



In Focus

Laurel Park stakes

December 26, 2015

Maryland Juvenile Filly Championship

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 2 (12:54), 2yo Maryland-bred fillies, 7 furlongs
- **Key question:** How good is Lexington Street?
- **2014 winner:** Spotted Heart
- **Track record:** 1:20.95, Greenspring, 2/15/10

THE SCOOP

- ❖ **THE TOP CONTENDERS** – The prohibitive 4-5 morning line favorite is **#6 – Lexington Street** winner of three consecutive races including the Maryland Million Lassie in convincing fashion. That 5¾-lengths score earned her a 91 Brisnet#, by far the best among this field of seven. She stretched out to one mile in her most recent outing, a \$50k optional claimer prevailing by ¾ length as the 1-5 favorite after encountering some traffic at the ¼ pole... **#5 – Jump for Love (7-2)** has chased Lexington Street in vain in their past two outing. On a note positive, this daughter of Jump Start cut into the deficit, losing by 3¼ lengths compared to 9¼ two races back. Her pedigree suggest the longer the distance the better, so cutting back from one mile to 7 furlongs might not be ideal even though she has improved her Brisnet Speed Figure in each of her three races since her career debut... **#7 – Look Who's Talking (9-2)** is the most experienced two-year-old in this field (5:1-1-1) and has never been off-the-board at Laurel until her most recent outing in the \$100k Gin Talking Stakes when she “gave way” to finish 24 lengths behind the winner. She needed a lengthy shoe repair prior to that race while her rivals enjoyed an extended post parade,

SELECTIONS

1. **#6 – Lexington Street (4-5):** *A stand out on paper, but the race isn't run on paper; has proven to be the best in her class, locally thus far; the bullet drill, her only work since her last race, indicates no drop off...*
2. **#7 – Look Who's Talking (9-2):** *Comes closest to the favorite as far as Brisnet#; giving her a pass in Gin Talking based on shoe issue that caused her to miss entire Post Parade and pre-race warm-up...*
3. **#4 – If I Was a Boy (10-1):** *Beaten favorite after runner-up when 27-1 in debut; addition of Lasix might indicate why she “gave way” in second career outing...*
4. **#5 – Jump for Love (7-2):** *Continues to progress, & Brisnet#'s keep increasing; Carrasco/Jenkins combo has been lethal (32%) this year and an off track might help...*

which may be why she was off her game that day. She is the only one to have competed in a graded stake, finishing 5th by 4 lengths in the 1 1/16th mile G3 Miss Grillo at Belmont on the turf. The top three finishers from that race were entered in the BC G1 Juvenile Fillies Turf. She was third two races back against the boys going one mile over a “good” main track in an optional claimer that was originally scheduled for the turf. If the forecast for rain holds true, an off track may help her chances

- ❖ **LIVE AT A PRICE** – Trainer William Komlo saddles **#4 – If I Was a Boy (10-1)** and will give a leg up to Trevor McCarthy for the first time on this daughter of Jump Start out of a Silver Charm dam. Making her third career start but first with Lasix should help her step forward and give a good account of herself after failing to break her maiden in her most recent outing as the Post Time favorite. If she runs back to the 80 Brisnet# earned in her debut, there’s upside here to expect an in-the-money finish.
- ❖ **THE REST OF THE GALLS** – From the rail **#1 – Eve (30-1)** broke her maiden here easily going one mile at a nice price (\$28.60) but that was in a \$16,000 maiden claimer. Though her speed figures just don’t measure up to the contenders in here, an off track would be a Godsend as she was runner-up on a sloppy Laurel track in her second career effort... **#2 – Friesan Flyer (8-1)** is a first-time starter from the barn of Michael Trombetta who is 0 for 3 with these types v. winners. Her sire Friesan Fire has thrown some nice, early winners but those came against fellow maidens; unless this gal is really special, as owners/breeders Josh & Mike Pons of Country Life Farm hope (or believe), the reality might be an attempt to get black-type in a small field. Cannot fault worktab leading up to debut that boasts a couple bullets... Prx shipper **#3 – Princess Talia (20-1)** takes advantage of being bred in the Free State to have the opportunity to compete in here. A surprise debut winner (\$29.00) by 5½ lengths at Prx in a \$25,000 maiden claimer going 5½ furlongs the stretch out to 7 furlongs should not be a problem. She didn’t fare too well in first try v. winners and regular rider (M. Felix) doesn’t make the trip but picks up another Prx rider, Maria Remedio, her only mount on the card.

