

Saratoga Trying to Lure Triple Crown Winner American Pharoah for 147th Season

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NYRA officials have been in contact with American Pharoah's handlers to have the Triple Crown winner race at Saratoga.

Historic Saratoga opens for the 147th time on Friday offering its richest season of racing, including 69 stakes races worth \$18.7 million during the 40-day meeting that runs through Labor Day, Sept. 7.

The highlight of the meeting will be the 146th renewal of the Grade 1 \$1.25 million Travers Stakes on Aug. 29, when a total of seven stakes races, worth \$4.6 million in purses, will be up for grabs.

In total, there will be 17 Grade 1 races offered attracting the top stars of the sport to upstate New York.

However, the big question for the New York Racing Association will be if they can draw Triple Crown winner American Pharoah for a start at the Spa. NYRA officials have been in contact with trainer Bob Baffert and owner Ahmed Zayat trying to lure horse racing's 12th Triple Crown winner and first in 37 years to start at Saratoga in the Travers Stakes, including possibly racing the purse to \$1.5 million.

American Pharoah hasn't raced since winning the Belmont Stakes and sweeping the Triple Crown on June 6.

He is scheduled to make his return to the races in the \$1 million Haskell Invitational at Monmouth Park in New Jersey on Aug. 2.

While NYRA waits to see what happens in the Haskell, and if American Pharoah will show up, Saratoga still has plenty to offer to the racing fan, as it runs for 40 days with just Tuesdays as the dark day, at the upstate New York track.

On six of the seven weekends, Saratoga will offer at least one Grade I race, beginning this weekend with the running of the \$500,000 Diana on July 25 and the \$300,000 Coaching Club American Oaks on July 26.



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American Pharoah gets the Daily News backpage treatment after winning the Triple Crown.

Frosted, who finished second behind American Pharoah in the Belmont Stakes, will be the one to beat in the \$600,000 Jim Dandy Stakes, the local prep race for the Travers Stakes, on Aug. 1, along with the \$350,000 Alfred G. Vanderbilt Handicap featuring top sprinters in the nation.

Met Mile winner Honor Code will be one of many older handicap horses trying their luck to win the prestigious \$1.25 million Whitney Stakes on Aug. 8, a day that also features the \$500,000 Test Stakes.

The \$500,000 Fourstardave Handicap is the highlight of racing on Aug. 15 before the top 3-year-old fillies go to post in the \$600,000 Alabama Stakes on Aug. 22.

The \$1.25 million Travers Stakes will highlight a super day of racing on Aug. 29 that features seven stakes races, including five other Grade 1 events - the \$1 million Sword Dancer Invitational, the \$500,000 Ballerina Stakes, the \$700,000 Forego Stakes, the \$750,000 Personal Ensign Invitational and the \$500,000 King's Bishop Stakes.

The meet closes on Labor Day weekend with the running of the \$600,000 Woodward Stakes and the \$350,000 Spinaway Stakes on Sept. 5, before ending with the \$350,000 Hopeful Stakes on closing day, Sept. 7.

There are some pricing changes the NYRA made for this year that have drawn criticism from racing fans, including charging a fee (\$40 on weekdays, \$60 on weekends) for 100 picnic tables, which in prime real estate space, crowded the already crowded backyard area, and a charge to sit at the Carousel area, which was converted into a sports bar this year.