

Time Out

New York

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Eat Out Awards 2008

The best bars and restaurants

...decided by us and you! **WITH** hot sausage, imported
ale and chocolate bread pudding (above) for dessert



The First Saturday in May



RIDE THE LIGHTNING Barbaro flies down track.

★★★★★

Dirs. the Hennegan Brothers.

2007. N/R. 96mins. Documentary.

John and Brad Hennegan grew up around Long Island horse racing; their father was an official. Anyone who's ever been to the track knows the mood that comes with it—the long, dusty stretches filled with idle speculation, the sporadic tensions, the smells of junk food and bad luck. The Hennegans' debut documentary, *The First Saturday in May*, captures that feeling to its core. The film is about the big show, 2006's Kentucky Derby. But it doesn't fuss with that event's julep-scented history or the science (and art) of horse training. Rather, what unspools is an unusually pure account of competition. We meet six trainers,

including wheelchair-bound genius Dan Hendricks and Michael Matz, tending to the explosive Barbaro, and watch them fret and work. Their families can hardly reach them.

You don't need to love racing to appreciate these people, sustained over the months by a two-minute dream. The doc culminates in a sequence of extraordinary power, set to a ghostly choral version of "My Old Kentucky Home," the traditional riders-to-post song. We see young boys in their new suits, the smiles of nervous trainers and grooms, the NASCAR-like circus of paparazzi, Southern ladies and jockeys. In mere moments, the film evokes the whole of Americana. The bell rings, and your heart is already in your throat. Essential. (Opens Fri; Cinema Village.)—*Joshua Rothkopf*