Dave's Friend Stakes

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 4 (1:51), 3yo and up, 6 furlongs
- **Key question:** Can hard-hitting locals like **Service for Ten**, **Jack's in the Deck** and **Majestic Hussar** hold serve against talented invaders like **Jake N Elwood**, **Rainbow Heir**, and **Heaven's Runway**?
- **2014 winner:** **Bern Identity**
- **Track record:** 1:07 ½, **Richter Scale (7/15/00)**
- **Named for:** **Dave's Friend**, the Maryland-bred sprinting star of the 1970s and 1980s who won 35 races and more than \$1 million.

❖ **TOP CONTENDERS** – New York shipper from the David Jacobsen barn **#10 – Heaven's Runway (5-2)** got the slight nod as Morning Line favorite. This will be his 3rd race off a layoff, trying to avoid a third straight SHOW finish. Though he earned black-type in the G3 Bold Ruler Handicap at Belmont on Halloween, he only beat two runners. Early in his career made a living on synthetic (7: 3-1-1) while at this six furlong distance hits the board 50% of the time (10: 2-1-3) but only 1 for 16 on a fast, dirt surface... **#7 – Jake N Elwood (3-1)** is your prototypical sprinter. 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 recently at Prx and Del in restricted company, being part of the Exacta in all five (5) races since returning to the track from an 18-month layoff. Surprisingly this field of ten lacks early speed which could set up for a gate-to-wire score for this "Soul Man" (it's a Blues Brothers reference)... Trainer Ben Perkins has reason to be optimistic about New Farm's **#8 – Rainbow Heir (9-2)** as the 5-year-old enters this race off a 4¼ length victory in an

SELECTIONS

1. **#7 – Jake N Elwood (3-1):**
Should be able to get the early lead without much effort and try to milk it from there; threat to go gate-to-wire

2. **#9 – Majestic Hussar (12-1):**
Beaten just 2 lengths by Breeders' Cup Sprint SHOW horse Favorite Tale in \$200k stakes at Pen; if the track is "off", he's your play (4: 3-1-0)

3. **#1 – Always Sunshine (8-1):**
Hard to ignore recent 108 Brisnet#; 3yo has yet to run a bad race in 7 lifetime efforts

4. **#10 – Heaven's Runway (5-2):**
Vulnerable a.m. favorite will take action but seems to have topped out at a 97 Brisnet# on a fast track, a number that has been surpassed by 6 rivals in here

allowance optional claiming event at Laurel for his eighth victory in 18 career starts and his third victory in four starts here. “He ran real well [last out],” Perkins said. “We got a little behind getting him started up because of the weather last winter and, at Monmouth, he just wasn’t really 100 percent ready when we started running him. I think his early races took a little bit out of him and it just took him a while to come around. He’s a nice, sound horse and in the fall he started to come back to himself.”

