

2025

PREAKNESS

DAY

Epilog

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Jim Mazur's PREAKNESS Day

Epilog

As is my custom, I always recap the BES and Preakness day cards. Earlier in the week, rain was hit Pimlico as predicted. The main track dried out to be fast but the turf course had some give to it and was labeled "good." A nasty thunderstorm hit before the BES post time and delayed the race and turned the track in a sea of slop. The track was wet in the morning on Preakness day but eventually dried out to become fast. The turf course was listed as "good" all day.

Jim Mazur

Selections For Race 1

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	5 7	Augusta Melody (9-5) Exploration (7-2)	To me EXPLORATION the stronger part of Brittany Russell's uncoupled entry.
<i>Value Plays</i>	8	Circle P (9-2)	3 for 4 at 6f and drops in from stakes company.
<i>Bombers</i>	3	Sheriff Ronnie (8-1)	Penn and Lrl win machine; bullet in the holster.

Same as yesterday, the opening race went to a logical and heavy favored runner. This time it was AUGUSTA MELODY who proved me wrong per the above. She was the stronger part of the entry.

Selections For Race 2

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	11	Betula (9-2)	Bred on both sides to handle OFF TURF. New trainer for a top barn gets JR to spring the minor upset.
<i>Value Plays</i>	6	Miss Ellary (8-1)	Has a conditioning edge on many in here is a possible wire threat for a trainer who is batting 30% this year.
<i>Bombers</i>	8	Fivecommatwo (20-1)	Looks overmatched but actually has top speed figs from last year and a 5f tuneup that could make her a wire threat as well. One of the few in here with a win at this specialty distance.
<i>Heads Up #1</i>	9	Drop the Hammer (2-1)	A vulnerable favorite in my opinion. Her speed figs are actually slower than some in here plus her only try on OFF TURF was mediocre although she did have some trouble. I will use her defensively on the P5 ticket.

It was a good news, bad news story for this race. The good news was that my HEADS UP #1 was on target. DROP THE HAMMER was a vulnerable fave. The bad news is that the upsetter at 43-1, THE AMAZIN MIZZEN was nowhere on my radar or anybody else's for that matter. A complete head scratcher. And the trainer stats were scary bad: (1) 0/16 moving sprint to route; (2) 2/44 in routes; and (3) 1/20 in allowance races.

Selections For Race 3

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	7	Drill Baby (8-1)	Top Oaklawn trainer goes for the stretchout move here in what looks like a front-end steal attempt with Paco Lopez climbing on board.
<i>Value Plays</i>		NONE	
<i>Bombers</i>	5	Task Force (12-1)	Recent claim ran 2nd going 9f. Trainer bats 26% off the claim; this hoss has a great chance to upset.
<i>Heads Up #1</i>	1	Last Man Standing (3-2)	Let's try and beat the chalk! Last Man Standing was OFF SLOW in his first start and had road trouble in his latest. Maybe he is a magnet for trouble.
	3	Varney (6-5)	Baffet goes for the stretchout with Varney and probably will have Prat put this one on the lead...where he will duel with Drill Baby.

VARNEY didn't duel with anyone. He cleared the field quickly and was never threatened at 4-5.

Selections For Race 4 Maryland Sprint

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	6	Booth (7-5)	Oaklawn win machine takes his game north to Crabcake country. 5 for 7 at the distance with huge early lick.
<i>Value Plays</i>	5	Concrete Glory (2-1)	Formidable foe is a Gulfstream win machine taking his game on the road as well. 18-7-5-0 at 6f.
<i>Bombers</i>	4	Ninetyprcentmaddie (15-1)	Was 9-0-4-2 last year but has the best late pace in the race so look for her to hit the board.

Another MOST LIKELY chalker shows the way, BOOTH goes to the front and wires them at 4-5.

Selections For Race 5

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	#3	Glean (3-1)	Wesley Ward filly in a turf sprint coming off a layoff. That's a high % scenario for this trainer. Plus we have first time LASIX and blinkers on. Solid.
<i>Value Plays</i>	#5	Parola Sicura (7-2)	Was the 3-1 fave last time out but took up sharply and finished 6th. Is bred to like OFF TURF and gets key rider switch to Saez.
<i>Bombers</i>	#7	Wise and Elegant (12-1)	Trainer not known for having them ready off long lay-offs but this filly has competitive speed figs and is a smart play to use underneath.

Wow. Another longshot fuzzy on the turf. This time it was PREPAREFORTAKEOFF at 55-1. I thought this 6-year-old mare was entered in case the race came off the turf. She was 31-5-5-4 lifetime on the dirt and just 5-0-0-0 on the turf. Again there was no way per the trainer stats to back this winner.

