



In Focus

**Laurel Park stakes
September 12, 2015**

For more, visit www.theracingbiz.com

LADY BALTIMORE STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 6 (3:39 EDT), \$150,000 purse, Fillies and mares 3 y.o. & up, 1 1/16 miles (Turf)
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** A wide-open field of nine is slated to face the starter. Graham Motion brings three, including last-out All Brandy winner Joy, but Ham Smith will saddle the morning line favorite, Fasnacloich, the second half of whose season has not gone exactly as her splashy Justakiss win might have suggested it would.

THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE FAVORITE AND TOP CONTENDERS** -- Favorite **#2 Fasnacloich (7-2)** looked like she was sitting on a big season after rolling to a six-length score in the Justakiss back in June, and her fourth in the G3 Dick Memorial at DEL didn't diminish that impression by much, but last out sixth in a \$100k stake at MNR had to register as a disappointment after a wide, clear journey that saw her sitting in striking range at the quarter pole but with no late answers... **#1 Interrupted (4-1)**, the lowest-priced of the trio of Graham Motion runners, has won four of eight career starts and all three tries at Laurel. She's G3-placed and won last year's Penn Oaks and enters off a fast-closing win at the trip -- the only runner to make up much ground after slow-paced opening panels... **#4 Joy (6-1)**, a Maryland-bred, snapped an eight-race losing streak last out when outgaming Vielsalm to post a head win in the state-bred All Brandy over the strip. That was her third stake win, which has to count for something, and the 1/16th cut back in distance here might be to her liking... **#9 Speed Seeker (5-1)** has labored to find the form that made her a flashy winner of the G3 Ontario Colleen last year, but let's not judge her recent efforts too harshly; she was beaten just two last out at the Spa in a race that's produced a next-out winner and a next-out graded-placed runner, and the G3 Eatontown's also been productive. Her best would be good enough here.
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE - #8 – Monster Sleeping (10-1)** is as honest as they come and never seems to run a bad race. Though the evidence suggests she prefers shorter distances -- her career-best Beyer came at six furlongs and she won last out in the Jameela at that distance -- she's won going up to 1 1/8 miles, so it's not completely beyond her.

LADY BALTIMORE FACTS

- ✓ 45th running, begun at Pimlico in 1937
- ✓ Mothballed from 1949 to 1974, then run alternately at Bowie and Pimlico for several years. Was not run from 2003 to 2010.
- ✓ Was run on the main track from 1983 to 1985 and in 1987.
- ✓ Has been run at both 1 1/16 miles (current distance) and 1 1/8 miles
- ✓ Fastest running at 1 1/16 miles: Silver Screamer, 2012, 1:40.63

2015 RACE NOTES

- ✓ Two runners -- Fasnacloich and Joy -- ran in this race last year. Fasnacloich finished fifth, while Joy was 13th.
- ✓ Speed Seeker is the only graded winner in the field, and may be the main speed, especially if Brenda's Way scratches.
- ✓ Interrupted, Fasnacloich, Sumba Sunset, and Pink Poppy are all graded placed runners.

Bad news is that Forest Boyce jumps ship, but the Dale Capuano trainee should be able to work out a trip from the outside and is good enough to make some noise in here.

- ✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG** -- What to make of **#3 Sumba Sunset (9-2)**? Her Beyers compete here, and she is graded-placed, having finished a near-miss second in the G3 Boiling Springs at Monmouth a year ago. She gets blinks, which may (or may not) help. But the Michael Matz trainee has just a single win from 12 starts and has failed five times in first-level allowance company. She wasn't

GQ SAYS...

1. **#1 – Interrupted (4-1)**: *3 for 3 on Lrl grass w/ Rispoli in irons who's only mount on card is this gal; she'll have plenty of pace to run down late; added blinkers in last... result a "W"*
2. **#2 – Fasnacloich (7-2)**: *Can boast best turf Brisnet# at distance when she destroyed field (incl. #1 & #4) in minor stakes @ Del 3 back; concern is OTB in 3 on Lrl turf*
3. **#7 – Red Hot Tweet (15-1)**: *On the shelf since Oct. no problem as she has turned in her best efforts 1st off layoff; 2 of 5 at distance on turf plus 3: 0-2-1 @ Lrl makes her an attractive price play*

** Selections in this In Focus guide by Gary Quill, who writes the GQ Approach column every live racing day in Maryland. In-depth analysis by Frank Vespe.*

beaten much last out at the Spa, and Matz likes what he sees enough to come back on short rest. Hard to love at expected short odds, but if they drift up? Your move... **#5 Brenda's Way (20-1)** would look a lot different if the race came off the turf, but the front-running Damon Dilodovico trainee looks to be up against it if this one stays on the lawn... Plenty of talent in **#6 Pink Poppy (6-1)** -- enough to win this heat -- but you sure would like to see her string good efforts together more consistently. In 2015 alone, she has a win, a third -- and three other races where she finished 10th or worse. She ran great to be third in the G3 Penny Memorial two back, just OK against a rugged

group in the De La Rose... Tres Abbott trainee **#7 Red Hot Tweet (15-1)** lands in a tough spot for her '15 bow, and her two prior stakes tries were not promising. She does sport a solid work tab and the services of Sheldon Russell in the irons.

