

NEW RECORD FOR MIGHTY POCKET POWER

Pocket Power thrilled the big crowd at Kenilworth recently by storming to a fourth consecutive L'Ormarins Queen's Plate victory in race record time. He is now as short as 15-10 to win his fourth J& B Met.

The fact that no other horse has ever won more than two of either of these races is a measure of his achievement, his ability and his place in racing history.

For once there was no heart-stopping "By God, he is going to get beaten" moment in his victory. The odds-on favourite, with only two behind him turning for home, responded almost as soon as Bernard Fayd'herbe started riding in earnest and he was in front with fully 100 metres to go.

He then drifted in, away from the whip, but he still beat the fast-finishing Kapil by a relatively comfortable three-quarters of a length with Big City Life and stable companion Fabiani dead-heating for third half a length back. The time of 97.16 seconds was fractionally better than Winter Solstice's 2006 Queen's Plate record.

"He's a real champion and he proves it every time," said Fayd'herbe but Mike Bass, while full of praise for his great champion, warned that the years could be beginning to catch up with him.

He said: "Pocket Power did this in the same style as last year but he is getting on, seven rising eight, and he finds it that little bit more difficult.

The Met will be an even tougher task than this."

The Jet Master gelding, bought from breeder Dan de Wet for Marsh Shirliff and Arthur Webber for only R190,000 at the 2004 Cape Yearling Sale, has now won 18 races and R9.1 million.

He was reported in reasonably good shape yesterday by Candice Robinson who said: "He pulled up a little bit sore, as usual, but he will be fine for the Met."

Kapil and Big City Life will renew rivalry on January 30 and, while Stan Elley feels his horse is basically a miler – "and so Saturday was our best chance of beating Pocket Power," – Karis Teetan reported that Big City Life will be more effective over the extra 400 metres.

Mother Russia predictably proved too strong for the opposition in the TBA Paddock Stakes despite Sparkling Gem bravely coming at her again in the closing stages. The runner-up may have been favoured by the steady pace but the time was only fractionally slower than Dancer's Daughter's in 2008.

Mike de Kock, winning this for the fourth time, said: "Mother Russia is right up there with the best fillies I've trained. I don't think the Met is her best trip but she may run."

MDK'S 2010 DUBAI SQUAD HAS PLENTY OF QUALITY

MIKE de Kock is excited about the 2010 Dubai Racing Carnival at the new Meydan racecourse, which features a new grass track and a new all-weather track which has replaced the old sand track at Nad Al Sheba.

He has a quality string of horses comprising hopefuls for most races on World Cup night and unlike last season at this time, everything is well on track. "Last season we were way behind schedule, the horses arrived late and we had a few setbacks including respiratory problems.

"So far this season has been trouble-free, in fact we are a month to six weeks further ahead than we were at the same time last season. We are very pleased about that and I think we have the horses to be most competitive this year," De Kock said.

He discussed some of the new acquisitions:

"Frozen Fire and Golden Sword were among the top major-race contenders in England last season, we got them from Aiden O'Brien and Frozen Fire is the most forward and likely to race first.

MDK(cont)

"Boss Professor and Jody are new runners from Brazil owned by Mohd Jaber Abdullah, a new patron in the stable. I am not familiar with their track records, they joined just recently."

Among the older horses we have Wonder Lawn and Our Giant from South Africa, both are doing very well, I like what I have seen so far. The filly Zirconeum is an exciting prospect, she will follow the same route as Sun Classique going for the Cape Verde and the Ballanchine into the Dubai Duty Free."

The young South African horses look terrific and are doing well. Solid Choice in particular has been impressive, he has taken to the all-weather track well. Musir and Mr Crazy Boy are also making good progress, as a trio we are looking forward to seeing them on the racetrack. The filly Raihana has really blossomed and is another we hope will hold her

own."

Eagle Mountain, De Kock said, would be the stable's principal choice for the Dubai World Cup, if all goes according to plan. "We'll give him a run on the all-weather surface and map out our plans from there. The all-weather is a completely different kettle of fish to the sand."

