

VODACOM DURBAN JULY TRADITION BROKEN

A tradition of over 100 years will be broken in 2010 when Africa's greatest horseracing event, the Vodacom Durban July, moves from its traditional slot of the first Saturday in July to the last Saturday of the month. To avoid a clash with the World Cup as it builds to a climax and also to comply with FIFA regulations governing World Cup host cities, Gold Circle, the company that runs horse racing in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, decided to move next year's Vodacom Durban July to the last Saturday of the month, July 31.

Gold Circle's Event Marketing Manager, Ken Tweddell said, "While acknowledging the importance of the Soccer World Cup we must realize that the Vodacom Durban July is the African continent's pre-eminent horseracing event and is worthy of its own place in the sun, away from the extreme hype of the World Cup. Its new date will allow sufficient separation between the two events to afford the 'July' the prominence it deserves."

This change of dates will necessitate a shuffling of the racing programme for Champions Season and new dates for the Gold Cup and the Champions Cup will be announced. Other feature races that form part of Champions Season will also be repositioned to make for a smooth

racing programme through to the end of the racing season.

"The Soccer World Cup is billed as the 'Greatest Show on Earth' and forced us into a rethink about the Champions Season and the Vodacom Durban July in particular," said Gold Circle's Chief Operating Officer, Graeme Hawkins.

"While we need to maximise the opportunities afforded us by the expected influx of a large number of foreign visitors, it makes no sense for the Vodacom Durban July to clash with World Cup fixtures and indeed the city's administrators who are bound by FIFA World Cup contracts."

Enzo Scarcella, Vodacom's Managing Executive for Marketing commented, "The change in dates will enable Vodacom to effectively pay homage to its status as the Greatest Supporter of South African supporters; to celebrate with soccer fans across the country, the company's sponsorship of SAFA and Bafana Bafana as well as ensure that supporters of this horseracing spectacular, receive their fair share of indulgence".

A final decision on the Champions Season and national racing fixtures programme will be made after the draws for the Group stages of the World Cup have been made on Friday, December 4.

GREG CHEYNE

If there had been any ice around to be broken in the hot, muggy conditions, then new South African jockey Greg Cheyne did the trick - to the mild surprise of his winning trainer, Almond Lee Yee-tat.

Lee trained a double on the day with Nightlign (Jeff Lloyd) and Wine Win (Cheyne), with the latter stringing together his third win in succession up the Sha Tin straight against expectations for Cheyne's first winner here.

"The horse looked well in himself but I have to say that I thought the rise to Class Two would be too much for him," Lee said and his apprentice jockey, Keith Yeung Ming-lun, obviously agreed as he took the ride on stablemate Always Giggle and left Lee scratching for a lightweight rider.

Cheyne said rides had been hard to come by at the opening meeting of his Hong Kong stint and Lee admitted he had not expected to have many opportunities for the South African when the jockey had approached him.

"I told Greg that I have Zac Purton doing plenty of riding for me, Gerald

Mosse will do plenty too when he comes back and I have my apprentice for the light rides, so I said I didn't think I would have much for him," Lee said.

"But when Keith chose Always Giggle that left the ride open and I was happy to put Greg on. One thing I was sure of is that he had to be a pretty good jockey because he worked with Basil Marcus for two years in South Africa. Now I knew Basil very well when he was riding for David Hayes and I was the assistant trainer, and Basil is very demanding, a real perfectionist and would be a tough boss. So if Greg rode for him for two years, he must be a hard worker and a good jockey to last that long." Cheyne's dream start was a surprise to most, with Wine Win going out at 16-1, but the South African knew he was in with a shot at the halfway mark after rival jockeys had left him alone with the lead.

"I got away well and let him run and then when I tried to steady him in front, Wine Win dropped his head down like he was going to sleep and had to pull him back up and say 'whoa boy, you're here to race!'"

GREG CHEYNE *(cont)*

Cheyne said.

"It probably helped him too that we were over on the outside of the track away from the speed horses closer to the centre and Wine Win was able to run along and feel like he was on his own.

