

PIERRE JOURDAN

Pierre Jourdan, a mere R60,000 purchase from Summerhill Stud trained by Gary Alexander, put himself in line for a R2 million Triple Crown bonus as he claimed the Grade 1 SA Classic over 1800m at Turffontein in the manner of a Champion, drawing clear of a star studded field in effortless fashion under Derreck David.

Meanwhile, in Dubai, a former Port Elizabeth racehorse, Lizard's Desire, who was the result of a breeding experiment by his original owner Albert Boshoff and born from a mare he bought back from a riding school, went within a whisker of winning the world's richest race, the US\$10 million Dubai World Cup.

Pierre Jourdan was drawn wide and David made use of him early to get into a handy position.

David was pulled through under hands and heels in the straight and found himself in the lead a long way out.

He got to work at the 400m mark and the son of Parade Leader then proved himself worthy of the-best three-year-old-in-the-country tag as the chasers could not live with him.

He won easing up by 1,75 lengths from the Gavin van Zyl-trained Bulsara, who improved with gelding and bounced back to his best, flying up from behind.

The Mike de Kock-trained Irish Flame and the Roy Magner-trained Iwanadance were next best respectively.

Piere Jourdan, having won the Grade 2 Gauteng Guineas in his previous start, must now only win the Grade 1 SA Derby on April 24 to repeat the feat of the great Horse Chestnut and complete the Triple Crown.

Piere Jourdan is owned by E Baisero and Alexander himself.

De Kock produced his magic at both Turffontein and Dubai yesterday, culminating in the former Mitch Wiese-trained Lizard's Desire's storming finish in the World Cup under Kevin Shea.

Shea thought he had won the 2000m event run on a Tapeta surface and celebrated after the line, but heartbreakingly for him, de Kock and owner Sheik Mohammed Bin Khalifa Al Maktoum, the photograph showed that the pacemaker, the Pascal Bary-trained Gloria De Campeao had just held on under Brazilian jockey TJ Pereira.

Lizard's Desire is by the generally disappointing sire, Lizard Island, and is out of a Northfield's mare. Northfields was a former champion broodmare sire in both Britain and South Africa.

Back at home de Kock's Here To Win also looked all over the winner of the Fillies Classic, but just as she seemed set to sweep into the lead under Anthony Delpech on the outside at the 50m mark, she dug in her toes.

Marco van Rensburg got the Stuart Pettigrew-trained outsider Spiced

Gold back up on the inside to dead-heat. It was van Rensburg's first Grade 1 victory.

The shared spoils still reduced part-owner of Here To Win, the Norwegian racing journalist Bjorn Erik Lobben, to tears of emotion.

Lobben, who met de Kock in Dubai, chose the filly himself at a sale in Brazil.

She is by fifteen times Brazilian Champion Sire, Roi Normand, and Lobben owns him in partnership with M Mhyre.

Spiced Gold, by Kahal, is owned by Peet Diedrichs and MS Peixoto and was bred by Greenhill Stud.

Shortly after the Fillies Classic had been run, de Kock claimed yet another victory in Dubai's ever glamorous World Cup racemeeting, run for the first time at the grandiose new Meydan racecourse.

His brilliant Australian-bred son of Redoute's Choice, Musir, was given a confident ride by Christophe Soumillon in the Grade 2 UAE Derby over 1900m on the Tapeta surface, coming from last and getting up late ahead of his stablemate, the Australian-bred Elusive Quality filly, Raihana, who was ridden by Shea.

This was the fifth time De Kock had won this race.

The Grade 1 HF Oppenheimer Horse Chestnut Stakes over 1600m at Turffontein was won for the third year in succession by Charles laird and for the second time by his Strike Smartly gelding, Smart Banker, who was brought home by Anton Marcus.

Delpech sent the 14-10 favourite, the gallant de Kock-trained filly Mother Russia, to the front from her wide draw.

However, staving off the colts after her busy season proved just too much for her although she fought all the way to the line for a 1,25 length second.

The de Kock-trained Rudra was next best.

Smart Banker was bred by Ascot Stud.

Earlier, in the Grade 3 Pretty Polly Stakes over 1100m, the Paul Matchett-trained 15-1 outsider, Oochee Agent, came flying out of the clouds under Sherman Brown to claim victory by a short-head from the de Kock-trained Empire Rose who had finally got the better of her duel with the speedy Louis Goosen-trained Waywest Goddess.

Oochee Agent is by Cataloochee and was bred by Summerhill Stud.

In The Grade 3 Protea Stakes Felix Coetzee's disappointment at coming within a head of winning his third Hong Kong Derby two weeks ago on Super Pistachio was relieved to some extent by his win here on the Sean Tarry-trained first-timer, Gold Onyx.