Selections For Race 6 Skipat

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	7	Striker Has Dial (5-2)	Gets the CLASS and LASIX test as she moves up from two sharp allowance scores both on LASIX into an ungraded stakes WITHOUT. Carmouche's front-end style fits her well.
<i>Value Plays</i>	1	Apple Picker (8-1)	Won this race last year at 3-1 but was in racing shape for that one. Now she comes off an almost 9 month layoff for a trainer who can get it done off that sort of layoff. Note she beat ONE MAGIC FILLY last year. <i>Twilight Zone</i> exacta play coming up.
<i>Bombers</i>		NONE	
<i>Heads Up #1</i>	3	One Magic Philly (9-5)	Vulnerable fave as she has little experience at 6f and trainer bats just 13% with his long layoffs

Again the dirt races played to form as 3rd fave ZEITLOS topped my MOST LIKELY at 3-1, as the top 3 faves ran 1-2-3 and the trifecta paid \$21.90 for a buck.

Selections For Race 7 The Gallorette

	Prog #	Horse	Comment if any
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	8	Sparkle Blue (5-1)	CRABCAKE connections and a filly that is set up to score in her 3rd start off the layoff. Multiple wins at the distance and lifetime top last year on "yielding" turf in a CD stakes.
<i>Value Plays</i>	9	Way to Be Marie (3-1)	Not sure she is great value at 3-1 but this filly comes off a win at FG and ran a sharp 2nd in the G2 Edgewood at CD last spring on "good" turf. Heads up...this filly likes to finish 2nd and 3rd.
<i>Bombers</i>	3	Ocean Club (15-1)	Has not experienced an OFF TURF course but this filly is competitive on the speed figs and well traveled for a top owner group.

That makes two years running that my choice in this race—DANA'S BEAUTY—scratched off the program due to course conditions. Speed had been holding in the previous turf races, so it was no surprise when CHARLENE'S DREAM went to the front and never looked back at 8-1.

Race #8 Chick Lang (First Leg of PREAKNESS Rainbow Pick 6)

<i>Selections For The Chick Lang</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Keep It Easy (4-1)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Faster Gator (6-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Slam Notion (15-1) Normandy Coast (12-1)

<i>“C” TEAM</i>				
#	Horse			
	#3	#5	#10	#11

<i>“A” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
1	Slam Notion (15-1)
4	Normandy Coast (12-1)
6	Keep It Easy (4-1)
7	Faster Gator (6-1)

<i>“B” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
2	Chipotle (15-1)
8	One Nine Hundred (7-2)
9	Perfect Force (9-2)

The Chick Lang kicked off the Pick 6 which had a mandatory payout and was likely to handle a million and change. I debated all morning on whether to play or save my bankroll for the Belmont. JOURNALISM was solid in the Preakness but there was always the chance he would react to a quick return. But there were also 3 turf races in the sequence. If the bombs continued to light up then the play was worthwhile even with JOURNALISM in the mix.

I went six deep on my A TEAM leaving off PERFECT FORCE for the backup ticket. I took a separate ticket singling JOURNALISM for 5x meaning a \$1 play.

I have four runners on my C TEAM (there were some scratches). Three of them ran 1-2-3. Ouch. What did I miss? Nothing. Winner RETRIBUTION had only two career starts and his speed figs were slower than most in the field AND he was coming OFF LASIX. For none of my six bullitos to fire a competitive shot was disappointing.

I had the “C” TEAMERS on a backup play but that meant reduced coverage the rest of the way.

Race #9 **Jim McKay Turf Sprint** (Start of the **PREAKNESS** Pick 5)

Selections For The McKay Turf Sprint

<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Determined Kingdom (4-1)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Fore Harp (5-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Witty (10-1)

“A” TEAM

#	Horse
2	No Nay Hudson (5-2)
4	Witty (10-1)
5	Determined Kingdom (4-1)
9	Fore Harp (5-1)

“C” TEAM

#	Horse
	#1 #3 #7

“B” TEAM

#	Horse
6	Coppola (2-1)
8	Mattingly (8-1)

On the backup ticket, I had three shots in the Jim McKay. Two were from the A TEAM—DETERMINED KINGDOM and FORE HARP. The other shot was a 20-1 longshot named HONEYQUIST, a speedster with 16 dirt starts and just one turf start. But that one start was a wire job in fast time. With the turf course playing to speed, I threw him in on the A TEAM.

In my analysis, I noted that WITTY’S 10-1 ml was bound to be wrong. I also noted that he had a penchant for finishing 2nd especially at 5f on the turf. He seemed to need more ground. When he opened up hot on the board, I thought it might be a sucker play. So I used him underneath.

Nope. Wise-guy \$\$\$ were on the spot. WITTY came flying home from well off the pace. The turf speed bias looked to be an early-card phenomenon. Tutti Finutti to my Pick 6 play.

Race #10 The Sir Barton (First Leg of the PREAKNESS Pick 4)

Selections For The Sir Barton

<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Invictus (9-5)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Crudo (5-2)
<i>Bombers</i>	Bestfriend Rocket (15-1) Just a Fair Shake (6-1)

“A” TEAM

#	Horse
1	Crudo (5-2)
6	Invictus (9-5)

“C” TEAM

#	Horse
	#3 #4 #5 #7 #8

“B” TEAM

#	Horse
2	Bestfriend Rocket (15-1)
9	Just a Fair Shake (6-1)

I had no interest in the Sir Barton. It looked like a 2-horse race between INVICTUS and CRUDO. But neither had been around two turns so maybe they would beat each other and let an upsetter pass by.