"It might have been a surprise but I'll take it. It's a great start and I was

pretty pleased generally with how I rode the three I had today - a win and third from three. My strike rate looks all right and the way the heat was today, maybe just a few rides to start off was the right idea." – South China Morning Post

GROUNDBREAKER LONDON NEWS DIES

LONDON NEWS, the hard-galloping chestnut who put South Africa on the world racing map with his spectacular win in the 1997 QEII Cup in Hong Kong, has died at age 17. He was a successful stallion at Cheveley Stud in the Western Cape and in his last three years at Terry and Barbara Silcock's Starston Stud in the Karoo.

Stallion Manager John Freeman told Racingweb: "London News came down with colic at the weekend and responded to treatment, but on Sunday morning he went backwards fast and died. The autopsy showed that he was riddled with cancer - his liver, intestines and heart, incidentally according to the veterinarian the biggest heart he has seen."

Freeman added: "It is a strange coincidence that London News' breeder Wilfred Koster also died of cancer, and so did his owners, Laurie and Jean Jaffee. Shortly before her death I drove Jean to Starston Stud as

she wanted to see London News, who did them so proud. She loved him."

London News was a solid stallion who was unlucky not to have produced a Grade 1 winner when his offspring Port Of London won the Administrator's Champion Stakes at Greyville in the only year it had Grade 2 status. His other notable runners include Sally Bowles, Oracle News, Mercury Chief and Manville. He sired 170 winners of 360 races and covered mares until last week.

Trained by Alec Laird, London News won 11 races between 1400m and 2200m and all South Africa's majors, including the Dingaans, the Durban July, the J&B Met, the Daily News and the Queen's Plate. He was named South Africa's Horse of the Year in 1995/6 and 1996/7.

BLACK MINNALOUSHE BOOST

Black Minnaloushe, the son of Storm Cat who stands in South Africa at Andreas Jacobs' Maine Chance Farms in Robertson, received a timely boost over the weekend when his son Dancing In Silks won the Group 1 Breeders Cup Sprint run over 1200m at Santa Anita on a Pro-Ride surface.

Dancing In Silks, trained by Carla Gaines and ridden by Joel Rosario, sat in fourth place in the running about three lengths off them and made his move just before the home turn.

He was forced to come into the straight three wide but produced a telling finish and showed fine resolve to come out trumps in a four-way photo-finish.

It was Dancing In Silk's seventh victory and he became Black Minnaloushe's fourth Group 1 winner.

His Breeders Cup win couldn't have come at a better time for Black Minnaloushe, whose first Maine Chance foals will be given their Thoroughbred Breeder's Association inspection on Friday to see whether they are up to the standard required for the National Yearling Sales.

John Slade, the stud manager of Maine Chance, has a very good regard for the Black Minnaloushe foals and yearlings and said that similarly good reports had come from all of the stud farms in the stallion's syndicate.

The former Aiden O'Brien-trained horse, who won the Group 1 Irish 2000 Guineas at the Curragh and the Royal Ascot meeting's Group 1 St. James Palace Stakes, both races over a mile as a three-year-old, was purchased by Maine Chance in 2006.

Coolmore retained a 25% share in him, a sure sign of the high esteem in which he is held.

In 2006 he had to fulfil his obligations in New Zealand, where he was Champion First Season Sire and his progeny included Joker's Wild, a dual Grade 1 winner and Champion two-year-old.

Black Minnaloushe arrived in South Africa in 2007.

His progeny worldwide have now won stakes races in such places as New Zealand, Australia, Europe, USA and Canada.

His syndicate in South Africa includes Maine Chance, Klawervlei, Gars-

BLACK MINNALOUSHE BOOST *(cont)*

fontein, Highlands, Ascot, Danika and Milkwood Stud.

Black Minnaloushe covered from 100 to 120 mares in his first two seasons in South Africa and this year, owing to his high price of R60,000 coupled with the economic downturn, will cover roundabout 80.

Two mares sent to him for the second time this season are Dancing Flower, dam of Victory Moon, and the three-time Grade 1 winner, Jamaica.

Slade said that Black Minaloushe is even more popular among breeders than Maine Chance's Silvano, which surprises him as he rates the latter a future Champion Sire.