SELIMA STAKES

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 7 (4:10 EDT), \$75,000 purse, 2yo fillies, 5 1/2 furlongs (Turf)
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** Speedy Ruby Notion looks to be the one to beat in this event for juvenile fillies, and a win here would be her second stakes win already. She's all early speed and might be too much for these, but one thing's for sure: the early fractions should be sharp.

THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE FAVORITE TOP CONTENDERS** --Boy, #7 **Ruby Notion (9-5)** sure looked good in winning at Monmouth, playing "catch me if you can" by laying down an opening quarter in 21 3/5 and a half in 44 2/5 and still winning ridden out. A repeat of that makes her a handful here... Word was out on #9 **Look Who's Talking (5-1)** prior to her debut in mid-August, as the Robin Graham trainee went off the 6-5 fave and delivered a good-looking win, overcoming traffic trouble to burst clear late. Notably, Forest Boyce, who also piloted #2 **Fly Girl (4-1)** to her maiden score, picks LWT, and the pace scenario -- plenty of early zip in this one -- might work to her advantage... Speaking of Fly Girl, she ran second in her career bow at Belmont before graduating locally at 1-5, but it's unclear just how strong the company she's been keeping is... #3 **Table Jumper (8-1)**, pictured below, won nicely at first asking, by four lengths, taking down million-dollar yearling Espresso Time in the process for trainer Ham Smith. Place horse Jump for Love won next-out, and this runner's been firing bullets in the morning ever since. She'll try turf for the first time, and her breeding's a bit inconclusive on that score, but it looks like there's talent aplenty... #8 **Un Po Di Vino (5-1)** won at first asking and then was a credible fourth, beaten less than three, in the Ontario Debutante over synthetic. This'll be her first try on the lawn, but her dam's lone win came on the downhill turf at Santa Anita.
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- #4 – **Atara (15-1)** is yet another here who won at first asking, winning gamely over Penn National maidens after bumping at the break. Andrew Wolfson makes the trek down to ride her for trainer Todd Beattie -- never a bad sign -- in what will be her first turf try. Will she like the green? Sire Crown of Thorns was

SELIMA FACTS

- ✓ 86th running, begun at Laurel in 1926.
- ✓ Was run on the main track from its inception to 2004, with a handful of exceptions..
- ✓ It became a grass sprint with the 2011 running and was shortened from 6 furlongs to 5 1/2 in 2012.
- ✓ Fastest running at 5 1/2 furlongs: 2012, Mystic Love, 1:02.23.

2015 RACE NOTES

- ✓ Favorite Ruby Notion is the only stakes winner in the group, having won the Colleen at Monmouth Park.
- ✓ The only other runner to try stakes company is Un Po Di Vino, who ran fourth in the Ontario Debutante.
- ✓ Eight of the nine runners have broken their maidens, six at first asking.
- ✓ Fly Girl, Holiday Wishes, Ruby Notion and Look Who's Talking are the only runners to win on the turf to date.

a top-class synthetic sprinter whose lone turf try was a fourth in a G2 event, and dam Oilgonewile was a stakes winner on the green.

✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG -- #1**

Azuma Mura (20-1) beat claimers on the main track in her debut, but

trainer Ham Smith is confident

she'll like the lawn... **#4 Chief Bow**

No Move (30-1) provided her few backers (she was 51-1) a brief thrill

in her debut, gunning to an early

lead before throwing in the towel

and finishing last, beaten nearly

20... Gina Rosenthal trainee **#6**

Holiday Wishes (8-1) enters the most experienced horse in the field,

having taken four cracks to break

her maiden, which she did last out

going 7 1/2 furlongs at DEL. She

controlled the pace that day,

though, and it sure is hard to see a

repeat of that here...

GQ SAYS...

