

# JJ THE JET PLANE

Punters might have taken a beating at Scottsville's Festival Of Speed, but there seems little doubt that the Grade 1 winners were all class horses who should go on to win more feature races.

Lucky Houdalakis and Pieter Strydom didn't know quite what to expect from JJ The Jet Plane beforehand, and their respective comments were that "he is probably about 85% fit" and "he hasn't been working so well, but we will see."

However, his class was the telling factor.

He not only won the Golden Horse Casino Sprint with topweight as a three-year-old, but after an overseas campaign that yielded a Grade 3 win, a Listed win and two Group 1 places at Royal Ascot and Newmarket respectively, he has now returned to win it again having last run in England in September last year.

The last horse to recapture the Golden Horse after a one year gap was Dambuster in 1984.

JJ has also won the weight for age Grade 1 Computaform Sprint over 1000m and the Mercury Sprint over 1200m as a three-year-old, the latter by four lengths.

On paper he is no doubt one of our best sprinters ever, but the detractors would argue that he hasn't faced as strong fields as some of the greats of the past.

Sean Tarry has won three of the last five runnings of the SA Fillies Sprint with the brilliant "flying filly" National Colour winning in 2006 and Ethereal Lady winning in 2007.

Captain's Gal is a similar type to Ethereal Lady, having won a stakes races around the turn over further.

However, Captain's Gal will likely go down as the better of the pair as she beat a top class field on Saturday that included two brilliant three-year-olds, Gibraltar Blue and Val De Ra.

The de Kock yard were very confident beforehand with Gibraltar Blue

but were probably wary of getting into a throat-cutting dual with Val De Ra early on.

If they had the race again, the probable tactics employed would be to blitz away from the off and try and run Captain's Gal off her feet, but as it happened Captain's Gal was able to sit in behind her before picking her off late on.

Alec Forbes was happy with Val De Ra's third place and felt it was the best she could have done, "It was her first meeting with horses of this class and she is still only three. She definitely saw out the 1200m."

The winner of the Allan Robertson, Chocolicious, was the longest priced of the Grade 1 winners at a whopping 55-1, but the performance didn't surprise Herman Brown's assistant, Frank Robinson.

She needed her last run when beaten three lengths by Romantic Moon, as Robinson had allowed her to "get a bit big" knowing the Allan Robertson was her aim.

She put up an outstanding grass gallop last Monday, beating the Grade 1 performing Intellectual comfortably even if the latter is not known to be a good work horse.

Chocolicious is by Kahal out of the Grade 3 winning Exclusive Patriot mare, Candy Box.

She is a robust sort and looks likely to be a sprinter.

The Dennis Drier trained Link Man beat a classy field to win the Medalion to provide Torreador with his first Grade 1 winner and both Drier and Alec Forbes' with their second respective victories in this race.

The jury will be out on whether he can stay further, although his second dam, a sprinter, did produce the SA Derby winner, North By Northwest.

The Alistair Gordon-trained Tuscan Sky ran the best race on the day of those that were forced to stick to the far rail, finishing an eye-catching third in the Alan Robertson.

A lot more will be heard from him.

# NOBLE HEIR

Noble Heir, the small but lightning fast grey filly, has come a long way since the day she was laughed at by South Africa's current Champion Jockey, Andrew Fortune.

It was her first appearance at Greyville in a D Division over 1000m.

Trainer Dennis Bosch smiled yesterday as he recalled the race, "I said to

Andrew in the parade ring, 'She's very capable. She will win as she likes.' Then he took a look at the filly and started laughing."

Fortune recalled, "I was going down to the start and she was tiny. She had a thin little neck and was going down like this," he said while demonstrating a short, choppy action. "I thought to myself, what is this I'm

## NOBLE HEIR *(cont)*

riding. But when the gates opened she flew out so quickly I nearly got left behind. I have never gone around the Greyville turn so quickly. I had tears in my eyes from the wind. She still had her head in her chest and when I pressed the button she leant forward and found more. I got off and said wow ... this is a good filly!"

Noble Heir has been taking it easy since arriving home at Clairwood after her highly successful Johannesburg campaign that culminated in her brilliant win in the R1 million Computaform Sprint (Grade 1) over 1000m at Turffontein.

Bosch has been around the block a few times in this game, first as a heavyweight jockey who was once well clear in the National Championship before an untimely suspension and consequent weight problems, and latterly as a trainer.