- ❖ **LIVE AT A PRICE – #1 – Always Sunshine (8-1)** turned in a monster effort on Dec. 14th at Prx in a N1X, winning by 13 lengths and earning a 108 Brisnet#, 21 points higher than his previous (dirt) race, the \$100,000 City of Laurel stakes. In that event, he broke poorly then raced 4-5 wide throughout, yet was only beat 3¼ lengths, finishing sixth, his only off-the-board finish, to a trio who finished noses apart. El Kabeir prevailed that day and the runner-up came back to win a PA-bred N2X event. A bounce is a possibility but that hasn’t been the case in previous 10+ point speed figure moves.
- ❖ **THE REST OF THE CREW–** Cross entered in the Jennings Handicap is **#2 – Outbacker (30-1)**, who returns to Laurel for the first time in 2015, seeking just his second victory here (15: 1-4-3). Last seen in the slop at Laurel finishing 7th in the 2014 Jennings Handicap, the connections have reinvented this MD-bred as a sprinter. After two consecutive runner-up finishes at Mahoning Valley (OH) v. N3x, he has hit the board in five lifetime 6 furlong outings (5: 2-2-1)... **#3 – Service for Ten (15-1)** was set up to fail when travelling 9 furlongs in the \$100k Richard Small stakes, showing early speed through the 2nd call before faltering; usually a deep Closer in sprints, that race may have been an experiment to change tactics... House Horse and lightly raced four-year-old **#4 – Demon Buster (15-1)** looks for the natural Hat Trick after winning Laurel debut in N1X which followed maiden score in the Great White North (at WO)... **#5 – Jack’s in the Deck (15-1)** was no match for Favorite Tale last out in the \$200k Fabulous Strike stakes at Pen, looking to rebound by turning in an effort similar to his nose victory in the Maryland Million Sprint Handicap; an off track would help as his best Brisnet# came here in the mud... Leading PRX trainer Ramon Preciado ships in **#6 – Beach Hut (6-1)** looking for consecutive victories for the first time in his 18 race career; J.D. Acosta, who is 2 for 2 on this four-year-old son of First Defence will be in the irons once again... **#9 – Majestic Hussar (12-1)** may have found the back class that saw compete in graded stakes at age 2 and 3 as he was runner-up at 87-1 in the \$200k Fabulous Strike to the aforementioned Favorite Tale, who was third in the BC Sprint in his previous race.

Maryland Juvenile Futurity

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 6 (2:44), Maryland-bred 2yo, 7 furlongs
- **Key question:** Which Maryland-bred will step to the head of the class in the final stake of the year?
- **2014 winner:** Ghost Bay
- **Track record:** 1:20.95, Greenspring, 2/15/10

THE SCOOP

- ❖ **TOP CONTENDERS** – Country Life Farm’s **#4 – Flash McCaul (3-1)** has been part of the Exacta in all four starts and is the Morning Line favorite among this field of 10 two-year-olds. Stretching out to one mile didn’t help the late-running son of Friesan Fire, a well beaten runner-up in his past two outings at 8 furlongs. Having improved his Brisnet Speed Figure in each of his past three races, blinkers get added for this event in hopes of getting more speed early on the cut back to 7 furlongs for trainer Michael Trombetta who also sends out... **#6 – It’s the Journey (7-2)** who broke his maiden in his second start going one mile after exiting a “key race” in his debut, a race that produced four (4) next out winners; loses services of Julian Pimentel who sticks with “Flash” but Victor Carrasco was coaxed off **#10 - Welcome Fairbanks** to be in the irons... **#3 – Ravenheart (5-2)** gave Olympic Gold Medalist Bode Miller his first win as an owner on Oct. 3rd at Del at first asking; since then failed as Post Time favorite (4th by 6¼ lengths) in Maryland Million Nursery then was thrown to the wolves in the G2 Remsen at The Big A and ran evenly (6th by 11) stretching out from 6 to 9 furlongs.
- ❖ **LIVE AT A PRICE** – Trainer Hamilton Smith sends out **#1 – Easy River (15-1)** who broke his maiden in his most recent outing, on the Laurel turf on Halloween. Off the board in both dirt, fast track outings he’s no future turf specialist. The son of Not For

SELECTIONS

1. **#3 – Ravenheart (9-2):** *Olympic Alpine star Bode Miller has been on a roll with his two-year-olds locally; son of Dance With Ravens was his first winner and might be his best MD-bred.*

2. **#4 – Flash McCaul (3-1):** *Adds blinkers which could be the missing ingredient to end this string of runner-up efforts and break through to get win #2*

3. **#1 – Easy River (15-1):** *Has had time off to mature and build stamina as shown in work tab with pair of 6f drills*

4. **#7 – Jarvis Steel (20-1):** *Undefeated (1 for 1); showed willingness late in 5½ furlong jaunt; stretch out to 7 panels could be even more to his liking*

Love simply needed some time for Smith to teach him how to harness that early speed shown in both dirt efforts. Smith is 20% with runners coming off 46-90 day layoff. The rail assignment is no piece of cake but should be no problem with Trevor McCarthy as the pilot.

