after a 5<sup>th</sup> place finish in an Optional Claiming N1X turf sprint event at Santa Anita, her first of 2015. Her only natural dirt surface start resulted in her only win (by 2½ lengths) earning a lofty 94 Brisnet Speed Figure. The runner-up that day, who was 5¼ lengths clear of the third place finisher, came back to break her maiden next time out. Trainer Simon Callaghan and Stevens will team up with *Firing Line* in the Preakness Stakes on Saturday, but it's interesting to note that this gal is Stevens' only mount on the Black-Eyed Susan Day (Friday) card.
- **THE REST OF THE GAL'S** – As sure as the sun will rise and set, **#4 – Super Saks (15-1)** will be on the lead early, but don't blink or you'll likely lose her. Last November @ Churchill Downs she led

by 18 lengths at the 1<sup>st</sup> Call, only to lose by 46! Captain Obvious must have written the comment line for that race, “Runaway speed; stopped”. After 3 straight G3 races going longer than today’s distance, the cut back to 6 furlongs and trainer D. Wayne Lukas putting blinkers back on her, she could upset at a price... NY-bred but locally raced filly **#5 – Regina Christina (30-1)** has a tall task against these gals even though she’s never been off the board in four lifetime dirt races (4: 2-1-1); likely a pace victim... along with **#7 – Coco’s Wildcat (12-1)** who seems to get leg weary beyond 5½ furlongs. Makes her 3<sup>rd</sup> start of ’15 after improving career best Brisnet Speed Figures to 90 and 91... has made a living thus far in minor stakes races in FL... another local runner **#8 – Streamsong (20-1)** failed miserably (7<sup>th</sup> by 10) in turf/stakes debut but can take advantage of a pace meltdown and rally in deep stretch for a chance to upset as does... **#9 – Irish Jasper (8-1)** having similar late running style she displayed in winning the Belle Harbor Stakes at Aqueduct last time out and the Gasperilla Stakes at Tampa Downs in late Dec.; 3<sup>rd</sup> race off a layoff with improving speed figures makes her one to watch... **#10 – Spark (10-1)** gets a huge jock upgrade in getting North America’s top jock Javier Castellano versus 10 lb. bug boy, though the latter guided the *Speightstown* filly to a gate-to-wire victory in most recent effort at Belmont.

## **MISS PREAKNESS FACTS**

- > 30<sup>th</sup> running
- > Miss Behaviour won in 2014
- > Stakes record: 1:10 flat, Lucky Livi(2000), Wildcat Bettie B (2006)
- > Track has played to speed this meet: 10 of 25 May winners led after ½ mile, 8 of 25 after ¼
- > 23 of 25 May winners were on the lead or within 3 lengths after ¼ mile

# GRADE 3 ALLAIRE DUPONT DISTAFF STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 10 (4:21 EDT), \$150,000 purse, F&M 3 yo & up, 1 1/8 miles
- **STORYLINE:** **Stopchargingmaria**, winner of the 2014 G3 Black-Eyed Susan (BES) Stakes, returns to Pimlico to challenge 11 of her peers and elders in this G3 event. Two of those peers also ran in the BES, **Fortune Pearl** (3<sup>rd</sup>) and **Joint Return** (4<sup>th</sup>), seek to even the score with “Maria.”
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** There’s a good mix of Early Speed, Stalkers and Closers among the 11 scheduled starters. So look for an honest pace where given a clean trip by all the best filly or mare on this day will be the victor.