The Computaform Sprint was the second Grade 1 win of Bosch's training career, the first being with Mighty Crystal, who won the Administrators Champion Futurity for two-year-olds over 1600m at Greyville in 1991.

He recalled the day he bought Noble Heir, who is by Kahal and bred by Connington Stud, at a Clairwood Sale for a mere R50 000, "She was very well balanced. I like the Kahal's and I knew the mother, Irish Honour, very well."

Irish Honour, a grey, was a 1300-1400m specialist by Kilconnel and won four races.

Noble Heir showed a lot from the beginning.

"She had tremendous pace and finished less than a length behind On Her Toes (subsequent winner of the Grade 1 Allan Robertson Fillies Championship) over 1200m on debut," he continued.

"She has matured and gets better every year. She is also lightly raced. She had a high merit rating from the start so we had to earmark every race for her very carefully."

Besides Fortune's high praise, Johnny Geroudis once told Bosch after he had ridden Noble Heir work that it was a long time since he had ridden such an "awesome filly."

Anthony Delpech added credence after the race, describing it as one of the easiest five furlong wins of his career.

Bosch said he had targeted the Computaform Sprint after her win in the Grade 3 Tommy Hotspur against "the boys" over 1000m at Turffontein on February 16.

She travelled up to the Vaal three weeks later for the Listed Bauhinia Handicap over 1000m and finished a 0,5 length second with top weight of 60,5kg.

Bosch then asked Stuart Pettigrew to look after her at Randjesfontein until the Computaform Sprint.

He is most grateful to Pettigrew and said, "I used to phone him everyday and tell him what to do and I went up to see her regularly."

A month before her win in the Computaform she finished second in the Grade 2 Senor Santa Handicap over 1160m at Turffontein.

Noble Heir's strength has always appeared to be her tremendous early pace and is one reason why she has always struck as a 1000m specialist.

So when she was squeezed out between two horses at the start on Saturday and ended up last the signs were not good.

"I have to admit I was cursing the jockey," said Bosch. "I thought that was her finished."

However, in the end the slow start could have been a blessing. There was a blistering pace, so a move from behind was easier. Delpech was also able to follow Bosch's pre-race instructions and switch her to the inside, where he felt the going was better.

"I could see from a long way out she was travelling like an awesome winner. She won so emphatically."

Besides her speed and consistency (she's won eight times in 25 starts and only been out of the money four times), Noble Heir has a very good temperament.

"She has a lovely nature," said Bosch. "When my granddaughter Chloe was four I lost her at the yard once. I eventually found her in Noble Heir's box sitting there and playing with her. That's how quiet she is."

One of the attractive grey filly's more endearing quirks is that she carries all of her food to the door and puts it outside before eating.

Bosch, who is one of racing's great characters, concluded by saying that he had always been lucky.

"The man upstairs has always been good to me, especially when I'm in a bit of trouble."

Perhaps not as lucky as Sean Franken, in whose colours Noble Heir runs. He got off to a bad start in ownership when his first horse died of African Horse Sickness but his worst horse from four subsequent purchases is a four-time winner.

Despite her size Noble Heir has a huge heart.

Franken and his partners Drew Hadden and Des Holder look likely to have a lot more fun with her.

# TROPICAL EMPIRE

Tropical Empire proved himself the likely best horse in the country over the Greyville 1400m when winning the Grade 2 Drill Hall Stakes in scintillating fashion.

The performance had the crowd murmuring their approval as people tend to do when seeing something out of the ordinary.

Trainer Duncan Howells praised jockey Stuart Randolph.

"To get him on to the rail where he likes to be from that draw (barrier 10) ... it was a great ride," said Howells.

Howells added that Tropical Empire is one of the best horses he has ever been involved with, including during his time as assistant to David

## TROPICAL EMPIRE (cont)

Payne.

"He compares favourably to horses like Take A Walk and Jallad," he said.

Howells ruled out the Vodacom Durban July, saying that the Second Empire seven-year-old entire was getting old now and he had decided to take a route that would be easier on him and stick to the shorter distances.

He added that Tropical Empire has been sounder this year.

"He had a lot of trouble with his back last season. This season I decided to keep him fit for longer periods of time to take the stress off his muscles. It seems to have worked."

Tropical Empire was very unlucky in the Golden Horse Casino Sprint in 2008, when having to be snatched up at a time he was travelling very well.

Tropical Empire stood out going down to the start, exuding well-being and looking primed to deliver.

Last year's Vodacom Durban July winner Big City Life, also looked in good shape, and so did Kapil, who started favourite at 4-1.