Team de Kock for 2010 Dubai is:

Art Of War, Biarritz, Blaze Of Fire, Boss Professor, Blues and Rocks, Eagle Mountain, En Grupido, Front House, Frosty Secret, Frozen Fire, Golden Sword, Honour Devil, Hunting Tower, Imbongi, Jody, Kingdom of Naples, King Of Rome, Lizard's Desire, Lucky Find, Mr Brock, Mr Crazy Boy, Musir, Our Giant, Raihana, Rocks Off, Royal Vintage, Silver Mist, Solid Choice, Stubbs Art, Warsaw, Wonder Lawn, Zirconeum, Zulu Chief.

POCKET POWER BEATEN

Pocket Power relinquished his stranglehold on the J&B Met at a packed Kenilworth, but it was fitting that it was his younger full sister, River Jetez, who succeeded him on the throne. Indeed it was left to the fairer sex to fight out the finish as River Jetez outgunned the Mike de Kock-trained Mother Russia to the line with tote favourite and crowd hero Pocket Power filling third, just ahead of stable companion Fort Vogue. It was a personal triumph for trainer Mike Bass, nicknamed "Gandolph" by his legion of followers after the legendary wizard in the Lord of the Rings trilogy, as he saddled three of the first four past the post and garnered his fourth successive Met victory.

River Jetez is co-owned by Cedric and Barbara Amm and Marsh Shirliff, also a major shareholder in Pocket Power and fourth-placed Fort Vogue. River Jetez is likely to stay on track for the Champions Season in KZN this winter before being retired to stud.

Bass offered no excuses for the beaten Pocket Power but did reveal in a post race press conference that the champion had been quite badly cut into behind and had to receive veterinary treatment after the race.

Bass was also magnanimous in his praise for River Jetez and Mother Russia saying that the two fillies had both put up exceptional performances and said that on the given day they were the best horses in the

race. Chairman of the Gold Circle Western Cape board, Vidrik Thurling said he had been exceptionally happy with the day's tote turnovers. Takings on the main race alone had been up R158 000 although Gold Circle's total turnover was down 2 %. The National tote was up by R49 000 less than 0,5 % however seen in the context of the trying economic times, the figures were more than satisfying, said Thurling.

Official crowd figures were not immediately available but it was estimated to be in the region of 35 000, up on last year's 32 000.

Earlier in the day, the Investec Cape Derby went the way of the unbeaten gelding Bravura for trainer Joey Ramsden and jockey Anton Marcus for owners Markus and Ingrid Jooste. The race proved to be a thrilling duel between Bravura and race favourite Noordhoek Flyer with the latter not quite able to match strides with the winner when it mattered.

The Klawervlei Majorca Stakes proved to be another thrilling finish with the judges unable to separate De Kock-trained Gluwein and the Bass-trained Love Is In The Air, declaring a dead-heat. There were a few anxious moments for the connections of Love Is In The Air after the jockey aboard Gluwein, Anthony Delpuch, objected on the grounds of interference at the 600m mark but this was later over-ruled by the stipendiary stewards.

BASIL MARCUS ALL SET

Basil Marcus is one step closer to beginning a new career in Singapore as 32 of his horses arrived safely in the South East Asian country.

Racing South Africa took charge of the export process from beginning to end. The horses spent the required 40 days at Kenilworth quarantine station and were then flown out on a Singapore Airlines Boeing 747 equipped with the latest in horse transportation comforts.

After a 10 hour flight non-stop from Cape Town to Singapore the horses arrived in good health and were immediately transferred to the Singapore Turf Club to begin their 14 days post arrival quarantine.

