



ADVANCE SHEET – August 14, 2026

A Word From The Librarian

It was recently announced that the Triple Crown Series, which has existed since 1875 (It came into being that year with the first running of the Kentucky Derby: the Belmont Stakes was first run in 1867 and the Preakness in 1873), would be replaced in 2027 by a new Thoroughbred Championship Series. All of the races will be run in Kentucky and New York, and although the Series will include the Kentucky Derby and the Belmont, it will not include the Preakness. It does not look as though paying eighty-five million dollars for the intellectual property rights to the Preakness Stakes and the Black-Eyed Susan Stakes is quite the bargain anymore.

During the golden era of Maryland racing there were nine primary tracks for horse racing. The major mile tracks were: Pimlico, Laurel Park, Bowie, and Havre de Grace. The half-mile fair circuit tracks were: Timonium, Bel Air, Cumberland, Hagerstown, and Marlboro. As the tracks have died, so too has the Preakness. The largest crowd ever recorded for the race was in 2017 when it was attended by 140,327. In 2024 the number was 46,999 and in 2025, the last year the race was held at Pimlico it was 46,173. Although Pimlico is scheduled to reopen in 2027, perhaps someone should tell them to take their time. It appears there is no reason to hurry.

Set forth below is an article on early horse racing in America, as well as articles on racing in Maryland and the Preakness Stakes. If things completely disappear here in Maryland, however, did I ever tell you how nice the races are at Charles Town. And right next door in the casino is a really delightful Chinese restaurant. Just saying.

Joe Bennett



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Judge Paul W. Grimm To Speak At The Library

On Tuesday, September 29, 2026, the Honorable Paul W. Grimm (Ret.) will take part in the Kaplan Schneider Lecture Series at the Baltimore Bar Library. Judge Grimm will speak on judicial security: how judges are increasingly under attack and what needs to be done about it. A flier about the evening will be going out soon, but if you already know you want to attend, call the Library at 410-727-0280 or e-mail us at jwbennett@barlib.org.



Racing 101: A Brief History of America's Early Horse Racing Scene

Long before football fields and baseball diamonds began popping up across the United States, another sport swept across the nation: horse racing. Horses provided early American settlers with everything from transportation to companionship. Thus, it's only natural they looked to them for entertainment as well.

However, the sport didn't rise to astounding levels of popularity overnight. American horse racing would grow to be the spectacle it is today in tandem with the expansion of the nation.

In this quick history lesson, we'll explore the early days of American horse racing and explain some key milestones in its over 400-year history.

Before Tracks: America's First Horses and Races

Horse racing is one of the world's oldest sports and its history in the US predates the very foundation of the nation. The country's first race horses reached the eastern seaboard in the early 1600s—well before the continent's first tracks or jockey and driver clubs.

Thus, these early American equines likely competed in informal, unregulated circuits—a far cry from the grandiose and opulent experience of going to a modern race [1]. In about a half-century, however, Americans would begin building the types of tracks that had been in the Old World for millennia.

Horse Racing Takes Hold in the Northeast

America's first track was established in what's now Long Island, New York in 1665—over a century before the Founding Fathers began writing the constitution [2]. This elongated oval race course was founded by then governor Richard Nicholls, who named it Newmarket in honor of the famous down in Suffolk County, England [3]. While this first track signaled the start of organized racing on the continent, it didn't stop the informal nature of early American equestrianism.

Henrico County, Virginia, was a hotbed of action for early jockeys, drivers, and racing fanatics near the end of the 16th century. Its straight, centralized roads were perfect for sprint races—a pastime that, at the time, was legally reserved for society’s most affluent and noble.

Despite being barred from participating, laborers would often challenge each other to street races down the area’s main drags. Surviving records from the 1600s show these young men competed for more than honor, with common wagers including [4]:

- Tobacco
- “Caske” or barrels and their (likely alcoholic) contents
- Cash
- The settlement of debts

These same records also show a familiar, standardized length for many of these early races: one-quarter of a mile [4]. It’s from these first street races and subsequent, more organized operations in 1700s Virginia and Rhode Island that the name and practice of Quarter Horse Racing was born [3].

The First Jockey and Driver Clubs

Despite horse racing slowly starting to spread across colonial America, opinions were split on its value and validity. There were several reasons early opponents of the sport challenged its practice, including [1] [5]:

- The danger of being trampled while spectating races on narrow city streets
- The prohibitions against commoners created unfavorable class divisions
- More puritanical settlers despising the competition and gambling associated with racing

Regardless of these legal challenges, America’s new elite derived profound pleasure from racing and, by 1734, the country’s first Jockey Club was established in Charleston, South Carolina. This wealthy collection of horse owners and breeders was responsible for organizing some of the continent’s first tournaments complete with trophies and cash prizes [5].

