

12/03/2013

Star trio in titanic clash for HKG1 Queen's Silver Jubilee Cup

Sha Tin Racecourse will stage a real clash of the titans on BMW Hong Kong Derby Day, Sunday, 17 March, when three of Hong Kong's brightest stars face-off in a top-class renewal of the HKG1 Queen's Silver Jubilee Cup (1400m).

The final leg of the **Hong Kong Speed Series** brings together the brilliant two-time Horse of the Year **Ambitious Dragon**, January's HKG1 Stewards' Cup hero **Glorious Days** and last year's victor **Lucky Nine** who last month saw off **Frederick Engels** to win the series' second leg, the HKG1 Chairman's Sprint Prize (1200m).

Lucky Nine, victorious in the G1 Hong Kong Sprint (1200m) in December 2011 for trainer **Caspar Fownes**, is bidding to confirm superiority over Glorious Days, having held champion trainer **John Size's** then up-and-comer by a head in an epic struggle for last year's Queen's Silver Jubilee Cup.

"He's got a heart as big as a lion, he just fights and I love him," said Lucky Nine's jockey **Brett Prebble**. *"He worked hard that day, he was on the canvas and going to get beat twice I thought, and then at the line he was pulling back away strongly."*

"I think his last start he was back to his best and he gave me a great turn-of-foot when I asked him," continued Prebble, who sees Glorious Days as the biggest threat to Lucky Nine becoming the race's first back-to-back victor since Joyful Winner (2006 & 2007).

"Glorious Days looks a pretty bomb proof horse, he looks great in his action and I think the blinkers have made him a really true racehorse – he's the bigger danger because he's the more consistent horse and he backs up every time. He can take a more forward position than Ambitious Dragon so I'm a touch more worried about Glorious Days. It's going to be quite a race."

Fownes reports Lucky Nine to be in fine form for what is shaping to be one of the season's highlights. *"I'm happy with Lucky Nine, he's always competitive and I hope he draws a good gate. He's up against 'The Dragon' and Glorious Days, so it's going to be a great race – I'm looking forward to it."*

Ambitious Dragon and Glorious Days have two wins apiece in their four head-to-heads this term with the former gaining the upper hand in December's big one, the G1 LONGINES Hong Kong Mile. Glorious Days swept aside a sub-par Ambitious Dragon last time in the HKG1 Stewards' Cup (1600m), having also come out on top when the champion's famous afterburners didn't fully ignite in November's G2 LONGINES Jockey Club Mile.

"Glorious Days is an uncomplicated horse and pretty much trains himself," said the gelding's rider **Douglas Whyte**. *"I think John put him in the trial (last week) to let him stretch his legs and have a good blow-out and that's exactly what he did."*

"In this race last year I remember Lucky Nine running out to me and my horse being intimidated and that's what Glorious Days was like, but since the blinkers have been applied he seems to have got the better of that side of things and his mind is really on the job. I think Glorious Days has gone from strength to strength physically and mentally. He gets himself in a position now that affords him a chance of winning these big races. He's certainly got a fantastic turn-of-foot when I ask him."

Prebble and Whyte both have enormous respect for the Tony Millard-trained Ambitious Dragon, who will once again have Zac Purton in the saddle on Sunday. *"Ambitious Dragon is pretty much unbeatable when he's on song and he's obviously had a good freshen up,"* said Whyte, while Prebble's summation was almost identical: *"When he's on song, Ambitious Dragon is unbeatable."* Ambitious Dragon, a six-time G1/HKG1 winner, is stepping back to 1400m for the first time since delivering a devastating performance to win the HKG3 National Day Cup under top-weight in October, 2011.

Thumbs Up makes his long-awaited return to action in the nine-runner contest. Fownes' charge, second in last season's G1 Hong Kong Vase (2400m) and G1 Audemars Piguet QEII Cup (2000m) was last seen finishing down the field in the G1 SIA Cup at Kranji last May.

Also in the field are G1 LONGINES Hong Kong Sprint second and third, **Cerise Cherry** and **Captain Sweet**, as well as **Time After Time** and **Penglai Xianzi**. Completing the line-up is **Admiration**, who held Glorious Days to win the HKG2 Chairman's Trophy (1600m) last season. The feature event on Sunday's card is the HK\$16 million HKG1 BMW Hong Kong Derby (2000m), the third and final leg of the Four-Year-Old Series.