Among the horses were the Grade 3 Byerley Turk winner, Polished Steel, the three-time winning sprint-miler, Flying West, the Grade 1 Woolav-

ington fourth-placed, Jet Goddess, the promising three-year-old Rock Of Gibraltar colt, Trafalgar Legacy, and the twice winning Victory Moon three-year-old colt, African Rainbow. There were also a lot of well-bred unraced two-year-olds in the shipment, sired by the likes of Captain Al, Silvano, Royal Academy, Count Du Bois, Dynasty, Kahal, Victory Moon and Johannesburg. Marcus will leave for Singapore after the J&B Met on January 30. His son and assistant trainer, Adam, flew with the shipment and has remained in Singapore to take care of the horses until his arrival. Those horses that Marcus leaves in South Africa will be trained by Mike de Beer, who is currently his Milnerton assistant.

DR LEN KONAR

The National Horseracing Authority of Southern Africa is pleased to announce that Dr Len Konar, who has served on the National Board since June 1999, was elected as Chairman of the NHA on 18 January 2010. Dr Konar replaces Larry Nestadt whose term of office has expired.

Dr Konar is an independent consultant and professional director of companies. Prior positions include executive director of internal audit portfolio and head of investments at the Independent Development Trust, and professor and head of the department of accountancy at the University of Durban-Westville. He is a past Patron of the Institute of Internal Auditors South Africa, and a member of the King Committee on Corporate

Governance in South Africa, the Securities Regulation Panel and the Institute of Directors. He was appointed Chairperson of the Ministerial Panel for the review of the Regulation of Accountants and Auditors in South Africa in 2003.

Len is co-chairman of the Implementation Oversight Panel of the World Bank Washington and past chairman and member of the External Audit Committee of the International Monetary Fund. He is also a non-executive director of the South African Reserve Bank, Sappi Ltd and Chairman of Steinhoff and Mustek and Acting Chairman of Exxaro Ltd.

RHYS VAN WYK JOINS SOUTH AFRICAN JOCKEY ACADEMY

Rhys van Wyk, who is chiefly remembered for the formidable partnership he formed with four-times National and twelve times Transvaal Champion trainer, Jean Heming, joined the South African Jockey's Academy as Head Riding Master about two weeks ago.

Van Wyk, who was Transvaal Champion jockey once and high up on the National log for most years of his career, was in the Academy from 1977-1981 at a time when jockeys of the calibre of Jeff Lloyd, Bartie Leisher, Gavin van Zyl and Paul Whitmore were his colleagues.

Cyril Buckham, Vincent Curtis and David Cave were the riding masters at the time and he was able to look up to a selection of brilliant senior jockeys of that era that included Marty Schoeman, James Maree, Roy Curling and Raymond Rhodes, while the younger Michael Roberts was already emerging as a world class rider.

Van Wyk has won most of the top races in the country such as the Summer Cup, the Derby, the Oaks, the Queen's Plate, the Garden Province etc although his best finish in both the July and the Met was third.

As well as riding for Heming he rode for Mike de Kock and also for Ormond and David Ferraris.

"I was fortunate to have a father, Hennie, who was a jockey," he said.

Hennie van Wyk rode with Lester Piggot during his career and was able to pass on a lot of his skill and experience to Rhys.

"I was lucky enough myself to ride against Piggot in an invitation meeting at Greyville once", recalled van Wyk.

He also recalled the SA Invitation Stakes at Scottsville in which he rode the great Model Man to victory as a young three-year-old.

"I got off and told Patrick Lunn that this could be the best horse I had ever ridden", he remembered.

Other horses that van Wyk singled out as among the best he had ridden

were National Emblem and Golden Loom as well as the fillies Roland's Song and Dancing Danzig.

Jean Heming said of van Wyk in a recent interview with the Sporting Post, "Rhys was an exceptional judge of pace. He combined several factors to make the pace work for him. He rode a lot of work, knew the cruising speed of his mounts. He was good at Turffontein, especially. He would set the pace, but slow it down and give his mounts a breather down the back straight to conserve their energy for the hill. Often he would have his rival jockeys calling for the stick before the home bend. We were a great team for a long time."

Van Wyk said yesterday (Wednesday), "Pace is one of the huge keys to being a successful jockey. Obviously, the apprentices must first be taught a suitable seat and riding style, but riding tactics and pace judgement will be something I can bring to them as they advance."

