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## Speed stars go head to head in HKG2 Sprint Cup

A clutch of Hong Kong's elite sprinters will lock horns in the **HKG2 Sprint Cup** at Sha Tin Racecourse on Sunday, with the 1200m division's headline star, **Lucky Nine**, aiming to stamp his authority before possibly embarking on at least one overseas adventure.

The **Caspar Fownes**-trained six-year-old is penciled in for a tilt at the G1 Krisflyer International Sprint in Singapore next month and is also among the entries for the G1 Diamond Jubilee Stakes at Royal Ascot in June.

Set to carry 5lbs more than his 10 rivals in Sunday's 1200m test, Lucky Nine is aiming to bounce back from finishing fourth to **Ambitious Dragon** in the HKG1 Queen's Silver Jubilee Cup over 1400m last month.

"His last run was disappointing but he came out of the race with a sore foot so we can cut him a bit of slack for that," revealed the trainer. "It wasn't a major setback and it just took a couple of days for that to settle. He's good now, he looks great and he's got a good record over this trip."

Five of the 2011 G1 Hong Kong Sprint hero's 10 Hong Kong wins have come at the course and distance, including the HKG1 Chairman's Sprint Prize back in February, but Lucky Nine often fails to live up to his name when it comes to drawing a favourable gate in big races.

"Again, he comes up with a lovely draw in eleven, which is par for the course for him," said Fownes, his tone laden with irony, "but if there's some rain around, I'd like to see him on a track with a bit of give before we make a decision about Singapore. He's never been on a track with give in it. We'll see how he runs, he's in good form and his last bit of work was very nice last Saturday, on the grass."

The rising star of the sprint scene, **Frederick Engels** was three quarters of a length second to **Lucky Nine** when the pair faced-off in the Chairman's Sprint Prize, having previously filled the same berth behind **Eagle Regiment** over the straight 1000m in the HKG1 Centenary Sprint Cup. At Meydan last month, the **John Moore**-trained four-year-old had a torrid run in the G1 Dubai Golden Shaheen after missing the break.

"Frederick Engels has come back from Dubai with no worries," said Moore of his charge, who galloped the final 800m of his workout yesterday in 51.8s with a final 400m split of 22.3s.

"(**Weichong**) **Marwing** reported that his work yesterday was very good, he was nice and free in his action and we're expecting him to run up to his very best. We clocked him closing off the last 200 (metres) yesterday in 10.42s and they don't do that too often; so we don't think he took any harm from the Dubai trip judging from his work yesterday and with luck in running he's a live chance."

**Captain Sweet**, third in the G1 Hong Kong Sprint in December, accompanied Frederick Engels in his gallop. The five-year-old was sixth in the Queen's Silver Jubilee Cup last time.

"Captain Sweet has been a bit in and out lately. Last start he ran like a horse that needed a break, so we've given him a freshen up."

Moore's **Time After Time**, like Lucky Nine, holds an engagement in the Diamond Jubilee Stakes.

"Time After Time's done everything right," the trainer said, "He didn't do too much in his work yesterday but the jockey (Zac Purton) reported he was happy with him. Based on his last run, he's a horse that's just coming into form. We've put an entry in for the Diamond Jubilee and we might take him over there."

The field also includes the **Derek Cruz**-trained HKG2 Premier Bowl winner **Cerise Cherry**, the **Tony Cruz**-trained pair of **Best Eleven** and **El Zonda**; **Go Baby Go** represents the **Dennis Yip** stable, while **Michael Chang** will saddle **Rich Tapestry** and **Vital Flyer**. The **Peter Ho**-trained **Arrived Ahead** completes the field.