



2017

In Focus: March 18 Stakes



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The Racing Biz  
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## Conniver Stakes

**RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 7 (4:10pm EDT), \$75,000 guaranteed purse for Maryland-bred/sired fillies and mares 4yo and up, 7 furlongs (dirt). 49<sup>th</sup> running.

**LAST YEAR** Candida H. won by 2 ½ lengths in 1:24.05.



12016 Conniver winner Candida H. Photo by Jim McCue, Maryland Jockey Club.

## The Picks

1. **#5 – Bawlmer Hon** (9-5): *Prefers two-turn affairs as she's competed in open stakes company in her last two efforts, showing early speed then holding on to be bridesmaid in the MD Racing Media stakes; don't be fooled by her 0 for 1 at this distance as she stumbled badly losing any chance at the start when 2-1 favorite*
2. **#7 – If I Was a Boy** (5-1): *At first look appears to be overmatched as she finally beat winners (AlwN1X) in her ninth try while earning career best 90 Brisnet#; steps out of her comfort zone (6 furlongs) as she gave up the lead in late in her latest of 2 lifetime tries traveling 7 panels*
3. **#4 – Next Best Thing** (2-1): *12-time winner from 54 starts making stops at Lrl, Pen, Prx and Del for trainer Claudio Gonzalez; cuts back from one-mile victory v. tough AOCn1x group when in for \$20k tag*
4. **#2 – Holiday Blues** (15-1): *Badly beaten favorite in latest outing v. AlwN1X and still eligible for N3L events, will need to find her form from late last year when in her last four races of '16 was just a nose and a head away from four straight wins; trainer Robin Graham capable of righting this ship*

## The Rest of the Field

**#1 – Clem Gem** (30-1): *Hard to recommend as she's yet to hit the board in 2017 after 3 starts; in latest offered no energy finishing 8+ lengths behind (#7) If I Was a Boy...* **#3 – One Proud Gal** (6-1): *Been on a downward spiral since trainer Michael Trombetta claim from J. Ness last June; showed nothing in first race at Pen after 9-month layoff, which was latest race...* **#6 – Great Illusion** (10-1): *Prx shipper for trainer Mario Serey after playing "Claiming Ping-Pong" with Tom Iannotti 4 times at the \$5k - \$7500 range; latest was a clunker when 3-1 in PA-bred AlwN1X; was runner-up going 7 furlongs in '16 MD Million Distaff Starter, her lone Lrl outing...* **#8 – Scip's Sonata** (15-1): *Would benefit from an off track (9:3-1-1) and should relish stretching out from latest 5½ furlong effort when 4th as the runner-up returned to win (\$15.80) a tough OC\$25kn2x last week*

## Not for Love Stakes

**RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 8 (4:40pm EDT), \$75,000 guaranteed purse for Maryland-bred/sired 4yo and up, 6 furlongs (dirt). 1st running.

**LAST YEAR** Run as the Ben's Cat Stakes, it was won by Sonny Inspired by a length in 1:11.23.

## The Picks

1. **#4 – Laki (6-1):** *Lightly raced 4-year-old gelding is riding a three-race win streak; only career loss came in debut on turf and without Lasix; is the speed of the speed and will likely play "Catch me if You Can" with H. Karamanos in the irons; from his latest win, the SHOW finisher (Joy Drive) came back Mar. 10 to dust a nice OC\$20kn1x field*
2. **#5 – Sonny Inspired (5-2):** *Won this event last year when it was prematurely named the Ben's Cat Stakes; G3-placed runner has the class to repeat, having run in more stakes than his competition here combined; won last outing, his 7th but first away from Lrl, a \$30k Handicap at CT which amounted to a paid evening workout; has been equally successful on all kind of surfaces*
3. **#3 – Stolen Love (7-2):** *Would be appropriate for this 10-time winner to take the race named for his sire; 7-year-old gelding goes for the natural Hat Trick and first ever stakes victory; concern is how long he can maintain his current form, which is the best of his career; winless on an off track (11:0-4-3) -- in case Mother Nature delivers some precipitation*
4. **#2 – Jrock (6-1):** *Been facing N3X while majority of rivals in here have recently completed N1X condition; will need some pace help to be heard from in deep stretch; got SHOW purse in latest behind the classy Cocked and Loaded*



2Sonny Inspired won last year's Ben's Cat Stakes. Photo by Laurie Asseo.

