



# NEWSLETTER

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## Winning the race

### Achieving an outstanding Empowerdex Rating

Gold Circle, the licensed racing and gaming operator in KwaZulu-Natal, recently achieved an "AA" Empowerdex rating for outstanding compliance to the requirements of the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act.

The rating followed an evaluation by Empowerdex of Gold Circle's performance on its BEE programmes relating to ownership, management, employment equity, skills development, procurement, corporate social responsibility and enterprise development. The "AA" rating provides independent, reliable proof of contributions made towards Black Economic Empowerment.

Outstanding BEE compliance is an important accomplishment for Gold Circle. It enables the company to empower its stake holders and indicates the commitment of its leadership to the future well-being of the country.

The composition of Gold Circle's Board of Directors and the Provincial Chapter Boards which oversee racing in each region continues with their balanced racial mix at Board level. The percentage of Black people on the Gold Circle main Board has increased to 46.2%.



### Enterprise development and procurement



### Slotting in

KZN Slots is a partnership between Gold Circle, Mien (DEE), Natal Bookmakers Society, Gold Circle Tote Agents and Community based groups. KZN Slots is a licensed Limited Payout Machines operator that is focused in KwaZulu-Natal. The LPM machines are installed at sites across the province. The company is committed to establishing a profitable and sustainable partnership with the site operators, who are primarily from previously disadvantaged communities.



### Reaching out

PROFESSIONAL procurement is an effective vehicle of transfer-making as it enables businesses from all communities to develop and expand their output. Gold Circle is committed to ensuring that a significant proportion of goods and services are sourced from BEE companies and has extended procurement to include outsourcing and commission opportunities. Tender Committees have been set up to ensure that all procurement and tender activities are in line with the company's BEE procurement policies.

## DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS FOR A DYNAMIC INDUSTRY

### Riding to win

GOLD Circle funds The Racing and Equestrian Academy at Summerwald, which combines academic education (IEB Senior Certificate) with stable and stud management, equine studies and race riding. Black jockeys in training make up 31% of the current intake. The Academy has produced world-class jockeys who have excelled throughout the globe. Gold Circle is affiliated to the Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority (THETA).



### Training to win

GOLD Circle has facilitated the development of the first African trainer in KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Bennet Dlamini, who has been granted a full trainer's license by the National Horseracing Authority of South Africa. Mr Dlamini was the riding instructor and stable manager at the Stable Employees Training School operated by Gold Circle at Summerwald before he decided to make a career from the professional training of thoroughbred racehorses.



### Learning to win

THE Racing and Equestrian Academy operates The Gracen School in the KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape as a Section 21 Company. The school provides groceries with all the knowledge and skills they need to ensure that the floor maglows are well cared for. Gold Circle also encourages and subsidises trainers who promote groceries through the ranks of stable employees and assistant trainers by contributing to the trainer's additional wages as their employees acquire more skills.



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## Caring for the community



For more information: Visit [www.goldcircle.co.za](http://www.goldcircle.co.za)

# SA EQUINE TRADE COUNCIL VISIT TO IRELAND

Peter Gibson, CEO of Racing South Africa, headed a SA Equine Trade Council visit to Ireland recently that was a follow on from the highly successful trade mission to Newmarket racecourse in England last year.

The aim of the weekend's visit to the Curragh racecourse in Kildare, which is less than an hour's drive from Dublin, was to create an awareness of the benefits of racing horses in South Africa and also to forge a relationship with which to facilitate future exchanges between the two horse-loving countries.

As was the case at Newmarket, a race was sponsored by Racing South Africa.

The first race on the card, the Racing South Africa European Breeders Fund maiden for two-year-olds over 1200m, was fittingly won by a filly trained by Andrew Oliver, who is a qualified vet and has previously had a stint in South Africa working for the renowned horse vet, John McVeigh.

In a large 27 horse field run in very testing ground, Oliver's



Peter Gibson with winning connections in Ireland

Efiso filly, Perfect Polly, ridden by Niall McCullagh, was prominent throughout and assumed the lead inside the last 400m. The 20/1 shot kept on well to win by 1,75 lengths from the Rock Of Gibraltar colt, Rock Of Rochelle, who also started at 20/1.

