



# In Focus

**Maryland Pride Day stakes**

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# MARYLAND PRIDE DAY

Saturday's first ever Maryland Pride Day, a day to celebrate Maryland-bred and Maryland-sired Thoroughbreds, is topped by a quartet of stakes, the results of which will depend in part on the answers to two questions:

- ✓ **Can the defending champs, well, defend?** Five-time Mister Diz winner *Ben's Cat* figures to be odds-on to make it sixth but enters off a disappointing effort that's raised some questions about whether he's quite the horse we're used to. And 2014 All Brandy winner *Vielsalm* hasn't won since but enters off an encouraging effort and should relish the added ground.
- ✓ **Can Ham Smith's comebackers come back strong?** *Miss Bullistic* looked like she could be any kind in taking her two turf sprint tries, including the \$100,000 *Selima*, impressively as a juvenile, but Saturday's *Jameela* will be her first start since December. And *Talk Show Man's* early spring promise -- including a win in the Henry S. Clark -- has dissipated with two disappointing efforts. He looks to find the range while getting a class break in the Find.

## MISTER DIZ STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 4 (3:39, 3 y.o. & up, 5½ furlongs (Turf)
- **STORYLINE:** On a day where Maryland racing will salute King Leatherbury, racing's newest Hall of Fame member will saddle the prohibitive favorite, **Ben's Cat**, who seeks a remarkable sixth win in this event - a single-race dominance surpassed by just one American flat horse.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Just seven (7) are entered but there's a nice mix of early speed, tactical speed and closers. Translated: No one will "steal it" on the front end nor will there be a pace meltdown. Interestingly, the top 3 finishers from two years ago (*Ben's Cat*, *Night Officer* and *Disco Elvis*) square off this year.

### RACE FACTS

- ✓ 32nd running
- ✓ Race has been contested at 3 different distances, from 5f to 6f.
- ✓ Inaugurated at Pimlico in 1983, has been run almost equally often at Laurel and Pimlico, including the last four years at Old Hilltop.
- ✓ Fastest 5 1/2f running at LRL: *Tommie's Star*, 2007, 1:01 flat.
- ✓ Named for Mister Diz, who was a Maryland-bred divisional champion four straight years (1968-1971).

### TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ 14 turf sprints conducted at Laurel in the last two weeks.
- ✓ All have been won by horses that raced close to the pace (10 times) or were on the lead (four times).
- ✓ Winners' average post position: 6.7.
- ✓ Only two winners broke from inside the five post.
- ✓ Six winners were from outside the seven post.

## THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE TOP CONTENDERS** -- The aforementioned **#3 – Ben’s Cat (1-5)** looks to bounce back from his worst placing (6<sup>th</sup>) of his career, though he only lost by 2½ lengths in the G3 Parx Dash Handicap. Leatherbury termed it "disappointing" the morning after the race, adding, "He was sluggish early and didn't have his usual big kick at the end. He ran a bad race, and we're not used to that. If it was a normal horse, you'd just say he ran a bad race. But he's not the kind that does that. But he's fine this morning and maybe it was just a bad race." Then again, maybe at his age he’s losing his edge... Track record holder **#6 – Night Officer (6-1)** started career in Maryland for Fitzhugh LLC winning 4 times in 19 efforts but was claimed in July 2012 out of an AOC for \$50,000 at Belmont by Chalk Racing (trainer Bruce Brown). Gets reunited with top local turf rider Forest Boyce, who last rode the 7 y.o. son of Officer to a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish in the 2013 \$100k Laurel Dash. He’s never been off-the-board in four (4) starts on the Laurel Park turf course, but hasn’t crossed the wire first in the past 15 races (note: Placed 1<sup>st</sup> via DQ 3 back)... **#5 – Jack’s in the Deck (8-1)** connections showed confidence in his ability to handle turf by entering him in the \$100k Henry Clark Stakes at Pimlico this spring. It was a valiant effort going one mile, leading from gate into the stretch while be pressed every step of the way, faded to 5<sup>th</sup>. Certain to improve off that race, he’s a sprinter. The one mile was the challenge, not running on grass for the first time. Away since Preakness Day, but the work tab indicates a top effort can be expected.
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE - #3 – Sonny Inspired (15-1)** is the youngster of the group. This 4 y.o. gelded son of Artie Schiller can run on any surface, but has done his best work on the Laurel park grass (6: 2-3-1). Runner-up to Ben's Cat in this event last year, should improve off 2015 turf debut at Saratoga against some heavy hitters as he steadied while being beaten by 5½ lengths.