## THE SCOOP

- **THE TOP CONTENDERS** – Morning Line favorite **#2 - Stopchargingmaria (9-5)** brings an impressive resume’. Since winning the Black-Eyed Susan, she has competed in four (4) Grade 1 events scoring 2 victories and 2 runner-up finishes. In addition, she’s one of just three in here to have won at today’s distance. Better yet, she’s won 3 of 4 going 1 1/8 miles. Definitely the one to beat. The two other 9 furlong race winners are... **#1 – Lunar Surge (5-1)** and **#10 – Yahilwa (9-2)**. Lunar Surge fits the “3<sup>rd</sup> race off layoff” angle while having troubled trips in her previous two races. In her most recent one, the G3 Doubledogdare Stakes at Kenneland she was blocked in the stretch, losing momentum but still managed to lose by just a head. Never off the board in four 1 1/8 mile outings, she’s a bargain at 5-1. Yahilwa won at the distance last time out at Hawthorne in the G3 Sixty Sails Handicap. She only beat four rivals that day, but this West Coast based mare gets KY Derby winning jock Victor Espinoza in the saddle for the first time... According to trainer Graham Motion, his runner **#5 – Fortune Pearl (8-1)** has matured quite nicely since losing to “Maria” a year ago. “She’s had enough time [to recover] since her last win at Keeneland,” Motion said. “And she was very competitive against Todd’s horse (*Stopchargingmaria*) last summer. I like to think my filly has improved since then.”
- **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- **#4 – Joint Return (15-1)** has lost to “Maria” twice. The first time in the Black-Eyed Susan by 4¾ lengths then three months later in the G1 Alabama at Saratoga by just ¾ of a length. After a 7 month layoff, this daughter of *Include* made her 4-year-old debut at Aqueduct in the G3 Top Flight Handicap, finishing a non-threatening 4<sup>th</sup>. One could say she needed that race... simply a prep race for this one? Trainer John Servis said his entry is ready to run. “She’s coming in very good,” Servis said. “And, she’s a closer. She doesn’t care where she starts because she drops way out of it anyway. It makes no difference to her, and I think the 1 1/8 miles is a good spot for her. *And let me tell you, I’m not coming there just to take a tour of Baltimore.*”

- THE REST OF THE GALLS** – Trainer Larry Jones’ **#3 – Blue Violet (8-1)** has improved her Brisnet Speed Figure in each of her past 3 races, topping out at 97, but edged out by *Lunar Edge*... **#6 – Brenda’s Way (20-1)** claimed by her current local owners (Big Bertha Stable) for \$15,000 in November 2013, the 5-year-old mare has run 14 times with four wins, two seconds, three thirds since then. Making her graded stakes debut, she’ll at least give her connections hope early as she will undoubtedly take the early lead and try to hold it for as long as she can... **#7 – Before You Know (10-1)** proved she can handle the distance when she placed in the G3 Top Flight Handicap on April 15th... Korean bred **#8 – Queen’s Blade (50-1)** won seven of her 16 starts in Korea, including the Korean Derby (G1) against males and the Korean Oaks (G1), and earned nearly a million dollars. Finding races she qualifies for has been tough on trainer Valora Testerman, “I ran her in the Primonetta Stakes here at Pimlico. It was for sprinters and she’s not a sprinter, but I had to get her a race. The only races she can run in are stakes because she’s won so much and earned so much.” As a result, Queen’s Blade finds herself in here. “You’d like her to be going in something easier to get her started,” Testerman added, “Stakes are hard and this is a really strong field. But I know she’s a distance runner. If she’s relaxed and runs her race, we’ll keep our fingers crossed.”... Trainer Dale Romans’ brother Jerry leads the ownership group who owns **#9 – Perique (20-1)** an impressive winner last out in a non-winner of 2 races Optional Claiming event with the addition of blinkers. A far cry from graded stakes company, but nonetheless, this lightly raced 5-year-old gray mare seems to finally “get it” and could shock at a huge price... **#11 – Oasis At Midnight (20-1)** has yet to hit the board in four (4) previous graded stakes races, but her 4<sup>th</sup> place finish in the G2 Royal Delta on March 21 at Gulfstream Park saw both the second and third place finishers come back to win their next race, a Grade 1 and a Grade 3 to boot... **#12 – Celtic Kate (50-1)** is a local MD-bred runner who is off her best form while making her graded stakes race debut. She’ll be every bit of her 50-1 Morning Line odds come Post Time.

## **ALLAIRE DUPONT DISTAFF FACTS**

- > 21st running
- > Summer Applause won in 2013, most recent running
- > Stakes record: 1:42.43, Buy the Barrel (2008)
- > Horses with tactical speed have done well at the trip of late: 8 of 10 May winners around 2 turns were on the lead or within two lengths at the pace call (after ¾ mile)
- > 6 of 10 May winners had the lead at the pace call
- > 2 of 10 did close from as much as 10 back
- > Most runners have been on the rail or a path or two out



# GRADE 2 BLACK-EYED SUSAN STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 11 (4:50 EDT), \$250,000 purse, 3 yo fillies, 1 1/8 miles
- **STORYLINE:** Trainer Bob Baffert has won this race three times ('99 Silverbulletday; '04 Yearly Report; '13 Fiftyshadesofhay) and has the Morning Line favorite **Luminance**. A 4th win would tie him with D. Wayne Lukas for the most Black-Eyed Susan Stakes victories by a trainer.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Eight of the nine fillies entered have never run a 9 furlong or farther race in their young career. The one who has, **Include Betty** did so just two weeks ago in the G1 Kentucky Oaks. Could she bounce back on such short rest to be a factor here?

