

The Canon GOLD CUP

The R1 million, Grade 1, Canon Gold Cup is without doubt the ultimate test of stamina for thoroughbreds in South Africa and at Greyville on August 4 the best stayers in the land will compete again in this outstanding race.

First run in 1921, the 3 200m Canon Gold Cup has a long and proud history and one record that may never be broken is that of the late Charlie Barends who booted home the winner an incredible seven times.

The lesser fancied runners in this marathon event have had an excellent record and it was not until 1950 that the first outright favourite managed to score. Chez Monty, starting at 9-2, took the honours for the second consecutive year, just prevailing to win by a head. The chestnut was bred in Ireland and was ridden by Charlie Barends and trained by R Forsythe.

Since then, it was not until the 2003 running when Highland Night strode to victory that any horse had managed to complete back-to-back victories in the race.

The only deadheat for first place was in 1977 when the judge was unable to separate Don The Stripe and Pacer. Aged four and three respectively, they returned one of the slowest times for the race - that of 207,1 seconds - with Don The Stripe carrying 50,5kg and Pacer a modest 49,5kg.

In 2002 this raceday was revitalised through the concept of multi-sponsorship and through involving the diverse cultures of our city and province. The raceday was a great success and paid tribute to the contribution that the city and its population have made to horseracing in KwaZulu-Natal – Africa's Racing Capital and to tourism in the province.

Canon Gold Cup Day has now become the racemeeting at which Gold Circle offers its thanks to all who have supported racing in KwaZulu-Natal over the past year.

Since 2003 this tribute continued along with a massive social responsibility exercise where Gold Circle afforded the opportunity to charitable organisations to raise funds on the day. Each organisation was provided, free of charge, the basic infrastructure for a hospitality marquee. With great enthusiasm they grasped the opportunity and with their own personal flair organised hospitality packages catering to a variety of levels at a profit for their particular organisations. This exercise will be repeated in 2007.

The success of the day was evidenced by the carnival atmosphere created by the marquees and the huge crowds that enjoyed the festivities of the spectacular raceday.