Harness racing was a bit slower to develop on the continent and didn’t really take off until after America’s independence. Throughout the 1800s, informal versions of the sport were being practiced at tracks across the expanding nation. It wasn’t until the 1870 establishment of the National Trotting Association in New York City, however, that harness and standardbred racing would begin being regulated in the US [6].



Maryland's Horse History

Maryland's Equestrian Legacy: Hoofbeats Through History

Horses and Maryland—it's a partnership that's galloped through history, shaping the state's culture, economy, and identity for more than four centuries. From the first English horses stepping onto colonial soil to the high-stakes races that drew wagers from the likes of George Washington, Maryland's Thoroughbred tradition is as much a part of its DNA as the Chesapeake Bay itself.

Back in 1643, when the first horse arrived in St. Mary's City, it wasn't just another piece of cargo from England — it was a game-changer. These animals became essential, powering farms, transporting settlers, and forging paths into the wild unknown. By 1694, when Annapolis became the capital, the city was already flexing its influence in politics and commerce. Ships docked at its harbors, offloading luxury goods—fine furniture, imported silks, and, most importantly, bloodlines straight from England's royal stud farms. Maryland wasn't just importing horses; it set the foundation for an equestrian empire.

Racing Toward Colonial Greatness

Where there are fine horses, racing is inevitable. By 1719, the city of Annapolis made it official, carving out the first recorded racetrack in Maryland. Just a year later, in 1720, the quarter-mile match race became a spectacle, drawing crowds, excitement, and, of course, a little gambling. By 1721, Annapolis wasn't just hosting races—it was taxing the pubs and booths around them to fund the silver plate prize, marking the first municipally-backed race in the colonies.

But Maryland's racing ambitions didn't stop there. In 1743, the Maryland Jockey Club was founded, bringing structure and prestige to the sport. Its members were a who's who of colonial aristocracy—Governor Samuel Ogle, Colonel Benjamin Tasker Jr., and Samuel Galloway—men who understood that fast horses meant fast fortunes.

By 1745, the club had organized its first sanctioned race, awarding the coveted Annapolis Subscription Plate. And in 1747, Governor Ogle took Maryland's Thoroughbred scene to the next level, returning from England with two prized horses—Spark and Queen Mab—descendants of the Royal Stud. They were soon joined by Selima, a filly imported by Col. Tasker, and later, Governor Sharpe's legendary stallion Othello. Together, they became the foundation of Maryland's Thoroughbred dynasty.

A Sport Fit for Revolutionaries

By the 1770s, Race Week had become the event of the season. High society gathered to cheer, wager, and celebrate, and Annapolis was the place to be. Even George

Washington, ever the gentleman, couldn't resist the thrill—though his diary reveals a few regrettable losses at the betting table.

The Jockey Club Stakes, held on the first day of autumn's Race Week, was the crown jewel, offering the largest purse. In 1772, the American Theatrical Company even sponsored a stakes race, marking one of the first commercial sponsorships in sports history.

Then, in 1774, the rhythm of galloping hooves was drowned out by the drumbeat of war. The American Revolution halted the import of British Thoroughbreds, and Maryland's racing scene went quiet. But the bloodlines remained. The horses endured. And once the war ended, Maryland picked up the reins once again, racing toward the future, as it always had.

Baltimore: The Rise of a Thoroughbred Empire

Baltimore's love affair with horse racing runs deep. It began at Hampton Mansion, where Governor Charles Carnan Ridgely turned his estate into a Thoroughbred empire. In 1805, he built the first stone stable for his racehorses and carved out a private racecourse, setting the stage for a centuries-long tradition of speed and prestige.

By 1806, the Baltimore Jockey Club galloped onto the scene, with the Ridgely Family leading the charge. Races popped up all over town—Potter's Course in Canton, Locust Point, Herring Run, and even Lexington Market. Yes, that Lexington Market, where you can now grab a what may be the world's best crab cake, once hosted elite horse racing. The Maryland Jockey Club's Central racecourse on Old Frederick Road became the crown jewel until the Civil War put a damper on the festivities.

Robert Gilmor III, another horse-obsessed Baltimorean, took things up a notch at his family estate, The Vineyard, near present-day Waverly. The man built not one but possibly two race courses on his land because, well, why stop at just one?

Meanwhile, over at Timonium, an ambitious new track emerged in 1833, thanks to the newly arrived Baltimore & Susquehanna Railroad. Advertisements for races stretched as far as Easton, proving that Baltimore's racing scene wasn't just a local obsession.

