



2016

In Focus: New Year's Eve Stakes



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The Racing Biz

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Marylander Stakes

RACE PARTICULARS: Race 4 (2:00pm EST), \$100,000 guaranteed purse for 2-year-olds, 7 Furlongs (dirt). 15th running.

LAST YEAR Vorticity won by three-quarters of a length in 1:24.63. It was the second straight win in this event for jockey Victor Carrasco.



O Dionysus. Photo by The Racing Biz.

The Picks

1. **#2 – Irish War Cry** (9-5): A 4½-length debut winner for trainer G. Motion on Nov. 11 over the Laurel dirt oval, recording an eye-popping 99 Brisnet#; this NJ-bred son of Curlin out of a Polish Numbers mare could be special and get better stretching out; like latest work going 6f
2. **#4 – Two Charley's** (4-1): Second to impressive stablemate El Areeb in the James F. Lewis III Stakes; previously was third behind well-regarded stakes winners No Dozing and O Dionysus after winning his career debut
3. **#5 – O Dionysus** (9-2): Beaten favorite in latest outing, an eventful trip in the MD Juvenile Futurity which resulted in first OTB finish of his five race career; willing to forgive that performance as this son of Bodemeister ran career best Brisnet# (95; second best in this field) two back in a restricted stakes at Prx
4. **#1 – Undulated** (5-2): This \$625,000 yearling son of Curlin is a head-bob away from being undefeated; won the Swynford Stakes over the WO all-weather surface in most recent outing after that nose loss which followed his debut win, both on turf; the \$64,000 question is, can he run just as well on natural dirt?

The Rest of the Field

#3 – Cape Lookout (12-1): Got maiden at Parx just 19 days ago in fifth try; never OTB while up against quality 2-year-olds in MSW events; best efforts have come on turf and sloppy surfaces; considering ARG-bred mare made living on turf, that may be his preferred surface... **#6 – Always a Suspect** (8-1): Winner of two straight in New York for Victory Racing Partners and trainer K. McLaughlin; fact that regular, NY-based rider J. Alvarado not listed to ride doesn't give a warm and fuzzy feeling about his chances; Brisnet#s have been ascending and this field lacks "need the lead" type, so maybe the jock will try to go gate-to-wire... **#7 – Alive** (20-1): Still a maiden after two starts; third in debut when sent off as 1-1 favorite then runner-up with not the best of trips; further progression today plus Closing style runner gets the extra furlong that could put him in the Winners' Circle at a huge price

Jennings Stakes

RACE PARTICULARS: Race 5 (2:30pm EST), \$75,000 guaranteed purse for 3-year-olds and upward, MD-bred/MD-sired, One Mile (dirt). 75th running.

LAST YEAR Noteworthy Peach won by six lengths in 1:37.41. Eighttofasttocatch had won the four prior editions.

The Picks

1. **#4 – Just Jack** (5-1): Only 3 dirt, fast track starts in 11 race career w/ bookend victories... in his latest effort, recording career best Brisnet# (97) in a restricted stake and in career debut 8 months ago; took advantage of quick, early fractions in most recent win, will need the same here to repeat; loves Lrl main oval (4:3-0-1)
2. **#2 – Charmed Victory** (15-1): Nice ridgling who last Spring faced the best 3-year-olds the Mid-Atlantic had to offer in local stakes; away since getting drubbed in Sir Barton Stakes on Preakness Day; was surprisingly transferred from Hillwood Stables longtime trainer R. Jenkins to G. Motion when training resumed two months ago at Fai not Lrl; expect top effort first time in restricted company
3. **#7 – John Jones** (7-5): Won a Claiming Crown “Win & You’re In” qualifier locally on Nov. 6 which led to a game SHOW effort over the GP dirt oval; back home, in restricted company and poised to start a new win streak as jock/trainer combo have been on fire (33% at meet); will get pressure early from both #5 and #9; asking a lot to bounce back after shipping to/from FL a few weeks ago
4. **#8 – Kaitain** (12-1): Ran his eyeballs out (100 Brisnet#) when runner-up v. N2X at this distance in latest; first time in stakes company and will be equipped with a “Bar shoe”; two nice drills since last race layoff but prefers an off track (3 for 7) v. fast track (1 for 13)

The Rest of the Field

#1 – Rockinn On Bye (6-1): Cross-entered in Dave’s Friend Stakes (Race 8; 6 furlongs), the connections might opt for that one based on sprint ITM record (10: 2-5-3) v. one mile (7:1-2-1) though it came up tougher; going on that assumption, see comments him for that race...