- ❖ **THE REST OF THE GENTS** – Maryland Million Nursery winner in his debut **#2 – Corvus (10-1)** tested positive for the prohibited vasodilator isoxsuprine after that race, but was not disqualified after an appeal to the Maryland Racing Commission.. After a dismal showing in the unrestricted James F. Lewis III stakes, blinkers will be added for his third career start... **#5 – King of Versailles (20-1)** scored his second career victory in an open \$25,000 Claimer in a game effort. It's either all or nothing for this one as he's been off-the-board in six other races. Lost to Flash McCaul by 8½ lengths while in the maiden ranks... **#7 – Jarvis Steel (20-1)** was a debut winner to the surprise of his connections as he paid \$45.80 just 14 days ago when in for a \$25,000 price tag. He earned an 84 Brisnet#, so why not give this race a shot... **#8 – Captain Alex (15-1)** showed a lot of promise through his first three races -- a maiden win, runner-up in the Laurel Futurity then third in the Maryland Million Nursery. Since then something has gone amiss as he's lost by double digits and finishing 6th in his two most recent outings, adding blinkers in the last one... Baltimore Orioles skipper namesake **#9 – Showalter (9-2)** bred/owned by Marathon Farm, owned by Orioles owner Peter Angelos, took to the muddy Laurel surface in his debut going 5½ furlongs, winning in gate-to-wire fashion while looking professional and game turning back Hennessey Fire, who barely missed breaking his maiden in his next start. "Buck" earned a lofty 89 Brisnet#, just a tick lower than the top number held by both #6 It's a Journey and #3 Ravenheart. The question is can he get the added distance... while **#10 – Welcome Fairbanks (8-1)** scored his second career victory in convincing fashion just 7 days ago, his first race off the claim of Claudio Gonzalez. Interesting that Carrasco's not on board (he's on #6). Might indicate that Gonzalez isn't 100% certain he'll run this gelding back so quickly.

Jennings Handicap

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 8 (3:44), Maryland-breds 3yo and up, 1 mile
- **Key questions:** Will 3yo like Tesio runner-up Noteworthy Peach or Private Terms winner Bridget's Big Luvy best their elders? Can Tim Keefe, who won this race four straight times with Eighttofasttocatch, make it five straight, this time with Connemara Coast?
- **2014 winner:** Eighttofasttocatch
- **Track record:** 1:34 $\frac{3}{4}$, Skipper's Friend (12/6/80)
- **Named for:** Legendary Maryland horseman William Jennings, Sr. whose Glengar Farm produced 1887 Preakness winner Dunboyne.

THE SCOOP

- ❖ **TOP CONTENDERS** –**#11 – Admirals War Chest (3-1)** leads this field of twelve as the Morning Line favorite and will literally lead the field as they travel down the backstretch during this one-turn, one mile event. Winner of 2 of his last 3, the most recent came in the Maryland Million Classic, holding on for a neck victory. It would be easy on the front end... as second choice **#6 – Cerebral (7-2)** likes to avoid kickback, but failed to get the lead as favorite against N2X and faded to 3rd. Seems it was a case of the lightbulb going on in his seventh start as he came back to win a N1X event next out for trainer Gary Capuano who also saddles... **#3 – Noteworthy Peach (5-1)** who loves the one mile distance (4: 3-1-0) but seems to be delicate as this will be the fourth time he's needed 30 or more days between starts leading up to his ninth career start. This spring was runner-up in the Frederico Tesio... **#12 – D C Dancer (8-1)** is as game as they come, squeezing through the rail late to get second v. OC50k group three weeks ago going 6 furlongs. He's never