Then came Governor Oden Bowie, a man who didn't just talk big—he built big. After bragging at a New York dinner party in 1868 that Maryland could outshine Saratoga Springs, NY, he returned home, rallied the members of the Maryland Jockey Club, and convinced them to shell out \$23,500 for 70 acres near Jones Falls. Another \$25,000 later, the hallowed horse grounds at Pimlico Race Course was born. On October 25, 1870, the track's first race was won by a horse named Preakness, forever cementing its place in history. Three years later, the Preakness Stakes became a staple in the Triple Crown.

With his own horses like Crickmore and Dickens dominating the track, Bowie built five stables and a three-quarter-mile track at his Fairview estate, ensuring that Maryland's racing tradition stayed in the fast lane. By 1879, racing was back at Timonium when the Agricultural Society of Baltimore County leased the land for what would become the Maryland State Fairgrounds—still home to top-tier Thoroughbred racing today.

The Golden Age: When Maryland Ruled the Racing World

Horse racing wasn't just a sport in Maryland — it was a spectacle. When the Preakness Stakes galloped back to Pimlico in 1909, it signaled the dawn of a new golden age. Tracks sprang up like wildflowers: Laurel Park (1911), Havre de Grace (1912), Bowie (1914), Cumberland (1924), and Bel Air (reopened in 1937). The Roaring Twenties brought fast cars, jazz, and the rise of radio, allowing Maryland horse racing to reach an even bigger audience. Suddenly, Thoroughbred racing wasn't just for those at the track — it was an event everyone could tune into.

Then along came Man O' War, a racehorse so dominant it made other Thoroughbreds look like plow horses. The Kentucky-born legend trained at Glen Riddle Farm on Maryland's Eastern Shore and won all 11 of his 1920 races, including the Preakness and Belmont Stakes. His legacy cemented Maryland as a Thoroughbred powerhouse. In 1929, the Maryland Horse Breeders Association (MHBA) was founded, creating the country's first agency dedicated to promoting the horse industry. Then the Great Depression dropped in, but rather than derail the sport, it made racing even more popular. People needed an escape, and betting on fast horses provided the balm. In 1938, Seabiscuit's legendary showdown against War Admiral at Pimlico drew a crowd of 40,000 and 40 million listeners on the radio. Seabiscuit's underdog victory became a symbol of hope for Depression-era America.

Hoofprints Into the Television Age

By the 1940s, television changed everything, and Tracing was no exception. WMAR in Baltimore became the first station to broadcast live races from Pimlico in 1947. The voice behind it? A young Jim McKay, who later became the face of Wide World of Sports and the inspiration for the Jim McKay Maryland Million Day — second only to the Preakness in popularity.

Then came Native Dancer, Sagamore Farm's "Gray Ghost," who won 21 of 22 races, became Horse of the Year in 1952 and 1954, and even landed on the cover of Time magazine. It wasn't just a racehorse — it was a cultural icon.

In the '50s, Pimlico changed hands when Alfred Vanderbilt sold it to the Cohen brothers, who modernized the track. Meanwhile, over at Laurel Park, John Shapiro had a revolutionary idea — an international, invitation-only race. The Washington D.C. International Stakes debuted in 1952 and became a prestigious global event, even attracting Queen Elizabeth II. The race eventually inspired the Breeders' Cup but was discontinued in 1994 before making a comeback in 2015 as the Baltimore-Washington International Turf Cup.

The 1980s: A Changing Landscape

Maryland saw its last homegrown Preakness winner in 1983 with Deputed Testamony, a Maryland-bred horse trained and ridden by local jockeys. Yet, despite these wins, racing attendance began to decline. Nearby states approved slots at their tracks, drawing gamblers — and money away from Maryland. By the late '80s, Pimlico and Laurel Park found new owners in the deFrancis family, who pumped fresh energy into the sport.

The Late 20th Century

The Stronach Group took over Pimlico and Laurel Park in 2002, pouring investments into infrastructure and working with local authorities to ensure racing's future. Finally, in 2008, voters approved slot machines, directing a portion of the revenue back into the struggling Thoroughbred industry. It was the lifeline Maryland racing needed.

As Preakness attendance increased, the home of the second jewel of horse racing's Triple Crown began to tarnish, showing its age. Pimlico was in need of a major face-lift; conversations on how to renovate and modernize the second-oldest racetrack in America abounded.

By October 2019, negotiators representing three groups—the City of Baltimore, the Canadian-based Stronach Group, and the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association—reached a surprising agreement: to keep the Preakness in Baltimore, at Pimlico, but in a completely reimaged venue.

