

Ellis Park | Posted 8/1/2007, 6:39 pm

72 to vie for Claiming Crown titles

By MARTY McGEE

HENDERSON, Ky. - Seventy-two horses have been entered in the seven races of the ninth annual Claiming Crown, the \$600,000 series that will be run Saturday for the first time at Ellis Park.

Ten older horses were entered in the \$150,000 Claiming Crown Jewel, the richest race in the series. Track oddsmaker Luke Kruytbosch made Mining for Silver a 4-1 favorite in the Jewel, reflecting the competitive nature of the 1 1/8-mile race.

The Jewel, as always, anchors the Claiming Crown program as the final race in the series. Until this year, after new Ellis Park owner Ron Geary made a push for the event, the Claiming Crown had been a mainstay at Canterbury Park in Minnesota, having been held there for seven of the eight previous runnings.

Mining for Silver is a gray gelding based at Arlington Park with trainer Becky Maker. Mining for Silver, to be ridden by Larry Melancon, is somewhat typical of the caliber of runner in the Claiming Crown, which strives to give recognition to horses who otherwise are overshadowed by the bigger stars in the game. He has spent much of his career in the claiming ranks and happened to come to peak form in the weeks and months leading up to the event.

Among the other Jewel contenders are Semi Lost and Soupy, an uncoupled duo based in Southern California with trainer Jeff Mullins. Jesus Castanon has the mount on Semi Lost, and Victor Lebron will ride Soupy.

A 12-race Saturday card will begin at 12:40 p.m. Central. The Claiming Crown runs consecutively as races 4 through 10. Working backward from the 10th, the Jewel, the other races shake out this way:

- * The biggest and most competitive field, the series maximum of 14, was entered in the \$100,000 Emerald, a 1 1/16-mile turf race. Arlington-based General Charley, trained by Mike Stidham, is the 7-2 program choice.
- * The \$100,000 Tiara, the female counterpart to the Emerald, got a field of 10, with Heathersdaddysbaby, Unplugged, and Westward Miss ranking strong among another well-matched group.
- * Lookinforthesecret, a winner in 6 of 8 starts since being claimed by Jamie Ness, is a 3-1 choice among a field of 10 entered in the \$75,000 Rapid Transit at six furlongs.
- * The \$75,000 Glass Slipper, the female counterpart to the Rapid Transit, has a pair of Tom Amoss-trained fillies, Mama's Temper and Sunneytown, as contenders in a field of 11.
- * Probably the biggest favorite of the day will start in the \$50,000 Express: Golden Hare, the Steve Asmussen-trained gelding who has won 11 of 12 starts since being claimed last August. Eight others will challenge Golden Hare in the six-furlong race.
- * The shortest field of the day is in the opener, the \$50,000 Iron Horse, a one-mile race out of the clubhouse chute. Kenai River, on a recent roll for Churchill Downs-based trainer John Fahey III, looks like the one to beat in a field of eight as the 2-1 morning-line favorite.

Both HRTV and TVG will broadcast the Claiming Crown races live. HRTV will have a broadcasting crew on site.

All Claiming Crown races are run under starter-allowance conditions. The series is a cooperative effort of the host track, the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association, and the national Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association and its local division.

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