Considering that with this perceived under usage Silvano has three-year-olds this season of the calibre of Bulsara, Bold Silvano, Galanthus, Water Nymph, Wittenberg and Clearly Silver he could well be right.

HORSE CHESTNUT IS BACK HOME

Horse Chestnut is a very happy horse having returned from stud in America to stand in his homeland South Africa.

The legendary son of Fort Wood, trained during his racing career by Mike de Kock and regarded by many as the greatest racehorse to ever grace the South African turf, stands at Johann and Gaynor Rupert's Drakenstein Stud and is "stopping" (getting into foal) his mares so well that another 10 services have been released at the special first season price of nil nomination plus R35,000 payable on a live foal.

Ross Fuller, the stud manager of Drakenstein, reckoned that Horse Chestnut would end up covering 70 to 75 mares this season.

To date he has covered 38 mares and of the 21 scanned 17 are in foal.

This is a very good "stopping" rate.

Horse Chestnut had been limited to a book of 60 mares at his former stud, Claiborne Farm in Kentucky, who had warned of a slow libido and not to overbook the stallion.

Fuller, however, has seen no libido problems whatsoever.

"Maybe having the African sun on his back has helped," he said. "He is the quickest coverer I've ever witnessed. He is in and out of the barn in a minute and is stopping his mares incredibly well."

Horse Chestnut covers a maximum of two mares a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Fuller and his team have noticed that if Horse Chestnut covers everyday instead of being given a break his semen maintains a higher quality.

He has been very well supported with many people wishing to get their mares to him, so has a good book.

One example is the Robin Bruss-owned daughter of Complete Warrior, Circle Of Life, the twice Equus Champion older female, who is a half-sister to J&B Met winner, Zebra Crossing.

Horse Chestnut goes on the horse walker every morning, so is very fit and spends the rest of the day in his paddock.

The tendon injury that tragically put paid to his career after just one start in America when he was in his prime and before he had had the op-

portunity to be tested against the world's best is still visible but does not bother him at all.

"He floats around the paddock with such grace, it is easy to see that he was a great racehorse," said Fuller.

He described Horse Chestnut as "so laid back that he has the character of a twenty-year-old mare."

Stallions are often very aggressive towards each other, for they are natural competitors.

Their stables are therefore kept very secure and often surrounded with prison like bars.

However, Fuller said that Horse Chestnut and his stallion colleague, Trippi, are "very good mates."

"If they come out of their stables together they actually muzzle each other," he said. "If only one leaves, the other will call for him. They can see the mares from their stables and are both just very happy horses."

Trippi, a son of End Sweep, is the most expensive thoroughbred to ever be imported to South Africa.

He was the leading sire and leading sire of two-year-olds in Florida before coming to Drakenstein.

He is the sire of, among others, Jealous Again, a two-year-old filly who was flown over to Royal Ascot this year to win the Group 2 Queen Mary Stakes over five furlongs impressively by five lengths.

William Hill quote Jealous Again at 12-1 for the Breeder's Cup Juvenile fillies to be run on November 7 at Santa Anita.

Trippi, who commands a service fee of R100,000 (R30,000 nomination plus R70,000 for a live foal), has a book of 110 mares and has already covered 70.

Of the 41 scanned 35 are in foal.

His first South African crop will be on the yearling sales next year.

Fuller said Trippi's Drakenstein foals were "very nice" and there had been very good reports from the other studs too.

SLEW THE RED

An imported sire that perhaps hasn't been given the support he deserves is the Red Ransom USA-bred horse, Slew The Red, who now stands at Chris Saunders Invermooi Stud in Mooi River.

Slew The Red was originally an Arab owned stallion who stood at Summerhill.

He has now been bought out by Invermooi. He only had 19 foals in his first season at Summerhill as he arrived late due to a problem with his customs papers. From that 2004 born crop of 19 he produced the likes of Phunyuka, Littleredcorvette, Two Moccasins and Press For Peace.

Phunyuka recently won the Listed August Stakes over 1200m and the Grade 2 Emerald Cup over 1450m both on the Vaal sand, the latter being Africa's richest sand race.