Many a racefan will also recall van Wyk's strength in the finish, driving horses home with a style that was unmistakable from the stands.

The discipline during his time at the Academy made a big impression on van Wyk.

"Self discipline is a vital aspect of being a good jockey," he said.

During his time as Head Riding Master he will pay attention to detail.

"The buildings at the Academy need some maintenance work here and there. It is harder to have well presented young gentlemen and women coming out of an institution if there are tiles falling apart in the bathroom and paint peeling off walls." Van Wyk's principles clearly co-incide in many aspects with those of Academy Headmaster, Graham Bailey, and he will certainly play a part in nurturing an excellent work ethic as well as good manners into the apprentices.

"The likes of Piere Strydom, Anton Marcus and Kevin Shea are not going

RHYS VAN WYK(cont)

to be around forever," he said "It is vital for the future of the industry that the Academy produces top class jockeys capable of replacing the best of the previous generation."

An injury to the sixth and seventh vertebrae of his spine in the mid 2000's put paid to van Wyk's riding career.

He took up training to while away the time while this was repairing and, at the time of the job offer from the Academy, was training a small string of horses at Randjesfontein.

He said it had been a hard decision to leave the training ranks as the support of two new owners had brought several nice young horses into his yard.

At the same time he was looking forward to his new challenge.

His wife Donna, a fine horsewoman in her own right, has made the move with him and together they should fit very well into the Summerveld community.

TAB PAYOUTS

TAB has taken several steps to address the concerns of its customers about significant differences between Win and Place dividends displayed at the start of a race and final official payouts.

These include doing pool updates more frequently, commissioning an independent audit and ensuring that a major overseas customer bets earlier.

TAB recently completed a thorough investigation into the differences between dividends at the start of a race and the final official payouts. Phumelela and Gold Circle are satisfied that no bets are being placed into pools after the close of a race, but in order to further reassure customers independent experts are being commissioned to carry out an audit as soon as possible.

In general, the differences between payouts at the start of a race and the final official dividends are caused by the increasing volume of overseas bets taken just before the off into Win and Place pools on South African races. Overseas bets currently comprise more than 30% of Win and Place pools, but can be as high as 65% on a single horse in a race.

Big amounts are bet in the last few seconds and thus payouts shown at the start of a race can change significantly when the betting system does a final scan that incorporates the final bets.

All overseas totes commingling into TAB pools now transmit final betting data within 30 seconds of a pool closing. The only exception is Australia, which delivers final data 55 seconds after pools close. TAB has requested its Australian tote partners to seek ways of expediting the transmission of final data.

In order to limit the magnitude of the fluctuations, TAB's tote system has since Monday 18 January been updating pools every 20 seconds compared to 60 seconds previously.

The TAB investigation has revealed that many of the major fluctuations in tote payouts result from last-minute bets taken by a single international customer. TAB has now taken steps to ensure his bets are placed earlier.

Horseracing and tote betting operators Phumelela and Gold Circle are fully aware that the integrity of TAB's system is paramount to horseracing and all of the sport's participants. Consequently, all controls in respect of betting are constantly monitored and Phumelela and Gold Circle will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure TAB retains the confidence of its customers.

David Attenborough, CEO Phumelela (South Africa), has resigned and will leave at the end of April to take up the position of managing director of the wagering division of Tabcorp Holdings, Australia's leading gambling entertainment group.

Phumelela Group CEO Rian du Plessis said he wished Attenborough and his family all of the very best for their future in Australia.

"David has worked for Phumelela for the last six and half years and I would like to thank him for his hard work and valued contribution to our business. Phumelela has a very strong working relationship with Tabcorp and I look forward to working with David in his new role," Du Plessis said.

He added that consideration would be given to Attenborough's replacement in due course.

Attenborough said: "I am privileged to have worked for Phumelela and South African horseracing for the last six years. I am moving on with a deal of sadness, but simultaneously I am excited about the challenges of my new post at Tabcorp."