The favourite, the John Oxx Green Desert colt, Hanoverian Baron, started at 9/2 but could only manage ninth place under arguably Ireland's best jockey, Mick Kinane.

Oliver trains out of a small yard in Caledon, County Tyrone, which is in Northern Ireland.

Gibson said that the Racing South Africa stand had been very popular during the day's racing and there had been a lot of the sort of interaction that was aimed for.

There had also been a lot of interest in the South African wines on offer. The stand was sponsored by the wine farms Avontuur, L'Ormorans, La Brie and Arabella as well as by Investec Bank.

Further exciting news on the day was that Gold Circle Director Hassan Adams' horse, Vision Of Grandeur, trained by top Irish trainer, Dermot Weld, finished third in the second race, a Listed race over 2800m.

Vision Of Grandeur, a three-year-old colt by Grand Lodge, was bred by the Barronstown Stud which is owned by two great friends of South African racing, David and Diane Nagle. He had come into the race on the back of three victories and Gibson said that Weld had been very pleased with his performance.

The Irish have the reputation of being the greatest thoroughbred horsemen in the world and have enormous passion for the game.

The South African contingent were treated to European racing of the highest order and watched the ante-post favourite for the 2008 English 2000 Guineas, Henrythenavigator, winning the Group II Galileo European Breeders Fund Futurity Stakes over 1400m.

## HARNESS RACING SA

### Trotting Traipses In

The dusty little northern KZN town of Dundee staged the running of South Africa's first ever regulated Harness Horse Race. An enthusiastic crowd of six thousand spectators and a marquee full of VIPs and government officials witnessed the spectacle and gave a thumbs up for this exciting new equine sport.

"I am so excited" said Dundee Mayoress Thandeka Nukani. "This brings to us in the rural areas a whole new world of opportunity, excitement and rewards".

Six horses contested the race, the 1900m Classic Harness Racing Rural Cup, which was won by six year old bay gelding Mercedes Benz, owned and trained by Mr Mdubane Gama and driven by Msa Mdluli (17).



A total of seven trotting races were held on the day, six of which were ridden monté. The atmosphere was carnival with a number of side-shows, dancing and musical displays held in the background.

Dean Latimer, chairman of the Harness Racing Association, explained that harness racing will be co-regulated with the National Horseracing Authority of South Africa. "We are really pleased with this result and the widespread interest that has been generated in harness racing so far" he said. "There is still a long way to go, and far higher standards to be achieved in the future. Hopefully we will have trotting live in one of the bigger centres by year-end".

# PETER DILLON



**Peter Dillon**

Peter Dillon, a veteran Kwazulu-Natal jockey, passed away in a motorcycle accident recently.

He leaves his wife, Leonie, who had been a tower of strength to him after the early passing of his parents and is known for her vocal support of her husband at the race-track, a son Carl, daughter Catherine and step-daughter Gaylene.

Dillon, 43, had recently opened a Bangkok Wok take-away business in Kloof which had kept him busy in his hours away from racing.



# SCOTTS STALLION DAY

THE Midlands area of KwaZulu-Natal has long been scoffed at as a region for breeding thoroughbreds and to many it is the drier areas of the Cape where conditions are the best for this industry.

That belief, unfortunately, still does prevail in many quarters - particularly down south - in spite of the fact that Mick Goss's Summerhill Stud at Mooi River has been the country's leading operation by a long way for the past few years.

It also seems to have slipped the minds of many, that so many great horses were bred by the Ellis family and others in the

Midlands area. They also seem to have forgotten the days when the Scott Bros Highdown Stud at Nottingham Road stood two of the most influential stallions this country has ever seen in Jungle Cove and Foveros and bred many top horses including one of the country's greatest, Politician.

The stallion day at Highdown Stud, showcased the exciting stallions now doing duty there.

The brothers Scott - Des and Robin - are two of the most popular and respected men in racing. Not to forget the third member of the Scott team, brother Neville, who played an important part in the development of Highdown in its early days but chose a different career path to racing.

Undoubtedly, one of the most exciting stallion prospects to arrive in the country is the reigning Eclipse Award winner, Miesque's Approval, who was the American Champion Turf Horse of 2006.

