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APQEII Cup barrier draw reactions

Ambitious Dragon will break from gate six when he lines up against 13 rivals in a world-class renewal of the G1 Audemars Piguet Queen Elizabeth II Cup (2000m) at Sha Tin Racecourse on Sunday, 28 April.

The Hong Kong Horse of the Year's joint owner, Johnson Lam Pui-hung, drew the berth at the official barrier draw held today, Thursday, 25 April, at Hong Kong's Pacific Place Mall.

"I was hoping we would draw somewhere around that so I'm very happy," said the champion's handler, Tony Millard, who could aim his star at the G1 Champions Mile just seven days after attempting to secure a second APQEII Cup to go with his 2011 victory.

Saeed bin Suroor was content after **Sajjhaa**, one of four overseas raiders and successful in the G1 Dubai Duty Free on her latest outing, drew gate eight.

"I was hoping to draw between four and eight, we got eight, so there's no problem," said the Godolphin handler. "I'd like to see her travelling just behind the leaders and from that draw she should be okay."

South African raiders **Igugu** and **Treasure Beach** from the Mike de Kock stable will break out wide from gates 10 and 12 respectively, while Japan's Eishin Flash, trained by Hideaki Fujiwara is wider still in 13.

"I wanted to take an inside draw but the horse always jumps quickly from the gate so he'll compete well," commented work rider Kazuo Fujiwara.

The locally-trained big guns all enjoyed the luck of the draw with HKG1 Hong Kong Derby hero **Akeed Mofeed** snaring gate four.

"We couldn't have scripted it better, we're very lucky," said trainer Richard Gibson. "We've got a very professional horse – there aren't many ifs and buts about Akeed Mofeed, he's pretty straightforward, he's very talented and I'm looking forward to the race.

"He went really well this morning. Douglas (Whyte) sat on him, so it's exciting to have him in great shape for the big day."

California Memory, runner-up to Ambitious Dragon in the 2011 APQEII Cup, has drawn gate one twice in his Hong Kong career and both times the popular grey has been successful. Those two "gate one" wins came in no less a race than the G1 Hong Kong Cup in both 2011 and 2012, so small wonder trainer Tony Cruz was smiling after owner Howard Liang Yum-shing's seven-year-old drew the one berth again.

"It seems like it's a good omen and a good sign," said Cruz, whose runners will bookend the race after **Zaidan** drew the other extreme in gate 14. "I'm very surprised he's drawn one again and very happy about it. California Memory has improved since his last run and I'm sure he can run a big race."

Military Attack is the exciting emerging talent at the distance in Hong Kong and John Moore was pleased to see him draw gate three, while the trainer's Irian and Askhiyr will break from five and eleven, respectively.

"Military Attack has drawn well, three is perfect and there'll probably be no speed so he can sit handy from there. Overall I'm happy with what we've drawn."

Last year's runner-up, the Caspar Fownes-trained **Thumbs Up**, drew gate nine, while the Derek Cruz-trained **Crackerjack** will break from two and his stablemate **Wrath Of Fire** from seven.