"WORLD'S RICHEST RACE"

Magic Millions owners Gerry Harvey, John Singleton, Rob Ferguson & Katie Page-Harvey yesterday launched a campaign to make Queensland "the home of the World's Richest Horse Race". Harvey declared: "Magic Millions January Carnival contributes \$51.9 million to Queensland, now more than any other event on the Gold Coast. We have invested over \$25 million in the past 3 years (& over \$100 million in the past 10 years)

to take Magic Millions to the next level in terms of prestige & profile; however our aim has always been to be able to justifiably call Magic Millions a world-class event. We want Queensland to be home to the ultimate: the World's Richest Horse Race. To make this a reality, we are here to put our money where our mouth is. Today we are prepared to commit US\$5 million to prize-money for the 2011 Magic Millions 2YO Classic if the

WORLD'S RICHEST RACE *(cont)*

Queensland Government will match our contribution dollar-for-dollar." Singleton noted: "Currently the richest horse race in the world is The Dubai World Cup, with its prize-money set to increase to US\$10 million in 2010 from US\$6 million last year. Victoria's Melbourne Cup will offer \$6 million prize-money in 2010, making it the world's richest handicap. If

Queensland's Magic Millions 2YO Classic was the world's richest race, Australia would have the ultimate 'daily double' in international horseracing. If Magic Millions can generate \$51.9 million for Queensland in 2009, imagine what it will mean to Queensland & the Gold Coast if it was home to the race that stops the horseracing world in 2011."

PAYNE'S HUSSLER WINS LIKE A TOP CLASS SORT

GIRL HUSSLER, a classy filly trained by David Payne, scored an impressive victory at Rosehill on Saturday and is feature-race bound, reports JEFF ZERBST from Sydney, Australia.

Starting at 11-2, the daughter of Hussonet (US) won the \$70,000 Jackpot Big6 Handicap for 3yo over 1400m. (See headline photo, sportspix.com.au)

Her previous three victories had been on good tracks, but this time she had to handle a rain-affected track that had plenty of "give" in it. Even so, Girl Hussler accelerated superbly under the guidance of talented apprentice Brenton Avdulla.

The previous race had been won in facile fashion by talented gelding Pinwheel (6-10) and his full sister Counterpane (7-2) was fancied to complete a double for Sheikh Mohammed. Favourite, however, was Chris Waller-trained gelding Tromso (9-10), a strapping individual.

Payne instructed Avdulla to track Tromso and the appie had Payne's charge well back in the field of eight.

Counterpane set the pace for stable rider Kerrin McEvoy and the daughter of Lonhro (AUS) kicked strongly in the straight after a comfy lope up front.

Girl Hussler peeled out from behind Tromso and started whacking away down the centre of the track ahead of 9-1 chance Aultone (Timothy Bell). With 300m to run Girl Hussler was still four lengths behind Counterpane and didn't look like she was doing enough. Tromso was plodding and Payne's charge looked to have his measure entering the final stages.

The margin narrowed, but with 200m to go Girl Hussler was still three lengths off Counterpane. And there, on her outside, Aultone was tightening up and throwing down a strong challenge.

Counterpane's followers were getting anxious and the post wasn't coming fast enough. Her stride shortened and then, with 50m to go, the leader was in huge trouble. Girl Hussler and Aultone were both in full cry and doing more when it mattered.

In the final strides the chasers got to Counterpane. Avdulla and Girl Hussler had the measure of Aultone, and got to the line with a long neck to spare over that one. Counterpane was only a short half-head further back. It was a terrific win for Payne and he gave his filly a good rap after the finish. "She's very, very good and is on the way to bigger things," said the trainer.

"I'll probably give her a break now. She's won three out of four this preparation and was unlucky the other time when finishing a close third. She missed the break that day and had to be chased to make up ground."

Payne would love to get some black type for his filly but isn't targeting the big autumn features. Instead he's looking north.

"I'm aiming her at races in Brisbane during the winter," he said. "I'd like to get her to a mile and I'm thinking about the Queensland Guineas."