## THE SCOOP

- **THE TOP CONTENDERS** – Baffert's filly **#8 - Luminance (8-5)** has 2 wins from 3 career starts. Her only loss, a distant second was in the G1 Santa Anita Oaks to former Laurel Park based filly *Stellar Wind* who ran a troubled 4<sup>th</sup> as the 3-1 favorite in the G1 Kentucky Oaks... South Florida shipper **#1 – Danessa Deluxe (9-2)** will need an honest to quick early pace to play into her late running style. The daughter of *Summer Bird* should have no problem getting the distance, but her 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the G2 Gulfstream Oaks was not flattered when the two who finished ahead of her were off the board (5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>) in the G1 Kentucky Oaks... speaking of which **#5 – Include Betty (5-1)** finished a trouble 8<sup>th</sup> in that contest. "Blocked; steadied 1/8" may have been her excuse for not having a better finish. Prior to that she won the G3 Fantasy Stakes at Oaklawn Park when 18-1; history proves that Kentucky Oaks participants rarely do well two weeks later in the Black-Eyed Susan Stakes... **#3 – Ah Chocolate (6-1)** was one of the few shippers to arrive at Pimlico over the weekend (a good sign); unraced at age 2, she's 2 for 2 winning her debut as a 24-1 longshot at Fairgrounds in a sprint, then stretched out to 1 1/16 miles taking down 10 rivals in an allowance at Keeneland; could be special as she's the only mount for jockey Brian Hernandez, Jr. on Pimlico's Friday card.
- **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- **#6 – Sweetgrass (12-1)** is a daughter of 2007 Kentucky Derby winner *Street Sense*, whose progeny excel the first-time they run in a two-turn race. Well you guessed it, this will be her first two-turn race. With four career races under her belt, all middle distance (7 furlongs – one mile), her running style indicates she will follow the bloodline trend of her siblings. It helps to hear (trainer) Ian Wilkes say, "This race was always in the back of my mind. This won't be an easy spot. This will be a tough little race, so it'll be a good spot for her first stakes appearance." Wilkes was patient with Sweetgrass as she coped with some minor juvenile issues that kept her from running last year. She made her racing debut just four months ago (Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>). "We weren't in a hurry with her. The horses, they dictate how much time they need," he said. "I entered her in an allowance race at Churchill that didn't fill and we had this race as a

backup. I need to find where she belongs. I have to start somewhere.”

- **THE REST OF THE GALS** – Santa Anita shipper **#2 – Pure (10-1)** is fresh off her maiden win in her 7<sup>th</sup> career start. Jumping into graded stakes is a tall task for a young filly, but trainer James Cassidy isn’t one to throw his trainees to the wolves... the lone local runner, **#4 – Gypsy Judy (20-1)**, last raced 7 weeks ago but is working regularly in the A.M. and tossed a few bullets (i.e. fastest work at a particular distance) in the process. This will be first graded stakes event; note that on a fast track she would be 3 for 3 if not for a neck loss in her career debut; her best shot is to try to take this field gate to wire but... **#7 – Devine Aida (10-1)** may have something to say about those plans, showing early foot of her own in most of her six races; regular pilot Jesus Rios travels from south Florida just to ride her for the Stronach Stable... **#9 – Keen Pauline (15-1)** is trainer Dale Romans' only entry on the Pimlico Friday card, and shipping from his home track (Churchill Downs) but without regular jockey Corey Lanerie raises the yellow flag. Lanerie wasn’t willing to give up a half dozen mounts on maidens and claimers at Churchill Downs Friday for a chance to ride just one race at Pimlico for a \$250,000 purse?! On the plus side, picking up Javier Castellano to ride is certainly no downgrade. “Pauline” has faced some tough competition without it being in stakes. She beat *I’m a Chatterbox* who then swept the 3-year-old fillies graded stakes series at Fair Grounds and 3<sup>rd</sup> in G1 Kentucky Oaks; she beat *Oceanwave* who later was runner-up in the G3 Honeybee Stakes and G3 Fantasy Stakes at Oaklawn Park.

