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COMPETITORS: Trainers and horses are featured in the documentary about the Kentucky Derby.

Going nose-to-nose for a 'First Saturday' finish

Of the 40,000 thoroughbred horses born in the U.S. each year, only 20 will ever make it to the Kentucky Derby, the race that's been described as "the most exciting two minutes in sports."

"The First Saturday in May," a documentary opening Friday at Laemmle's Sunset 5 in West Hollywood, follows the competition leading to the 2006 race at Churchill Downs through the eyes of six trainers and their horses.

"When people tune into horse racing, they tune into Derby Day," says John Hennegen, who directed the film with his brother Brad. "They see a couple of trainers. But we wanted to put a face on people who don't make the headlines. They don't make a lot of money, but they love horses. It's all they know and for a reason — they love it."

The brothers shot more than 500 hours of footage and traveled more than 150,000 miles during the 16

months leading to the Kentucky Derby.

Among those profiled is Michael Matz, who trained Barbaro, the 2006 Kentucky Derby champ. Tragedy struck weeks later when the animal suffered a devastating leg injury in the Preakness. After battling through numerous surgeries, Barbaro finally succumbed in early 2007. "First Saturday" includes footage of Barbaro in December 2006, just before his health deteriorated.

"He was doing well," says Brad Hennegen. "He was a smart horse and not overdoing it. Then he took a downturn. . . . It was too much for him."

The brothers have pledged 25% of box office revenue of *Truly Indie* — the company releasing the film — to Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation, the worldwide leader in equine research.

"We always wanted to give something back," John Hennegen says.

— SUSAN KING

Morning briefing

By LARRY STEWART
Times Staff writerHe can
pick up
the check

The average price of gasoline in 1959 was 30½ cents a gallon, and now it's close to \$4. However, that increase is minuscule compared with how sports salaries have become inflated.

Tommy Hawkins, a Notre Dame All-American who was drafted in the first round by the Lakers in 1959 and received a salary of \$20,000, says that is meal money by today's standards.

As the master of ceremonies at the Los Angeles Athletic Club's John R. Wooden Award dinner at a downtown hotel Friday night, Hawkins said to award finalist and top NBA prospect D.J. Augustin of Texas: "You'll probably spend that much on lunch."

Augustin, who was a bit lost for words, said: "I probably will."

Trivia time

Pat Summitt, the Tennessee women's basketball coach who was honored at Friday night's dinner, was co-captain of the 1976 U.S. Olympic team. Who was the coach of that team?

He couldn't bluff
his way out of this

Tyler Hansbrough of North Carolina won the Wooden award, which was presented by former Lakers coach, general manager and president Bill Sharman. But first came a chat with emcee



Hansbrough

Hawkins on the podium, who among other things asked Hansbrough whether he had ever been kidded about being from Pine Bluff, Mo.

Said Hansbrough: "Actu-

"We're moving lawn mowers to the top of the key."

All in the family

Kobe Bryant's part in the new ad that shows him, through some digital magic, jumping over a moving convertible, was shot atop the parking structure at the Los Angeles Athletic Club.

One member of the crew that shot that segment was Andrew Mardis, a freelance production assistant whose uncle is Lakers assistant coach Frank Hamblen.

A plea from
within

The Angels' Torii Hunter, featured on HBO's "Real Sports" on Tuesday night, challenges the perception among youth in urban areas that baseball is not cool.



Hunter

"The girls don't like it," Hunter says. "There's nothing cool about baseball. Nothing hip-hop about baseball. But it is. I play it. So there's something cool about baseball. I am hip-hop. I am cool. Play the game, baby."

Just a week off

"The First Saturday in May," a documentary about the Kentucky Derby, begins a run Friday at Laemmle's Sunset 5 in Los Angeles.

And there's a new book out titled, "First Sunday in April: The Masters." One problem, though. The final round of the Masters almost always falls on the second Sunday of the month.

Trivia answer

Former UCLA coach Billie Moore, who Friday night presented Summitt with the