It is staggering to believe that a horse of this stature, who won the 2006 Gr1 Breeders Cup Mile World Championship by four lengths - the widest winning margin since his paternal grandam Miesque - is actually at stud in South Africa. And, in winning that race, he did it the hard way.

Coming from the back of the field and racing eight-wide, he ran down some of the best horses around to win as he liked. Behind him came seven other horses that have since been retired to some of the best studs in the world including the famous Coolmore where their covering fees are R150 000.

Miesque's Approval is, in fact, the very first American champion to retire directly to stud in South Africa and, with a Timeform rating of 126, is the highest ever stake earner - \$2 645 879 - to enter stud in KwaZulu-Natal.



**Stallion prospect, Overlord.**

In his career spanning six seasons from a two-year-old to a seven-year-old, he raced 41 times winning 12 races from 1 600m to 1 800m. In 2006 he was the Horse Of The Year, Champion Sprinter and Champion Miller of Florida and was the highest ranked horse from the Mr Prospector line in the world.

And now he stands at Highdown Stud in Nottingham Road, the property of the KwaZulu-Natal Breeders Syndicate and Scott Bros.

In addition to Miesque's Approval, Highdown has four other top stallions in residence. They are the three-parts brother to top stallion Fort Wood, Hinton Wells, the son of Danehill, Overlord, the son of Storm Cat, Mogok and the Gr 1 winning son of Al Mufti, The Sheik.

Hinton Wells and Overlord are the property of top racehorse owner Jim Atkinson and have impeccable breeding.

Hinton Wells is by one of the world's leading sires, Sadler's Wells, out of the Woodman mare Aspen Leaves, the full sister to the champion two-year-old colt in the United States in 1994, Timber Country.

This is an incredible family that not only includes Fort Wood and Timber Country, but two top Danzig sires, Coolmore's Bianconi, and Hamas who has a Timeform rating of 125.

And it doesn't end there. This is also the family of the world champion racehorse, Dubai Millenium, whose Timeform rating is 140 and who has now retired to stud.

Overlord has what the experts say is a "remarkable pedigree" representing three of the world's top stallions. He was a R12-million purchase at auction and is by Danehill out of Prawn Cocktail, the female line of both Royal Academy and Storm Cat.

Prawn Cocktail has also produced two group winning full sisters to Overlord in One World and Langoustine, the latter having been sold to Queen Elizabeth at the Keeneland sale

for R6.3-million.

Mogok is by Storm Cat out of the top Halo mare, Coup de Folie and is a half brother to Machiavellian. Storm Cat needs no introduction but there is outstanding Group 1 performance in the female line including the winner of the French 1000 gns, Denebola and winner of the Arc de Triomphe and other Group 1 races, Bago, - the latter also having been the European Horse Of The Year.

In the second dam there is El Moxie, the sire of Silent Witness who holds the world record for 17 consecutive wins and Torrestella, winner of the French 2000 gns.

This is also the family of Australian sire sensation Redoute's Choice and includes, through the third dam, Natalma, Northern Dancer and Danehill.

Mogok has already shown his potential as a top stallion being the first freshman sire in 2007 to have a stakes winner in Island Retreat while Balito Boy established a new class record.

The Sheik was raced by Robert and Robyn Muir and finished in the placings in six Grade 1 races, winning both the Gr1 Cape Derby over 2 000m and the Gr1 SA Guineas over 1 600m.

By Al Mufti, The Sheik is out of the Broodmare of the Year, Jessamine, and is a full brother to champion sprinter Al Nitak. Bringing back a touch of the past for Highdown, the family also includes the great Politician.

Speaking to Robin Scott at lunch, he was extremely excited about the prospects and thanked the KwaZulu-Natal breeders for their outstanding involvement and support for the Highdown stallions. He paid a special tribute to brother Des who played an important role, financially and influentially, in securing the top stallions.

## WINNING ISN'T EVERYTHING

Vertigo Baby, a six-year-old mare out of Nothern Guest mare, Humming Bird, has done very well for her owner and breeder, Anthony Maroun. Trained by Bradley Maroun, she has earned R197 525, a tidy sum for a daughter of her modest sire, Noble Thatch, who has only produced one stakes winner to date.

However what makes Vertigo Baby unusual is that she is still a maiden after 60 outings.

It is not known whether this is a South African record.

