

The Canon GOLD CUP RACE HISTORY

R1,2-MILLION - SATURDAY, 2 AUGUST

Although coming at the end of the KwaZulu-Natal winter season at the beginning of August, it does kick off the new racing season in South Africa. Run over 3 200 metres, it is the top marathon event for thoroughbreds in the country and has been run since 1921. With a stake of R1,2-million, it is a merit rated handicap open to all horses. It is a race for out and out stayers commanding the highest degree of fitness from horse and rider and, while usually won by older horses, four-year-olds Place Of Gold, Cereus and Colonial Girl have been successful in recent years.

It is a major feat for any stayer to win this race but Highland Night proved to be one of the best of his kind when he won the race in 2003 for the second year running – a feat not achieved since Chez Monty did it in 1950.

2007 Overview

Last year was no exception with 20 runners facing the starter on the home straight in front of the huge crowd. They cheered the runners on as they galloped past the finish line for the first time before disappearing behind the totalisator board and Royal Durban Golf Course clubhouse and storming down the back straight.

It was a spectacular finale to the 2007 Champions Season in KwaZulu-Natal and a great one for trainer Mike de Kock whose Fort Wood colt Thundering Star, then a three-year-old, bolted home over the final 200m to win comfortably by 2.5 lengths.

It was a great result for the punters as well as the bay son of Lightning Duel, a daughter of former champion sire Foveros, was favourite throughout the build-up to the event and went through the pens as joint favourite with the Joey Ramsden-trained Omaha Beach at 5-1.

As a three-year-old some questioned his right to be favourite seeing as only three runners of his age, and that included Pacer who dead-heated with Don The Stripe in 1977, had ever won the grueling marathon since 1970 – particularly as he was to shoulder second top weight of 57kg. Pacer, and Castle Walk in 1988, had carried 49.5kg and Humdinger in 1972 had shouldered a mere 48kg.

With only nine previous races under his saddle, Thundering Star had earned joint-top merit rating of 102 with Omaha Beach and the cynics were saying - "if he earned it let him carry it."

In his previous start he had run second to Long Dollar in the Grade 2 SABC Sport Gold Vase over 3 000m at Greyville on Vodacom Durban July Day and earlier in the season had finished two lengths second to Ravishing in the South African Derby at Turffontein. He had let it be known in both races that he was a serious stayer and one to be respected.

In the Canon Gold Cup Thunder Star and Omaha Beach topped the betting boards at 5-1 with Long Dollar shortening from 6-1 to 11-2 and Alpe D'Heuz coming in from 10-1 to 7-1. Dunford drew support from 12-1 to 8-1 with To And Fro also shortening from 14-1 to 8-1.

At the break Winona and Paris To Peking were slow into stride and Omega Code stumbled as he emerged from the stalls. Winona recovered quickly and MJ Byleveld took her to the front from his outside draw to set the pace.

She drew away from the field ahead of Wise Son, Pacific Warrior and Modern Quest but the pace was not a strong one and the field settled in as they made their way to the home straight.

Johnny Geroudis allowed Thundering Star to move comfortably within himself in fifth place until they turned for home and then he turned up the wick, calling on the colt to show what he could do. That was all that the three-year-old needed and as pacemaker Winona began to fade and with Pacific Warrior, Wise Son and Modern Quest not able to find an extra gear in the finish, he sped past the leaders to win going away.

Omaha Beach had raced midfield throughout the race and produced a strong finishing burst to take second place ahead of Pacific Warrior with Dunford making a late bid to fill the fourth

Eleven Year History

Year	1st	Age	Kg	2nd	Age	Kg	3 rd	Age	Kg	Time
1997	Sciantiso	7	53,5	Yankee Blue Dill	5	56,5	Tickets And Tax	6	55,0	211,05s
1998	Bella Bianca	5	53,5	Kale	4	52,0	Parisian Tango	5	52,0	201,03s
1999	Place of Gold	4	52,0	Golden Hoard	6	58,0	Yankee Blue Dill	7	55,5	204,50s
2000	Colonial Girl	4	50,0	Fairfields Fancy	6	57,5	Technique	5	50,5	203,30s
2001	Cereus	4	52,0	Sequoia	5	51,0	Reef Road	5	50,5	202,40s
2002	Highland Night	5	50,5	Badger's Coast	6	58,0	Jackson Square	7	54,5	200,40s
2003	Highland Night	6	52,5	Amphitheatre	5	54,0	Fantastic Horse (Arg)	5	56,0	202,50s
2004	Major Bluff	5	51,5	Double Reef	8	54,0	Superwood	5	58,0	201,96s
2005	Reveille Boy	6	54,0	Eurovision	6	50,5	Red Badge	7	56,5	202,50s
2006	Diamond Quest	5	50,0	Eurovision	7	55,0	Cycad	6	53,5	202,18s
2007	Thundering Star	4	57,0	Omaha Beach	6	58,0	Pacific Warrior	6	54,0	206,96s