



Scottsville
R A C E C O U R S E
THE HISTORY



Nestled in Pietermaritzburg is the picturesque Scottsville Racecourse that has a long and proud history established over a century of racing excellence.

The early days of racing are not well documented, but the first racemeeting took place on Michaelmas Day at what was then known as the City Sporting Club. The first racing events were rather primitive with the starts progressing from flag to tape starts, although neither was particularly effective.

Back in the early days the straight had a simple wattle pole railing. The maintenance of the track was also an elementary affair as oxen were used to harrow the track. Drivers of old belt-driven motorbikes were in great demand as they were encouraged to ride on the track in an attempt to break up divots.

The Pietermaritzburg Turf Club made South African racing history in 1962 when hosting the first ever sponsored race, the Gilbey's Stakes. The race was a huge

success and the Club wasted no time in following it up the next year with the inaugural running of the Smirnoff Plate. The Gilbey's and Smirnoff involvement ceased in 1996 but the Golden Horse Casino has taken over sponsorship of the main event for an initial period of five years and it is now known as the Golden Horse Sprint with a stake of R400 000.

Keen to continue breaking new ground, six years later the Club staged the first international jockeys' race in South Africa, the International Jockeys Invitation Stakes. This event enjoyed tremendous support from both racegoers and the racing fraternity and was fondly referred to as the Bull Brand, even after their sponsorship ended.

Racing at Scottsville continued to go from strength to strength and, in 1969, it introduced mid-week racing. The Pietermaritzburg Turf Club was also instrumental in the development of fillies races, with the South African Fillies Guineas, South African Fillies Sprint and The Oaks, all races that enhanced the paddock value of any potential broodmare. Although the Guineas and the Oaks have been moved to Greyville and Clairwood respectively, these graded races remain three of the country's most prestigious races for the fairer sex.

Another of Scottsville's notable achievements is that it was the first racing club in South Africa to schedule three grade 1 events on one day – on Smirnoff Plate day in 1988. Also impressive is that the Club became the first in the world to host a "skins" racemeeting eight years ago.

Continuing their trend of pioneering in 1999 Scottsville created racing history when they become the first to stage four grade 1 sprint races on one afternoon.

Scottsville has now become an entertainment hub for KwaZulu-Natal – Africa's Racing Capital – with the Golden Horse Casino effectively "plugging in" to the back of the Scottsville grandstand providing non-stop entertainment for racegoers and casino visitors.

In March 2006, at a cost of R4.6-million, an additional track was built at Scottsville which will allow the number of meetings staged at the Pietermaritzburg venue to be increased by about 60%. The new arrangement provides for two separate racing surfaces and while the 1 000 metre and 1 200 metre sprints continue to be run up the existing straight, races longer than that will be run on the new surface.

The changes undertaken to provide for the additional surface comprised the widening of the track by eight metres from about the 1 200 metre mark giving a racing surface round the bend of 26 metres with a cross fall to the inside. From the junction at about the 600 metre mark the track width was doubled to 36 metres giving two separate 600 metre straights.

The races round the bend will now finish on the new inside surface and races previously run over 1 800 metres will now be over 1 750 metres.