



In Focus

Laurel Park stakes

February 15, 2016

MIRACLE WOOD STAKES

THE FIELD

1. **Hard Hitter (12-1)** – Linda Rice trainee ships in from Aqueduct after breaking maiden by nose when sent off as 2-1 post time favorite; took next to no action in debut (18-1) under same conditions (6 furlongs and off track) less than two months earlier.
2. **Street Heat (8-1)** – This *Street Sense* sophomore ships in from Aqueduct for trainer Chad Brown after earning maiden victory by a head in second career start, first going two turns; cutting back to a one-turn mile may play havoc with his psyche; Kendrick Carmouche retains the mount.
3. **Charmed Victory (3-1)** – One of many three-year-old stars in the Rodney Jenkins barn for Hillwood Stables; this son of *Flatter* is 2 for 2 in his young career, most recently scoring a six-length victory in a one mile, \$50k Optional Claiming event here with the addition of blinkers.
4. **Jess I Am (20-1)** – Hails from the Triple Crown winning Zayat Stables but is still a maiden after three starts in New York; this *Eskendereya* colt had lackluster efforts while sprinting in the slop then tried routing on the turf, both at Belmont in October; given a few months off, returned to sprint at Aqueduct on Jan. 30 to get the SHOW purse.
5. **Never Gone South (3-5)** – Hard to look beyond this bay son of *Munnings* as he's been part of the Exacta in all five starts, losing just twice, each time by less than a length and to colts who have done well moving forward... *Awesome Speed* was a next out winner in the Mucho Macho Man at Gulfstream and *Voritcity* came back to be

RACE DATA

- Race 5 (2:20pm EST)
- 3-year-olds, 1 mile, \$75,000 guaranteed purse
- 22nd running of a race named for 1986 Preakness runner Miracle Wood, a horse trained by local trainer Ferris Allen for his father Bert.
- 2015 winner: Savvy Street
- Stakes record: 1:36.75, Extrasexyhippzster (2014)
- Notable: Five of six entered here have been Triple Crown nominated.

THE PICKS

1. **#5 – Never Gone South (3-5):** Toyed with small field in the \$75k Frank Whiteley, Jr. as jock gave him just one tap entering stretch and he took off wanting to keep going well beyond the wire; could be heading for the Derby Trail.
2. **#3 – Charmed Victory (3-1):** Impressive victories in first two career starts and a number of his competitors in those have come back to win; big test today to determine if he's the real deal.
3. **#6 – Marengo Road (6-1):** Was all out to finish second to M/L favorite in first race after layoff; should be not as keen

runner-up in both the G3 Jerome and G3 Withers at Aqueduct. Ultra-impressive winner of the Whiteley in last start, romping by seven while coming home fast.

6. **Marengo Road (6-1)** – Most experienced runner in this field with seven starts on his resume' with two wins and two runner-up efforts, but oddly enough has never hit the board on a fast dirt track; took time off after getting buried in G2 Remsen on Nov. 28 and returned to chase *Never Gone South* in vain to be second best.

today and move forward off that effort.

4. #4 – Jess I Am (20-1): Maiden made a nice middle move in first race since mid-October going 6 furlongs after rough start, but could not get to top two yet galloped out strong.

WIDE COUNTRY STAKES

THE FIELD

1. **Trace of Grace (15-1)** – Two-time winning *Petionville* filly from Penn National conditioner Bernie Houghton ran a disappointing fourth of five in the \$75k Marshua Stakes on Jan. 16 over a “good” track in her Laurel Park debut; her worst two races came on an off track.
2. **Great Soul (9-2)** – Ignored in debut when 29-1 and rallied through traffic to be runner-up going 6 furlongs; it was a different story in her second start as the 2-1 post time favorite, stretched out to one mile as she was involved early and pulled away from the field to win easy while the runner-up broke her maiden next out.
3. **Social Butterfly (6-1)** – Winstar Farm \$140k purchase from the OBS in April has been well traveled in just three starts... debut at

RACE DATA

- Race 7 (3:19pm EST)
- 3-year-old fillies, 7 furlongs, \$75,000 guaranteed purse
- 23rd running of a race named for 1991 Maryland-bred Horse of the Year, Wide Country, who compiled a nine-race win streak (all stakes races) at either Pimlico Race Course or Laurel Park.
- 2015 winner: Gypsy Judy
- Stakes record: 1:22.78, Saarligh (2008)
- The race was named in honor of the 1991 Maryland-bred Horse of the Year, Wide Country who compiled a nine-race win streak (all stakes races) at either Pimlico Race Course or Laurel Park.

Canterbury on Sept. 11, then 3 weeks later broke maiden at Delaware Park, was put on the shelf until Jan. 26 when she sprinted over the synthetic surface at the Ocala Training Center to win a race restricted to OBS grads; regular rider Scott Speith stays aboard.

4. **Clare's Dowery (12-1)** – Connex had lofty expectations for this MD-bred daughter of *Jump Start*, running her in MD Million Lassie in second start... it did not go well (8th by 17); got first trip to Winner's Circle in fifth and most recent career outing, second with blinkers.
5. **Karen's Silk (9-5)** – Completed a natural Hat Trick on Jan. 16 with 1¼-length victory in the \$75k Marshua Stakes here; appears trainer Michael Dilger has this one firing on all cylinders for another top effort; only knock could be "she hasn't beaten much"... no next out winners and small fields of 4-5 rivals.
6. **Prognosis (7-2)** – Toss her debut w/o Lasix, on the turf and she's quite the runner, winning twice and then second best to arguably one of the top two three-year-old fillies in the country, *Cathryn Sophia*; been away since Dec. 5 but has kept to a leisurely work pattern.
7. **Spun Copper (15-1)** – Trainer Mike Trombetta has taken his time bringing this gal along; made a nice middle move in debut when not expected to do much (17-1), then 35 days later, on New Years' Day graduated from the maiden ranks; 7 furlongs is closer to what this *Hard Spun* filly is bred to run.
8. **Aye a Song (5-1)** – WV-bred has won 5 of 7 and was a game third in the \$75k Marshua Stakes in Laurel debut when she melted down, unseating her rider just prior to loading into the starting gate, then dueled with the odds on favorite for 5½ furlongs; a cooler head and easier lead v. these make the difference.