"She's a fantastic horse to own and has definitely made me a profit," said Anthony. "She is still earning her keep and that is all you want from a horse. She's a sound horse and we'll keep her going until she's had enough. Maybe, one day, when everything falls into place she'll win a race. I don't follow statistics so don't know whether she is the record-holder but it would be nice to know if she is."

Vertigo Baby has run 26 places in her 60 races and has finished second twice in her last five races.

The world record losing streak is said to be held by the legendary Japanese horse, Hara Urara.

She became a household name and ended her career without a victory after 113 races. At the peak of her popularity a commemorative race was held for her and 13 000 spectators packed into the Kochi racetrack. A grand sum of 121,751,200 Yen was bet on her to win the race but despite being ridden by the champion jockey, Yutaka Take, she finished 10th of 11.

Hara Urara even became associated with a strange superstitious fad in Japan. The word "ataranai" in Japanese can mean both "to lose a bet" and "to avoid being struck," so it was said that a Haru Urara betting ticket-a guaranteed loss-could protect the owner's car from being hit. In Sept. 2003, the Kochi Prefecture Horse Racing Association introduced a service wherein they would stamp "ataranai" on any betting ticket related to Haru Urara.

England's most famous loser was Quixall Crosset, a jumper, who ran 103 times without victory, sometimes going off at odds of 1500/1. He had his own fan club and when he notched up 100 losses in July 2001 the world's press and broadcast media took up the story and Crosset's internet website gained up to 12,000 hits a day.

America's most celebrated failure was Zippy Chippy who lost 100 times but was included by People magazine on its 2000 list of the year's most interesting personalities.

Although unsuccessful against thoroughbreds, Zippy Chippy did win a race though, narrowly beating a minor league baseball player in a 120 foot race in August 2001.

However he later spoilt his unbeaten record against humans by losing to a Rochester Red Wings outfield player in a 40 yard dash.

# MICHAEL OWEN RACING STABLES

AS he unveiled his state-of-the-art Manor House racing stables to the world on Thursday, England football star Michael Owen revealed one simple ambition for his new venture: "I want to make this as good as anywhere in the land."

Racing fanatic Owen, looking fresh despite the previous evening's exertions against Germany at Wembley, oozed enthusiasm as he led a guided tour of the 160-acre project near Malpas, in the Cheshire countryside.

The Newcastle striker talked visitors through long-term plans to expand it to a 100-box yard fit for champions.

The 27-year-old, recently signed up as the face of 'young racing' by the Racehorse Owners' Association through their Club ROA scheme, has already seen his trainer Nicky Vaughan saddle a Wolverhampton winner from Manor House.

Owen said: "I met Nicky when I had a share in one with John Gosden, and he was assistant there, so I have been around a big stable." I've visited Coolmore and Ballydoyle, I've been to Jackdaws Castle and I've been to Manton, and what I want is to build a proper yard to train proper horses."

He added: "Obviously, my football career will take centre stage for another eight or ten years, but I am not going in to this half-heartedly. I'm planning for my future and if this is successful, I want to see it progress and expand."

"The only trouble is, Nicky tells me I am going to have to play until I'm 40 to pay for it!"

Vaughan, a former apprentice jockey and an employee of Gosden and Barry Hills, is the brother-in-law of David Platt, the former England international and successful owner who first coaxed Owen into the ownership ranks.

Owen will be at the helm of a public yard that boasts two grass gallops, a 7f all-weather strip, covered indoor arena and three American-style barns. In addition, it will soon gain a swimming pool and woodchip gallop.

Vaughan's string numbers around 30 but the aim is to increase that to three figures in time. Owen's fledgling breeding operation will run in tandem with the racing stable.



Owen puts his trust in trainer Nicky Vaughan.

# SUMMERHILL READY TO RUN SALE

THE 2007 Summerhill Ready To Run Sale is scheduled for Sunday, 4 November at the TBA Sales Complex, Gosforth Park and will be preceded by Summerhill's Breeze-Ups on Friday, 19 October at Mick Goss' farm in Mooi River, KwaZulu-Natal.

The sale will coincide with the inaugural running of the R500 000 Emperors Palace Ready To Run Sweepstakes over 1400m at Turffontein's inside track on Saturday 3 November.

