

David Cassidy High on Mayan King's Lane's End Chances

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Trainer Gary Contessa (left) and entertainer David Cassidy hoping Mayan King hits the Derby Trail with a win in the Lane's End.

Photo: Horsephotos/NTRA

Entertainer and active Thoroughbred breeder David Cassidy loves his chances and will take a gamble with his Mayan King in Saturday's Lane's End Stakes (gr. II). The '70s TV and pop music star and long-time Las Vegas performer won't be on hand at Turfway Park, however, as he had already booked a weekend engagement at the Mohegan Sun Casino in Connecticut.

Turfway Park's signature Kentucky Derby (gr. I) prep race will be shown live on ESPN from 4:30-5:30 p.m. EST. The Rushaway Stakes, a 1 1/16-mile race for 3-year-olds, will also be shown live.

Long associated with the New York-bred program, Cassidy takes his shot on the Derby trail with the Florida-bred Mayan King in the nine-furlong Lane's End. A son of [Stephen Got Even](#), who won the race in 1998 when it was the Gallery Furniture.com Stakes, Mayan King is two-for-two, coming off a six-furlong maiden win and one-mile allowance win at Aqueduct for trainer Gary Contessa.

It's a good place to start as the inner track at Aqueduct has produced three of the last four winners of the race. Last year, Sinister G shipped down from New York for the Toscano family to win; in 2003 it was New York Hero, trained by Jennifer Pedersen for Ernie Paragallo's Paraneck Stable; in 2001, the Todd Pletcher-trained Balto Star won the race for Anstu Stable.

Mayan King, out of the Storm Bird mare Miss Popularity, was a \$210,000 purchase out of last year's Ocala Breeders' Sales Co.'s March sale of 2-year-olds in training.

"I thought he was an exceptional individual," said Cassidy, who spoke on an NTRA-sponsored conference call today while attending this year's OBS auction. "He had no training and hadn't been broken until January, which is late for a sale 2-year-old. On the first breeze day he had the second best work of the day. On the second day, he flipped his rider and worked the wrong way. Gary (Contessa) was the only guy who had a clock on him and he went :10 and one, :10 and two, :10 and two, and then ran into a fence.

"He was a horse I had to have," Cassidy said. "I thought he'd bring between \$300,000-\$400,000. The day I bought him I thought he was a Derby horse."

He was purchased by Cassidy, Ed Lipton, and Our Canterbury Stables. Lipton is a friend and neighbor of Cassidy who just entered the business last year, and Our Canterbury Stable is a partnership group run by Tom Daly. Both Cassidy and Lipton live in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla, near Mayan Drive, the street the horse was named after.

Mayan King was readied for the races at two, and was five days away from a maiden special weight start at Saratoga when he wrenched an ankle, according to Cassidy. Contessa backed off the colt and he didn't make his career debut until Jan. 28 at the Big A.

Mayan King should face a full slate of Derby hopefuls in the Lane's End, a race that produced last year's Belmont Stakes (gr. I) winner Birdstone from its field.

Expected heavy hitters are **Texcess**, winner of last year's \$1-million Boyd Gaming's Delta Jackpot and a recent second in the San Mateo Mile Stakes at Bay Meadows; **Spanish Chestnut**, winner of the San Rafael (gr. II) Stakes and a recent third behind Declan's Moon and Going Wild in the Santa Catalina (gr. II) at Santa Anita; and **Magna Graduate**, winner of the John Battaglia Memorial Stakes over the Turfway surface March 5.

Others expected in the Lane's End are: the Robert LaPenta-owned and Nick Zito-trained **Andromeda's Hero**; a pair of horses from trainer Ken McPeck in **Diamond Isle** and **Wild Desert**; allowance winner **Flower Alley** and maiden winner **Monarch Lane** from Pletcher's South Florida contingent; **Mr Sword**, a winner of three straight for Paraneck Stable and Pedersen; and **Silent Bid** from trainer D. Wayne Lukas.