THE PICKS

1. #8 – Aye a Song (5-1): Can get to the front without anywhere close to the pressure she faced in her previous outing; realistic chance to go gate-to-wire on a surface that hasn't been kind to early speed.

2. #6 – Prognosis (7-2): Like the confidence the connections showed earlier shipping from Ellis Park to run at Keeneland... and won! Then no shame being the first loser (aka second) to Cathryn Sophia.

3. #5 – Karen's Silk (9-5): Respect NY shipper but she took advantage of speed duel in Marshua Stakes... one may not materialize today.

4. #2 – Great Soul (9-2): Has the look of a filly mature beyond her racing experience; she dusted a next out winner in her maiden score; McCarthy taking the reins is a plus.

GRADE 2 GENERAL GEORGE STAKES

THE FIELD

1. **Act of Madness (30-1)** – Will be SCRATCHED as he ran on Saturday in the John B. Campbell Handicap.
2. **Page McKenney (2-1)** – Connections passed on opportunity to repeat in the \$75k John B. Campbell at Laurel on Saturday and instead shot for this graded stakes carrying a much larger purse; claimed for \$16k 2½ years ago, has become a \$1 million earner via multiple graded stakes placings; has a current streak of 22 consecutive finishes in-the-money, 19 of them being part of the Exacta; this will be his 18th straight appearance in a stakes race; should get a perfect stalking trip as there is plenty of early speed to chase down late.
3. **Green Gratto (9-5)** – Speed of the speed will try to take this field gate to wire; ships in from New York to make Laurel Park debut as a.m. favorite; has never finished worse than fourth in six graded stakes races, winning one of them; does best work at 6 furlongs but is just 1 for 5 at 7 furlongs, the distance of this event.
4. **Warrioroftheroses (20-1)** – There's only one way this 7-year-old gelded son of *A.P. Warrior* runs... that's on the front, but that may not happen as the M/L favorite (#3) in here does the same; has not been in the money in two tries at the trip; gave a top effort in last outing, third race after a layoff, by salvaging SHOW purse money in the \$75k Native Dancer behind *Page McKenney* and *Golden Glint*. The

RACE DATA

- Race 8 (3:49pm EST)
- 4-years-old and upward, 7 furlongs, \$250,000 guaranteed purse
- 40th running
- 2015 winner: Misconnect
- Stakes record: 1:20.95 – Greenspring (2010)
- Inaugurated in 1973, the General George was named in honor of first president of the United States and Commanding General of the American Revolutionary Army. The race was originally run at 1 1/16 miles in nine of the first thirteen runnings. Since 1989 it has been run at a distance of 7 furlongs.

THE PICKS

1. #6 – Majestic Affair (7-2): Kendrick Carmouche stays on Chad Brown trainee instead of M/L favorite here, but can you blame him? He's never been worse than second in the seven races he's had the mount.

2. #2 – Page McKenney (2-1): Can this gelding continue this amazing string of victories and/or runner-up finishes? Of course he can! He's been nothing short of a machine and only a speed favoring track can

latter came back to run 4th in John B. Campbell Hcp. here on Saturday.

5. **Sonny Inspired (15-1)** – Upset winner (\$27.40) of the \$75k Fire Plug here in most recent effort with blinkers back on; could lightning strike twice with second start with blinkers angle? Lone try in graded stakes was outrun in a sixth-place effort in the G3 Tom Fool Handicap at Aqueduct last March.
6. **Majestic Affair (7-2)** – Four-year-old gray makes third start after layoff for Chad Brown, trying to make it three in a row as he was put up via DQ followed by gate-to-wire score in the mud, at The Big A going one mile 70 yards, earning a personal best 105 Brisnet# in the latter; has a win and a second in two prior LRL tries, both in stakes company.
7. **Any Court Inastorm (30-1)** – Big, if logical step, for lightly raced 5yo *Successful Appeal* gelding, who is out of conditions; a last-out winner, he was 3rd two back in the state-bred Jennings; Forest Boyce retains the mount.
8. **Fabulous Kid (8-1)** – Ships in from NY for owner/trainer David Jacobson (10:2-2-1 at current Laurel meet); will be his 5th straight meeting with M/L favorite *Green Gratto*, getting the short end of the stick in the past three after winning by a nose in their first meeting; all previous face-offs have been at 6 furlongs... added furlong means advantage “Kid”?
9. **Majestic Hussar (12-1)** – Seems to have contracted “second-itis” as runner-up in the past three outings, all in minor stakes races; troubled trip in latest may have cost him the “W”; takes on graded stakes competition for first time since 2013 when he was a promising three-year-old.

derail him.

3. #9 – Majestic Hussar (12-1):

Multiple issues in Fire Plug cost momentum and likely the race; like how trainer seems to have recaptured old form and will give Carrasco a leg up.

4. #4 – Green Gratto (9-5): This guy’s wheelhouse is 6 not 7 furlongs; vulnerable favorite here and wouldn’t be shocked to see 3-1 or more at Post Time.