### OUR HANDICAPPERS SAY:

1. *Ben's Cat* may be 9, and might be past his very best efforts, but he's still good enough to make it six straight Mister Diz wins.
2. *Jack's in the Deck* gave a good accounting of himself going a mile on the lawn two back and has been working like he's ready to deliver a top effort.
3. *Sonny Inspired* has been in the money seven of eight at the trip, ran second in this event last year.

- ✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG -- #1 – Magnificent Mr. Z (50-1)**, not to be confused with the 3 y.o. multiple graded stakes placed Mr. Z, who competed in the KY Derby and Preakness Stakes. This magnificent one just earned his initial win in a \$12,500 Maiden Claimer turf sprint by a head! Really?! Talk about shooting for the stars... **#2 – Disco Elvis (30-1)**, though third in this event in 2013 as previously mentioned, has yet to win on the grass in 12 tries while finishing off-the-board in 3 grass races at Laurel Park (note: The 2013 Mr. Diz Stakes was contested at Pimlico)... **#7 – Wire Funds (20-1)** best chance to upset this field is to go hells bells from the start and hope the turf course favors early speed as it has at times during the summer meet. Unfortunately, he seems to have issues carrying his speed beyond 5 furlongs. So the additional 330 feet (½ furlong) realistically may be his biggest obstacle.

## JAMEELA STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 6 (4:13 EDT), \$60,000 purse, F&M 3 yo & up, 6 furlongs (Turf)
- **STORYLINE:** Miss Bullistic, 2 for 2 in turf sprints at Laurel Park, including the 2014 Selima Stakes, makes her 3 year old racing debut and gets a rematch with **Spotted Heart**, who defeated the former in the Maryland Juvenile Filly Championship on the dirt at Laurel Park on Dec. 26, 2014.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** There's a full field of 12 entered where the 3 & 4 year old fillies appear to be stronger than their elder counterparts. Six runners have won over this turf course while three will be testing it for the first time. Last year's runner-up (**Monster Sleeping**) and third place finisher (**Tizgale**) are back to try again.

### THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE TOP CONTENDERS** -- Trainer Kathleen Demasi ships in from Parx the morning line favorite **#12 – Everything Lovely (9-5)** with Tammi Piermarini, who has been in the irons for the filly's past 3 races, all of which were turf sprint victories in allowance company.

### JAMEELA FACTS

- ✓ 28th running, begun at Pimlico in 1983.
- ✓ Has been run on the main track for most of its existence before becoming a turf race in 2010.
- ✓ Talented Jazzy Idea set a since-broken LRL track record for 6f on the grass in 2012 running, 1:07 2/5.
- ✓ Named for Jameela, first Maryland-bred to top the \$1 million mark in career earnings. Jameela was two-time Maryland-bred horse of the year (1981-82) and later was the dam of Eclipse champ sprinter and top sire Gulch.

### TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ 14 turf sprints conducted at Laurel in last 2 weeks.
- ✓ All have been won by horses that raced close to the pace (10 times) or were on the lead (four times).
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- ✓ Only two winners broke from inside the five post.
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In addition to putting her perfect (3-for-3) turf record on the line, she seeks revenge on Spotted Heart and Miss Bullistic, who bested her in the aforementioned Maryland Juvenile Filly Championship contested on the dirt going 7 panels where she gave up a 2½ length lead in the final furlong... Speaking of **#2 – Miss Bullistic (5-1)**, she is also perfect (2 for2) on the grass. Both came at Laurel Park traveling 5½ furlongs, first breaking her maiden and then earning a career best 92 Brisnet# in a flashy win in the \$100,000 Selima Stakes... Only **#6 – Monster Sleeping (9-2)** can boast a better Brisnet# (97), which she earned two years ago in this race when finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at 28-1. Last year she returned to be runner-up, losing by just a neck when sent off at 8-1. Could third time be the charm?... The speedy **#9 – Tizgale (5-1)**, also returns after her 3<sup>rd</sup> place effort in last year's Jameela, will try to give Sagamore Farms' new private conditioner, Horacio DePaz, his first win with just his 5<sup>th</sup> career starter (note: he's never had a runner OTB; 4: 0-3-1).

- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE -- #1 – Spotted Heart (30-1)** had a successful 2 yo campaign exclusively on dirt, then made the switch to turf in her most recent two, a pair of \$100,000 stakes races this spring at Pimlico. Though she failed to hit the board in either, she faced many of the top 3yo turf fillies in the nation including multiple graded stakes placed *Miss Temple City* and the freakish sprinter *Lady Shipman*, winner of 7 races from 9 starts, most recently the Coronation Cup at Saratoga. An anticipated fast, early pace should give Spotted Heart an excellent opportunity to unleash her strong, closing kick in deep stretch which she displayed in all three of her career victories.
- ✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG -- #3 – Chesapeake Spring (20-1)** steps up from the claiming ranks for the first time after nine career starts and why not? Since being claimed by trainer Ann Merryman for \$11,000, the 3yo daughter of Bullsbay has run a respectable 4<sup>th</sup> in a \$25,000 N2L then reeled off two victories, the most recent in a \$35,000 beaten claimer, all on the lawn... **#4 – Spring Dance (8-1)** makes her turf bow in her 12th career start. Always well backed at the windows (PT fav. in 7 of last 10), she'll make her presence known early as part of the early pace... The same could be said for **#5 – Deliver Me (30-1)**, part of the trifecta in three career turf sprints but against claimers sporting Brisnet figs in the 70's... **#7 – See**

### OUR HANDICAPPERS SAY

1. *Miss Bullistic* gave every indication that she could be a turf monster as a juvenile in winning both tries on the green, makes her '15 debut here.
2. *Everything Lovely* has been transformed by the switch to the lawn and brings a three-race win streak here.
3. *Spotted Heart* gave a better-than-it-looks effort two back in her turf debut and has a positive work tab entering this event.



**What Happens (20-1)**, strictly a turf sprinter but never stretched to 6 furlongs, seems to be at her best going 5 furlongs; 0 for 9 on the Laurel Park grass with 4 runner-up efforts... **#8 – Eddy Gourmet (20-1)** best turf days seem to be behind her, though it's a mystery why she hasn't run on turf since last September. Just one win, 5 seconds and a third on the turf in 13 starts in claiming and allowance company, her claim to fame is freaking in the mud to win the Conniver Stakes by 7¼ lengths... **#10 – Charm City (15-1)** had been routing on the turf until she rallied to win at 5½ furlongs in her most recent race, her first since a 4-month layoff. She may have been prepping for the All Brandy Stakes (6<sup>th</sup> in 2014) but trainer Mary Eppler may have called an audible after that performance (83 Brisnet#)... **#11 – Wild for Love (20-1)**, though off-the-board in both turf starts, showed speed going long then when cut back to a sprint, displayed a nice late rally against weaker. She's heading in the right direction as she continues to find back class, albeit on dirt.

## ALL BRANDY STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 8 (5:19 EDT), \$60,000 purse, F&M 3 yo & up, 1 1/8 miles (Turf)
- **STORYLINE:** Back to defend her crown, **Vielsalm** will try to make it a perfect 3 for 3 going 9 furlongs on the turf, the only distance she has been able to win at in 17 overall turf outings. Getting the short end of the 3-way photo for the win in last years' event, **Joy** returns as well.
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Ten fillies and mares are entered yet only two (Vielsalm and Pagan Priestess) have run the 9 furlong distance more than once in their career. There is not a ton of early speed in this group, so if either Debbie's Tude or Brenda's Way scratch, the other could have a golden opportunity to take the field gate-to-wire by walking the dog early on.

### THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE TOP CONTENDERS** -- Surprisingly, Julian Pimentel who has piloted **#5 - Vielsalm (9-2)** in her past nine races, including last year's All Brandy victory, has jumped ship to ride for the first time the Morning Line favorite **#7 – Joy (8-5)**. Maybe it was the lure of Graham Motion and the

### ALL BRANDY FACTS

- ✓ 45th running, begun at Laurel in 1970.
- ✓ Contested at 1 mile and 1 1/8 miles.
- ✓ Named for Maryland-bred All Brandy, who was champion Md-bred 3yo filly of 1962.
- ✓ Four runners have won the race twice: Gala Lil, Debby's Turn, Mz. Zill Bear, and Absolutely Queenie.

### TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ 10 two-turn races on the grass contested at Laurel last two weeks.
- ✓ Overall, the track has played relatively fair; two horses wired their fields, while three closed from well back.
- ✓ Winners' average post position: 5.2
- ✓ Three horses won from the three inside posts, and three won from the eight or nine post.

potential for more mounts in the future? Over the past year Pimentel has only ridden Motion runners 15 times with four wins. The well-travelled Joy has competed at eight different tracks in her past nine races, all in similar minor stakes company... No drop off in rider talent for Vielsalm though as Forest Boyce gets the call... Sheldon Russell will get a leg up on **#9 – Complete St. (4-1)** for the first time, a major upgrade. Last seen competing against the boys (5<sup>th</sup>, 3¼ back) at Monmouth, the 5yo mare is a major player if the turf is firm (which it should be). The bad news: she is winless in four starts at Laurel Park... **#3 – Debbie’s Tude (10-1)** was just a 1¼ lengths behind Joy in last year’s All Brandy to finish 4<sup>th</sup> but carries 4 lbs. more this year whereas Joy sheds 6 lbs., a 10 lb. swing for those who think weight matters. Whatever issues she had at the end of 2014, after nearly an 8 month layoff, her 4yo debut was an encouraging sign she’s back in good form.

- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE** – On her 9 furlong turf record (4: 1-0-2) alone **#8 – Pagan Priestess (15-1)** is a threat at a price. Add in the fact she’s recorded the best 9 furlong Brisnet# (90) makes her even an more formidable foe. 2015 has not been kind to her, though her best finish (6<sup>th</sup> 5 lengths back) came in most recent effort. That may be a sign she is rounding back into her better form. Trainer Robert Bailes and jockey Taylor Hole have teamed up 4 times in the past year, reaching the Winners Circle twice.
- ✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG -- THE REST OF THE GALS** – Claimed for \$10,000 in her last outing **#1 – Lucy Boo (30-1)** might be in over her head, but has given an honest effort while gaining ground late when racing 1 1/6 miles... **#2 – Northern Smile (10-1)** has at least two things going for her, she’s 1-for-1 at 9 furlongs on the turf and that race took place over the Laurel Park turf. Having only 10 career starts, she also has tremendous upside... **#4 – Lionhearted Lady (15-1)** has made 13 starts with five on the grass, but only one in-the-money finish; she has a tall task here, especially since this will be her initial race going 9 furlongs... **#6 – Brenda’s Way (15-1)** has been facing tougher lately but on the main oval. Her only turf try was a flop, but she’s a speedster and if she is able to get an easy lead, it wouldn’t be a shock to see the rest of the field trying to catch her in the final furlong... **#10 – Green Wave Girl (10-1)** has a condition no owner, trainer or horseplayer is fond of, “Seconditis.” This 7 y.o. mare has been runner-up in nine of

### OUR HANDICAPPERS SAY

1. *Vielsalm* ran well last out in Delaware allowance, relishes the added ground here.
2. *Joy* gets rider Julian Pimentel, who jumps ship from Vielsalm, but her two stakes wins are at a flat mile, and she flattened out late in this race a year ago.
3. *Pagan Priestess* ran credibly last out against allowance foes and has been in the money three of four at the trip.

36 lifetime turf races while only winning three. On the plus side, her 94 Brisnet speed figure on the turf is second best among this group, but that didn't come at this distance and was recorded a few years ago. She was 12-1 in the 2014 All Brandy and finished 5<sup>th</sup>, 5 lengths behind the winner Vielsalm.

