



**HECKLE TIME.** Roosevelt Raceway last night inaugurated "Talk to the Stars," a period when bettors may ask questions of drivers. Session was spiced with good-natured heckling. Drivers were Lucien Fontaine, left, and Carmine Abbatiello.

# 'Talk to the Stars' Is Gibe Exchange

By Tony Sisti

Westbury—A new series called "Talk to the Stars" made its debut last night at Roosevelt Raceway. Carmine Abbatiello and Lucien Fontaine, two of the nation's leading drivers, were the guests and they were entertaining. So was their audience.

The "talk" took place in front of the winner's circle at 7 P.M. Fontaine was wearing his familiar green and white driving silks while Abbatiello was wearing red and gold. Though the weather was cold and damp, close to 400 harness racing fans showed up to talk with and frequently needle the drivers.

"Hey Lucien, take the Fifth Amendment," shouted one fan just before the questioning began.

Some one asked Carmine: "Do you drive harder when you're driving in a race against your brother, Tony?" He answered: "When you're out there you have no friends."

Another fan couldn't let this answer pass without asking: "Then how come they picked you two to be here tonight?" Carmine ignored the question.

Abbatiello was also asked: "why do you finish up the track with 3-5 shots?" But Mike Lee, the show's master of ceremonies, told the fan "we don't need you" before Abbatiello could answer.

Why had Tormax looked so good winning one week and so poor finishing up the track the next? "I can't tell you the reason," Abbatiello said. "I raced him the same way both times. Maybe he just didn't feel as good in the race he lost."

Abbatiello's strategy in driving Kenny Vale in Wednesday night's second race also came under fire. "Why did you take to the outside and try to pass an even-money horse like Buckshot Hanover with Kenny Vale (7-1) after a 1:04½ first half?" a fan asked. "My mistake was in letting him get to the half in such slow time," Carmine said. "I thought my horse could get around him—but I was wrong."

Fontaine laughed when asked if a horse's sex had any effect on how he raced in cold or warm weather. "If you think a horse is the best, go ahead and bet on him and don't worry about whether the horse is a gelding, mare or stallion," he said.

"Is it true that you won't drive in the ninth race unless your horse has a real good chance?" a fan asked Carmine. "Right," he answered.

"Talk to the Stars" has a very simple format. It consists of about 20 minutes of questions and answers followed by 10-minutes or so of autograph signing. There was a real crush of humanity in front of Abbatiello and Fontaine as the customers battled to get their autographs on the front of their programs.

"Talk to the Stars" is one new show that doesn't have to worry about its future. It has a sponsor, Roosevelt Raceway, and will be continued each Thursday night for the rest of the meeting. If first impressions mean anything, it should draw larger and more enthusiastic crowds once the word gets around. Watching and listening to the fans and drivers was good for lots of laughs. Some great lines were delivered from the crowd.

"Why don't they put all the chalk in one race and get rid of it?" suggested one fan.

"How about marking my program instead of giving me your autograph?" another fan asked Carmine and Lucien.

The most frequently asked question was: "Who do you like?" Abbatiello and Fontaine wouldn't say.

Harold Dancer Jr.'s five-race winning streak, over the past two nights, stopped when he finished eighth with Hildian in last night's seventh race. He won the eighth race with Worthy Jimmy (\$5.00) and the ninth with Garrison Light (\$7.40) Wednesday night. Then he followed with Aust Southern Silver (\$7.80) in the fourth race, Rapid Queen (\$4.40) in the fifth and Estes Minbar (\$4.40) in the sixth last night. Dancer finished sixth with Ricci Reenie First in the eighth race in his only other drive last night.