Littleredcorvette was touched off by the narrowest of margins in the Listed KZN Breeders over the Clairwood 1600m in July this year by the talented filly Goat, to whom he gave 1,5kg, and earlier was beaten just 4,5 lengths at level weights by the Champion Pocket Power in the Grade 1 Gold Challenge over the same Clairwood course and distance.

Two Moccasins finished a two length third in the Grade 3 Strelitzia Stakes in soft going over 1200m at Scottsville as a juvenile having beaten subsequent Grade 2 winning juvenile, Supper Club, in her maiden.

Press For Peace has won four times over 1000m, her most recent victory coming in her penultimate start in early September.

Slew The Red is a small dark brown horse, who raced in France and was said to be brilliant on his day. He won two Listed races over 2600m and 2400m and two Grade 3s over 2000m.

He is said to have a "beautiful action" and always stamps his progeny in that, although virtually all are "red bays", they all have his white blaze with a snip of white between the nostrils, and usually have one or two white feet below black canons. "You can pick everyone of them out," said Invermooi stud manager Felicity Bowles.

Another excellent trait of his progeny according to Bowles is that they are very strong legged and sound. He also seems versatile in the trip that his progeny enjoy, some having speed and others staying well.

Slew The Red is by Red Ransom, who has sired close to 94 stakes winners worldwide, 80 of them on turf.

Red Ransom by Roberto is from the same family as Outstanding Star, an Australian-bred filly imported to South Africa by Graham Beck.

She won the Majorca Stakes as well as producing the likes of KZN Guineas winner Kapil. Her half-sister is the dam of Gauteng Guineas winner Biarritz.

Roberto's sire Hail To Reason is also the damsire of Bold Reasoning, who is the sire of Slew The Red's damsire, Seattle Slew.

Slew The Red has seven instances of the great Nearco in his seven generation pedigree.

His third dam, Great Lady M, has the rare distinction of producing a filly, Secret Lady(Secretariat), that won the Eclipse Award for Horse Of The Year.

Slew The Red has not been well supported and in 2005, 2006 and 2007 had only 17, 13 and 5 foals respectively. However, interestingly enough, trainers have always displayed a keen interest in his progeny.

Invermooi are now sending most of their mares to him and are getting some outside support. He is due to have 18 foals this year and is set to cover 20-25 mares this season.

Included among them are a full sister to Jet Master and also the dam of the promising current youngster, Lemonade.

Bowles said that two of his progeny to watch are Time After Time, a three-year-old filly with Dennis Drier, and Sense Of Speed, a two-year-old colt also due to be sent to Drier. Most of Slew The Red's progeny will be sold and could be worth keeping an eye out for.

YEATS TO STAND AS COOLMORE FLAT STALLION

In Ireland, star 8YO stayer Yeats (Sadler's Wells-Lydonville, by Top Ville) who has won the Cartier Award as Champion European Stayer for the last 3 years & was retired to Coolmore last month following a 3rd-placing in his final start in France's Gr1 Prix du Cadran (4000m) "will commence his stud career next season under the Flat banner," reported racing-post.com. The announcement "marks a departure from the traditional dual-purpose route taken by the majority of high-class stayers that have retired to stud in recent years". Yeats (who finished unplaced in the 2006 Gr1 Melbourne Cup) scored an historic 4th consecutive victory in this year's UK Gr1 Gold Cup (2.5 miles) at Royal Ascot in June & overall recorded 15 wins (also including the 2006, 2007 & 2008 renewals of

the Ascot Gold Cup, plus 2008's French Gr1 Prix Royal Oak-French St Leger over 3100m at Longchamp & UK Gr2 Goodwood Cup over 2 miles, as well as 2007's Gr1 Irish St Leger over 14 furlongs at The Curragh, Irish Listed Vintage Crop Stakes over 13 furlongs at Navan & Irish Listed Saval Beg Stakes over 14 furlongs at Leopardstown, in addition to 2006's UK Gr2 Goodwood Cup over 2 miles, 2005's UK Gr1 Coronation Cup over 12 furlongs at Epsom Downs & both 2004's Irish Gr3 Ballysax Stakes & Gr2 Derrinstown Stud Derby Trial) & 4 placings (also including 2007's French Gr1 Prix Du Cadran over 4000m at Longchamp & 2006's Gr1 Irish St Leger over 14 furlongs at The Curragh) for over £1.3 million (A\$2.34m) earnings.