Tropical Empire opened at a surprisingly generous 8-1 before shortening into 5-1.

The pace was a fair one and Tropical Empire broke well before finding a position one off the rail in midfield.

He was gradually reined back until able to get on to the rail, but consequently turned for home near the back.

The field stuck to the centre of the course off the seven metre wide false rail, allowing Tropical Empire to be taken to the inside rail.

He appeared in a class of his own as he swept past them, going on to win by 3,25 lengths.

The brave Mike de Kock-trained warrior, Braggadacio, finished second just ahead of the Charles Laird-trained Imperial Gesture, who appears to love this distance especially on tight tracks.

The Glen Kotzen-trained July entries, Fabiani and Big City Life, were next best respectively.

Big City Life was running on well over a distance well short of his best.

Kotzen said he had needed the run and pronounced himself "delighted" with the performance.

He was also very pleased with Fabiani's run.

"Chips" Pennells and his wife Elma, part owners of Tropical Empire, were emotional after the win.

"I want to thank the people of Durban, who always wish us well," said Elma. "They brought him home."

Chips praised Howells, saying the horse had "never been better".

He added that Tropical Empire, an Australian-bred, had a program in South Africa and was then due to leave for Australia where he would take up stallion duties.

However, after this performance Pennells said he was having second thoughts about the sale and might keep him here instead.

Tropical Empire has many favourable stallion credentials, including magnificent looks, a good track record and plenty of speed as well as the class to win over middle distances.

He is likely to attract a lot of interest from breeders out here.

Gary Westwater, a part-owner, was also present, while the other share holder, Johan Meyer, unfortunately couldn't be there.

Vaughan Marshall demonstrated his expertise in the training of two-year-olds once again at Kenilworth when landing both 1200m Grade 3 features on the card, the Betting World Nursery and the Betting World Fillies Nursery.

MJ Byleveld had the Kabool colt, Brilliant Cut, who started 5-2 favourite in the Nursery out in front early on.

He continued to roll to the wire, winning by 0,25 lengths from an unlucky Dean Kannemeyer-trained Jack Hobbs, who was baulked for a run at a crucial stage.

Brilliant Cut was bred by Gavin Schafer and is owned by RH Gardiner and Marshall himself.

The Grey Eminence filly Madrisa used similar tactics under Craig du Plooy in the Fillies Nursery and proved to good for the field, landing her fourth win in a row by a comfortable 1,5 lengths.

She is owned by BRG Finlayson, PRC Freestone, Aubrey Jacobs and AC Rhodes and was bred by the Gary Player Stud.

Both Madrisa and Brilliant Cut will be staying put in Cape Town for the winter.

## DYLAN CUNHA

Dylan Cunha, one of the youngest trainers in the country, has decided to hand his training license in.

Cunha was away but his father, Luiz, said that Dylan had found it increasingly difficult to compete against the games big players.

He cited the National Yearling Sales as proof that there was an increasing gap between the buying power of the big yards and the smaller ones.

He added that Dylan felt he was still young enough to make a career

change.

Indeed, Cunha, who trained out of Summerveld, was one of the most dynamic of trainers and was always willing to take the bit between the teeth and try new strategies and methods.

He became one of the few trainers in South African history to have won a Grade 1 race while still in his twenties when Strategic News won one of the country's big three, the Summer Cup at Turffontein, in late 2007.

Cunha grew up around horses on his father's stud farm, the Right Con-

## DYLAN CUNHA (cont)

formation Stud, which was in those days in Weenen in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

He had always wanted to be a trainer and Luiz advised him to start from the bottom.

Cunha consequently went over to England for two years where he worked as a stable lad to one of the top trainers in Europe, Barry Hills.

He did every job imaginable there from mucking out to workriding and was associated with such horses as Distant Music, who won the Group I Dewhurst Stakes as a juvenile.

Cunha worked as assistant trainer to Justin Snaith for four years on his return to South Africa, which included one year running his satellite yard in Port Elizabeth. He used to ride 20 to 30 horses in work everyday and weighed in at 58kg which allowed him to take part in the workrider races.

He won two of these races in Cape Town and one in Port Elizabeth.

When Cunha applied for his license as a Summerveld trainer in 2003 he showed the National Horseracing Authority a list of about 30 potential horses that would make up his string but as it happened only four of them ever materialized, all owned by his father.

Fortunately one of them was the Rambo Dancer filly, Coconut Grove, who won eight races and provided Cunha with his second Stakes win when she landed the Listed East Cape Paddock Stakes over 1600m at Fairview in August.