Girl Hussler has won four of seven starts and \$100,000.

This win was Payne's 19th of the season and he is sitting in fifth place on the Sydney trainers' table. He also has 20 seconds and 16 thirds to his credit - 55 podium finishes.

TWO-BIT TRAINER KNOCKS 'EM DEAD AGAIN

THE fairytale continued for bush-league battler Michael Tubman, only now his horse box has turned into a princess's coach and someone is talking about a Golden Slipper, reports JEFF ZERBST from Sydney, Australia.

The 62-year-old trainer only has three horses in work, and two of them are lucky to make it to the oats trough every morning. The other one is a superstar.

Back in mid-December Tubman brought 2yo filly Chance Bye to Randwick and he and his mates backed the bejesus out of her in the Inglis Nursery (1000m). Going off 3-1 joint favourite she cruised home by 3 1/2 lengths. She had opened at 25-1 on the Thursday.

This weekend Tubman pitched the daughter of Snitzel (AUS) into the \$250,000 Inglis Classic at Rosehill Gardens and she went off 17-20 favourite. The \$15,000 buy was again shooting for a first-place stake of

TWO-BIT TRAINER(cont)

\$150,000 - 10 times her purchase price!

Up stepped jockey Kathy O'Hara - nowhere to be found on the Sydney Top 10 list - and we were ready for the second leg of racing's most improbable story since Takeover Target became a superstar for a taxi-driving trainer living in a caravan.

At this point the fairytale needed a dark, murky twist in the plot to put the good ending in jeopardy. No such calamity unfolded.

O'Hara was drawn 10 out of 10, but used Chance Bye's pace to get her to the front. Then she parked the filly on the rail, gave her an easy run into a strong headwind, and niggled at her as she straightened for home.

Chance Bye now had the wind at her stern and it was "anchors away". She breezed along in swift and spritely fashion just like Alfa Romeo, the supermaxi I successfully tipped to win for the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

Nothing resembling a pirate ship or a mythological bark sailed into view. For O'Hara it was "steady as she goes" and she brought her filly home with 3 ½ lengths to spare over 8-1 chance Ilovethiscity (Nash Rawiller). It might as well have been 35 nautical miles.

Tubman was all smiles after the race, although he admitted he'd been shaking so much he'd needed medical fortification. "I took a couple of valiums earlier, so I'm OK," he said.

"I have never trained a two-year-old before and I know you can't be too

tough on them. But she is very special." She certainly is. While only beating B-graders on Saturday, Change Bye cut out the fastest time over the final 400m (22.27 secs) after making the pace.

Chance Bye has now won \$300,000 from two winning starts.

The logical main mission for the filly is the \$3.5 million Golden Slipper, to be run over 1200m at Rosehill on 3 April.

"We just have to figure out how to get her into the field," said co-owner Jack Knight. Chance Bye's two wins have been in restricted races, so her earnings won't count towards a Slipper berth. However, she is first being aimed at the \$200,000 Silver Slipper Stakes (1100m) on 27 February. A win there would solve the problem.

Few people doubt that the resourceful Tubman will find a way to get his filly into the Golden Slipper. He has already beaten cancer twice, for one thing. On the day he bought the filly, he didn't even have enough money for a beer on the way home. Never mind that - he got Jack Knight to cough up the fee.

The rinky-dink trainer is clearly no mug and he has the admiration of his vivacious jockey.

"It's great to have this success with Mick," said Kathy O'Hara. "He is the sort of person who puts his horses ahead of himself."

It was a very good day for O'Hara, whose mount Al Dhafra (22-10 fav) won the 1500m fourth race in a very tight finish.

YOUNG SCHOFIELD HAS JOCKEYSHIP IN THE GENES

IT's in the genes, they say, and that means Chad Schofield is going to be a top jockey, writes JEFF ZERBST. The 15-year-old is the son of former Natalian Glyn Schofield and he's already in the public eye.