SEA THE STARS RETIRED TO STUD CAREER

Trainer John Oxx stunned the international thoroughbred world overnight with the announcement 6-time Gr1-winning boom Irish-bred 3YO colt Sea The Stars (Cape Cross-Urban Sea, by Miswaki) has been retired. The news “ends speculation Sea The Stars, owned by Christopher Tsui, would run in the US Gr1 Breeders’ Cup Classic (for which he was overwhelming favourite) & comes just over a week after the colt’s magnificent triumph over older rivals in France’s Gr1 Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe,” reported racingpost.com. Oxx explained: “He’s had a long season & has been in regular fast work from March 3, with his final workout on October 2. He’s been in intensive training for 7 months, with only a 3-week break after the Eclipse Stakes at the beginning of July. We feel it is unfair to keep him going any further, given his unprecedented record of achievement in the last 5 months. He’s come out of the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe in his usual good form. He is fit & healthy & has been cantering since the race.” Sea The Stars “who had been the subject of rumours he would be purchased by Sheikh Mohammed, will be a much sought-after sire” & Oxx added: “He is now retiring from racing, but I have no

information on stud career details & an announcement will be made at a much later date when plans have been finalised.” Sea The Stars notched his 6th successive Gr1 victory of the season with a 2-lengths victory against older rivals in the Gr1 Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe (2400m) at Longchamp in Paris. At his previous start, Timeform announced Sea The Stars (a half-brother to Gr1-winners Galileo, Black Sam Bellamy & My Typhoon) “has joined the list of all-time greats” after rating 140 when easily defeating older rivals in September’s Gr1 Irish Champion Stakes (10 furlongs) at Leopardstown; & in August he smashed the track record in winning the UK Gr1 Juddmonte International (10.5 furlongs) at York. In 3 earlier starts this season, Sea The Stars returned from a 7-months spell to win England’s Gr1 2000 Guineas (8 furlongs) at Newmarket in early May, then followed-up with victories in both June’s Gr1 English Derby (12 furlongs) for 3YOs at Epsom Downs & July’s Gr1 Coral-Eclipse Stakes (10 furlongs) at Newmarket. Overall Sea The Stars notched 8 wins (also including 2008’s Irish Gr2 Beresford Stakes over 8 furlongs at The Curragh) from 9 starts for €4,605,248 (A\$7.829m) earnings.

STRIKE-RATE WORRIES FOR TOP SIRE

Australia’s champion stallion Redoute’s Choice is struggling in the breeding barn, causing concerns for Arrowfield Stud.

“Every year you have horses that have little dips and curves during their season, he (Redoute’s) had one in 2001 and another in 2003 and this year it’s happened at the beginning of the season,” Arrowfield principal John Messara said.

From his first six crops, Redoute’s Choice (pictured) has produced 15 Group I winners, 54 individual stakes winners for 115 black-type wins.

During those six crops he averaged between 83.3 percent and 88 percent of mares in foal.

“He has spoiled us over the years with his excellent rate in the breeding barn, usually all he has to do is look at the mare and they are in foal,” Messara said.

“Because he has a very high conception rate as the norm when he’s below that rate you think what’s going on here.”

Redoute’s Choice, a son of the legendary Danehill, took over the baton when his father died in 2003 and was the champion first season of Australia in 2004, champion two-year-old sire of Australia in 2005, 2006 as well as being the champion stallion in that year.

In the 2008/09 season, Redoute’s Choice was the leading sire by individual stakes winners.

“He’s got 25 mares in foal so things aren’t exactly dire at this stage, but he is not firing at his exceptional best,” Messara said.

“He has plenty of live sperm but for whatever reason he hasn’t got the same conception rate as normal.

“We’re going through the process of checking all the boxes and ticking them off to try and work out what could be causing the difference this year.

“We have his testes scanned regularly and there is no degeneration there so we don’t think that this is a long-term problem.”

2009 EMPERORS PALACE READY TO RUN SALE

THE 2009 Emperors Palace Ready To Run Sale ended on a high note at the TBA Sales Complex, Gosforth Park, when last year's phenomenal record aggregate of R26.74 million was marginally bettered and the average price per lot was well up on the 2008 figure.

