



# In Focus

Laurel Park stakes

January 16, 2016

## Marshua Stakes

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 4 (1:55), 3yo fillies, 6 furlongs, \$75,000 purse
- **2015 winner:** Lindisfarne
- **28th running**
- **6f stakes record:** Gator Prowl, 1:09 ½ (2010)
- **1964 Selima Stakes winner Marshua was one of the top distaff runners of her generation and also won the 1965 Coaching Club American Oaks.**

### THE SCOOP

1. **Lost Raven (7-5)** – One of two Todd Pletcher fillies sired by Uncle Mo invade from New York; this Repole Stable runner won the \$100k Smart Halo here in convincing fashion, a carbon copy of her debut victory in the mud at Belmont; her lone loss came in her the G2 Demoiselle (5<sup>th</sup> by 4¼ lengths) when trying to stretch out to 9 furlongs.
2. **Mo d'Amour (5-1)** – The second of the Pletcher uncoupled entry was well meant in her career debut at 6 furlongs, making every pole a winning one as the 2-5 Post Time favorite; she too took the huge class leap from maidens to graded stakes (G2 Demoiselle) in her second start, but did not fare too well, failing to keep pace after 7 furlongs as her jock saved her for another day (7<sup>th</sup> by 11 lengths).
3. **Aye a Song (5-1)** – This WV-bred filly would be 7 for 7 if not for a neck loss in the Tri-State Futurity versus male counterparts; has run all races at Charles Town at distances of 4½, 6½ and 7 furlongs in both state-bred and open stakes company; no doubt she'll be on top early.

### MARSHUA SELECTIONS

1. #5 – Karen's Silk (7-2): *Should get the perfect set-up here as most rivals want to be on or near the lead; goes for the natural Hat Trick for trainer M. Dilger.*

2. #1 – Lost Raven (8-5): *Pletcher runners usually do not come south from New York unless they plan on picking up a win purse; not to say they always do (4:1-1-0 at meet) but when the owner is Mike Repole, you know they will be ready.*

3. #3 – Aye a Song (4-1): *Plenty of speed, but this ain't the CT bullring; that said, 6 wins in 7 starts in a span of 5 months is nothing to sneeze at... has speed figs that rival M/L favorite*

4. #2 – Mo d'Amour (6-1): *Pletcher's other entry fits the "higher priced uncoupled entry" angle; black type not out of the realm in third career start.*

4. **Decoratedwithstyle (15-1)** – Gray daughter of *Rockport Harbor* took a field of eight foes gate to wire in her debut at Pen in the slop, earning a respectable 74 Brisnet Speed Figure (BSF).
5. **Karen's Silk (5-2)** – Ships in from New York for trainer Michael Dilger; winner of 2 straight after backing up in debut over a muddy Belmont oval; makes 4<sup>th</sup> start at 4<sup>th</sup> different track having a 4<sup>th</sup> different jock in the irons.
6. **Trace of Grace (6-1)** – Exits second lifetime win from four starts, all at 6 furlongs, while earning a career high 85 BSF, second best among this group of fillies; local rider V. Carrasco takes over for regular rider D. Cora.

## Frank Whiteley, Jr. Stakes

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 6 (2:55), 3yo, 7 furlongs, \$75,000 purse
- **2015 winner:** Majestic Affair
- **Stakes record:** 1:23 ½ (Majestic Affair, 2015)
- **4th running**
- **Centreville, MD native Frank Whiteley, Jr. is a member of the National Racing Hall of Fame and trained legendary runners like Forego, Damascus, Tom Rolfe, and Ruffian.**

1. **Wychmere (12-1)** – Was runner-up in a N1X just 10 days ago here to a nice colt (*Charmed Victory*) with a bright future; made a nice middle move when going one mile.
2. **Henry the King (12-1)** – Undefeated after two starts at 6 furlongs while not getting respect at the windows (7-1 & 6-1); speed figures come up short but these are young runners with ability to progress by leaps and bounds from one start to the next.
3. **Never Gone South (6-5)** – Morning Line favorite for trainer Cathal Lynch (also has #1) has faced the best the Mid-Atlantic has to offer in three open stakes races (1 win & 2 seconds) since impressive debut victory.
4. **Danny My Boy (20-1)** – Finally graduated from the maiden ranks in 8<sup>th</sup> career start, his first at Laurel with a furious rally from dead last at the ½ mile pole; believers in the “Lightbulb Theory” (i.e. wins next outing after breaking maiden) will like the price.

### WHITELEY SELECTIONS

1. #3 – *Never Gone South (9-5): Part of the Exacta in all four starts (4:2-2-0); big edge in Brisnet Prime Power#; runner-up two back to Awesome Speed, who came back to win stake @ GP*
2. #7 – *Moon Over a Beauty (6-1): 14-1 winner at 1st asking for trainer R. Violette, who gets jock (A. Gryder) to make the trip from AQU to retain the mount; gate-to-wire candidate*
3. #2 – *Henry the King (8-1): Late running sprinter stretches out, puts perfect 2 for 2 record on the line; nice price to use in exotics*
4. #6 – *Marengo Road (5-2): Overmatched in G2 Remsen when traveling 3-wide on the turns; A.M. drills since indicate he can run back to that 92 Brisnet# earned here two races back*



5. **Huntin'theholidays (5-1)** – The most experienced runner in this field with nine starts on his resume'; switched to dirt after racing first six on synthetic surface of Presque Isle Downs; woke up on the Prx slop in most recent outing to win by 8¾ lengths v. N1X
6. **Marengo Road (7-2)** – Quality Road colt trained by M. Trombetta got a reality check in G2 Remsen @ Aqu (9<sup>th</sup> by 22 lengths); recent A.M. work tab is riddled with bullets which indicates he could be sitting on a big effort.
7. **Moon Over a Beauty (4-1)** – Debut winner @ Aqu when largely ignored by bettors (14-1); takes a shot here in which connections may believe is an easier spot than next level N1X in back home; jock (A. Gryder) makes the trip for his only mount on card.

