

Mad Rush carries US hopes

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HE HAS his own website and describes himself as an "involved horse breeder and trader". Now Earle I. Mack is out to win Australia's greatest horse race — the \$5.5 million Melbourne Cup at Flemington today.

Mack is the owner of the Luca Cumani-trained stayer Mad Rush, who is likely to start favourite, with two-time Melbourne Cup winner Damien Oliver aboard.

Mack's curriculum vitae says he has a "long history associated with business, the arts, philanthropy, public service and education". He is even a former board member of the New York City Ballet.

But today at 3pm, the Melbourne Cup will be the only thing on Mack's mind.

"I am guardedly optimistic about the horse's chances," Mack said yesterday. "Looking from back in America, we feel that Australian racing has come into its own. It rivals any racing in the world and your shuttle stallion business is huge now, too."

Mack admits that "we follow the races in Australia" and "back in America, we've heard about the Melbourne Cup".

"I understand that the Melbourne Cup is a foundation race and it is also one of the premier races in the world. Its purse structure is also very enticing," he said.

In addition to his many other business ventures, Mack has served as a racing official as the chairman of the New York State Racing Commission. He has also been a trustee of the New York Racing Association.

"Right now, my home is Palm Beach, Florida, and this is my first time in Australia," he said. "To have been at Derby day was unbelievable. In terms of comparing the Melbourne Cup and its carnival to an American event, I would say it would be similar to the Kentucky Derby. "That is our biggest day, just like this carnival is yours."

Mack said he struck up an association with Cumani when he was racing Juddmonte International winner Electrocutonist.

"I had Electrocutonist with the Italian trainer Valfredo Valiani and when he was getting ready for the Juddmonte Luca Cumani gave Valfredo a bit of a hand. They were good friends," Mack said.

"He won the Juddmonte and I got to know of Luca. I liked his style."

Electrocutonist was subsequently bought by Godolphin but Mack now has what he considers to be another top-class galloper in Mad Rush. "He's prepared very well for this race," Mack said.

"The horse looks to be at the top of his game. He put in an excellent piece of work on Wednesday and Luca has been very happy with him since he arrived. His daughter Francesca has been doing a great job with the horse in between time."

Mad Rush finished fourth in the Caulfield Cup, with that being the only unplaced run of his career. Oliver was aboard in that race and Mack said it was a boost to have him stick with the five-year-old

stallion today. "With Damien Oliver, we have a champion rider. You can't do any better than him," said Mack, mindful that Oliver rode Purple Moon into second place in last year's Melbourne Cup for Cumani.

"The thing is with this horse, until now, he has never had the same jockey on him twice. Damien Oliver knows the horse now and that is going to be a big advantage."

Despite his impressive business credentials, Mack said a win in the Melbourne Cup could even top some of his other career achievements.

"This would be a pretty big thing for me, to win your Melbourne Cup," he said.

"As an American coming down here trying to win your big race, I would consider it a privilege to be able to go home as a winner."