## The Rest of the Field

**#1 – Blu Moon Ace (9-2):** *Supplemented after being claimed from a winning effort in OC\$25kn2x just 6 days ago; has been competitive against Struth (#6) and Jrock (#2) but quick turn-around might be asking a lot...* **#6 – Struth (8-1):** *Either runs big or doesn't show up (12:4-4-0); won open \$25k Claimer in most recent start but competition was suspect; pair of bullet works; candidate to put early pressure on Laki...* **#7 – Nicardalic Rocks (12-1):** *Best win of career came in '16 MD Million Sprint against 5 foes; has been runner-up in 3 of 5 efforts since, behind Laki (#4) in latest but ahead of a sharp next out winner; stalking style requires pace help...* **#8 – Jeezum Jim (10-1):** *Cross entered in the 1 1/8 mile Harrison Johnson (R11) which may be his preference since career turned around when stretched out to two turns; was a tiring 5th v. AlwN1X in only start at this 6 furlongs distance*

## Private Terms Stakes

**RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 9 (5:10pm EDT), \$100,000 guaranteed purse for 3yo, About 1 1/16 miles, 28<sup>th</sup> running.

**LAST YEAR** Abiding Star won by 1 ½ lengths in 1:46.61. He later finished 11<sup>th</sup> in the Grade 1 Preakness.

## The Picks

1. **#6 – O Dionysus (9-5):** *The sky's the limit for this MD-bred Bodemeister colt... well, maybe the skies over Maryland as he easily disposed of 7 rivals in the Miracle Wood stakes here last month and is on the fast track (no pun intended) to take all three MD Preakness preps; is built for two-turns and should shine here; had horrific trip two back in loss to High Roller (#2); next stop the Federico Tesio*
2. **#5 – Hashtag Alex (4-1):** *This gelded son of Afleet Alex must be showing trainer John Servis signs of being special; he broke maiden in third career start -- against winners -- earning a gaudy 93 Brisnet#, avenging a nose loss in previous outing to J.J.'s Candy...*
3. **#3 – No More Talk (10-1):** *May surprise if he continues to progress in third start with Lasix after two one mile contests; has the look of a two-turn runner so this event is where he can show it*
4. **#1 – Twisted Tom (3-1):** *When trainer Chad Brown ships to Lrl, it's because his runner has a chance (3:1-1-1); this NY-bred, two-time winner gets blinkers for second time after prevailing in state bred OC\$75kn1x but no NY jock cared to sacrifice their day of races at Aqu to come ride*



3Abiding Star won the '16 Private Terms. Photo by Laurie Asseo.

## The Rest of the Field

**#2 – High Roller (5-1):** *May be distance challenged has he was impressive winner in the Frank Whiteley stakes when stretched out to 7 furlongs but failed to hit the board for first time in his 5-race career weakening to 4th along a dead rail going one mile in the Miracle Wood last out; like the 7 furlong work though...* **#4 – Dharmaster (8-1):** *Broke maiden in latest, his 4th career outing when equipped with blinkers; runner-up and third place finisher didn't do so well in their next try so stepping up to this level might be wishful thinking on the connections part as was nominating him to the Triple Crown series...* **#7 – Greek Prince (15-1):** *This Tapizar gelding has made amazing progress in his young career; from a "no factor" 8th in debut when offered for \$25k less than 5 months ago to earning back-to-back victories, all the while improving his speed figures and stretching out in each start; would need to take another huge step forward here to pull off the upset*

## Caesar's Wish Stakes

**RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 10 (5:40pm EDT), \$100,000 guaranteed purse for 3yo fillies, 1 mile (dirt). 29<sup>th</sup> running.

**LAST YEAR** Sophia's Song won by 4 lengths 1:38.40. It was jockey Victor Carrasco's third straight win in the event.

### The Picks

1. **#2 – Aspen Hilltop (12-1):** *There were high expectations for this \$350k yearling purchase after successful debut at Sar last August when she unleashed furious late kick; on the shelf until Jan. to prep for G2 event at GP which was disastrous as she stumbled over a fallen foe on backstretch, managed to stay on her feet but jock saved her for another day*
2. **#8 – Jenda's Agenda (7-5):** *Trainer Larry Jones isn't shipping this undefeated daughter of Proud Citizen north from New Orleans (FG) because he has a craving for MD crabcakes; has never seen the back end of a rival at a call in two-front-running wins, but might get cooked as plenty in here will provide a pressured pace*
3. **#4 – Super Star (9-2):** *Rebounded nicely in most recent efforts (a win & runner-up twice) in a trio of minor stakes at Lrl after trailing throughout in G1 Frizette last Oct. going one mile; gives that distance a second try here; encouraging that T. McCarthy stays aboard*
4. **#1 – Sine Wave (15-1):** *Prx shipper puts perfect 2-for-2 record on the line while stretching out another furlong; broke maiden at Lrl going 6 furlongs then returned home to romp by 7+ length in first level allowance after adventurous start; could be benefactor of pace meltdown*



