



[Return to the Hambletonian mini-site](#)

Clerk Magistrate heads for the Hambo

Thursday, July 31, 2008 - by Karen Briggs, WEG media department

Norwood, ON --- This Saturday, all eyes will be on an undefeated trotting superstar named Deweycheatumnhowe, as he attempts to capture the legendary Hambletonian Stakes and extend his win streak to 15.

But Canadians will be rooting for a well-regarded colt named Clerk Magistrate, who'll attempt to get past Dewey and seize the \$1.5 million purse for the Maple Leaf.



New Image Media photo

Clerk Magistrate will try to overcome post eight in the Hambletonian Final on Saturday.

Though Pennsylvania-bred, Clerk Magistrate (by Andover Hall, out of the Lindy Lane mare Weather Bird) is wholly Canadian-owned. Co-owner and trainer Per Henriksen, 62, hails originally from Oslo, Norway, but has called Norwood, Ontario home for the past four years. Clerk Magistrate will also be the only colt with a Canadian-bred pilot: Trevor Ritchie, who steered Doug McIntosh trainee Yankee Paco to victory in this race in 2000, will be in the bike on Saturday afternoon.

Henriksen, who has a reputation as a trotting specialist, is also no stranger to the Hambo winner's circle. He won this coveted race in 1986, with Nuclear Kosmos. Last year, he sent out Please Poppy, who was fourth to the indomitable Donato Hanover, as part of a career-best season in which Henriksen earned C\$1.4 million and harnessed 103 winners.

If anyone can beat Dewey, Clerk Magistrate certainly has the chops. Never off the board in his last eight starts, the burly colt is on a roll highlighted by his 4-1/2 length victory in the \$274,190 Goodtimes Stakes at Mohawk on June 14, defeating Define The World and B Strike Three. Earlier this month, he was a solid third to Deweycheatumnhowe in the final of the \$350,000 Stanley Dancer Memorial at The Meadows, and he came second to Dewey in the eliminations for that stake the week before.

With just 15 starts under his belt, lifetime, he has amassed a career bankroll of \$249,427 for Henriksen and Ann Karin Larsen's Asa Farms, Team Garberg (Erik Morton and Per Garberg) and Stall Sixpence (Jan Klein), all of Norwood. That would be pleasing enough, but Clerk Magistrate is now taking Morton, Garberg, and Klein, who have partnered with Henriksen on horses on and off over the past 30 years, to the Hambletonian for the first time.

Henriksen negotiated the private purchase of Clerk Magistrate, who he described as "a big, clumsy 2-year-old," last November from Ole Boch.

"I went to look at the horse and I liked him. The only thing was that he carried a bit too much weight in his front shoes, and (he was wearing) trotting hobbles. Going from two to three years old, I figured I could take care of some of that."

Now, he rates the colt as one of this year's most talented trotters.

In last week's Hambo elimination, Clerk Magistrate trotted a strong :28.1 final quarter to finish second, 2-1/4 lengths behind young Frank Antonacci's Crazyed. He was timed in 1:52.

"He left good, but he got locked in a little bit and came loose too late," said Henriksen of the elimination. "I don't know if he could have beaten that other horse, Crazyed. He was charging to the wire."

Clerk Magistrate's record has garnered him some respect from the Hambletonian handicappers. He's rated the 10-1 equal third choice in the morning line (with Atomic Hall), behind Deweycheatumnhowe (rated 2-5, to no one's surprise) and second favorite, Crazyed (5-1).

But having drawn post position eight, Clerk Magistrate will need just the right kind of trip to get the job done.

"He's the best horse I've ever had (but) the only shot we have is if we get a slick trip, and he has got to work hard," said Henriksen of his colt's chances.

Fortunately, an excellent work ethic is only one of the qualities Clerk Magistrate has demonstrated in spades. Expect this colt to give 110

percent during his two minutes in the limelight this Saturday.

In North America, NBC will be airing the Hambletonian during a special one-hour broadcast. Sirius Satellite Radio will also be beaming a special one-hour show. Both shows will hit the airwaves at 2:00 p.m. (EDT).

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