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Trainer Bob Baffert saddles the likely favorite for the Sham, The Program.

Photo: Anne M. Eberhardt

Sham Entrants Hope to Get With The Program

By [Jack Shinar](#)

Updated: Thursday, February 25, 2010 8:51 AM
Posted: Wednesday, February 24, 2010 6:57 PM

The \$150,000 [Sham Stakes](#) (gr. III) for 3-year-olds at Santa Anita Feb. 27 should serve as a good indicator for 10 trainers wondering if their charges belong on the Triple Crown trail.

None of the colts and geldings entered in the 1 1/8-mile Pro-Ride test, the same distance as the \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (gr. I) April 3, have accomplished much to date. The Sham is scheduled as the eighth race on a nine-race program with a probable post of 4:07 p.m.

Trainer Bob Baffert has the likely favorite in [The Program](#), who comes off a first-level allowance victory by a nose over [Indian Firewater](#) going 1 1/16 miles over the track Feb. 3. He ran fourth, 1 1/2 lengths behind his victorious stablemate [Lookin At Lucky](#), in last December's CashCall Futurity (gr. I) at Hollywood Park.

The Program, who worked five furlongs at Santa Anita in 1:00.80 Feb. 21, has tactical speed, which should come in handy from his rail starting post. The son of [Harlan's Holiday](#) --Shadow On the Moon (by Deputy Minister), has won two of seven starts and \$116,860 for his owners, Thoroughbred Legends Racing Stable.

Martin Garcia, who has been aboard for both of The Program's victories, retains the mount for the Hall of Fame conditioner Baffert, who no doubt wants to see where the bay colt fits in his powerful stable of 3-year-olds this season.

Likewise, trainer Richard Mandella is anxious to see whether [Setsuko](#) can advance toward the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I). The son of [Pleasantly Perfect](#) , with whom Mandella won the 2003 Breeders' Cup Classic (gr. I), has raced around two turns in his last five starts with a win, a pair of seconds, and a pair of thirds.

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"He's doing real well," said the Hall of Fame trainer. "He ran a mile and an eighth on the grass the other day (second by a half-length on Jan. 27). "It looks like distance is not going to be any question for him, but this should provide a barometer on how good he is. You have to keep stepping up to find out."

Setsuko ran third behind the victorious The Program in a maiden race at Santa Anita Oct. 31. This time, Setsuko gets the services of Santa Anita's hottest jockey, Rafael Bejarano, who has opened a big lead in the rider standings. They'll break from post 5.

Trainer Michael Machowsky, who already has undefeated Robert B. Lewis Stakes (gr. II) winner **Caracortado** in his barn, has another to watch in the promising maiden winner **Nextdoorneighbor**.

Nextdoorneighbor signaled his distance readiness by breaking his maiden by four lengths while running 1 1/16 miles in 1:43 4/5 Jan. 24. A loser of his first two starts sprinting, he warmed up for the Sham with a blistering work of 1:10 3/5 for six furlongs on Feb. 15.

"He trains like a really good horse," the 44-year-old Cincinnati native Machowsky said of the bay son of **Lido Palace** owned and bred by John and Jerry Amerman. The Amermans raced Lido Palace as well as Nextdoorneighbor's dam, Fencelineneighbor. Both were major stakes winners.

"We're keeping our fingers crossed," Machowsky said. "Nextdoorneighbor is working good and acts like he's got everything you'd want in a horse at this time of year."

Machowsky isn't making a comparison with Caracortado, who is five-for-five in his career, but notes, "A few months back I breezed them together a couple of times. They went very well together, so I'm pretty excited to have both of them."

The Florida-bred Nextdoorneighbor, to be ridden by Mike Smith, drew the far outside post.

Darley's **Kettle River** has back-to-back two-turn wins in Southern California for Eoin Harty after beginning his career with a sixth-place finish on a sloppy track at Saratoga in August. The most recent tally for the son of **Congaree** came in a first-level allowance at 1 1/16 miles in which he closed from the back of the pack to lead at the eighth pole and held sway by three-parts of a length. The Program finished third.

Brice Blanc, who rode Kettle River in both wins, has the call once again.

Last-out maiden special weight winners are Moon Han's homebred **El Mirage King**, who won on the hillside turf course Jan. 9, and the Ken McPeek-trained **Outlaw Man**, victorious by a nose on the grass going nine furlongs Jan. 27.

\$150,000 Sham Stakes (gr. III, Race 8, 4:07 p.m.), 3-Year-Olds, 1 1/8 Miles (Synthetic)

PP. Horse, Jockey, Weight, Trainer

1. The Program (KY), M Garcia, 118, B Baffert
2. Kettle River (KY), B Blanc, 118, E G Harty
3. Straightmidnight (CA), O A Berrio, 116, A C Avila
4. Outlaw Man (VA), G K Gomez, 116, K G McPeek
5. Setsuko (KY), R Bejarano, 116, R E Mandella
6. Wolf Tail (CA), C Sutherland, 116, D F O'Neill
7. Viva Macho (FL), S R Amador, 116, M K Cho
8. El Mirage King (KY), T Baze, 116, M S Han
9. Alpie's Bet (CA), A O Solis, 116, A Barba
10. Nextdoorneighbor (FL), M E Smith, 116, M Machowsky

HORSE PROFILES

- [Kettle River](#)
- [The Program](#)
- [El Mirage King](#)
- [Setsuko](#)
- [Nextdoorneighbor](#)

RACE PROFILES

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