#3 – Sonny Inspired (20-1): Also cross-entered in Dave’s Friend; has never raced in a one mile event in 34 starts; has earned a living sprinting; see comments on him for race 8; **#5 – Jeezum Jim** (15-1): Riding a three race win streak, all going two turns; wheeling back in just 8 days after a hard-fought stretch drive might be too much to ask; though only cutting back 1/16th mile, the one turn may play with his equine psyche...

#6 – Ravenheart (15-1): Returns from 3 month layoff after winning N1X going 1 1/16 here; training lights out but would have to improve a few lengths off his best effort to get the job done against this group; 2 of 3 wins have come on a “good” track ... **#9 – Admiral’s War Chest** (6-1): Has feasted on MD-bred and MD-sired foes as he repeated as MD Million Classic champ; draw a line through latest start as he didn’t break alertly and is a “needs the lead” type who should get tested early by a couple others (#5 and #6); runner-up in here last year...

#10 – Final Prospect (15-1): Runner-up in state-bred stakes when 14-1 which followed a fourth by nearly a pole in G3 DeFrancis Dash when 40-1; first try going this distance; seems to be best sprinting which makes this ‘capper wonder why trainer G. Capuano didn’t opt for Dave’s Friend Stakes

Gin Talking Stakes

RACE PARTICULARS: Race 6 (3:00pm EST), \$100,000 guaranteed purse 2-year-old fillies, 7 Furlongs (dirt). Eighth running.

LAST YEAR Cathryn Sophia dazzled, winning by 16 ¼ lengths in 1:23.17.

The Picks

1. **#1 – Lucky in Malibu (4-1):** Gets tough assignment from the rail for first time in eighth career start; runner-up MD Juvenile Filly Championship right after maiden score which was initial dirt try; speed figures have been on the steady improve as last race final 1/16th time is best in this field
2. **#4 – Ms Locust Point (5-2):** It's peculiar to find a group of maiden winners where just one of them scored in gate-to-wire fashion (#8). That one hasn't seen the lead in 3 races since but this daughter of Dialed In has been close to or on the lead throughout in both of her starts; though trainer J. Servis has fired blanks w/ shippers during current Lrl meet (8:0-0-1)
3. **#9 – Aiden's Rag Doll (8-1):** Horrendous start in most recent which was first against winners and w/ Lasix, yet on her own will recovered making a nice middle move, undaunted when shut off in mid-stretch, angled out and finished just 3½ lengths behind the winner
4. **#3 – Bubbly (15-1):** Don't sleep on this maiden who was runner-up to a next out stakes winner in only start at Pen when 46-1 while taking an overland trip ("5path" comment is an understatement); was late changing leads, head cocked towards grandstand but galloped out nicely



Cathryn Sophia romped in the '15 Gin Talking. Photo by Laurie Asseo.

The Rest of the Field

#2 – Star Touch (30-1): Fresh off a \$36.40 maiden score v. \$25k Maiden Claimers after being crushed first two starts v. MSW... **#5 – Pink Cashmere (20-1):** NJ-bred a bit better than the aforementioned #2 breaking maiden at same level on Oct. 28th; been away since and faces a tall task here... **#6 – Squan's Kingdom (4-1):** Adds blinkers which must have been on for recent bullet work and gets Lrl leading rider (J. Toledo) but already been beaten twice by #8... **#7 – Cold Hearted Pearl (15-1):** Most experience filly in here with 9 starts at 5 different tracks and distances on dirt, turf and synthetic; participated in two G1s and woefully lacks figures to compete here; only prayer would be go to lead and hope to hang on, as she did in only victory... **#8 – Star Super (3-1):** Tough call leaving this one out of Superfecta but as my mentor would say, "Ya can't play them all"; gutty runner-up finish in latest when mid-race looked to be going nowhere; first start for new barn (14%) that does better w/ 2 y.o. (21%)

Thirty Eight Go Go Stakes

RACE PARTICULARS: Race 7 (3:30pm EST), \$100,000 guaranteed purse for Fillies and Mare 3-year-olds and upward, One Mile (dirt). Sixth running.

LAST YEAR Athena picked her way through traffic to win by a length in 1:37.85.

