



In Focus

Pimlico stakes

Preakness Day

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(Primary handicapping and analysis in this document by Ted Black.)

THE RACING BIZ
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GRADE 1 PREAKNESS STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 13 (6:18 EDT), \$1.5 million purse, 3 yo
- **STORYLINE:** The top three finishers from the Kentucky Derby arrive for the middle jewel of thoroughbred racing's Triple Crown, led by Derby winner **American Pharoah** will seek to become the 35th horse in history to capture the first two legs of the crown and then potentially seek to become only the 12th horse to successfully complete the Triple Crown sweep.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** While the Derby was comprised of 18 runners, the Preakness has, by comparison, a compact field of eight three-year-olds that features only three "new shooters" who bypassed the Derby to play a spoiler role in this event in Baltimore.

THE SCOOP

- **The favorite** - American Pharoah lived up to his role as the 5-2 choice in the Kentucky Derby to capture the run for the roses in a modest 2:03.02 for the one-mile and one-quarter distance at Churchill Downs. Last year's champion two-year-old colt has showed no signs of relinquishing his title as the best of his generation by taking both the Rebel Stakes and Arkansas Derby at Oaklawn Park before heading to Louisville to capture the sport's biggest prize to date.
- **Top contenders** - *Firing Line* finished a game and gritty second in the Derby after stalking the previously unbeaten *Dortmund* through the first mile of the 10-furlong affair. Dortmund was the second choice in the Derby and could assume that same role in the Preakness although Firing Line will garner plenty of respect from the bettors following his solid effort in Louisville two weeks ago. Firing Line won the Sunland Park Derby six weeks before his second-place effort in Louisville, while Dortmund suffered the first setback of his seven-race career when fading to third in the Derby. He had previously edged Firing Line in the Robert Lewis Stakes at Santa Anita.
- **Live at a price** - *Divining Rod* actually prevailed in his career debut at Laurel Park last fall then finished a solid second in the Sam F. Davis Stakes at Tampa Bay Downs and then was third behind Carpe Diem in the Tampa Bay Derby over that strip before capturing the Grade III Lexington Stakes at Keeneland in his most recent outing. Of the three newcomers to the Preakness, Divining Rod clearly has the most upside and most likely upset potential as the likely fourth choice in the wagering.



- **The rest of the boys** - *Danzig Moon* finished a respectable fifth in the Derby at a big price and could improve on that effort in this event. *Mr. Z.* was 13th in the Derby and looks to have regressed since the latter portion of his freshman campaign. *Bodhisattva* won the Federico Tesio Stakes over the strip and will seek to follow in the footsteps of *Oliver's Twist* and *Magic Weisner* who both finished second in the Preakness after prepping in the Tesio. *Tale Of Verve* arrives off a maiden score at Keeneland and picks up a difficult spot to make his stakes debut and will likely be the longest shot on the board.
- **Ted's Top Three** - *Firing Line*, *American Pharoah*, *Dortmund*

PREAKNESS FACTS

- > 140th running
- > California Chrome won last year
- > Stakes record: 1:53 flat, Secretariat (1973)
- > Middle jewel of the Triple Crown; trio last completed by Affirmed in 1978
- > 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 DIXIE STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 12 (5:25 EDT), \$300,000 purse, 3 yo & up, 1 1/16 miles turf
- **STORYLINE:** As is often the case with lucrative turf races in the spring, horses are literally coming from everywhere for this event and handicappers can make a case for many of the contenders.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Several of the runners in the Dixie have either won or placed in Grade I races during their careers and several others own recent wins in Grade II and Grade III events, which makes the Dixie a mystery that is on paper the antithesis of the Preakness Stakes that immediately follows.

THE SCOOP

- **THE CONTENDERS** – *Up With the Birds* won the Grade I Jamaica at Belmont Park in the fall of 2013 and the Grade II Nijinsky Stakes last summer, but his most recent effort was a 16th place finish in the Grade I, \$4 million Japan Cup in Tokyo and the Dixie represents his seasonal debut. *Long On Value* won the Grade III Canadian Turf Handicap at Gulfstream Park and then the Grade II Twilight Derby at Santa Anita last fall. *War Correspondent* won the Grade III Appleton at Gulfstream after running third in the Grade I Gulfstream Park Turf.
- **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- *Legendary* won the Japan Racing Association at Laurel Park last fall and captured the Grade III Knickerbocker Stakes at Belmont Park last summer and could work out an ideal trip in this event at a nice price.
- **THE REST OF THE GANG** - *Talk Show Man* captured the Henry Clark Stakes by a nose over the course in his most recent start, is an improving sort who could make some noise here. *Lochte* captured the Grade III Tampa Bay Stakes two months ago. *Skyring* has plenty of back class and career earnings of over \$670,000, but he has failed to hit the board in three starts this year. *Grand Tito* has been knocking on the door in numerous graded stakes on the grass in Florida. *Manchurian High* won the Sunshine Millions Turf and also the Laurel Turf Cup last fall for young trainer Lilli Kurtinecz. *Beyond Smart* prevailed in his final start of 2014, but makes his seasonal debut this weekend. *Tricky Hat* has won two minor stakes over the last 18 months. *Ironicus*, *Cape Fighter* and *Aripeka* have won allowance races recently.
- **TED'S TOP THREE** – Long On Value, War Correspondent, Grand Tito