I thought BESTFRIEND ROCKET (3/4 at the distance and CD bullets in the holster) might be worth a spot play at 9-1.

He wasn't. He hung around the expected speed duel but then folded his tent around the turn. So did INVICTUS at 1-2. CRUDO cruised home at 7-2.

Race #11 James W. Murphy (First Leg of PREAKNESS Pick 3)

<i>Selections For The James W. Murphy</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Reagan's Wit (5-2)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Clock Tower (5-1) End of Romance (9-2)
<i>Bombers</i>	Curahee (8-1) Stormy Flight (15-1)

"C" TEAM	
#	Horse
	#2 #4 #10

"A" TEAM	
#	Horse
3	Clock Tower (5-1)
7	Reagan's Wit (5-2)
9	Stormy Flight (15-1)

"B" TEAM	
#	Horse
1	Twain (20-1)
5	End of Romance (9-2)
6	Soleil Volant (7-2)
8	Curahee (8-1)

*Usually I like to find reasons to bet against the ML fave in any race. But **Reagan's Wit** had earned that status. This son of Authentic gets an edge on company lines alone. He was a neck behind multiple graded stakes winner Zulu Kingdom two races back and on the edges in the G3 Transylvania. I note a turf maiden breaker on sod labeled "good" so he should handle Saturday's turf. Trainer Cherie DeVaux is on a roll. **MOST LIKELY.***

Life got a bit easier for REAGAN'S WIT when CLOCK TOWER and END OF ROMANCE scratched. She sat off the pace and then pounced to win by daylight and giving DeVaux her second stakes win on the card.

Race #12 The Dinner Party (Start of the PREAKNESS DD)

<i>Selections For The Dinner Party</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Trikari (5-2)
<i>Value Plays</i>	Balnikhov (9-2) Fort Washington (5-1)
<i>Bombers</i>	Abrumar (20-1) Crabs N Beer (30-1) Crystal Quest (10-1)

<i>“C” TEAM</i>					
#	Horse				
	#2	#7	#9	#11	#12

<i>“A” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
3	Signator (8-1)
6	Balnikhov (9-2)
8	Crystal Quest (10-1)
10	Fort Washington (5-1)
13	Trikari (5-2)

<i>“B” TEAM</i>	
#	Horse
1	Divin Propos (12-1)
4	Neat (8-1)
5	Abrumar (20-1)

To me, this was the best betting race in the sequence. A full field with no superstars. My KEY FACTOR for this race is a win at 9f on the resume. Not many in here had that qualification. FORT WASHINGTON, CRYSTAL QUEST, last year's winner BALNIKHOV and CASH EQUITY, part of a Saffie Joseph Jr uncoupled entry with ABRUMAR.

I didn't like either of Joseph's entrants. But I thought that ABRUMAR would play the rabbit and try to set it up for closer CASH EQUITY with Irad Ortiz Jr on his back. In my mind, CASH EQUITY seemed a cut below these for the win slot but maybe he could earn a slice.

So I focused on FORT WASHINGTON and CRYSTAL QUALITY. I liked the latter better and hoped they hit the trifecta together. They didn't. FORT WASHINGTON proved to be the real deal but he was all out to hold off CASH EQUITY. At least we had 5-1 over 11-1 for a \$144 exacta. The historical profile did its job this time around.

RACE #13 THE PREAKNESS

<i>Selections For The Preakness</i>	
<i>Most Likely to Win</i>	Journalism (8-5)
<i>Value Plays</i>	River Thames (9-2)
<i>Bombers</i>	Heart of Honor (12-1) Pay Billy (20-1)

“A” TEAM	
#	Horse
2	Journalism (8-5)
4	Heart of Honor (12-1)
5	Pay Billy (20-1)
6	River Thames (9-2)

“B” TEAM	
#	Horse
7	Sandman (4-1)
8	Clever Again (5-1)

“C” TEAM			
#	Horse		
	#1	#3	#9

With my P6 kaput, I didn't have huge interest in the Preakness. But I did have two \$50 DD alive to longshots HEART OF HONOR and PAY BILLY. The former had compiled a 6-2-4-0 competing mostly in the desert at Meydan. The latter was a local CRABCAKE player.

Of the newbies, I gave RIVER THAME the best shot at the upset. Most of my play was in the exacta and trifectas using my two BOMBERS in the pieces slots.

JOURNALISM had had trouble in the Santa Anita Derby and had overcome it. He had that and more as they turned for home in this race. Somehow he extricated himself from the trouble and accelerated strongly to just nip GOSGER at the wire. Neither of my bullets ran a lick. Disappointing but congrats to JOURNALISM on a gritty performance. And yet another heavy fave muting the payoffs:
P6 \$2,276 P5 \$414 Ugghhhhh.

When chalk storms descend, I will always lose money. On these big weekends, we are here to chase the logical BOMBERS that often come to roost in full fields with competitive horses. Not so this year on the Derby and the Preakness weekends. But there is always the Belmont in three weeks (at the Spa) to set the record straight!

Get busy livin' or get busy dyin' says Red from *Shawshank Redemption*. Damn right!!!

Jim Mazur