



NICK'S PICKS

COMMONWEALTH DERBY - SEPTEMBER 19, 2015

VIRGINIA STAKES RETURN TO LAUREL

In hopes of lobbying support, it is said that the Army of Northern Virginia sang "Maryland, My Maryland", while marching through through the Free State towards Harrisburg, Pennsylvania before getting sidetracked in Gettysburg. If you have heard Virginia's new state song perhaps nobody won't mind if it was borrowed again.

So bitter has been the industry fracas in Virginia, that the race had to be renamed since it was last run in July of 2013. Racing officials thought the race needed to be preserved and the race formerly known as the Virginia Derby is now the Commonwealth Derby, landing the event today at Laurel Park for a respot while a permanent home south of the Potomac is sought. If any state can appreciate sending a stakes outbound it might be Maryland. Racing historians are quick to point out the Preakness was run in the State of New York, first at Morris Park then Gravesend Park, until it returned to Pimlico in 1909 where it has been held ever since. Hopefully the preservation efforts to for Virginia Derby work out as well as it did for the Preakness.

This is still a good race. Timed to run shortly after the Triple Crown, Virginia Derbys past attracted the cream of the three year old turf crop. Even when the purse was below Saturday's \$400,000, Jonathan Sheppard won it twice, Peter Vegso won it twice (and then a third time with Go Between). With increased purse money, it became the launching point for the careers of Kitten's Joy, English Channel, Gio Ponti, Paddy O'Prado and Silver Max. Not hard to figure out why. The former Virginia Derby at one time offered four times the purse money of any other three year old turf race prior to that time of year.

Saturday's feature along with its sister race, the Commonwealth Turf Cup attracted both winner's of the \$1.5 million-plus Belmont Derby, Force the Pass in the Derby and Mr. Speaker in the Turf Cup, both favored on Saturday. Force the Pass is trained by Alan Goldberg who nearly won the Virginia Derby and Colonial Turf Cup twice, (2007-Strike a Deal and 2009-Straight Story), missing out on making a winner's circle appearance by a combined foot in all four races. Mr. Speaker's defense of favored status is tougher facing Up With the Birds and Legendary.

**KNICKERING
NICK'S
EXOTIC
PLAY OF
THE DAY**

**LAUREL PARK
RACE 6
\$.50 PIC5
8 with 1,3,5,6,12 with
6,9,10,12 with 5,8 with 4,9
COSTS \$40**





Virginia Equine
Alliance



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RACE 1

6	BLIMEY	Several veteran claimers still running well late in their careers have a rematch of a Spring duel.
4	ISLAND SUNSET	
1	GIG EM	

RACE 2

6	TWELVE STONE	Claudio's grey seems to run a little better at Laurel & will need to vs. Keefe's "Team" that now includes Sheldon.
2	TEAM TIM	
1	FINAL PROSPECT	

RACE 3

2	THESSA'S ROAR	"Roar" won't be lone speed but has enough talent to make 5&1/2 furlongs dashing.
6	O REELEY	
1	INSPIRED VOYAGE	

RACE 4 - THE COMMONWEALTH TURF CUP (G3)

5	UP WITH THE BIRDS	Recent races soggy for contenders like the drenched Million. Firmer going at Laurel aids "Birds".
2	MR. SPEAKER	
7	LEGENDARY	

RACE 5

1	GRAIN	Return to turf & class drop tempting for Voss' Hard Spun off the layoff. Like the price on "Special K" mount.
9	PIANO MAN TED	
4	MONEY FAN	

RACE 6

8	ANOTHER SEVEN	Long resumes not desired in this condition. Keefe hopes switching to dirt an edge to find the win column.
3	SLEW HOT TO HANDLE	
7	UPTOWN INDY	

RACE 7

5	AFTERMARKET SPOILER	In from Chicago, journeymen Stidham filly comes east and finds deep field of hungry foes.
3	CLEM GEM	
6	POP OF COLOR	

RACE 8

16	CAME BACK	Watch for tough AE's likely to get in here, three that won their last start on the turf.
9	IRUNALATTE	
10	DISCO ELVIS	

RACE 9 - THE COMMONWEALTH DERBY (G2)

8	FUNDAMENTAL	Don't leave "Pass" out of exotics, worthy here. Just trying to find price with Brown's colt-likes 1&1/8th.
5	FORCE THE PASS	
1	GO AROUND	

RACE 10

9	JAHWHOL	Jahwhol improved stretching out on turf in 2nd start. Could finish here. Motion's Blame filly will if she won't.
4	MOON OVER PARIS	
7	LAKE NATRON	