Maryland lawmakers approved the Racing and Community Development Act of 2020 to rebuild the track, but it never got off the ground due to costs.

Adapting to the Changing Landscape

Despite these challenges, Maryland's Thoroughbred industry continued to evolve. Breeders, owners, trainers, The Stronach Group, Baltimore City and Maryland state officials continued to come together to create a vision and strategy for Maryland's Thoroughbred industry to make strides forward.

At the end of the 2023 legislative session, the Maryland TRacetrack Operating Authority (MTROA) was created and tasked with turning Maryland into "a best-in-class location for Thoroughbred horse racing."

On May 9, 2024, Maryland Governor Wes Moore signed legislation (HB 1524) to re-imagine Maryland's horseracing industry and give the Pimlico Race Course a complete overhaul. A week later, another obstacle of the state's purchase of Pimlico had been overcome – the Board of Public Works approved to transfer ownership of Pimlico from The Stronach Group to the State of Maryland. The historic agreement guarantees the home of the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore, establishes Pimlico as the year-round home of Thoroughbred racing in Maryland, and creates a year-round hub of economic activity in Baltimore's Park Heights community.

Rounding the Bend In 2025

2025 marks the start of Maryland's Thoroughbred and racing industry stepping into its future!

Day-to-day racing and training operations at Pimlico and Laurel Park officially transferred from The Stronach Group to the state of Maryland/MTROA on January 1, 2025.

When the starting gates fly open May 17th for the 150th time, another three-year old will possess just a touch more heart than the rest of field, and end the day draped in a blanket of Black-Eyed Susans. It what will, no doubt, be a Preakness that would leave an indelible mark on racing history, while heralding in a significant evolution in Maryland's Thoroughbred and horse racing industry.

Soon the Maryland Stadium Authority will take over the Pimlico site and demolition will begin.

The Preakness will move to Laurel Park in 2026 and is expected to return to Pimlico in 2027.

Once the rebuild of Pimlico and training center at Shamrock Farm are complete, Stronach will sell Laurel, and all racing in the state will take place at the state-controlled Pimlico.

Down the stretch, it will be the Maryland Thoroughbred that prevails.



Preakness Stakes History

The Preakness Stakes was introduced in 1873 when Pimlico Racecourse held its first spring meet. The race has since become one of the most important in American Thoroughbred Racing and is the second leg of the American Triple Crown. It is also known as the “Run for the Black-Eyed Susans”.

Survivor won the first ever Preakness Stakes in 1873 when he dusted his rivals by a 10 lengths. That win stood as the greatest margin of victory for well over a century, before the record was shattered by Smarty Jones in 2004 when he smoked the field by 11 ½ lengths.

Not so surprisingly, Secretariat owns the fastest time in the Preakness Stakes. As arguably the greatest racehorse of all time, Secretariat completed the 1 3/16th miles in an astounding time of 1:53.00. This winning time was actually awarded to Secretariat retroactively in 2012 when a timer malfunction was recalibrated.

A horse many experts consider the best of the 20th century, Man o’ War, captured the 1920 Preakness in his season debut after bypassing the Kentucky Derby. The once-beaten “Big Red” was followed a half-century later by another colt who shared that nickname: Secretariat (1973).

In addition to the 13 Triple Crown winners, the Preakness has been won by 24 other winners of the Kentucky Derby.

Fillies have won the Preakness six times, with Swiss Skydiver the most recent after she won in 2020.

The connections of the Preakness winner are awarded replicas of the Woodlawn Vase. Designed by Tiffany and Company in 1860.

The Preakness Stakes has been run at seven different distances throughout its history. In the modern era, it remains the shortest of the three legs in the Triple Crown series.

Due to various factors, such as size and composition of the field, the Preakness has rarely fallen prey to extreme longshots. The highest-priced winner in the race’s history, Master Derby (1975), returned only \$48.80. The second highest-priced winner was Coventry, who paid \$45.60 in 1925.

Pari-mutuel wagering on the Preakness has been offered for more than a century. As of 2015, 72 betting favorites have won the race, with Citation (1948) and Spectacular Bid (1979) the shortest-priced winners paying \$2.20. The Preakness is typically the second or third most-wagered on race in the country.

On-track crowds, in excess of 100,000, are common for the Preakness. The race tends to attract television ratings that are second only to the Kentucky Derby in volume (except when a Triple Crown is on the line in the Belmont Stakes) for an individual race in the US. A record crowd of 131,680 witnessed American Pharoah capture the 2015 Preakness en route to his Triple Crown sweep.