The Picks

1. **#4 – By the Moon (3-5):** Really?! NY-based shipper's last 4 of 6 races have been in G1s (5th by 3 in BC F&M Sprint), the other two were G3s, just not as Also-Rans... winning a G3 and a neck lost in G1 Acorn at today's distance; easily won Caesar's Wish in lone Lrl in Mar. '15
2. **#9 – High Ridge Road (7-2):** L. Rice trainee could be the one that kills thousands of Pick-5 & Pick-6 tickets singling the prohibitive favorite; came up a whisker short of G3 win at Aqu in first start since Independence Day; 2 for 2 at Lrl and saw multiple winners exit those races
3. **#7 – Love Came Town (12-1):** Off the pace runner needed more than 6 furlongs in latest stakes effort; won minor stakes at Lrl nearly a year ago (Jan. 2nd); only "worse than second" outing in 5 at this distance was on an off track
4. **#10 – Addibel Lightning (15-1):** Only runner for 19% jock and 26% trainer who head to Winners' Circle 34% as a team; filly goes for natural Hat Trick as she continues to improve speed figures since being claimed for \$25k back in Aug.



Athena took the '15 Thirty Eight Go Go. Photo by The Racing Biz.

The Rest of the Field

#1 – E Lizzy (30-1): Overachiever of late getting minor awards while being hung 6-wide on turn makes initial stakes start... **#2 – Little Cyclone (20-1):** Stopped when failed to get lead in similar stakes event in latest; gets early lead here but not the distance... **#3 – Ansible (10-1):** NY Shipper won Lrl debut in last outing/ blinkers added v. N1X for trainer C. Clement... **#5 – Callingmissbrown (30-1):** Lightly raced 4 y.o. (2 for 3) takes big step up off N1X win and will need a huge leap in speed figs just to get a piece... **#6 – Cayman Croc (12-1):** Game competitor but best efforts have come at Prx; comments on last 3 have been weakened, no late kick & yielded... **#8 – Alpine Sky (30-1):** Two wins and runner-up finish in latest 3 starts in Mid-Atlantic after 0 for 6 start in So. Florida; best effort came over a sloppy Lrl surface going two turns; may need more than a mile to win

Dave's Friend Stakes

RACE PARTICULARS: Race 8 (4:00pm EST), \$100,000 guaranteed purse for 3-year-olds and upward, 6 Furlongs (dirt). 13th running.

LAST YEAR Always Sunshine won by almost two lengths in 1:10.02.

The Picks

1. **#2 – Chief Lion (5-2):** *No other foe has speed or gaudy triple-digit speed figs to challenge him early, so leading rider J. Toledo should be able to milk the early fractions, leaving enough tank in the gas to hold off late comers*
2. **#5 – Measured (12-1):** *Came up a neck short in stakes debut at Pen when 41-1 earning first triple-digit Brisnet# (102); 4 y.o. has had a solid 18-race career, churning his way through each condition; jock A. Wolfson fits him like a glove (6:2-3-1)*
3. **#8 – Heaven's Runway (2-1):** *Lit up Aqu toteboard to the tune of \$66.50 in G3 event on Thanksgiving w/ neck victory over next out winner; failed as Post Time favorite in this event last year; NY-based jock C. Velasquez makes trip in just for this ride*
4. **#7 – Never Gone South (15-1):** *Recorded an admirable 96 Brisnet# in \$100k stakes here in first start in 6 months in spite of finishing 11 lengths behind winner; the fact that McCarthy stays on gives hope that the brilliance displayed at age 2 could reappear*



Always Sunshine. Photo by Laurie Asseo.

The Rest of the Field

#1 – Bodhisattva (30-1): *Third race after layoff but showed nothing in similar stakes going 9 furlongs in most recent; has never raced 6 furlongs in 25 previous races...* **#3 – Sir Rockport (20-1):** *Exits 6th place effort in \$200k stakes at Pen but 3 who beat him return here; does best work on an off track while just 1 for 18 on fast strip...* **#4 – Day of Fury (12-1):** *Popular in Claiming Box this year switching barns five times; early speed has failed him in recent two starts; only runner capable of being on or near early lead w/ #2...* **#6 – Chublicious (9-2):** *Dominated NJ-breds at Mth this year but was outclassed in G1 Vanderbilt at Sar; behind #2 and #5 in here last outing...* **#9 – Sonny Inspired (15-1):** *Cross-entered in Jennings (Race 6) but trainer P. Schoenthal may call an audible and wait on the Fire Plug; Stakes-tested and graded-stakes placed (3rd in G3 Gen. George in Feb.); prefers an off track (3 for 7) v. fast track (1 for 14)...* **#10 – Rockinn On Bye (8-1):** *Also cross-entered in Jennings Stakes at one mile; think connections would go here based on sprint ITM record (10: 2-5-3) v. one mile (7:1-2-1); doesn't win much (6-for-40) but never OTB going 6 furlongs (10: 2-5-3); looks like another "late on the scene" run to grab a minor share*