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## Keeping up with the Joneses

### Turfway to host Smarty specials

By *Amanda Van Benschoten**Post staff reporter*

Florence's Turfway Park has Smarty Jones fever, and isn't afraid to show it.

The racetrack will host a Jones-themed party during Saturday's 136th Belmont Stakes, where favorite Smarty Jones could race into history with a victory and seize the coveted Triple Crown.

"This is unique," said Sherry Pinson, a spokesperson for Turfway Park. "There seems to be a groundswell in the industry that this colt has the best chance to win. He's very heavily favored."

If he wins, the 3-year-old would become the 12th Triple Crown winner in thoroughbred racing history, and only the second to win the crown while still undefeated during his career. He won the Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes, the first two jewels in the crown.

The racetrack, in collaboration with area businesses, has planned a variety of events for Saturday.

The Jones Soda Co., based in Seattle, has designed 24 "Smarty Jones" soda bottles, to be given away exclusively at the Turfway Park event. Custom labels feature a color picture of Smarty Jones and facts about the Belmont Stakes and Turfway Park. The commemorative bottles will contain assorted flavors.

"We try to do things like that -- the unusual, the creative," said Ken Bache, sales manager for Milford's Tri-State Juice, which distributes Jones Soda in Greater Cincinnati. Bache and a Turfway Park representative thought of and implemented the idea for the labels.

"We've done other promotional things like this, the fun stuff," said Michelle Whitehead, marketing assistant at Jones Soda Co. She said the company designed personalized labels for the launch party for the Pixar film "Monsters, Inc." several years ago.

The first 100 women who attend the event will receive a free white carnation, the official flower of the Belmont Stakes, compliments of Cincinnati's Jones the Florist.

David Fisher, owner of Jones the Florist, said his company donated 100 white carnations and \$100 in gift certificates to the event because "it seemed like a perfect fit."

"It just kind of all made sense for Jones to participate, with the Smarty Jones tie-in," he said. "It was too good to pass up. I thought it would be fun."

If your last name is Jones, you're in luck, too: the first 100 people with the last name of Jones will receive a free \$2 win ticket for Smarty Jones.



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"It won't be worth much, because he's the favorite," Pinson said. "The value isn't in winning. What makes it fun is that it will be a great souvenir."

Fans named Jones also can participate in a trivia contest to compete for the title of "Smartiest Jones" in the tri-state, and the chance to win cash, gift certificates and tickets to local sporting events and other activities.

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If Smarty Jones, undefeated in eight career races, wins the Belmont, he will become the first horse to win the Triple Crown since 1978, when Northern Kentucky native Steve Cauthen rode Affirmed to victory, becoming at 18 the youngest jockey to do so.

Smarty won the May 15 Preakness by the greatest margin of victory in that race's history. If he wins Saturday, he would also win nearly \$6 million. His total career earnings would surpass \$13 million and set a record in North American thoroughbred racing.

"There's so much interest in this race that we expect a good crowd," Pinson said, adding that the track saw unusually large crowds at the Derby and Preakness celebrations.

The gates at Turfway will open at 10 a.m. Saturday. Admission and parking are free. The first race from New York's Belmont Park will begin at about noon, and the Belmont Stakes will begin at 6:38 p.m. Nine horses and jockeys will compete for the \$1 million purse. All of the races will be simulcast at Turfway Park.

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