## FIND STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 10 (6:23), \$100,000 purse, 3yo and up, 1 1/8 miles
- **STORYLINE:** Can the talented Talk Show Man get back on track in time to defend his Maryland Million Turf crown next month?
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Intriguing group matches some proven turf commodities with talented dirt runners seeking greener pastures.

### THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE TOP CONTENDERS** -- Morning line favorite **#3 – Talk Show Man (9-5)** needs to find (in The Find) his back class, and this field will be no push over as there are a few up-and-comers poised to take him on... One is **#6 – Grandiflora (8-1)** whose only try going 9 furlongs on the turf was a winning one. His rider that day was Angel Serpa who gets the mount once again... Old-timer **#10 – Roadhog (7-2)** has come up short against Talk Show Man in the past and looks perhaps to have lost a step. But trainer Elizabeth Merryman hopes the extra distance here will be the difference as her trainee has won twice from 4 starts going today's distance and has recorded the best career turf Brisnet# (104) of this group assembled... An interesting entry is **#9 – He's Achance (10-1)** making his turf debut in his 14<sup>th</sup> career outing should be heard from early as he's typically on the lead at the 1<sup>st</sup> and/or 2<sup>nd</sup> call.
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE**-- 4 y.o. gelding by Great Notion **#7 – Phlash Phelp (10-1)** has a bright future on the local circuit, as he's 2 for 2 in 2015 after an 0-for-6 start to his career. Trainer Rodney Jenkins might have discovered something during that 6 month layoff prior to the start of his 4 y.o. campaign that could see this one in the mix turning for home. He's shown a liking for the turf and the stretch out to 9 furlongs should be within his grasp. A nice stalking trip guided by the meets leading rider (Victor Carrasco) could result in a Winners Circle photo.

### FIND FACTS

- ✓ 37th running, begun at Timonium in 1978.
- ✓ Run for 2yo at 6 1/2f on the main track until 1984, when moved to Laurel.
- ✓ Two-time winner La Reine's Terms equaled the course record in winning '02 edition in 1:46 flat for 1 1/8 miles.
- ✓ Maryland-bred Find was Maryland's all-time money winner until 1982, when Jameela surpassed him. The Sagamore Farm homebred was of the crop of 1950, which also included Native Dancer.

### TIPS AND TRENDS

- ✓ 10 two-turn races on the grass contested at Laurel last two weeks.
- ✓ Overall, the track has played relatively fair; two horses wired their fields, while three closed from well back.
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✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG** --- With the rail assignment "The X-Man" (Xavier Perez) will surely hustle **#1 – Capital Fellow (15-1)** to the front but don't blink because somewhere on the backstretch he'll likely fade like the ink on pari-mutuel tickets... **#2 – Love's Not Fair (30-1)** is simply not in this class especially given his last two efforts... **#4 – No Bull Addiction (20-1)** takes the difficult leap from maiden winner into restricted stakes company. He lit up the board at 22-1 in his 4<sup>th</sup> career race but first turf and made it look easy. Gets skilled turf rider Boyce which is always a plus... **#5 – Hiram (10-1)** has among his four turf victories one in his lone try over the Laurel Park course. Troubling that regular rider Ricardo Chiappe won't be aboard for this one's first attempt going 9 furlongs... A year ago **#8 – Willy d'Rocket (15-1)** got buried by Talk Show Man and Roadhog in the Maryland Million Turf. Just cannot imagine he'll jump up and shock the world here... **#11 – Connemara Coast (10-1)** has only been tested on the grass twice, grabbing the SHOW purse both times but his best turf Brisnet speed fig (79) on the lawn doesn't stack up against most in here... **#12 – Eyeplayeveryday (15-1)** is another making his stakes and turf debut. He'll be compromised by the outside post as he'll want to be close if not on the lead going into the first turn. This son of Jazil should have no problem getting the 9 furlongs for the first time; notably, his dam Gimme the Gold, though winless in two turf tries, ran by far her best Beyer speed figures on the green.

### OUR HANDICAPPERS SAY

1. *Phlash Phelps* turned over a new leaf with the arrival of 2015, looks to run his record to three-for-three on the season.
2. *Talk Show Man* has plenty of back class to dance with these.
3. *Grandiflora* probably isn't quite good enough to get the money but owns a win at the distance and arrives off a good try.



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