SELECTIONS

1. **#7 – Any Court Inastorm (10-1):** *Should get a quick early pace to stalk as trainer Jason Egan also has speedy #8 – He's Achance to keep the M/L favorite busy early*
2. **#2 – Coach Fridge (15-1):** *Hard to use on top or in multi-race wagers, having only 3 wins from 40 starts... but he has completed some nice Exactas...*
3. **#3 – Noteworthy Peach (5-1):** *Talented gelding loves this distance (4: 3-0-1); has perfect off the pace running style to catch early speed in deep stretch*
4. **#12 – D C Dancer (8-1):** *Chased Rainbow Heir in last outing; latter is entered in Dave's Friend (4th race), so look to his effort for a clue to this one's...*

hit the board in both tries at one mile, but both were over an off track which he's 0 for 5 on.

- ❖ **LIVE AT A PRICE – #2 – Coach Fridge (15-1)** is a three time winner from 40 starts and one of those was via DQ. (Pause to wait for you to stop laughing and collect yourself) This six-year-old gray gelding by Love of Money seems to have a terminal case of “2nd-itis” being the runner-up in 15 of those 40 outings. Trainer “Ham” Smith sent him out sprinting in restricted stakes company (Maryland Million Sprint) where he gave his all against Ben’s Cat, rallying late to be fourth. This Cash Cow stretches back out to a distance that he’s never been off-the-board (3: 1-0-2).
- ❖ **THE BEST OF THE REST –#1 – Final Prospect (15-1)** has improved on his speed figures in every race since coming off a 7-month layoff. One of his challenges will be can this sprinter carry his early speed 8 panels... while **#4 – Stolen Love (20-1)** seems at his best going one mile (9: 3-1-1) but lacks experience against stakes level competition even though restricted... NY shipper **#5 – Bridget’s Big Luvy (15-1)** made a splash in his only start at Laurel, a gate-to-wire win in the \$100k Private Terms this past spring in the mud. The only runner in this field with graded stakes participation on his resume’, albeit getting trounced in all three of those tries. Would need a huge turnaround in form after showing nothing in recent effort v. N2X... **#7 – Any Court Inastorm (10-1)** has fallen victim to M/L favorite #11 Admirals War Chest twice, but only by 1¼ lengths both times. Won third lifetime race off the bench in last outing on Oct. 25th. Takes next logical step up in class for small barn who also sends out... **#8 – He’s Achance (15-1)** who has been away since Nov. 7th when he faltered sprinting on grass and did the same in the race prior going one mile in the slop. His fast track form says he’ll be one of possibly four others pressing the early pace which likely sets things up for a Closer as such... **#9 – Connemara Coast (12-1)** winner twice at this distance from five starts but appears to be off form based on showing no rally in his last for OC50k, a level he won at three races back... cross entered in the Dave’s Friend Stakes is **#10 – Outbacker (30-1)** who returns to Laurel for the first time in 2015, seeking just his second victory here (15: 1-4-3). Last seen in the slop at Laurel finishing 7th in this event in 2014. Connections have reinvented this MD-bred as a sprinter, so it’s likely he’ll go in the Dave’s Friend instead.

Thirty Eight Go Go S.

- **RACE PARTICULARS:** Race 9 (4:14), Fillies and mares 3yo and up, 1 mile
- **Key questions:** Can G2 winner Miss Mischief transfer top synthetic form onto the main track?
- **2014 winner:** Sheer Drama
- **Track record:** 1:34 ½, Skipper's Friend (12/6/80)
- **Named for:** 1980s-era Maryland-bred multiple graded stakes winner Thirty Eight Go GO