Tarry's brother Mark found this horse for owner Chris van Niekerk in New Zealand.

PIERRE JOURDAN *(cont)*

Tarry later teamed up with Anton Marcus to land the Grade 3 Man O'War Sprint over 1100m with the brilliant Captain Al filly Mana Mou.

This filly, also owned by van Niekerk and bred by The Alchemy Stud, hung in as she usually does, but still won by 0,75 lengths.

Just before that race was run, the Herman Brown-trained Irish-bred Bankable finished second in one of the world's richest turf races, the Grade 1 Dubai Duty Free over 1800m at Meydan. Bankable came from well back and finished very strongly under Shea but was unable to catch the A Al Raihe-trained Al Shemali who had stolen a march on the field. De Kock's Summerhill-bred Imbongi finished third.

Rocket Man, trained in Singapore by former South African conditioner

Pat Shaw, had earlier failed to convert favouritism in the Group 1 Dubai Golden Shaheen, but finished a fast closing second under Robbie Fradd to the Carl O'Callaghan-trained Kinsale King.

Back on the local front Johan Roux and Willie Figueroa captured the Grade 3 Caradoc Gold Cup over 2850m at Turffontein for owner and breeder, Josephine de Nys, despite the Shalford gelding being 4,5kg under sufferance.

At Greyville, apprentice Hennie Greyling was unable to claim his usual 4kg in the Grade 3 Kings Cup but still rode his seniors to sleep dictating the pace from the off and scoring on the Glen Kotzen-trained Thunder Creek.

VAR CONTINUES TO HOLD HIS OWN

The 2010 Equimark Vintage Yearling sale once again proved VAR's worth as a sire when he came out tops on average sale value at R235 000!

With three sales to his credit, the second highest price paid on the day and the top priced colt of the sale at R425 000 for Variety Club (Lot 425), out of La Massine from Beaumont Stud bought by leading Cape based trainer Joey Ramsden, VAR's untarnished reputation was upheld.

Two VAR fillies, Lot 79 went for R180 000 to Charles Laird and Lot 127 for R100 000 to Martin Wickens, both from leading vendor Litchfield Stud.

The sale average was unchanged at R86 425 and trade was up with the

overall sale perceived as positive in a very difficult economic market.

"This event is always a good indication of what to expect at the national sale in Joburg in a month's time, and this bodes well for Avontuur - and specifically for the VAR progeny we are taking up to the Highveld with us," says Avontuur GM, Pippa Mickleburgh. "As usual, Avontuur is presenting the cream of our crop at Gosforth Park and look forward to welcoming all serious buyers to our pavilion!"

SA-BREDS TO THE FORE AGAIN

SOUTH African bred came to the fore again in Dubai when Wonder Lawn and Biarritz won on the dirt track at Jebel Ali, recording a double for Mike de Kock and Frankie Dettori.

This was Frankie's first winners for the stable and it was a memorable occasion for him and Mike as they have built up a good friendship over the years racing in the UAE and the UK.

Mike was delighted to have won with Fort Wood's son Wonder Lawn and Biarritz, by Count Du Bois. "It's been a super season for SA-breds in the UAE and it shows once again that the South African breeders are producing thoroughbreds who can hold their own anywhere. I also commend Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum for being a big supporter of South African horses. He is getting his rewards."

First to win was Wonder Lawn who powered up the hill in the 1950m handicap to win impressively with stable companion Art of War in third under Kieren Fallon.

He was impressive but perhaps not as much so as Biarritz who turned what appeared a competitive 7f conditions race into a procession under the Italian who was clearly impressed: "That was two nice performances in what appeared competitive races. Wonder Lawn has shown he stays very well and Biarritz has quickened away from a good field. I had not had a winner for the yard before today so it is nice to get off the mark," said Frankie.

On both occasions he treated the crowd to his trademark flying dismount.

SCHOFIELD'S MOUNT BREAKS 35-YEAR-OLD RECORD

GLYN Schofield made a bit of Aussie turf history when he rocketed home to win the Gr. 2 Challenge Stakes (1000m), a WFA sprint feature, at Randwick in course-record time, reports JEFF ZERBST.

Back in 1975, Zephyr Bay ran the distance in 56.20 secs and some pundits thought no horse would ever manage to beat that time. But Saturday's track was a good one, and it played fast. Schofield took full advantage on board 4yo mare De Lightning Ridge (14 -1 to 9-1).

The former SA jockey parked De Lightning Ridge in fourth and the pair rounded the bend in the perfect spot to pounce. The daughter of Tale of the Cat (US) started moving down the leaders once she'd crested the rise and hit the front approaching the 100m mark.