On Saturday his "master", David Payne, put young Chad to work in a competitive gallop between races at Rosehill. And which wily old fox was the youngster up against in the saddle? Why, his old man of course!

Schofield senior rode More Than Ready while Schofield junior piloted Centennial Park, and the 1200m hit-out between two talented gallopers made for a good race.

A number of jockeys stuck their heads over the rail to watch this rare battle between father and son, as did a large number of punters.

The onlookers saw Payne's gallopers go hell for leather over the final furlongs and it was Centennial Park (Chad Schofield) who nosed out More Than Ready.

"That was fantastic," said Chad, who had been chewing his dad's ear off for a year about how he should let him become a jockey.

"It gets better," replied his dad. "Wait till they pay you to do it!"

David Payne is more than thrilled to have young Chad in his care.

"He has a great seat and all I'm doing is knocking him into shape," said Payne, himself a top jockey before becoming one of SA's all-time leading trainers. "Chad is bred to ride and that's a big plus in this game."

Payne was also smiling at the efforts of his two runners, who clocked a

fraction over 1 min 14 secs for their gallop. The last 600m was covered in 33.68 secs, so this was a serious piece of track work ahead of the autumn features.

Both of the gallopers will be aimed at Group 1 features in coming months. At the moment it's the bread-and-butter stuff, and Payne only saddled four runners at Rosehill. He was rewarded with a second and third place.

In the 1500m fourth race, 16-1 chance Sequinella (Nash Rawiller) raced on the pace and stuck on well to finish a 1 ¾-length third behind 5-2 favourite Gigas (Darren Ganderton).

Even better was the effort of Madibagold in the 1200m seven race. Coming back from a three-month layoff, the 4yo Johannesburg (US) gelding raced a long way off the pace in the early stages and spotted his opponents several lengths turning for home.

In the straight, Payne's 6-1 chance made up ground steadily. The imposing chestnut did his best work in the final furlong to finish an impressive second, only three parts of a length behind 7-1 winner Geared Up (Peter Robl). The three-time winner will surely add to his winning tally this preparation and keep a good vibe going around the name "Madiba".

Nelson "Madiba" Mandela is, after all, one of the starring personas in Clint Eastwood's new movie *Invictus*. It deals with South Africa's triumphant World Cup rugby win in 1995.

YOUNG SCHOFIELD *(cont)*

As someone who was at that World Cup final, and who had a fair amount of money on the Boks, I am looking forward to seeing the film.

Rugby, however, cannot compete with racing and nostalgia's a flawed emotion. I'm keener on the future and would love to see David Payne and Glyn Schofield win their first Melbourne Cups (Schofield senior finished third last year). Or perhaps young Chad will get there first - you never know in this weird and wonderful game.

Australian racing throws up more thrills and surprises than one can ever keep track of, and new stars are as common as flies on fence-posts.

Over here we look at Pocket Power's record of four-straight wins in the Queen's Plate, and possibly the Met, and shake our heads.

Here it couldn't happen. There are too many good horses competing, and races never follow the same pattern.

Why not send Pocket Power over here to see what he's really made of?

US JOCKEYS IN MID-RACE "PUNCH-UP"

US jockey Eri Luis Vaz (1 of 2 riders involved in a mid-race "punch-up" at Philadelphia Park on January 8) issued a public apology for "bad judgment" as he "awaits a hearing before the stewards along with fellow rider Ademar Santos," reported bloodhorse.com. Vaz "was racing along the rail on the Luis Calderon-trained Divine Light & sent his mount toward the outside, causing Santos aboard John Dunn trained Mi Helena to be pinched between horses". As Vaz corrected his mount, Santos "stood in the irons & turned his head to speak to Vaz". Santos told The Philadelphia Enquirer: "I asked: Man, why you go like that?" After Santos spoke to Vaz, Vaz "punched Santos in the face. Santos swung back, then Vaz struck at him with his whip before Santos's mount drew away. Vaz & Divine Light finished 5th but were disqualified to 9th by the stewards. Mi Helena & Santos finished 9th." Vaz's apology declared: "I made a mistake, one that I will regret the rest of my life. I used bad judgment & should have handled the situation differently." The jockeys will appear before the Philadelphia Park stewards on January 21. (Jan 12)

In other news the former headboy of the South African Jockey's Academy, Keegan Latham, was back in South Africa for a holiday before leaving for Dubai.