THE SCOOP

- **TOP CONTENDERS** – In this wide open event, the lukewarm morning line favorite is **#4 – Miss Mischief (7-2)** looking for a natural Hat Trick. She's comes off a 2¼ length score in the G2 Bessarabian Stakes at WO. So why only 7-2? Well she's somewhat of a synthetic surface lover (11: 6-2-2) and has never hit-the-board in three starts on the Laurel dirt oval... **#2 – Stroke Play (9-2)** picked up a check for her fourth place finish when 54-1 and facing some of the top three-year-old fillies in the \$300k G3 Comely Stakes at The Big A on Nov. 28th. This middle distance may be her wheelhouse as she won and run second in just two outings at one mile. She was a bridesmaid to super filly sprinter Hot City Girl in her only race at Laurel, nosing out a tiring... **#9 – Paulassilverlining (6-1)** who makes a return trip to Laurel for NY based trainer Michelle Nevin. This three-year-old daughter of Ghostzapper won the G2 Matron and G3 Tempted as a two-year-old. She placed in the latter which was the only time she raced one mile... **#12 – Pangburn (6-1)** is conditioned by Tony Dutrow who looks for his first win at the current Laurel meet (19: 0-2-4). This gal has competed in graded stakes company in seven of her eleven starts while all nine of her dirt races have been at two-turns. Frankie Pennington, jockey title winner at the recently concluded Prx year-long meet gets the call.

SELECTIONS

1. #12 – Pangburn (6-1): *Her Past Performances look like a Who's Who of the upper echelon of three-year-old fillies this year; time for A. Dutrow to get monkey off his back (0 for 19 at meet)*
2. #2 – Stroke Play (9-2): *Deep Closer needs pace help; ran into a buzz saw in Hot City Girl in her only start at Laurel two back*
3. #1 – Lionhearted Lady (10-1): *Like the 6 furlong effort 1st after layoff chasing Lady Sabelia with strong gallop out; should get a dream rail trip*
4. #10 – Kawfee Fa Marfa (12-1): *NY shipper for Violette is 2 for 3 on fast dirt oval track; typical runs to her odds; watch early tote action*

- **LIVE AT A PRICE** – Trainer Ham Smith will saddle his third and final stakes runner in the nightcap as **#1 – Lionhearted Lady (10-1)** tries to get back to the winner’s circle after winning the Maryland Million Distaff at seven furlongs by 2 lengths on Oct. 17th, before finishing third last time out in the Willa On the Move Stakes at six furlongs behind the graded-stakes winner Lady Sabelia. “She finished good in that race, she was closing, so that’s what you want to see,” said Smith, who’s filly is two-for-three at the distance and has never finished off the board in seven starts at Laurel. “I think she’s a better middle-distance horse than she is anything else. Seven eighths of a mile is her best distance, so we have that in our favor. I don’t know if she’s good enough to handle some of those mares in there, but there’s only one way to find out. She’s as good as we’re going to get her.”
- **THE REST OF THE GALS** – PA-bred **#3 – Bound (12-1)** has been successfully knocking heads with her fellow state bred at Prx, Pen and Pid. A consistent runner who dances every dance (18: 7-3-3) while never off-the-board in eight starts going this one mile distance... **#5 – Rapid Repair (10-1)** ran a career best 88 Brisnet# in her only start at Laurel two races back, a five-length victory going one mile... **#6 – Blisstikus (30-1)** is a WV-bred who has earned her keep in state bred races at CT. Last race was at Laurel in an OC32kN2X where she made a middle move and finished up evenly, behind two next out winners... **#7 – Samantha Nicole (10-1)** ships in from NY for trainer Kieran McLaughlin whose only other shipper to Laurel this meet placed. “Sam” has been on the shelf since a lackluster effort on the grass at Bel v. N2X on Oct. 22nd. Two-turns is her game but just hasn’t found the same success as her more famous older sister, Rachel Alexandra... **#8 – Athena (10-1)** ships in from CD riding a two-race win streak for trainer Helen Pitts, her first starter at Laurel this meet. Something must have kicked in after she exited two so-so turf efforts, switching back to the main oval... **#10 – Kawfee Fa Marfa (12-1)** ships down from The Big A for trainer Richard Violette who won with his only other entry at the current Laurel meet. This three-year-old daughter of hard Spun seems to have been wasting time running on the turf (6: 0-0-3) while she’s two for three on a fast, dirt track. This deep Closer needs some pace help to be a factor... **#11 – Walk of Stars (20-1)** won’t be walking out of the gate as she will be the first runner called out by name by track announcer Dave Rodman. Whether she can carry that speed one mile against this level of competition will depend on if she gets pressured early.