This is a race restricted to graduates of the Sale of the same name and while there is still plenty of time for horses to qualify themselves for the event, there are obviously some notable omissions in the form of horses whose owners did not subscribe them for the race at the time of their purchase, including at least one Stakes winner.

This opens the door for horses still to establish their credentials, and the great excitement surrounding the event, is heightened by the fact that the 1400m distance of the event and its relatively late programming (in November) opens the door to both the sprinting types, and those later maturing sorts (or later foals) that want to run 1400m and beyond.

Graduates from this year's sale will qualify for the 2008 renewal of the race, for which R1 million has already been allocated to the stakes pot! For a sale which already has a rich history in the production of exceptional runners, this news must be a mouth-watering prospect for those owners who have recognized, as has been the case internationally over the past decade, that buying a horse when you have had the opportunity to see him run, is as close to hindsight as you can get.

Summerhill CEO Mick Goss commented: "Summerhill's own support of the sale in 2007 would extend to beyond 100 horses in view of the added stake, (a contribution exceeding R500

000), and would include some nine Australian imports by some of the world's best stallions as an added dimension to the sale". The Summerhill Ready To Run contingent has leapt from a trot into a canter, without incident, and a notable excitement is prevalent among members of staff.

Ready To Run manager Tarryn Liebenberg, for example, has proclaimed this year's draft to be better than last year's selection. For one who normally errs on the side of caution, Tarryn's statement is a bold one. Her notable exuberance, however, is hardly surprising in the light of the quality and the depth of pedigrees due for presentation.

Former South American Champion sire Hussonet, now based at Arrowfield Stud, will be represented by a filly and two colts. The filly, named Trusted Instinct, is a half sister to star sprinter and 2007 Singapore Horse of the Year, Why Be.

Hussonet's latest success is Desert Flight, the newly crowned champion three-year-old filly in Chile, his 20th champion from only nine Chilean crops. He is a leading first-season sire in his new home.

Also on offer will be a colt by Danehill Dancer, who's been very much in the news of late with a major juvenile winner at the York meeting, who ran away with the Acumb Stakes (Group 3) by a growing 3,50 lengths. Meanwhile Danehill Dancer's daughter Demi Star made a cracking winning debut for Charles Laird at Clairwood last week.

Stay Sonic is a quality colt by the former World Champion Racehorse Hawk Wing, the sire of 14 Juvenile winners from his first crop. His foals featured prominently at the recent big French Yearling Sale.

# EQUINE JET SETTERS

A total of 27 horses started their pre-export quarantine from Kenilworth Quarantine Station on Thursday 23 August with an expected departure date to the EU of Tuesday 02 October. In contrast to the previous batch of horses that successfully completed their 40 day quarantine on Sunday 5 August, this shipment mostly comprises South Africa's elite thoroughbred racehorses destined for the major racing jurisdictions in the world.

Most will make their way to Dubai for the 2008 Dubai International Racing Carnival, where they will join the yards of South Africa's Dubai-based trainers, Mike de Kock and Herman Brown. These include Gr.1 performers Kildonan, Sun Classique, Divine Jury, African Appeal, Elusive Fort, War Artist and Jay Peg to name a few.

Team Valor's Little Miss Magic and Stately head Stateside whilst star Gauteng-based three year old filly, Dane Julia, looks to emulate the record of her paternal half sister, Perfect Promise, in Australia. And, Sam Magee heads for Hong Kong as part of Ormond and David Ferraris' South African nursery programme along with private purchase, Hitman.

Apart from 2008 Olympic Games qualifier, the beautifully made warmblood dressage mare, Odessa, eight polo ponies make up the balance of the shipment.



War Artist looks set for battle

Despite excessive rain that plagued much of the August quarantine, the condition and fitness levels of the eight endurance horses that joined the Bahrain team in Europe are better than expected. According to leading Bahraini agent, Gerrit du Plessis, the horses came through their first 28km prep race in good shape and are on track for the European Championship due to be held in Portugal in September. This follows a number of fantastic results for South African bred endurance horses in Europe and the Middle East.

The South African polo ponies that made up the bulk of the August shipment, arrived in the UK as part of an exciting initiative of leading South African polo player, Buster MacKenzie, to supply a team of ponies ahead of the 2008 season. Promising young player, Tom du Plessis, received two of his ponies and Racing South Africa wishes them both well for next year.