## Fire Plug Stakes

- **RACE PARTICULARS: Race 8 (3:55), 4yo and up, 6 furlongs, \$75,000 purse**
- **2015 winner: Never Stop Looking**
- **20th running**
- **Stakes record: 1:09 flat (Digger,2010)**
- **Local fan favorite Fire Plug won stakes for five consecutive years en route to winning 28 of 54 starts and earning over \$700,000.**

### THE SCOOP

1. **Final Prospect (10-1)** – Has improved his speed figures in every race since coming off a 7-month layoff five races back. Cuts back in distance from 7 furlong win v. N2X but needs an alert break from the one hole to avoid getting shuffled back early; past record in stakes races is not pretty.
2. **Snow Leopard (20-1)** – Connections should be doing a rain dance (8:4-1-0 on an off track); 6 furlongs has been a bit too far (9:0-3-1) for this six-year-old gelding; will be longest shot on the board but worth including on bottom of exotics if track comes up “sloppy” or “muddy.”
3. **Majestic Hussar (6-1)** – Nearly pulled off 12-1 upset in \$100k Dave's Friend here on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> just one race after being runner-up in \$200k Fabulous Strike @ Pen to *Favorite Tale*, who was third in the BC Sprint in that one's previous race; showing back class when at age 3 he was 4<sup>th</sup> in G2 Fountain of Youth Stakes.
4. **Any Court Inastorm (12-1)** – Cuts back to sprint (4:3-0-1) after earning SHOW purse in state-bred \$50k Jennings Handicap; won third lifetime race off the bench in prior outing on Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>. There's plenty of speed in here to give him a chance to arrive on the scene late.

5. **Heaven's Runway (7-2)** – New York shipper from the David Jacobson barn was the beaten Post Time favorite (4<sup>th</sup> by 6 lengths) in \$100k Dave's Friend in 3<sup>rd</sup> race after a layoff; earned black-type in the G3 Bold Ruler Handicap at Belmont on Halloween while only beat two runners; early in his career made a living on synthetic (7:3-1-1) but only 1 for 16 on a fast, dirt surface and winless (5:0-1-3) on an "off" track.
6. **Jake N Elwood (2-1)** – Previously trained by Ramon Preciado ships in from Prx for Marco Zulueta (31%). If he gets a clean break and the lead, he's a threat, if not, you can tear up your pari-mutuel tickets before they reach the quarter pole. This PA-bred has flourished at Prx and Del in restricted company but struggles elsewhere; makes debut on Laurel Park dirt oval and is not used to facing a field of this big.
7. **Maxwell Smarty (20-1)** – Lightly raced four-year-old *Smarty Jones* gelding leaves PEN to seek a natural Hat Trick for trainer Flint Stites; only OTB finish was on synthetic; that 95 Brisnet# earned in most recent victory says he belongs but will need to move forward yet again to compete with this group.
8. **Sir Rockport (12-1)** – Trainer Tim Ice moved this four-year-old gray son of *Rockport Harbor* to Laurel after a game runner-up effort here v. N2X, edging out Final Prospect (#1 in here); making just his 13<sup>th</sup> lifetime start, his only two victories have come on an "off" track (5:2-1-1)... let it rain!
9. **Beach Hut (5-1)** – Another runner who made his way to the M. Zulueta barn via R. Preciado suspension reverted back to early speed in the \$100k Dave's Friend holding for SHOW money; has improved those BSF in each of his past 3 races; T. McCarthy will be aboard for the first time, possibly using different tactics.
10. **Sonny Inspired (12-1)** – Just one win in five starts at this 6 furlongs distance; puts blinkers back on two uninspiring efforts without them; seeking his first victory since winning a N3X here last Valentine's Day.

### FIRE PLUG SELECTIONS

1. #4 – Any Court Inastorm (4-1): *Consistent 5yo is a late bloomer with just 10 career starts and a late mover who can catch the early speed in deep stretch*
2. #3 – Majestic Hussar (2-1): *Back class, and 2 good recent runner-up efforts; beaten just 2 by Breeders Cup Sprint SHOW horse (Favorite Tale) in PEN stakes; if the track is "off", he's your play (5:3-2-0)*
3. #9 – Beach Hut (6-1): *Seeks more tactical ride with McCarthy in the irons; 5 of 6 lifetime victories have come at this distance; earned career best fig in last*
4. #8 – Sir Rockport (8-1): *Chances are enhanced significantly if the track comes up "off"; has had a few excuses when racing line looks lackluster*