"We race a lot more over there than here in South Africa, so I needed a break," said Latham. Latham is based in Ireland where he has an excellent position as stable jockey to trainer Ger Lyons.

He rode 48 winners in all during 2009, including four in Britain, having ridden 23 winners in his first season in Ireland. His biggest wins of the season were all on Lyons horses.

He won the the Group 3 Amethyst Stakes at Leopardstown on Summit Surge, the Group 3 Sirenia Stakes when raiding Kempton in England with Love Lockdown, the Listed Rochestown Stakes at Cork also with Love Lockdown, the Listed Golden Fleece Stakes with Perfect Symmetry at Fairyhouse

Latham was recommended to Lyons by Johnny Murtagh when they were both riding for Mike de Kock in Dubai in 2008.

Lyons, who is regarded as a master of All Weather racing, is based in County Meath.

He will be sending some horses to the upcoming Dubai Carnival, which will take place at the new Meydan racetrack, and his main hope could be Berg Bahn, a three-year-old filly by Big Bad Bob.

She won her maiden over seven furlongs at Fairyhouse and then, after looking all over the winner in a Listed event at the Curragh, she got bogged down in the soft ground and faded into fourth place.

Lyons will aim her at the 1000 Guineas at the Carnival.

Latham will ride for Lyons at the Carnival and is also hoping to get the odd ride for de Kock.

GENETIC BREAKTHROUGH

Scientists in Ireland are claiming a "revolutionary" genetic breakthrough they believe "could transform the way racehorses are bred" reported racingpost.com. It could also help owners & trainers "more quickly establish their horse's optimum racing distance", according to Dr Emmeline Hill, creator of the Equinome Speed Gene Test. Derby winning trainer Jim Bolger (who has formed a company with Dr Hill to promote the test) last night described the development as "without doubt the most important thing that has happened to breeding since it begun over 300 years ago." The key to Hill's findings (based on samples taken from 179 Group & Listed winners since 2004) is the discovery of a gene that influences a

horse's speed. It means a potential racehorse "could be tested to establish whether its particular speed gene characteristic would best identify it as a sprinter, middle-distance horse or stayer". Hill noted: "This information could help a breeder decide which stallions to use, as, coupled with test results from the mare, you will know the probability of the foal falling into each one of those 3 categories."

CHRISTOPHE SOUMILLON

Trainer Mike de Kock announced that leading international rider Christophe Soumillon will be retained by his chief patron, Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum, for the duration of the 2010 Dubai Racing Carnival.

Soumillon, at the tender age of 29, has won Group races in no less than nine countries and his major wins include the Breeders Cup Turf, the Arc D'Triomphe twice, the Hong Kong Derby and the Hong Kong Cup, the Dubai Duty Free, the Irish Oaks, the Queen Anne and the Coronation Cup.

Soumillon, who rode his first winner in 1997, was the rider of choice for The Aga Khan between 2002 and 2009, when an amicable split was announced in the media and he went freelance. He has been associated

with many stars of the turf, most recently the brilliant filly Zarkava, also Shirocco, Dalakhani, Hurricane Run and Good Ba Ba.

De Kock told Racingweb: "Johnny Murtagh, who rode for us in Dubai over the last few seasons, is not available this year and Sheikh Mohammed moved quick to secure the services of Christophe Soumillon. I have spoken to Christophe, who is delighted with the opportunity to ride for us. He will be joining the stable shortly and is likely to ride at the first Carnival meeting at Meydan Racecourse next week."

De Kock said that jockey Kevin Shea will be sharing the stable's rides with Soumillon. "Kevin is a stalwart and he has been an integral part of our successful team for a long time. He has many years of experience in Dubai."