The event realized a turnover of R27.155 million, up 1.5% on last year and the only major sale to have improved its aggregate amidst the world-wide economic slump this year.

The average price was up 9.4% to R189 895 from R173 636 and the highest price paid of R2.1 million fell just short of last year's R2.2 million.

"We are very pleased," said Mick Goss of Summerhill Stud, who had consigned 108 of the 163 lots on offer. "With more fillies than colts for sale this year we thought that the sale might yield lower figures, yet if one looks at how well fillies are performing in the Ready To Run Cup it is hardly surprising that buyers don't shy away from the females!"

Mike de Kock paid the sale's top price of R2.1 million for Galileo's daughter Uthawini. She was bought for Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum "She has everything, pedigree, looks and conformation," De Kock said. "Galileo stands at something like 300,000 Euros which shows you that this can be considered a bargain."

De Kock secured six horses altogether including one that he rated in his top three colts on the Breeze Up Panel at Summerhill, Lot 82, a chestnut Kahal colt out of a Muhtafal mare.

The Galileo sales topper, lot 100, had appeared on three of the panelists lists, including on the list of Jehan Malherbe, whose Form Bloodstock often represents Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum at the sales. Prominent owner Andre Macdonald, the under-bidder on Uthawini, se-

cured the only other Galileo on the sale, paying R1-million for Igugu. "You win some and you lose some," said 'Mr Mac', but I am very happy with the one I got."

Uthawini had appeared on the top three colts of panelist Joey Ramsden's list at the Breeze Ups.

The most popular colt among the Breeze Up panelists, Lot 43, by Hobb Al Wahtan out of a Saumarez mare, who was said to have put up "an awesome gallop", fetched R400,000 and was bought by Prancing Horse CC.

The panelists most popular filly, Lot 30, a Kahal filly out of a Gulch mare, was bought by Champion trainer Charles Laird, also for R400,000.

Laird and patron Markus Jooste, active with 11 buys, paid R900 000 for Street Cry's daughter Emakhaya and Laird said: "This filly hasn't got a great dam line, but I loved her as a specimen and she moves really well too. We are pleased to have got the bid knocked down to us."

De Kock was the top buyer at the sale by aggregate and by average. His purchases totalled R4.095 million at an average of R682 500 per purchase.

Summerhill's stalwart Kahal was the top sire by aggregate, his 16 lots realizing R4.795 million.

"We are thrilled and in fact surprised with these results," commented Caroline Simpson, Sales Manager of BloodStock SA, who conducted the auction.

BSA's CEO Jan Naude added: "There are lots of positives to be taken from the figures and the clearance rate of over 90%, which is on a par with 2008. Notwithstanding the economic downturn, thoroughbred sales in South Africa continue to perform extremely well.

CUP DREAMS FULFILLED

Trainer Mark Kavanagh and jockey Corey Brown combined to fulfill lifelong dreams in winning the Melbourne Cup with lightweight runner Shocking at Flemington.

For both men, the victory erased some of their biggest disappointments in racing over the past 12-months.

During the spring carnival, Kavanagh lost last year's Cox Plate winner Maldivian to injury and last Saturday was forced to scratch Victoria Derby favourite Shamoline Warrior on race morning due to an elevated temperature. "Spring carnival is a tough time for all of us," Kavanagh said. "You have to roll with the punches and if you let those things take you off track, you lose sight of the ball and you just can't do that.

Exactly 12 months ago, Corey Brown was left a shattered man after Bauer was beaten by the barest margin in Viewed's Melbourne Cup win.

"I've had a spot on my mantelpiece for this Cup for a very long time and now I can finally put one there," Brown said.

Kavanagh said a perfect preparation was the catalyst for the win as Shocking left his rivals without excuses after travelling three-wide without cover for the entire trip to defeat Crime Scene and Moriliyan.

"Great job Mark, three deep with no cover," Brown said. "I tried to squeeze in over the back but no one would let me in. "I know he had a light weight but he toughed it out very well."