As part of the programme to upgrade Kenilworth Quarantine Station, a new railing will be erected along the 1400m training track and serious consideration is being given to the installation of a horse walker to assist with the conditioning of its horses, especially during poor weather conditions. Given the likelihood that Kenilworth Quarantine Station will be licensed to accept imported horses in the future, this is part of making the facility a world class venue for competition horses.

# SMALL BREEDERS

SEVERAL of the smaller breeders performed with distinction at the 2007 Emperors Palace National Two-Year-Old Sale which came to an end at the TBA sales complex recently.

Karoo-based Gelykfontein Stud recorded the highest sales price of its 72-year history when its bay colt Secret Rush (Lot 139) fetched R430 000, the fifth highest price at the sale.

Secret Rush will be joining Terry Lowe's stable and Gelykfontein's Schalk van der Walt said: "He is a magnificent looker and perfectly conformed, a once-in-a-lifetime horse of which we are very proud."

Gelykfontein was established in 1935 by Schalk's father, JC van der Walt. They are the second oldest stud in the country next to the Birch Brothers' Vogel Vlei Stud and over seven decades bred many big-race winners, including the 1966 Metropolitan Stakes winner, Renounce.

Gelykfontein also stood stallions Song Of Songs and Fats Waller, who both produced Grade I winners from their first crop and Van der Walt said: "It will be nice to see a revival of the Karoo as a leading breeding region. There are positive signs. Many of us have had to send our mares away to top stallions elsewhere in the land, but over time the regions broodmares will improve. When you start producing champions, you're back on the map!" Secret Rush's dam, Sumptuous Secret, has a foal by Portrush at foot and will again be covered by Windrush.

Lola and Stuart Crawford's Greenhill Farm of Balgowan is only a few years old, but they've made remarkable progress. Greenhill sold six lots at the sale, averaging R199 167 and Lola commented: "We are very pleased as we are only a young operation with 16 mares."

While Stuart looks after Greenhill's other function, the production of pink Proteas for flower markets, Lola studies pedigrees and said: "It is our aim to improve with every breeding season,

looking in particular at bettering the conformation of our individual foals."

Greenhill's top seller was Malhub's son Desert Raider (Lot 178), who fetched R280 000. He is out of Warrior Lady and is a half-brother to well-performed sprinter Go To War, from the family of Priceless Asset and Royal Mail.

While 2007 sadly brought a personal tragedy for Rennie Price and family of Wicklow Stud, their performance at bloodstock sales has remained excellent. Wicklow sold Fort Wood filly Seeking Wood for R500 000 and Price commented: "She's an exceptional filly, a good looker who should go places."

Price said that Wicklow Stud was in the process of upgrading their 20-strong broodmare band. "We've been looking at overseas mares and have just recently secured Ankara, a filly by Elusive Quality out of Maeander. Elusive Quality also sired the 2004 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner, Smarty Jones. Ankara hails from the family of Miesque and we have high hopes for her future at Wicklow Stud."



# STARS OF THE TURF

Gary Alexander rolled back the years at Turffontein when saddling four winners. "It was like old times," said Alexander.

Alexander has saddled six winners in a day on two occasions, both coming in the 1994/1995 season, and has saddled four winners in a day on eight or nine occasions.

These latter successes all came from a period from the late 1990's up until the early 2000's and this is his first four-timer since then.

Alexander had fancied First Blood, who won the first, and Spring Garland, who won the fourth as his best on the day.

However he gave places chances to his other three, Ermine, who ran in the third and Moonshine Man and Decidedly Greek, who both ran in the last.

Not only did Ermine win but Decidedly Greek and Moonshine man fought out the last, finishing first and second and giving Alexander his best possible return on the day. "It is always great to see two of your horses fighting out the finish," he said.

Alexander has two assistants, his brother Dean and Stuart Ferry, who has previously had a stint in Dubai, whilst his sister Julie, well known as a Tellytrack presenter, runs the Admin side of things.

"Stuart has been with us for a while now. He is first-class, a fine horseman," said Alexander of the odd one out in the mainly family-run business.

Alexander said that his yard had been plagued with a virus problem over the last few seasons that always hits around November time when there is a change of seasons and lasts for three to four months.