## **BLACK-EYED SUSAN FACTS**

- > 91<sup>st</sup> running
- > Stopchargingmaria won in 2014, then won two G1 races later in the year
- > Fastest running at 1 1/8 miles: Silverbulletday (1999), 1:47 4/5
- > Horses with tactical speed have done well at the trip of late: 8 of 10 May winners around 2 turns were on the lead or within two lengths at the pace call (after ¾ mile)
- > 6 of 10 May winners had the lead at the pace call
- > 2 of 10 did close from as much as 10 back
- > Most runners have been on the rail or a path or two out

# GRADE 3 PIMLICO SPECIAL

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 14 (6:21 EDT), \$300,000 purse, 3 yo & up, 1 3/16 miles
- **STORYLINE:** Last year trainer Todd Pletcher won this event with *Revolutionary*, a 4-year-old colt owned by Winstar Farm. This year the same connections are back with another 4-year-old, **Commissioner**.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Nine of the ten entered have earned “graded black type”; seven of the runners have competed at a distance of or longer than today’s distance; the ten trainers have amassed over 20,500 victories. Any questions on the quality of this field?

## THE SCOOP

- **THE TOP CONTENDERS – #1 - Tapiture (9-2)** last win was five (5) races ago in the G2 West Virginia Derby; ended 3-year-old season on a high note with a second place finish in the G1 Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile; two starts as a 4-year-old have been less than stellar but “3<sup>rd</sup> start off layoff” players will be on him like white on rice... **#9 – Cat Burglar (5-1)** returns for a second shot at this event after a game 3<sup>rd</sup> just 1½ lengths behind the winner, Revolutionary; trained by Bob Baffert and ridden by Victor Espinoza, for the first time trying to make amends for failing as the even money favorite in an \$100,000 Optional Claimer at Churchill Downs on Derby Day, his first race in 11 months! Now the lightly race 5-year-old wheels back in just two weeks.... The Morning Line favorite is **#10 – Commissioner (5-2)** coming off a neck victory in the G3 Skip Away at Gulfstream Park traveling same distance as he will in here; best known for narrowly losing the G1 Belmont Stakes to *Tonalist* by a neck at 28-1, he needed surgery after that race to remove an ankle chip. “I think he’s fully recuperated and has come back, and like you would expect from most *A.P. Indys*, he seems to be getting better and better as he gets older,” trainer Pletcher explained. Backers must hope he continues to grow for at least one more race.
- **LIVE AT A PRICE -- #5 – Page KcKenney (15-1)** is truly a Cinderella story. Nearly two summers ago owner Adam Staple took a big gamble when he spent \$16,000 to claim a nondescript Pennsylvania-bred gelding with one win from 14 career starts out of a sixth-place finish at Penn National. Somehow that gamble/investment has continued to pay off. Now 5, Page McKenney has run worse than third only twice in 20 subsequent starts with 10 wins, six seconds, two thirds and \$622,060 in purse earnings. Four of those wins have come in stakes, two of them at Laurel Park to kick off the year, and most recently he was third in the \$1.5 million Charles Town Classic (G2) in his graded debut. “I just started feeling like we’ve really got to see where we really fit in the big picture on a real racetrack,” Staple said. “We have the home field advantage, at least. He loves Pimlico. It just seems like it’s the right spot.” A little bit of rain would certainly be welcomed on Friday afternoon as he has won 3 of 6 races on an Off Track.



- THE REST OF THE GUYS** – The Pimlico oddsmaker believes **#2 – Transparent (6-1)** will be the 4<sup>th</sup> betting choice but that’s a hard sell considering he’s the only one in here without black type as his best graded stakes finish was 4<sup>th</sup> in the G2 PA Derby nearly two years ago. His best efforts come in state bred stakes and allowance races. He may be on or near the lead early but will indeed become transparent during the stretch run... **#3 – Encryption (10-1)** 3rd place effort in the G3 Skip Away finishing 7½ lengths behind *Commissioner*, earned him a career best 104 Brisnet Speed Figure. He’s as game as they come finishing in the money in all but one race, the G1 Haskell Invitational. Appears to be blossoming as a 4-year-old but might only make 8½ furlongs versus the 9½ today... it would behoove jockey Kerwin Clark to take **#4 – Albano (8-1)** to the early lead and try to milk the early fractions as he’s the only true “need the lead” runner. ... a year ago **#6 – Kid Cruz (15-1)** won the Tesio, got reality check finishing 8<sup>th</sup> in the Preakness but has since matured winning the G3 Dwyer. Claimed for \$50k in the second race of his career, he has earned over \$500K for his owners. Jockey Irad Ortiz, Jr. fits this guy like a glove having finished in the money in 4 of 5 races as a team. Today will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> start of his 4-year-old campaign; is this trainer Linda Rice’s target race?... **#7 – Vyjack (15-1)** was the 3-year-old darling on the New York circuit leading into the 2013 Kentucky Derby where he finished 18<sup>th</sup>. Since then he can hang his hat on winning the one mile G2 Kelso Handicap; his most recent 3 races have all been 1 1/8 miles as the favorite in 2 of those, yet his best finish was 2<sup>nd</sup> in a minor non-graded stakes at Aqueduct. He wants no part of going 1 3/16 miles; look elsewhere for the winner... **#8 – Top Billing (12-1)** sire *Curlin* won the 2007 Preakness Stakes at this same distance which bodes well for his chances here. He faced *Commissioner* in his 2<sup>nd</sup> lifetime start, losing by a neck. They faced again in the G2 Fountain of Youth where *Top Billing* got the best of his rival finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10 lengths in front of “Commish.” An injury while training up to the 2014 Kentucky Derby derailed those plans. One year to the day after his Fountain of Youth race, he made a disappointing return to racing finishing a distant 4<sup>th</sup> has the 7-5 favorite in an allowance race, followed that with an improved try. If he can continue to make progress, winning this race is not as farfetched as his 12-1 odds would suggest.