Fast as she was travelling, the mare had work to do because 9-2 shot Dorf Command (Tommy Berry) was making up ground hand over first. Schofield's timing was perfect, though, and De Lightning Ridge crossed the line with half a neck to spare on Dorf Command.

News quickly spread that the mare had stopped the clock at 55.92 sec. A record that had been set when winning trainer Joe Pride was three years old had been gloriously smashed.

"I thought I had gone too soon, but I had to come out when I did," said Schofield. "She was much too good for them."

Pride said the key to the mare was confining her to minimum sprint distances. "I apologise to punters for her last run when she finished eighth over 1200m at Rosehill. You have to key her fresh and not run her beyond 1100m. "I love this mare because she works better than anything in the stable and looks better than everything else too."

The race completed a double for Pride, who took out the Listed Aspiration Handicap (1600m) with top weight Sacred Choice (27-10 fav).

Heading the card at Randwick was the \$350,000 Randwick Guineas (Gr. 1) which was won in superb fashion by 2-1 favourite Shoot Out.

Jockey Stathi Katsidis had nowhere to go on this John Wallace-trained 3yo with 200m to run, but the High Chaparral (IR) gelding barged his

way into the clear and then pulverised his opponents with a blistering final furlong.

Shoot Out won going away by three parts of a length from Gai Waterhouse-trained colt Viking Legend (11-1) and his Gold Coast trainer declared him "the best I've trained".

Jockey Katsidis said, "I probably should have fallen when he got squeezed, but when he got out he exploded and won easily in the end."

While Sydney was enjoying an early Autumn Gr. 1, Melbourne was putting to bed its early season features. The two Gr. 1s washed out from the previous week produced an up-and-coming star and also gave a Gr. 1 win to a deserving old-timer.

In the \$750,000 Australian Guineas (Gr. 1), Sheikh Mohammed's Denman (6-10 fav) was supposed to run his rivals ragged but he flopped over a mile for the second time in his career. The Lonhro (AUS) colt didn't jump well, but circled his field to lead his seven rivals into the straight. His run died quickly and it was Bart Cummings' charge Rock Classic (17-1, Michael Rodd) who came flying down the centre of the track to score by 1 ½ lengths from 9-2 chance Set for Fame.

It was Cummings' 258th Gr. 1 victory and yet another that bore testimony to his genius. His Fastnet Rock (AUS) gelding hadn't looked top drawer before Saturday, but on came the blinkers and a Norton bit and the horse was a different animal.

Cummings nearly won the \$1 million Australian Cup (Gr.1) over 2000m too. His charges Sirmione (13-2) and Moatize (30-1) ran second and third, and Sirmione was only a nose behind 5-1 winner Zipping (Nicholas Hall) at the wire.

Zipping, an 8yo WFA stalwart, was cracking the Gr.1 nut for the first time in 15 attempts. "I suppose you can't win everything," said a disappointed Cummings. "In the old days Sirmione would have won that so I've missed something."

ZENYATTA WINS COMEBACK RUN

UNBEATEN dual champion and Group 1 Breeders' Cup Classic winner Zenyatta returned as expected with a convincing victory in the Santa Margarita Invitational H. (G1) in Los Angeles, but her contemporary Rachel Alexandra was surprisingly beaten in the New Orleans Ladies Stakes.

Zenyatta had to survive a few anxious moments at the top of the stretch.

Taking up her customary spot in the back during the early stages, the massive dark bay mare began to uncork her ferocious late kick nearing the conclusion of the far turn.

Regular rider Mike Smith decided not to circle extremely wide, instead opting to advance between rivals in search of an opening, and Zenyatta suddenly found no place to run in traffic, checking sharply as she altered

ZENYATTA (cont)

course to the inside nearing the eighth-pole.

The athletic six-year-old quickly regained her massive stride, closing fast up the rail into contention, and she angled out to blow past pacesetter Dance to My Tune in deep stretch, surging clear by a couple of a lengths as Smith wrapped up on her approaching the wire.

"She's a bit of a bully," Smith said. "This was a great, great race for her and it wasn't taxing at all. We got enough out of this race to move forward."

Next up is the Apple Blossom Invitational (G1) at Oaklawn Park, with the possibility of a \$5 million purse if Rachel Alexandra shows up in the starting gate.

Shirreffs not only saddled Zenyatta to her 15th straight win on Saturday, he upset the reigning Horse of the Year earlier on the afternoon with second-stringer Zardana (Brz) in the New Orleans Ladies Classic S. at Fair Grounds.

Horse of the Year Rachel Alexandra had been off since September and was set to face only four rivals in her return in the \$192,000 New Orleans Ladies S. at Fair Grounds, and one of those four was the Shirreffs-trained Zardana.