"It is not just the three or four months that take their toll but also the recovery period after that," he revealed.

Alexander said that Ermine, who has been somewhat disappointing since a promising debut run behind Spring Garland herself, had probably been suited by her home course 1200m as opposed to the 1600m she ran over last time but added that when the yard started firing as it was now all the horses could improve and be in with chances of winning.

"Hopefully the virus can be avoided this year as we have some very nice young horses and are hoping to have a good season," he concluded.

Guillermo Figueroa rode the first three of Alexander's winners and finished second on Decidedly Greek in the last whilst Moonshine Man was brought home by Devon Habib.

## POCKET POWER IS HORSE OF THE YEAR

THE exceptionally well attended and impeccably organised 2007 Equus Awards Banquet held recently at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg dished up very few surprises with the Mike Bass trained Pocket Power deservedly being crowned Horse of the Year, while Mrs Bridget Oppenheimer received a special Equus Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the industry in this country.

The 'first lady' of South African horseracing was on hand to receive

the award won last year by Chris Van Niekerk, the latter scooping the Owner of the Year award after a memorable season that saw his blue and red silks in the winners enclosure at what felt like practically every Gauteng and KZN race meeting. Another leading owner that received some well deserved recognition was Cape based Marsh Shirliff who visited the podium twice - firstly to collect the Champion three year old classic horse: male for the Basil Marcus trained Jay Peg and then for Pocket Power's Horse of the Year trophy. In his acceptance speech Shirliff referred to the 2007 J & B Met winning son of Champion Stallion Jet Master, as the best horse he had owned 'by a country mile' and was lavish in his praise for the Mike Bass racing team and trainer Basil Marcus, the latter for his efforts in keeping Jay Peg at the top of his game through a tough season. Pocket Power also added the Champion older middle distance horse trophy to his tally.

While controversy had been largely avoided by the selection committee, both Joey Ramsden for his smashing daughter of Western Winter, Nania and Riaan Van Reenen for Diana's Choice, could probably not be blamed if they felt a measure of disappointment at seeing their charges being upstaged by Mary Slack's Rat Burana in the Champion two year filly category. The possibility, however, of these fillies going head to head in the upcoming Western Cape Summer Season is a mouthwatering thought for racing enthusiasts and the known competitive nature of Ramsden, Van Reenen and De Kock will add a touch of much needed needle to some great racing.

A very satisfied looking Clyde Basel in his capacity as newly appointed General Manager of the RA, said afterwards that he was "extremely pleased" with the evening as an event and noted the excellent spirit that existed amongst racing people: "Seeing great horseracing people like Mrs Oppenheimer and Mr Chris Van Niekerk being rewarded for everything they put into the game makes us very pleased. Mrs Oppenheimer is a regular at our racecourses when supporting her runners and is a shining example to us all at an age where most folk are slowing down. I feel tremendously positive for the forthcoming season and we at the Racing Association have some great plans that include doing everything we can to add value for all our members and stakeholders. The future certainly looks bright."



Pocket Power winning the J&B Met

## 2007 EQUUS AWARDS BANQUET - WINNERS

Champion two year old filly	<i>Rat Burana</i>
Champion two year old colt/gelding	<i>Argonaut</i>
Champion three year old sprinter: female	<i>Ethereal Lady</i>
Champion three year old sprinter: male	<i>Mythical Flight</i>
Champion three year old classic horse: female	<i>Sun Classique</i>
Champion three year old classic horse: male	<i>Jay Peg</i>
Champion older sprinter: female	<i>Disco Queen</i>
Champion older sprinter: male	<i>Successful Bidder</i>
Champion older middle distance horse: female	<i>Bold Ellinore</i>
Champion older middle distance horse: male	<i>Pocket Power</i>
Champion stayer: female	<i>Festive Occasion</i>
Champion stayer:	<i>Long Dollar</i>
Work rider of the year	<i>John Nel</i>
Apprentice of the year	<i>Gavin Lerena</i>
Champion Breeder	<i>Summerhill Stud</i>
Champion Stallion	<i>Jet Master</i>
Broodmare of the year	<i>Loyal Linda</i>
Owner of the year	<i>Chris van Niekerk</i>
Special Equus Award	<i>Mrs B D Oppenheimer</i>
Champion Jockey	<i>Mark Khan</i>
Champion Trainer	<i>Geoff Woodruff</i>
Horse of the Year	<i>Pocket Power</i>



*Mrs B D Oppenheimer*

## BASS SAY'S THE BEST IS YET TO COME

Veteran Milnerton based conditioner Mike Bass grabbed his fifth Cape Champion Trainer title and dominated a glittering and well patronized Western Province Racing & Breeding Awards evening.