DIXIE STAKES FACTS

- > 114th running
- > Pimlico's oldest stakes race, first run in 1870 as the Dinner Party Stakes
- > The Dixie's first winner was Preakness
- > Utley won in 2014, Skyring in 2013
- > Summer Applause won in 2013, most recent running
- > 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



GRADE 3 GALLORETTE HANDICAP

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 9 (3:19 EDT), \$150,000 purse, 3 yo and up fillies and mares, 1 1/16 miles
- **STORYLINE:** Named in honor of one of the best Maryland-bred distaffers of all-time and a member of the inaugural class of the Maryland-bred Hall of Fame, the Gallorette is a fitting tribute to her namesake with several runners having competed in multiple graded stakes over the past year.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Handicappers may have a hard time settling on a favorite in this event since *Hard Not To Like*, *Mango Diva*, *Emotional Kitten* and *Watsdachances* have all performed well in graded stakes company over the past year and even recently

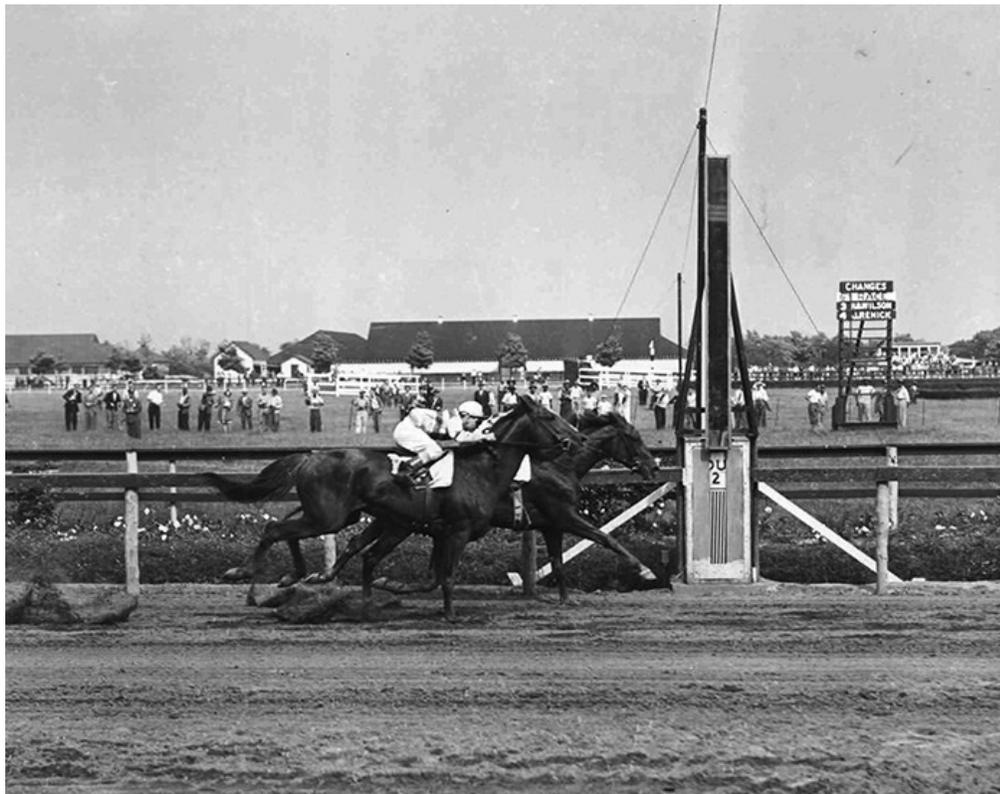
THE SCOOP

- **THE TOP CONTENDERS** – *Hard Not To Like* certainly lives up to her name following a good third-place finish in the Grade I Jenny Wiley at Keeneland in her last start after winning the Grade III Endeavor Stakes in her prior outing. *Mango Diva* won a Group III stakes in Ireland last fall which typically translates to a good performance against similar foes stateside. *Watsdachances* owns a solid 4-4-3 slate and earnings in excess of \$600,000 thanks to numerous good efforts in Grade I and Grade II stakes on the grass. *Emotional Kitten* has run well in graded stakes of late and cannot be entirely dismissed.
- **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- *Bocaiuva* had a troubled trip in her U.S. debut at Keeneland last month, but she won two minor stakes in France last summer and is accustomed to facing big fields on the lawn
- **THE REST OF THE GALS** – *Pagan Priestess*, *Joy*, *Run of the River*, *Fasna cloich* and *Sistas Stroll* have been competitive in local allowance and stakes at Laurel and Pimlico, but the jump to graded stakes foes could be a little beyond their reach here especially with the runners that arrived from elsewhere. *Cat's Claw* has raced well in open stakes, as has *Oscar Party* but both appeared outclassed in this spot.
- **TED'S TOP THREE** – *Hard Not To Like*, *Watsdachances*, *Bocaiuva*