His first stakes win had also come on a Port Elizabeth raiding mission from another Rambo Dancer filly, Cast A Spell, who won the Listed Breeders Guineas over 1600m at Fairview in March 2006.

Cunha had 60 horses when he moved from Summerveld to the Vaal in late 2006.

This was an example of his willingness to innovate and at the time he said, "We came here as there are more opportunities for trainers to find owners and also more opportunities for horses to run."

He returned to Summerveld in 2008.

Another example of his bold approach was that, despite the lack of a decent budget, he attended the Australian Sales where he had identified a gap in the buying market.

Strategic News was one of the end products, bought for a mere Au\$40,000.

He said after Strategic News' Summer Cup win, "The main Magic Millions sale has a big AU\$1 million race attached to it and people are only interested in buying speed horses that will come on early. Strategic News was a backward staying type. You can always get stayers for bargain prices over there. We got Pacific Charm's mother there too."

On the same card of Strategic News' Summer Cup win, Pacific Charm landed a Grade III race over 3200m.

Cunha was also one of the few out of province trainers this season to send a string to the Cape for their Sizzling Summer Season.

He was also recently seen trying something new before Strategic News' Champions Challenge bid by taking the horse for early morning workouts and swims at Virginia Beach in Durban.

Cunha is an easy going character and was very well liked by both his training colleagues and the media.

He will be missed by the industry but seems sure to make a success of any new venture and, who knows, he might come back to the game he loves when the time is right.

# FORMER PHUMELELA CEO JIM TENNANT DIES

JIM TENNANT, former Group Chief Executive Officer of JSE-listed Phumelela, died recently. He was 62.

Tennant started at Phumelela on 1 September 1999 as Financial Director and was involved in the corporatisation, restructuring and listing of Phumelela. Tennant took over at the helm of the company when Brian Mehl, chief executive since Phumelela's inception, retired in March 2005.

He had previously worked for Deloitte before becoming Financial Director of first FD Barlow Rand Ltd subsidiaries Middleburg Steel and Alloys and then Technology Systems International (IBM).

During Tennant's watch, South African horseracing became an international commodity and more financially viable than before the industry in Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and the Free State corporatised, making some difficult decisions along the way.

Said Phumelela general manager marketing and communications Robert Garner: "Jim proved a real asset for Phumelela and South African horseracing in his role as Financial Director and later as chief executive.

He was a delightful person and it was a pleasure working with him, and for him."

According to his wife, Lindsay, Tennant died of leukemia. He had been diagnosed with the disease a month before he retired to Plett in January last year and was seemingly in remission.

Tennant went to Cape Town for a monthly check-up, but while there he suffered a relapse. In hospital from Thursday 6 May, he died on Sunday morning, 9 May.

Tennant leaves his wife and three children, Briony Caroline and Andrew and a 17-month-old grandson, Matthew James.

# PETER LOVEMORE DIES IN SOUTH AFRICA AGED 66

Legendary thoroughbred auctioneer Peter Lovemore died from a heart attack aged 66. Lovemore was originally a tobacco auctioneer & prominent SA colleague Robin Bruss commented last night: "Peter revolutionised auctions in his native Zimbabwe & South Africa with his brand of selling which was part tobacco chant-part rock star, spiced with a sharp wit & more one-liners than a stand up comic. He owned the rostrums in

Southern Africa for 33 years, sold at Goffs, Fasig Tipton & a sensational guest appearance for Dalgettys in Melbourne in which he received a standing ovation from buyers." Lovemore was also an accomplished golfer, commentator & writer & mentored many aspiring young men into the racing industry

## TUNGSTEN MINE THREATENS SOUTH AFRICAN STUD

Wilgerbosdrift Stud "is under threat by the proposed mining of tungsten in its vicinity," reported racingpost.com. Mary Slack (daughter of Harry Oppenheimer) is part of a high-profile coalition of landowners & environmentalists trying to block Bongani Minerals from mining tungsten in the Moutonshoek Valley (50km northwest of Piketberg). Slack declared: "A mine will just ruin the whole area. It's just a catastrophe, an environmen-

tal catastrophe & personally it's a catastrophe. I should think we have far greater possibilities of earning foreign exchange from horse exports than a lousy bit of tungsten." Wilgerbosdrift (established 10 years ago) has bred top performers including 2003 Horse-Of-The-Year Dynasty & 2006 Champion 2YO Filly Asylum Seeker.