

# The Preakness, 1956



The 1956 Preakness Stakes was among the most controversial competitions in horse racing history. Not only was the race entirely devoid of three-year-old thoroughbreds (a key qualifier), but every jockey weighed more than 126 pounds (another one). Also, many equitation purists considered the horses *unthoroughbreds* because of their peculiar makeup. In place of hocks, hooves, and fetlocks were a quartet of rickety spoked wheels. The withers, muzzle, and bridle were painted on, and the body onto which they were painted was cylindrical and metallic, defying veterinary logic. But the race had been sanctioned by the Maryland Grade 1 Stakes Commission, and even Governor Dinklaker gave it his unconditional support. So on the afternoon of May 19, 1956, the starter fired his pistol, twelve horses bolted from the gate, and the chase was on. A typical thoroughbred can cover the 1-3/16<sup>th</sup>-mile course in less than two minutes. However, the steeds in this race were aerodynamically disadvantaged, and the winner, Quantoo, didn't cross the finish line until the 41 minute mark. The last horse, Zwarbbz, took nearly an hour to finish. The unbridled (ha) criticism of the race led to stringent new entry requirements and also to the rapid exit from office of Governor Dinklaker. There's probably a lesson there.