For the world racing superpower Godolphin, its quest for an elusive Melbourne Cup win once again came up short. Crime Scene became its third runner-up in the race to match the deeds of Central Park in 1999 and Give The Slip in 2001.

Powering home from back in the field was another imported galloper, the

CUP DREAMS FULFILLED *(cont)*

Herman Brown-trained Moriliyan, to claim the third prize.

"He kept improving from the half mile but we were held up at a vital stage," jockey Glyn Schofield said. "He got out a bit late but he finished off really well."

Master trainer Bart Cummings's bid for a 13th Melbourne Cup will have

to wait until 2010 after his trio of runners finished down the track.

Cummings was philosophical about the result.

"I'm not as good as last year but I'm alright," Cummings said. "Three losers, all in one race."

SEA COTTAGE

It is forty-three years since the immortal Sea Cottage, trained by the legendary Syd Laird, was shot at Blue Lagoon in Durban in an attempt to stop his participation in the 1966 Durban July.

There are few more qualified today to recount the details of the affair than Herman Brown Senior.

Durban's racehorses in those days, largely stabled at the Newmarket complex next to the present day Absa Stadium, did their morning workouts on the beach at Blue Lagoon.

Brown's ring, which was close to the ring of Laird's, was about half-a-kilometre from the bridge that crosses the lagoon.

At about 7 a.m. on Friday 10 June, three weeks before the July, Brown heard what he thought was a car backfiring. This was followed by screaming and shouting from the direction of the bridge.

Rushing over to find out what had happened, Brown and Laird heard the shocking news, "Sea Cottage has been shot!"

Brown recalled seeing the bullet wound in the horse's rump with blood and pus oozing out.

The police arrived and a crowd gathered on the bridge. A fisherman returning home had heard the shot and then seen a well built man jump into a convertible before speeding off.

"What colour was the car?" asked the policeman. "It was a sort of yellow colour," replied the fisherman. "That's Johnny Nel's car," said the policeman instantly.

Nel had foolishly used his own car, one of Durban's most recognisable, to carry out the dastardly deed. He was arrested in the city about 20 minutes later.

Brown is the only person to ever be Natal Champion trainer and Natal Snooker Champion at the same time and his life in those two sports often took him to the old Durban Tattersalls on Field Street and to the Monaco Club across the road.

Those two venues were inexorably linked to the shooting. Nel, two years or so after the shooting, told Brown his side of the story in a bizarre visit he paid him after being released from prison.

He told Brown that the owner of the Monaco Club, Monty Labuschagne, owed a bookmaker across the road, Sonny Chislet, a lot of money.

"Chislet told Labuschagne that he stood to lose so much money on Sea Cottage that he would have to close shop. He consequently demanded the money owed to him."

"Labuschagne asked what it would be worth to ensure Sea Cottage's non-participation. Chislet agreed to reward him."

Nel then told how Labuschagne had gathered his two henchman, one of them being himself, to devise a plan.

"I suggested shooting the horse," said Nel.

Brown recalled that about a week before the shooting an entourage of "gangsters", all in suits, had arrived at Blue Lagoon.

Brown recognised them all, including Labuschagne and Nel, from Field Street. He had always wisely stayed on the right side of Nel et al, although this was easy for trainers, who were seen as valuable sources of information for the races.

The entourage greeted Brown and then asked him where Syd Laird's string was.

In hindsight the purpose of the visit was to get an identity on Sea Cottage. The great horse was unfortunately unmistakable due to his largely white face.

Nel received four years for the crime. Chislet and Labuschagne were never charged, but Chislet lost his bookmaking license.

The visit Nel paid Brown happened one evening at about 9pm. Brown was sitting alone in the lounge of his flat on Stamford Hill, his wife and kids already in bed, when he heard a knock on the door.

Looking through the window he was astonished to see Nel, who looked in a terrible state.

He had little choice but to let him in.

It came to light that Nel was dying of cancer and had been let out of prison early, without anywhere to stay and stone broke. After giving him a drink, Brown gave him some money and pointed him in the direction of a boarding house. Nel apparently died soon after this.

During the course of the conversation in the lounge Brown had looked Nel in the eye and asked him, "Johnny, why did you do it?"