Though the Preakness Stakes is the crown jewel of Maryland’s Thoroughbred culture, the race also has strong ties to New York and New Jersey. In fact, the race is named after “Preakness”, a colt from New Jersey who grew up in an area of the state that

shares that name as well. The Preakness Stakes was also run at Morris Park Racecourse (1890) in the Bronx and at the Gravesand Race Track (1894-1908) on Coney Island, both located in New York State. All other renewals have taken place at Pimlico in Maryland.

Wagering on the Preakness Stakes has been bolstered routinely by the momentum created by the Kentucky Derby. In 2016, when Exaggerator upset Nyquist to win the Preakness, the race set records in attendance and handle. Despite subpar weather there were 135,256 fans in the stands for the 141st running of the Preakness Stakes. A total of \$94,127,434 was wagered during the 14-race program.

The Preakness and the Triple Crown

There have been only been 13 horses to have claimed the Triple Crown. Since 1932, the Triple Crown has been run in the order we know today: Kentucky Derby, followed by Preakness Stakes and then the Belmont Stakes. Prior to that, there wasn't a formally established schedule.

The first winner of the Triple Crown was Sir Barton in 1919 largely because the series itself wasn't an organized event until 1913. The most recent are American Pharoah (2015) and Justify (2018).

An additional 24 horses have won the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness Stakes, but come up short at the Belmont Stakes. Some of the most notable horses to do so are Northern Dance (1964), Spectacular Bid (1979), Alysheba (1987), Sunday Silence (1989), Silver charm (1997), Real Quiet (1998), Charismatic (1999), Smarty Jones (2004), I'll Have Another (2012) and California Chrome (2014).

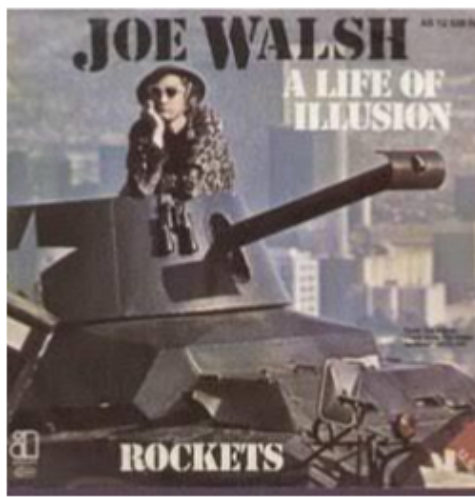
Preakness Stakes Winners & Records

The winningest jockey in Preakness Stakes history is Eddie Arcaro who also co-owns the records at the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes as well (shared with Bill Hartack and Jim McLaughlin, respectively).

In 2023, Bob Baffert notched his eighth victory and became the all-time winningest trainer of the Preakness Stakes. He finally surpassed the legendary Wyndham Walden, who notched a still-unmatched five consecutive victories at the Preakness between 1878 and 1882.

Six fillies have also claimed victory at the Preakness Stakes. Four horses did so in the first quarter of the 20th century: Flocarline (1903), Whimsical (1906), Rhine Maiden (1915) and Nellie Morse (1924). The feat would not be recreated for another 85 years until Rachel Alexandra did so at the 2009 Preakness Stakes, and finally Swiss Skydiver again in 2020.

The speed record for the Preakness Stakes is held by Secretariat, who ran an astonishing 1:53.00 in 1973. This was highly contested at the time due to contradicting clockers and video evidence, who compared him to Canonero II's time of 1:54.00 set in 1971. Secretariat was not awarded the official record for the fastest Preakness Stakes time until 2012. The legendary champion and Triple Crown winner now holds the speed record in the Kentucky Derby, Preakness Stakes and Belmont Stakes.



Is It Just An Illusion?

I have come to the conclusion, after a mere sixty-seven years, that life is in fact an illusion. What else can explain the manner in which days, I daresay even years, seem to just disappear. On a recent Friday someone wished me a pleasant weekend as I got on the elevator and by the time I got to the first floor it was Monday. At least, I am pretty sure that is what happened. It has gotten to the point where I hate to go anywhere or do anything, because no sooner than I start, it's over. What is that coconut cake doing in my cream of crab soup? Perhaps I could reach out to Penn & Teller to see if they have any suggestions as to how I could make those missing years reappear?

Speaking of something that is not illusion, might I suggest you look no further than the Baltimore Bar Library. No sleight of hand involved, no pulling rabbits out of a hat: just extensive collections; expansive databases; comprehensive services both on-site and remote; lectures; movies; amazing rooms and much more. The only thing that disappears at the Library are your legal questions and concerns. Come see for yourself.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Joe Bennett



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