

Guardian Angel As looks to make his mark in Hambletonian Maturity by Moira Fanning, for the Hambletonian Society

Cranbury, NJ --- The Hambletonian Maturity, a race exclusively for 4-year-old trotters, drew nine entrants and will go to post Saturday (July 14) at the Meadowlands Racetrack for a purse of \$405,850.

Ariana G, owned by Marvin Katz and Al Libfeld, fresh off a world-record 1:50.2 victory in the Graduate Series final, seeks to join 2016 winner Hannelore Hanover, 1964 winner Elma and 1963 winner Spry Rodney as mare winners of the Maturity. Ariana G, who won the 2017 Hambletonian Oaks on her way to divisional honors and \$1.1 million in earnings, would be the first mare to complete the Oaks-Maturity double if she wins Saturday.

Her stiffest competition comes in the form of Guardian Angel As, with three wins in three starts this year for trainer Anette Lorentzon. The son of [Archangel](#) authored a 4-year-old track record of 1:52 last month at Harrah's Philadelphia, but was ineligible to the Graduate final. Owned by ACL Stuteri AB and Kjell Johansson, Guardian Angel As has racked up \$320,030 in his career, with most of his sophomore success coming on the New York Sire Stakes trail.

This year he's a different horse according to Lorentzon.



USTA/Mark Hall photo

Guardian Angel As has three wins in three starts this year for trainer Anette Lorentzon.

in Lexington but he was not paid into the Kentucky Futurity. Then the Breeders Crown, that didn't go as we planned either. I was happy in the elimination but the final did not work out as it should, so then I just turned him out."

"Last year he was just unlucky most of the time," Lorentzon said. "He raced good but he wasn't as good on a half-mile track and that's where the New York Sire Stakes are raced. He was always better on a mile track. I thought he raced really, really good in the Hambletonian to make the final and everyone knows the story of him getting run into. (Guardian Angel As, driven by Jason Bartlett, was fourth in his Hambletonian heat and interfered with in the final, causing the first ever disqualification of a Hambletonian winner, when What The Hill was placed ninth).

"At the end of the year I started to have a problem with his foot -- I'm still not sure what bothered him, but he had a lot of issues with it. He raced really well

Guardian Angel As ended the year with a record of 19-8-3-1 and \$259,280 in earnings. Lorentzon qualified him at Hoosier Park in May and won an overnight in 1:53, a new mark for Guardian Angel As that he subsequently lowered in winning a leg of the Graduate at Tioga Downs and lowered again by setting the track record at Harrah's Philadelphia in 1:52.

"When Timmy (Tetrick) drove him in Tioga he said he got away a little further back than he wanted but won as easy as could be. Then of course at (Harrah's Philadelphia) he was very happy with him," Lorentzon said.

"We missed the Graduate because you have to race in half the legs and there are only three and I did not want to ship him to Canada because it's a long season with a lot of racing towards the end of the year. I am thinking about the future with him because we plan on racing him for several more years -- you never know what will happen but that's our plan.

"Ariana G was very, very impressive and it's a tough race for everybody. I'll be happy if he races well and has a little luck."

Also entered is Sortie, who was a surprise third-place finisher in the Graduate final at 53-1 for trainer/driver Trond Smedshammer; Canadian invader R First Class from the barn of Ben Baillargeon; a pair of contenders from trainer John Butenschoen, Don Dream and Bill's Man; as well as International Moni, Yes Mickey and Top Flight Angel.

R First Class is driven by Trevor Henry, whose most recent of only three previous career appearances at The Meadowlands was in 2017 when he drove Classic Pro to a third-place finish in the Meadowlands Pace at 64-1.

PP-Horse-Driver-Trainer-Morning Line

- 1-Guardian Angel As-Tim Tetrick-Anette Lorentzon-4/1
- 2-Yes Mickey-Ake Svanstedt-Ake Svanstedt-12/1
- 3-R First Class-Trevor Henry-Benoit Baillargeon-15/1
- 4-Top Flight Angel-Andy Miller-Julie Miller-8/1
- 5-International Moni-Scott Zeron-Domenico Cecere-5/1
- 6-Don Dream-Brett Miller-John Butenschoen-20/1
- 7-Sortie-Trond Smedshammer-Trond Smedshammer-10/1
- 8-Bill's Man-Corey Callahan-John Butenschoen-10/1
- 9-Ariana G-Yannick Gingras-Jimmy Takter-7/5

Trainer/driver Ake Svanstedt won the first edition of the current incarnation of the Hambletonian Maturity in 2014 with Your So Vain and starts Yes Mickey from post two.

Four of the nine entered were 2017 Hambletonian starters: Bill's Man, Guardian Angel As, International Moni, and Sortie.

Created by the Hambletonian Society and the Meadowlands as a racing opportunity solely for 4-year-olds previously eligible to the Hambletonian and Oaks, like those events the Maturity racing conditions prohibit the use of Lasix, the only race day medication permitted in New Jersey and entrants are subject to out of competition testing. The distance is 1-1/8 miles.

All starters in the race will receive money, with the winner receiving 50 percent of the purse. One percent of the total purse will be paid to the owners of the finalists finishing sixth through ninth. The remainder of the purse for the Maturity will be divided 50-24-16-10 percent for the horses finishing second through fifth.

For the complete Meadowlands card, click [here](#).

For Meadowlands announcer Ken Warkentin's analysis of all the races, click [here](#).