



## **THE INVASION HAS BEGUN**

Visiting horses have already started to arrive in KwaZulu-Natal for Gold Circle's Champions Season. The first of the pre-Champions Season features will be run at Scottsville on Sunday, April 6 with the Byerley Turk and The Umzimkhulu, Grade 3 events for three-year-olds at set weights over 1 400m.

The two-year-olds make their first feature appearances two weeks later at Scottsville in the Godolphin Barb Stakes and the Strelitzia Stakes, two Grade 3 races over 1 200m.

Then things begin to hot up as Champions Season gets into full swing at Greyville with the R300 000, Grade 2 KZN Guineas and the R250 000, Grade 2 KZN Fillies Guineas where the country's top three-year-olds will begin flexing their muscles as potential candidates for inclusion in the Vodacom Durban July.

The older big-race hopefuls then have the R300 000 Astrapak 1900 at Greyville and the R600 000 Gold Challenge at Clairwood in which to impress while the star three-year-olds can either follow the same route or make their mark in the R1-million Daily News 2000 or the R500 000 Woolavington 2000.

Scottsville at the end of May is the venue for the continent's biggest festival of brute speed – featuring the Golden Horse Casino Sprint and the SA Fillies Sprint and, for the two-year-olds, the Gold Reef Resorts Medallion and the Allan Robertson Fillies Championship - four Grade 1 races over 1 200m.

Two-year-olds make their appearance again on Vodacom Durban July Day in the Golden Horseshoe and the Golden Slipper which are Grade 1 races over 1 400m with the Garden Province Stakes for fillies and mares completing the Grade 1 programme on the day.

The stayers, who will have made their first appearance in the Lonsdale Stirrup Cup on Daily News 2000 day, will also feature on the card of the biggest meeting in Africa when they compete over 3000m in the Gold Vase with their eyes firmly set thereafter on the R1 200 000 Canon Gold Cup over 3 200m on August 2.

But there is plenty of racing in between with the R500 000, Grade 1 Mercury Sprint, the top weight-for-age clash for speed horses in the country. The following week, on July 26, sees Champions Day at Clairwood with three Grade 1 races – the R500 000 Champions Cup, the R500 000 Premier's Champion Stakes and the R350 000 Thekwini Fillies Stakes. The last two are the last of the classic clashes for two-year-

olds and they will be in good company as the three-year-olds are also on show in the Gold Circle Derby and the Gold Circle Oaks, the final classic clashes of the season.

Champions Season 2008 comes to a close with a fitting finale on August 2, the Canon Gold Cup. It is also the day that Gold Circle plays host to charity organisations in the region and says thank you to the country's racing fraternity from the owners, trainers and jockeys to the millions of racing supporters.

Champions Season 2008 promises to be the best ever, a programme of outstanding racing that will showcase the South African thoroughbred industry to the world and from where many of the gallant participants are likely to embark on international careers.