1. **#8 – Un Po Di Vino (5-1):** Found 6f on WO synthetic a bit too far to carry her speed; grass debut here should be another promising effort as she's by super turf sire More Than Ready
2. **#1 – Azuma Mura (20-1):** Bred for turf; won debut while handling traffic very professionally; #1 hole hasn't been kind to turf sprinters @ Lrl in '15 but Russell, among best in MD jock colony, gets the call
3. **#3 – Table Jumper (8-1):** Blew the shoes off competition in debut on dirt; runner-up was next out winner; love the work tab since especially introduction to turf as final tune-up



LAUREL FUTURITY

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 8 (4:41 EDT), \$75,000 purse, 2yo, 5 1/2 furlongs(Turf)
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** While trainers Mike Trombetta, Lupe Preciado, and Anthony Russo are all hoping for their horses to run back to their prior-race form, two other conditioners -- Graham Motion and Kathleen O'Connell -- are hoping to draw a line through their charges' last in this wide open juvenile sprint.

THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE FAVORITE AND TOP CONTENDERS** -- Favorite **#6 Thunder Pass (7-2)** certainly looked the part in winning at first asking, outslugging next-out winner Jeezum Jim to win by a half. Trainer Mike Trombetta didn't sound thrilled about this spot -- "Your choices are somewhat limited with where to go with 2-year-old winners," he said -- but did add that he was pleased with a recent grass work...**#1 Gotta Be Gold (4-1)** won at first asking over the Delaware main track, and though none of five to run back has won, all have run well; his pedigree suggests turf should suit... **#2 Mid Life Crisis** won decisively at first asking for trainer Graham Motion but then was buried in the G2 Saratoga Special. He should appreciate the class relief here, and while this'll be his first time on the lawn, his dam was a seven-time grass winner... **#4 Split (5-1)** looks light on the Beyer speed fig -- just a 45 in breaking his maiden -- but he is the only runner here to own a turf win and retains the services of solid grass rider Forest Boyce...
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE** -- **#7 Formal Summation (6-1)** eviscerated Gulfstream maidens by nearly five in his July debut, blowing up the tote board at 75-1 for trainer Kathleen O'Connell. His follow up, in the Tyro at Monmouth, in his first turf try, was a mess, however. He lugged out and was then pulled up. But O'Connell likes what she's seen of him enough to give him another crack in a turf stake. "He had been training like a rock star before and still is," she explained.

LAUREL FUTURITY FACTS

- ✓ 89th running, begun at Pimlico in 1921 and transferred to Laurel in 1966.
- ✓ Few races anywhere have the history of the Futurity: its winners include Triple Crown champs Count Fleet, Citation, Secretariat, and Affirmed, as well as numerous Derby and/or Preakness winners.
- ✓ Became a turf race in 2005, when Barbaro won, and a sprint in 2011.
- ✓ Fastest running at 5 1/2 furlongs: 2013, Yes I'm Lucky, 1:01.30.

2015 RACE NOTES

- ✓ There are no stakes winners in the field.
- ✓ Six of nine entrants have broken their maidens, five at first asking.
- ✓ Only one horse here - Split - owns a win on the grass..
- ✓ Both Wesley Ward trainees are fillies.

✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG -- #3 Ranger's Coming (6-1)** ran well in his debut, leading for a long way before settling for third in a 7 ½ furlong turf event at Delaware, but it seems unlikely that he'll control the pace through moderate fractions here... **#5 Louise the Laser (15-1)** is one of two Wesley Ward trainees in this race, and both are fillies. That probably says something good about his Selima entrant Ruby Notion, but it's also a vote of confidence in these – isn't it?

This runner was never much involved in her debut, on the main track at the Spa, and finished last after hitting the gate at the start... **#8 Deltalina (12-1)** is Ward's other entrant, and she'll be making her racing debut off a single recorded work. Ward wins often with firsters – but not against stakes company... **#9 Captain Alex (15-1)** did trainer Donovan Haughton proud in winning at first asking, but that was against claiming company on the main track, and his siblings are a combined 0-for-16 on the grass.

GQ SAYS...

1. **#4 – Split (5-1):** *Huge improvement in 2nd career start/turf debut victory when sent off PT fav.; has tactical speed to let the abundance of early speed meltdown in deep stretch*
2. **#6 – Thunder Pass (7-2):** *Nice debut win on dirt as the runner-up 4¼ clear of 3rd came back to win next outing; son of Street Sense should move forward in initial turf try*
3. **#2 – Mid Life Crisis (9-2):** *Buried in G2 Saratoga Special after debut win @ Del; lack of rider assignment makes one wonder he's the weaker of Motion's two in spite of M/L odds*

LAUREL DASH

- **RACE PARTICULARS: Race 9 (5:11 EDT), \$100,000 purse, 3yo and up, 6 furlongs (turf)**
- **RACE OVERVIEW:** No Ben's Cat for the first time in five years in this race means a different favorite, also for the first time in five years. Who'll hit the wire first? A horse like Night Officer, recently second to Ben? Or new shooters, like the top pair from Monmouth's My Frenchman?

