



Meet Me at the Races

Hot Friday Nights at Hollywood Park

By Sean Caffey

An old track buddy was fond of saying, “There are two types of people in the world: the ones who love Hollywood Park and the ones who haven’t been there yet.”

While this statement might be a bit bold, anyone taking advantage of the Inglewood racetrack’s “Hot Friday Nights” promotion over the next two months is sure to have an inexpensive, entertaining evening and experience

– something fairly unique and quite thrilling: live horse racing under the lights.

There are very few professional sporting events that can be enjoyed for less than \$20 per person – that’s \$20 total for the evening, not just admission – but that’s entirely doable at Hollywood Park almost every Friday night during its traditional Spring/Summer Meet.

Starting at 7:05 p.m. with the first race of the evening, draft beer, hot dogs and Pepsi are available for \$1 (the \$1 beer stops at 9 pm, but larger \$2 cups are still available until the last race), and General Admission is only \$7 per adult (anyone under 18 enters for free).

Also, every Friday night that features live racing also has live music, often in the form of recognizable '80s bands like A Flock of Seagulls or the Smithereens. The concerts are free with Club House admission (an additional \$3 per person, bringing the total to a whopping \$10 for the night) and begin before the 7th race of the evening.

This Friday, June 8, kicks off a big weekend at Hollywood Park, as the track will host four Stakes races and simulcast coverage of one of racing’s biggest events, The Belmont, on Saturday. While Friday night’s card won’t include any big-name horses, a thoroughbred is a thoroughbred to the casual fan or the first-timer to the track, and there are always colorful horse names and bright jockeys silks to help sway the unordained at the betting windows, no matter what the level of racing. Also, this Friday night features the reggae stylings of Steel Pulse.

Never been to the track? No problem, here are a few simple tips.

First, pay the extra \$3 for Club House admission. It’s a little less hectic on the Club House level than General Admission, and a private box seat can be purchased for an additional \$2 per person, offering an unobstructed view of the infield and the home stretch of the racetrack (the lines for refreshments are typically shorter as well).

Next, when it comes to wagering, keep it simple. There is a huge menu of wagering options at the track that involve complex combinations of first, second, third or fourth place finishers and often multiple races, so it’s advisable for a rookie to stick to the classics such as Win, Place and Show, and maybe something as exotic as the Exacta (picking the top two finishers in a race).

It’s impossible to make picks at this point because entries haven’t been announced for the evening’s races, but Michael Baze and David Flores are hot jockeys at the moment, and (as is almost always the case) the leading trainer by wins is Doug O’Neill. Statistically speaking, trainer stats are a little more significant than jockey standings, and another, less publicized trainer to look out for is Paulo Lobo, who is winning at a near 50 percent clip this meet with limited starters. All information about the horses, trainers, and jockeys for the evening’s races is available in the program, which is included with your General Admission.

If you’re looking for a slightly classier Friday night out, Hollywood Park also has a first-class Turf Club featuring Terrace dining. Admission is \$20 per person, and there’s a dress code, but the

view is spectacular ,and there are excellent dining options.

For information about this and all of Hollywood Park's amenities – plus racing information such as entries, trainer and jockey standings and a wealth of other data – visit the track's Web site at www.hollywoodpark.com.

Also, for the seeker of more in-depth information, the Racing Form is one of the oldest sports publications in the country, and detailed past performances of all horses racing on a given day are available for purchase on their Web site, www.drf.com.

Hollywood Park is located at 1050 S. Prairie Ave., Inglewood (right next to the Great Western Forum).