

Outside scoop on Preakness: The horses are faster on the other side of the fence

The Grandstand? The Infield?

No, thank you.



We're content hanging out in the parking lot two days before the race. We can see the horses and feel as if we're part of the whole horse racing excitement. There are no crowds, and the price is perfect.

This morning the boys and I made our second annual trip to Pimlico, where we watched the horses trot around the track for their morning exercise.



Sure, going to an actual race would be exciting. And maybe one day we will. But at 3 and 5, our boys are just as content to watch the horses walk or canter or gallop past. We only spend 10 or 15 minutes there, but that's perfect for their attention spans and we leave happy.

Last night we sat down and read through the horses' names to pick one of the nine horses to cheer for on Saturday. Both boys settled on the same one, Horse No. 9, It's My Lucky Day. He does have a good name.

We found his photo online, and he is very handsome—brown and black and sleek. Then this morning the boys clung to the chain-link fence, looking for him at the track.

"Is that my horse?" Leo asked as each one ran past.



"No, that one has a white stripe on his nose. I don't think yours had any white on his face," I'd say. "Maybe he's that one there, though. I'm not sure."



After a while, Leo picked up on the fact that his mother is no horse expert and that I had no idea which horse was which. So he started calling out hello to the jockeys instead. Most of them cheerfully called back, "Good morning," and waved.



There were crumpled potato chip bags at our feet, the fence was rusty, and the security guard yelled at me not to take pictures (these pictures of the boys are from last year), but we didn't care. One of the best things about preschoolers is that they can enjoy themselves almost anywhere.

Back in the car, as we were driving down Northern Parkway, I said, "You know, I've never been to the actual race." Yes, Baltimore born and bred though I am, I've never actually attended Preakness.

"Why not?" Leo asked.

"Well, first you have to pay for a ticket," I said.

"Yes, Mama," Leo said, "and Baba told me why it costs so much."

"He did?" I was surprised that John had even thought to discuss Preakness tickets with my son. I have never priced them and have no idea what they cost—and I bet John doesn't either.

"Yes, because everyone wants to go and there aren't a lot of seats," Leo said. "So when a lot of people want something, it costs more."

"Oh, yes," I said, still a little surprised. "That is true."

Well, our seats weren't in demand this morning. But they were just perfect for us. It was, after all, our lucky day.



For more ambitious families with longer attention spans, Pimlico actually offers free first come, first serve Sunrise at Old Hilltop tours of Pimlico during Preakness Week. [Learn more here.](#)