### **PIMLICO SPECIAL FACTS**

- > 45th running
- > Race won by Revolutionary in 2014
- > Most famous for 1938 Seabiscuit-War Admiral match race, but former G1 event has produced 15 winners of Horse of the Year
- > Stakes record: Farma Way (1991), 1:52 2/5 – track record
- > Horses with tactical speed have done well at the trip of late: 8 of 10 May winners around 2 turns were on the lead or within two lengths at the pace call (after ¾ mile)
- > 6 of 10 May winners had the lead at the pace call
- > 2 of 10 did close from as much as 10 back
- > Most runners have been on the rail or a path or two out

# UNGRADED STAKES

## Race 5 - \$100,000 Hilltop Stakes for 3-year-old Fillies

1 1/16 miles on TURF

1. #10 – Miss Temple City (8-5): *Any filly who gets beat by just 2½ lengths to Lady Eli, arguably the best turf filly on the planet, is a monster in her own right*
2. #8 – All in Fun (6-1): *Connections have reputation for turning out nice turf runners, this one could be their next star; forgiving wide run in last; Rosario should grab early lead*
3. #1 – Ayaady (7-2): *Cost a cool million at auction in 2013 and early results say she was worth it; Castellano is a masterful turf rider, but Pim turf has not been that kind to deep closers*

## Race 9 - \$100,000 Jim McKay Turf Sprint Stakes for 3-year-olds & up 5 furlongs on TURF

1. #10 – Brewing (12-1): *Speedster on dirt makes turf debut in a stakes indicating the confidence D. Wayne Lukas has in this colt; 1 of 3 mounts SoCal jock Nakatani has for the “Coach”*
2. #7 – Bold Thunder (7-2): *Can match strides from start to finish with top pick and stay on if the turf course continues to be “speed friendly”; ruined Ben’s Cat comeback in last outing*
3. #4 – Golden Emperor (12-1): *Puts his Big Boy Pants by stepping up into stakes company after scoring a hat trick going 5f on GP turf over restricted foes; love the fact Saez comes up just for this one*

## Race 12 – \$100,000 Skipat Stakes for Fillies & Mares 3-years-old & up 6 furlongs

1. #5 – Lady Sebelia (1-1): *Toss her G1 effort @ Keenelend effort in her last outing; 2 of 3 bullets works since proves that she is still on top of her game and more than capable of bouncing back v. these*
2. #7 – Who’s in Town (12-1): *Has an interesting trait... she wins or at least gives a solid effort 1<sup>st</sup> race off the bench; trainer M. Matz have a rough year (3 of 71), but works say “All systems are GO!”*
3. #4 – Galiana (8-1): *Hard to argue with turf sprint record (12: 8-0-1) and showed a liking to the Pim grass in in most recent start; will get a solid pace early on helping her cause to get up in deep stretch*

## **HOW’S THE TURF COURSE PLAYING?**

> **5 furlong** course has played to horses on or near the lead, usually near the rail.

> 5 of 14 May winners wired the field, all but one were on the lead or within 4 lengths

> Only one was as much as three wide on the turn

> Turf races **going two turns** has played like a classic turf course: only 1 of 14 May winners led after the ½ mile and only 3 were on the lead after ¾ of a mile

> 3 of 14 winners were at least 12 behind after ½ mile

> 2 of 14 were at least 10 back after ¾ mile