THE SCOOP

- ✓ **THE FAVORITE AND TOP CONTENDERS** – Favorite **#11 Oak Bluffs (3-1)** looked good in getting up to win the My Frenchman by a head over Ancil (duel pictured below), who's also here. That gave the 5yo wins in four straight and six of eight, including five of six since claimed by Jamie Ness. NJ-bred is reunited here with rider Trevor McCarthy, who's piloted him to three wins... **#4 Night Officer (5-1)** gave Ben's Cat all he wanted while finishing second in the Mister Diz last out, has done well at the distance, and has stakes-winning back class... **#8 Spring to the Sky (4-1)**, like Night Officer a Bruce Brown trainee, has been keeping awfully ritzy company, including three straight defeats to razor-sharp Shore Runner. Good news: Mike Luzzi's aboard. The lingering question: has he lost a step since his best tries a year ago?... **#9 Ancil (6-1)** ran a bang-up race last out to be second in the My Frenchman – at 10-1 – and a repeat of that puts him in the hunt here...
- ✓ **LIVE AT A PRICE-- #10 Majestic Hussar (15-1)** makes his turf bow in his 20th career start. Odd that it took the son of Majestic Warrior so long to try the green: he's a half to Joes Blazing Aaron (\$400k earner on turf) and Tiz Sardonic (\$200k earner on turf), and if he shows any of that kind of quality, he could make trainer Billy Campbell a happy man...

LAUREL DASH FACTS

- ✓ 17th running, begun at Laurel in 1988.
- ✓ Fastest time: Jazzy Idea, 2012, 1:07.29, which is also the course record.
- ✓ Ben's Cat (2011, 2013) is the only two-time winner.

2015 RACE NOTES

- ✓ A wide-open group of 12 scheduled to face the starter.
- ✓ Six runners – half of the field – are stakes winners, and seven have earned at least \$200,000.
- ✓ Field's leading money winner is Spring to the Sky: \$451,700.
- ✓ Oak Bluffs leads the field with nine wins.
- ✓ Night Officer, A P Elvis, and Against the Win are the only runners to have won at a similar distance over the Laurel lawn.

✓ **THE REST OF THE GANG** --- **#1 Rapid Dan (12-1)** is winless in two turf tries, five for 15 overall, mostly on synthetic. Tough assignment for the PA-bred... **#2 Barney Rebel (30-1)** has been in the triple five straight going a route of ground against starter company, but this is a very different kettle of fish... **#3 Choctaw Chuck (10-1)** brings rider Mario Pino back to central Maryland – Peen on the green, the punters used to say – and while it's not entirely out of the realm, this guy's turf stakes tries generally haven't been much to get excited about... **#5 Jack's in the Deck (15-1)** has made two turf starts, and both are OK – but neither's good enough to win here. He was five wide on the turn last time, so perhaps a cleaner trip helps, but he was also four in arrears of Night Officer... **#6 Blameshifter (12-1)** hasn't run in 16 months and hasn't raced less than one mile since 2011, so you have to wonder if this is a prep for something else. He has been working well enough and does get the services of turf ace Sheldon Russell, however... **#7 A P Elvis (12-1)** makes money the old-fashioned way: he earns it. The 8yo has never won a stakes but has cobbled together nearly \$280,000 in career earnings and enters on a two-race win streak... **#12 Against the Win (15-1)** has speed figs that don't measure up, but the nicely bred son of Distorted Humor out of G2 winner Win McCool has won three of four on the lawn and, with just six starts to his name, retains the right to improve....

GQ SAYS...

1. **#8 – Spring to the Sky (4-1):** *Only runner in here to earn a triple-digit Brisnet# on turf; excuses in last 2 starts @ Sar; trainer Bruce Brown not shipping down for crab cakes & gets M. Luzzi to takes the reins*
2. **#4 – Night Officer (5-1):** *Gave Ben's Cat all he could handle in Mr. Diz; gets his best distance (6: 3-0-2) and never OTB in 5 efforts on Lrl grass course; Boyce staying on is a plus*
3. **#6 – Blameshifter (12-1):** *7 y.o. has 18 career turf efforts but all routes & makes 1st start in over 17 months, so why does he have a shot? Impressive work tab going 5f & 6f throughout August and tougher in FL*