The gloriously incestuous nature of achievement in horseracing was underscored by the fact that the Bass yard were associated with nine of the awards on the night, with their champion Pocket Power grabbing his third Horse of The Year title in the space of a month while his sire Jet Master was crowned Stallion of The Year.

The 2007 J & B Met winner's part owner and passionate Bass supporter, Marsh Shirtliff was also deservedly recognized as Owner of The Year. An elated Mike Bass summed up a wonderful season afterwards by saying: " This has got to go down as one of my best seasons since I took out my licence over thirty years ago. Pocket Power's achievements were unbelievable and while we had a difficult time of it in Durban, he still performed bravely and has the heart of a lion. He is currently doing very well and I am extremely excited about the forthcoming Cape Summer Season. He is probably the greatest horse I have ever trained and believe me, we have yet to see the best of him ! I am honoured to have secured the trainer's title and all the credit is due to the support of my fantastic owners and loyal staff. They are the backbone of a close-knit and winning team. "

Joey Ramsden and Mike Rattray can count themselves desperately unlucky not to have picked up the hotly contested Juvenile Filly of The Year title with the very talented Nania - the award instead going to the Riaan Van Reenen trained first stakes winning daughter of Windrush, Diana's Choice, who nevertheless proved a popular and deserving choice. The

selection committee certainly deserve credit here for not taking the easy way out and simply going with a Grade 1 winner - rather opting to take a more holistic view of matters. After all Diana's Choice had won twice at Grade 3 level - once even slamming the colts - and the scene has certainly been set for a super summer showdown in the Cape Fillies Guineas between her, Nania and the Equus winner, Rat Burana. For the rest, the Racing Awards section produced no surprises and what a pleasure it was to see fanatical UK based owner Rose Leheup fly out from London to collect the Champion Stayer award for 2006 Canon Gold Cup winner, Diamond Quest, who saw some belated justice after the disappointment of being pipped in the same category by Long Dollar at the Equus Awards.

Considering that this surely has to be the busiest time of the year for them, the breeding fraternity turned out en masse to support their colleagues and a proud Mike Sharkey was on hand to accept the Breeder of The Year Award for Highlands Stud, while the thrilled Koster family of Cheveley, who bred the Two Year Old Colt of The Year Argonaut, were obviously over the moon at Badger's Drift being named Freshman Sire of The Year. Chairperson of the Cape Breeders, Liesl King said afterwards that the evening had been an unqualified success and that Cape breeds were always in demand: " The success of our horses at the recent Equus Awards and the close and competitive nature of most of the categories bears testimony to the excellent health of the Cape breeding industry. It is a tough but most rewarding pursuit and a tremendous spirit of co-operation exists amongst our fraternity. I feel very positive about the future."

## WINNERS

2-Y-O Colt of the Year:  
**ARGONAUT – Cheveley**

2-Y-O Filly of the Year:  
**DIANA'S CHOICE-Reggie Knight**

3-Y-O Colt of the Year:  
**Jay Peg- High Season**

3-Y-O Filly of the Year:  
**Dane Julia- Len Salzman & Farrel Rattner**

Older Male of the Year:  
**POCKET POWER- Zandvliet Stud**

Older Female of the Year:  
**Badger's Gift – T. D. Andrews - Sorrento Stud**

Sprinter of the Year:  
**MYTHICAL FLIGHT – The Alchemy**

Stayer of the Year:  
**Long Dollar- Lammerskraal**

Broodmare of the Year:  
**Loyal Linda –Highlands**

Freshman Sire of the Year:  
**BADGER'S DRIFT- Cheveley**

Stallion of the Year:  
**JET MASTER- Mr & Mrs Devine - Klipdrift**

Breeder of the Year:  
**Highlands**

Horse of the Year:  
**POCKET POWER**