42016 Caesar's Wish winner Sophia's Song. Photo by Laurie Asseo.

### The Rest of the Field

- #3 – Ticked Pink (8-1):** *Takes a giant leap from debut win to stakes; \$250k Kee Sept. yearling purchase had it too easy v. just 4 foes as 1-1 favorite as slow early fractions enabled her to accelerate late; won't get that type of trip in here...*
- #5 – Shacklefords Lady (6-1)** *Another who boasts a 2-for-2 record seeks stiffer competition than what she has faced at Pen in two sprints; she too has yet to see the back end of another runner so something has to give in here; similar improvement from her first to second race would render a 106 Brisnet#...*
- #6 – Crabcakes (5-1):** *Her perfect record ended when a nice filly from NY (China Grove) caught her in deep stretch; not so sure this MD-bred daughter of Great Notion wants more distance unless trainer Bernie Houghton has gotten her to rate; 6f work a good move...*
- #7 – Forever Liesl (10-1):** *NY shipper for trainer Michelle Nevin has already made the trip down I-95 twice... on Dec. 31, '16 to break maiden in second start traveling one mile then SHOWed in stakes debut behind China Grove and Crabcakes (#6 in here); any move forward puts her in the mix*

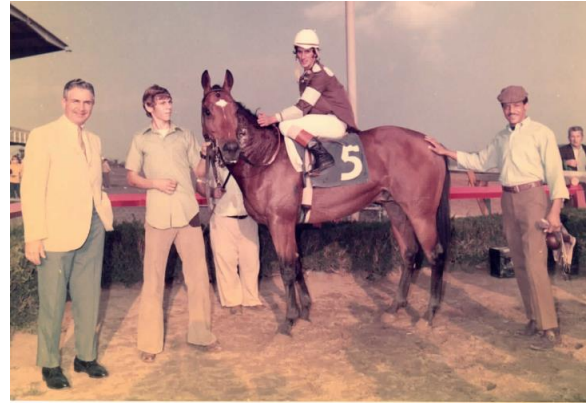
## Harrison E. Johnson Memorial Stakes

**RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 11 (6:10 pm EDT), \$75,000 guaranteed purse for 3yo and up, 1 1/8 miles (dirt). 31<sup>st</sup> running.

**LAST YEAR** Not run. Page McKenney won the most recent running, in 2015, by four lengths in 1:50.88.

### The Picks

1. **#6 – Kaitain (10-1):** *Took an ill-advised trip in latest along a dead Lrl rail as jock seemed to know there was a bigger fish to fry and didn't ask for much late; that was worst defeat of 11 race career and has always been gaining in deep stretch when having clear sailing; tall task for first try going this distance and in an open stakes company but these connections wouldn't have entered this lightly raced 6-year-old if they didn't think he warranted a shot; will be heard from in deep stretch*
2. **#4 – Bodhisattva (6-1):** *Upset winner (\$47.80) in John B. Campbell as race set up perfectly for his deep closing style; pace may be just as hot for this event; seems that trainer Jose Corrales has this up-and-down sort on an upswing now*
3. **#9 – Matt King Coal (7-5):** *Trainer L. Rice ships in from NY again as she gave this late blooming Cool Coal Man colt an easy 4-year-old debut when he went gate-to-wire, in hand by 4+ lengths in an AOC\$32kN2X last month but will face more pressure early here; if name sounds familiar, he was 4th in '16 G1 Wood Memorial*
4. **#2 – Jeezum Jim (12-1):** *Cross entered in the 6 furlong Not For Love (R8) but might end up here due to finding success traveling two turns; in best form of his career as ascending speed figures indicate*



**5** Harrison Johnson (right) in 1971. Photo courtesy of the Johnson family.

### The Rest of the Field

- #1 – Grasshoppin (15-1):** *A head-scratcher; b supplemented for this event after coming off a miserable effort in the 7 furlong G3 General George when 51-1; tries racing 9 furlongs for first time in 32nd career start...*
- #3 – Souper Lucky (10-1):** *Rough one last out in the Campbell but he may have been short in his first start since mid-March '16; loves the Lrl dirt (12:6-1-2) but winless going 9 furlongs (6:0-2-1); should give better effort off that last race...*
- #5 – Discreet Lover (12-1):** *Tough spot to make 4-year-old debut; still eligible for N3L; draw line through graded stakes starts and you have a decent runner; cross-entered at Parx; like work pattern leading up to this event...*
- #7 – Afleet Willy (3-1):** *Part of blistering pace in 7 furlong G3 General George then threw in the towel; connections would love to see an off track (4:3-1-0); needs to avoid getting caught up in fast, early pace...*
- #8 – I Came to Party (30-1):** *Does not possess the recent figures to compete at this level in spite earning 91 Brisnet# in gate-to-wire effort at Pen v. OC\$25kn2x*