Shirreffs was particularly keen on the race because Zenyatta and Rachel Alexandra have a date with destiny on April 9 at Oaklawn Park in the Apple Blossom Invitational (G1), which will carry a purse of \$5 million if both show up for the event.

Many expected Zardana to be a good measuring stick on just how fit

Rachel Alexandra would for the big day, but not many expected her to take down the champion.

They obviously forgot to tell that to the bay mare.

Zardana zoomed up to engage Rachel Alexandra exiting the turn after the heavy 1-9 favorite had spent the entire backstretch tugging on jockey Calvin Borel to let her run.

By this time, Zardana, who had been racing in third, was just turning on the afterburners. She quickly grabbed a head lead in the stretch, but Rachel Alexandra wouldn't stop fighting back along the rail. The two fillies battled it out down the lane, with Zardana crossing under the line three-quarters of a length in front of her rival

"My little filly tried hard," Borel said. "She needed the race, that's all. She needed the race more than anything. I wanted to let her run her race early but they wanted me to wait. I wanted to go on past the speed horse early (Fighter Wing). I'd have got by her anytime and my filly could have gone on but they wanted me to wait and not get into her until the sixteenth pole.

"You know how I know she's a real racehorse? She was beat when that other horse went by her — but she didn't quit. She dug in and fought right back and stayed with the winner the rest of the way. That's the kind of racehorse she is. My little filly tried her heart out. She ran hard. She got tired and we needed a race. Now we got a race into her and look forward to the next one. As long as she comes back good I think we'll be alright.

KAUTO STAR FALLS

IMPERIAL COMMANDER eclipsed both Kauto Star and Denman in the totesport Cheltenham Gold Cup, signalling a changing of the guard among the ruling dynasty of staying chasers.

The race was billed as a heavyweight showdown and an ultimate decider between Paul Nicholls' stablemates, but it was local hero Imperial Commander who prevailed for Nigel Twiston-Davies in a race filled with high drama.

Kauto Star, the 8-11 favourite and winner of the Gold Cup in 2007 and 2009, was unlucky not to dislodge Ruby Walsh with an uncharacteristic error at the eighth fence. He looked out of sorts and was never travelling well thereafter.

Walsh was niggling away at the four-time King George VI Chase winner passing the stands and the pair then came to grief four fences from home with an earth-shattering fall. Thankfully both horse and jockey were quickly on their feet as Imperial Commander squared up to 2008 winner Denman at the head of affairs.

Denman left his failure at Newbury last month well behind under Tony McCoy but the bruising combination were fighting for second place as Imperial Commander and Paddy Brennan went on strongly by at the second-last.

Any stamina doubts from onlookers were readily brushed aside as the 7-1 chance thundered up the hill for a sixth course success with his seven-length victory.

Twiston-Davies has won the Grand National twice. He craves the quiet life and admitted afterwards that "I am low player and like to be the small man".

But the small man had already nearly upset the colossus of Kauto Star once this season as back in November Imperial Commander ran him to a nose at Haydock.

"You can never be confident of beating Kauto Star as he wins so well every year but both horses were only half-fit at Haydock and he proved himself that day that we are that class," said Twiston-Davies.

"He is bred to stay and that is all he has ever done. He has always powered up the hill like it was flat and in another 10 yards at Haydock he would have beaten Kauto Star by miles.

"There was not a man in the world who didn't think we had won that day.

"I am slowly filling my CV and only the Champion Hurdle is missing after Khyber Kim finished second on Tuesday.

"I wanted to win the Grand National more than anything and have two now so they are getting boring!

"We don't like shouting our mouths off, but I couldn't understand it as Denman had let his supporters down last time and Kauto cannot do it every year.

SECOND TRAINER FOR GODOLPHIN

Worldwide racing power Godolphin has appointed a second trainer to oversee part of Sheik Mohammed's massive racing team.

Saeed bin Suroor has been Godolphin's sole European trainer in recent times but former stable foreman Mahmoud Al Zarooni, a 33-year-old Dubaiian will operate the Moulton Paddock complex in Newmarket.

Al Zarooni was granted a trainer's licence by the Emirates Racing Authority before Saturday's Dubai World Cup meeting but British licencing arrangements are still to be completed.

Godolphin racing manager Simon Crisford told the Racing Post Al Za-

rooni was appointed to ease a substantial amount of bin Suroor's workload.

"Saeed had more than 200 horses last year, but we don't want the main stable to be any bigger," he said.

"With a few more horses to come in this year, particularly two-year-olds, we felt that now was the right time to share the work load."

Crisford told Godolphin's website he and bin Suroor discussed the idea with Sheik Mohammed who agreed to the plan.