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Catonsville  
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## Local company to provide bartenders for Preakness

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Martin Taffe started working at the Preakness 15 years ago as a bartender.

This year, his Catonsville-based staffing company will be supplying the race with 150 bartenders.

"It's the biggest thing I've ever done," said Taffe, the owner of Martooni's Bartenders and Wait Staff.

Providing service staff for the May 16 race will be a bigger deal than in years past because of new rules preventing people from bringing their own alcohol to the track.

Last year, the Maryland Jockey Club, which owns the Preakness Stakes, barred alcohol from the grandstands at Pimlico Race Course.

This year, the club has also banned alcohol from the track's infield.

So if anyone wants an alcoholic beverage, they'll have to get it from a bartender.

"It's going to be an interesting year," Taffe said. "It'll be an eye opener."

The annual race usually draws more than 100,000 people.

Hoping to lessen the impact the new alcohol restrictions will have on attendance, race organizers are sponsoring concerts by ZZ Top and Buckcherry in the infield, as well as a woman's volleyball tournament to entice people who may be upset about the change in alcohol policy to come to the race.

Taffe said he anticipates 18-hour days starting May 13 to make sure there are no "glitches" on Saturday.

"I'm at the track and I'll be living there," Taffe said.

He also said that in a smaller market like Baltimore providing staff for an event like the Preakness Stakes can put his company on the map.

"It's not like L.A., Chicago or New York," Taffe said.

Taffe said his company landed the contract to provide bartenders at the race to being "at the right place at the right time."

The opportunity came when the Maryland Jockey Club's hospitality management staff changed last fall.

He said the new management gave him the opportunity and with the lead time, he was able to organize enough staff to meet the club's needs.

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