GALLORETTE FACTS

- > 63rd running of a race named for one of the all-time great Maryland-bred distaffer runners.
- > Somali Lemonade won in 2014, Pianist in 2013
- > Fastest running: Precious Kitten, 1:40.32, 2007
- > 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



GRADE 3 MARYLAND SPRINT HANDICAP

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 5 (12:39 EDT), \$150,000 purse, 3 yo & up, 6 furlongs
- **STORYLINE:** Defending champion *Happy My Way* returns to the scene of one of his more impressive wins in 2014 and now he will seek to regain his winning ways after tasting defeat in each of his first two outings this season.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** There is an abundance of speed in this event, so those faint of heart may want to look away. In fact, there is so much early speed that several of the frontrunners will likely be cast aside before the quarter pole and the race could set up for a one-run closer.

THE SCOOP

- **THE TOP CONTENDERS** – *Happy My Way* certainly looms as the one to beat in his title defense here despite starting the season with a pair of setbacks. On his best day, Happy My Way can hold his own in lucrative, graded, one-turn sprint stakes on the east coast and a victory on Saturday could be the turning point for him back in that direction. *Coup de Grace* has won five of 10 career outings, including a pair of graded stakes topped by a victory in the Grade II Amsterdam at Saratoga last summer and he should be a factor in the lane following a good seasonal debut.
- **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- *Jack's In The Deck* returns to the main track following a subpar performance in a grass stakes, but that race should be tossed aside. The Maryland-bred runner has turned in several very good efforts at a big price before and he is likely to get overlooked in this event due to the presence of both Happy My Way and Coup de Grace.
- **THE REST OF THE GUYS** – *Picko's Pride* showed speed when third in the Count Fleet at Oaklawn Park last out and won an allowance race at Delaware Park two starts back. *Sandbar* won an allowance race at the Fair Grounds in the slop to start his campaign, but has failed in recent tries on fast tracks. *Souper Knight* rallied to finish third in the General George at Laurel Park, but has not won a race in 15 months. *Warrioroftheroses* set the tempo in the Grade II Charles Town Classic before fading to eighth, while *Service For Ten* is seeking his first stakes victory in 18 months.
- **TED'S TOP THREE** – Coup de Grace, Happy My Way, Picko's Pride

MARYLAND SPRINT HANDICAP FACTS

- > 29th running
- > Race won by Happy My Way in 2014
- > Stakes record: 1996, Forest Wildcat, 1:09 flat
- > > 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

UNGRADED STAKES

Race 4 – James Murphy S., 3yo, 1 mile turf

1. **Woodwin W** has won all three of his starts this far for trainer Jamie Ness, including an allowance win over the course... His first attempt against stakes company, but Woodwin W may have found the ideal spot for his stakes debut
2. **Force the Pass** has won his last two starts for trainer Alan Goldberg, including the Cutler Bay at Gulfstream Park.
3. **Syntax** rallied from off the pace to defeat maiden special weight foes last out for trainer Bill Mott and makes the ambitious jump over allowance company to tackle stakes foes.

Race 7 – Sir Barton S., 3yo, non-winners of a stake, 1 1/16 miles

1. **Bold Conquest** only boasts one win in seven career outings and has yet to win in three starts this year for trainer Steve Asmussen, but a glimpse at his company lines offers a valid reason. In each of his last two starts, Bold Conquest has finished fifth in the Grade I Arkansas Derby and third in the Grade II Rebel Stakes at Oaklawn Park, won by none other than recent Kentucky Derby hero American Pharoah, who is expected to rule as the 4-5 favorite in the Preakness.
2. **Donworth** was a very good second in the Lexington as the post time favorite and could make his presence known late here.
3. **Noteworthy Peach** was second in the Federico Tesio Stakes over this strip last out and race winner Bodhisattva has opted to tackle the big boys in the Preakness.

Race 10 – Chick Lang S., 3yo 6 furlongs

1. **Gimme Da Lute** had won two straight state-bred stakes at Santa Anita before finishing third behind Competitive Edge in the Pat Day Mile on the Kentucky Derby undercard at Churchill Downs two weeks ago. This could be a spot for him to regain his winning ways.
2. **Blame Jim** won at first asking last summer at Saratoga for Todd Pletcher then rebounded from a thumping in the Gotham to win a one-turn allowance sprint last out by four.
3. **Victory Is Sweet** offered little in his career debut but came right back to garner his diploma by eight lengths last out in a solid clocking.

Race 11 – The Very One S., fillies and mares 3yo and up, 5 furlongs turf

1. **Ageless** arrives the defending champion of this event and she has performed well in several outings since then, including a fourth in the Breeders 'Cup Turf Sprint
2. **Shrinking Violet** arrives off the most impressive score, a victory in the Grade II Monrovia Stakes on the downhill turf course at Santa Anita, but she has been idle since winning that January event.
3. **Jewel Of A Cat** blistered the Gulfstream Park turf course in 55.14 to capture a minor stakes there and she will make her presence felt early in this affair.

