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Arlington

Happy Ticket faces her first away game

By **MARCUS HERSH**

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, III. - Away from home for the first time - really and truly out on the road - Happy Ticket has neither turned a hair nor lost a pound since coming to Arlington Park from Louisiana Downs last weekend. Happy Ticket arrived here Sunday, but the big horse in Saturday's Grade 3 Chicago Breeders' Cup Handicap, My Trusty Cat, will not make her appearance until Friday, when she ships by van from Churchill Downs.

The \$150,000 Chicago BC, for fillies and mares at seven furlongs, was drawn on Wednesday, and seven were entered in the race, though Fly Away Angel is not certain to start. My Trusty Cat is highweighted at 120 pounds, but Savorthetime and Injustice are runners too, with a speed horse, Silver Crown, and a deep closer, Shari's Gold Sole, filling out the field.

My Trusty Cat is the certain favorite, having won the Grade 1 Humana Distaff at Churchill on Derby Day. She missed by a nose last summer in the Grade 1 Ballerina at Saratoga, and is a seven-furlong specialist arriving at Arlington at the height of her powers.

"I feel like I'm running the best horse, and if she runs her race, she'll win," said Dave Vance, who trains My Trusty Cat for owner Carl Pollard.

Racing fans should be keen to see how Happy Ticket stacks up against a horse of such quality. Until now, she's been the boss, winning all eight of her races by an average of more than six lengths while competing strictly in Louisiana, where she was bred. Happy Ticket has won three times at six furlongs, twice at seven furlongs, twice at 1 1/16 miles, and once at 1 1/16 miles on turf - and she doesn't mind going for a little 13-hour ride, either.

"She had no problem at all coming up here. It went as smooth as can be," said Debora Quinteros, Happy Ticket's groom, as she rubbed down the filly's shining, dappled coat with soft-bristled brushes and a cloth Wednesday morning. "She's so smart about everything."

Happy Ticket has a sensitive eye and a friendly demeanor, but out on the racetrack she's all business. Her trainer, Andy Leggio, who has presided masterfully over Happy Ticket's development, had Happy Ticket walk the shed row her first two mornings at Arlington. Wednesday, with the trainer Lara Van Deren aboard, the filly had a routine gallop.

"She was a little strong at first, but once she figured out she wasn't going to work or anything, she settled right down," said Van Deren. "She acts like she has a lot of class."

Happy Ticket does have class; the question is whether she has the ability to beat a horse as good as My Trusty Cat.

Nicole's Dream wheels right back

Since Nicole's Dream came back on short rest and won last season, a one-week break between starts shouldn't get her beat here in Friday's featured

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fifth race, a five-furlong turf sprint for high-end allowance horses or \$100,000 claimers.

"It's seven days, just like we did last year when we ran back in five days and she beat the boys," said trainer Larry Rivelli. "She's been lightly raced this year, and there's no place to run her for a couple months. One of her strong points is she's sound."

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Nicole's Dream raced June 11 at Churchill, finishing a close second as the strong favorite in a high-end allowance race. The turf was rated "good" that day and "soft" when she finished third May 20 in The Very One Stakes at Pimlico, and wet grass is one of the few things that can get the brilliantly quick Nicole's Dream beaten.

"The only thing I'm concerned with is soft turf - she hates soft turf," Rivelli said.

Nicole's Dream drew post 1 and figures to make the most of it, going straight to the front under jockey E.T. Baird. The competition, if Nicole's Dream has any, could come from No Llories Catita or Rich City Girl, though the latter has never won a grass race.

Tic N Tin euthanized at age 10

Tic N Tin, the venerable 10-year-old Illinois sprinter, broke down after Sunday's first race, shattering the fetlock joint in his leg, and subsequently was euthanized. It was the 97th start for Tic N Tin, who had been a stakes horse for years, earning purses of more than \$771,000 while racing mainly for owner-trainer Ron Brandenburg. Brandenburg had dropped Tic N Tin into a \$10,000 claiming race Sunday, the lowest class level at which the horse had ever competed.

Tic N Tin had finished seventh and sixth in his two prior races after having won an allowance race at Fairmount - his 29th career victory - on April 16.

Board adopts new drug rules

The Illinois Racing Board adopted new rules concerning illegal race-day medication positives during a Wednesday meeting. A positive test below an established threshold will no longer result in a fine levied against the horse's trainer. Previously, a trainer was fined for a trace-level violation, but purse money wasn't redistributed. The new rule still mandates that stewards conduct an investigation into any positive test, and allows humans associated with the horse to be drug-tested if so ordered by the stewards.

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