At this point Nel had become very emotional and almost burst into tears.

Composing himself he replied, "I was desperate for the money. I've harmed people and felt nothing, but to harm an innocent animal really hurt me."

He told Brown proudly that he had hit Sea Cottage in the exact position where he had aimed, not wanting to kill the horse.

Ironically, Nel never received a cent of the promised reward.

The bullet remained in Sea Cottage for life.

He was perfectly sound by the time of the July gallops and put in a good piece of work. He finished a gallant fourth in the race, a bump at the top of the straight costing him a possible victory.

He went on to win the 1967 July, dead-heating with Jollify to whom he gave 13,5kg.

This ensured his place in racing folklore.

PAT RILEY

Accolades poured in for Ashburton trainer Pat Riley soon after he had died in hospital. Riley died of pluracy, an illness he bore bravely for many years.

Riley originated from Zimbabwe where his brother Tony was a trainer and his late brother Mike, who died earlier this year, was a jockey.

Pat and Mike both worked for Pat O'Neill's Broadlands Stud in the Cape before arriving in Kwazulu-Natal. Pat then ran a stud for Henry Kahn in Nottingham Road before becoming assistant to Mike, who had earlier taken out his trainer's license.

He later took out his own license.

Pat and Mike joined forces at one stage but ended up as single entities later on again.

Anne Upton, the stalwart KZN trainer of yesteryear, who was his neighbour for some time, spoke highly of Pat. "He ran an excellent stud operation for Henry Kahn and later trained successfully and had loyal patrons.

I remember two of our fillies, my Abernant Star and his Trade Enquiry, often met each other and used to take it in turns to win. I introduced one of my clients, the late Wally Sharratt, to Pat after I retired and he continued to love his racing. Pat's horses were turned out immaculately and he was a good feeder, who ran a very clean, decent yard. Even after his illness began effecting his well-being his standards never dropped. He was a great animal lover. I remember how he loved cats and his and my cats used to wander into each others yards very happily. He is a great loss to the racing industry."

Trade Enquiry, the good filly Upton mentioned, is the dam of Grade 1 winners Buy And Sell and Count The Money and SA Oaks winner, Bedloe's Island. She was named Equus Champion broodmare this year and Upton regards her success as a tribute to Pat's horsemanship.

Doug Campbell also described Pat as a fine horseman, "not only in racing, but in other disciplines too." Buller Benton remembered Pat as a fine trainer and someone "who always had a smile on his face and bore his illness with tremendous bravery."

James Goodman praised Pat as an outstanding horseman and trainer who did well with unfashionably bred horses throughout his career.

He cited the recent example of the Announce five-year-old gelding, Chigger Yellem, who earned a cheque in virtually every start.

"To be able to win with horses other trainers wouldn't be able to win with is the mark of a good trainer and that was what Pat could do," said Goodman. The day was a particularly sad one for Belinda Impey, who was Pat's life partner for about five years.

"I will remember him as a fine horseman who had a tremendous eye for a horse," said Impey. Jockey Derryl Daniels was apprenticed to Pat and Mike when they were a partnership and remembers them as fine horseman who had some very good horses.

"Pat was a very easy going guy and great to work for," said Daniels.

Pat, besides his horsemanship, was also known as a down to earth character who loved socializing.

"He was a salt of the earth character, a real sweetie, one of the true nice guys of racing", said photographer Anita Akal. "I will also remember how much he cared for his brother, Mike, who was a more 'live for the day' type of character than Pat."

Pat's horses were looked after by Bart Rice and his wife, Pam, during his illness.

Pam said, "He was the closest person to family we had here. We have only known him for a couple of years and he became a wonderful friend. The thing we will remember most about him, besides his kind heart, is his never-ending, entertaining stories that we used to listen to for hours on end and which he loved telling."

Pat had his last runner, Travel Light, and it finished second in the eighth race.

Pat's son Brett, who was his assistant at one time, is flying out from England to arrange the funeral. Dean, his other son, works at St. Charles College in Pietermaritzburg as a Public Relations manager.

NEW PHOTO FINISH CAMERA INSTALLED

New state of the art photo-finish technology was installed over the weekend at the three Kwa-Zulu racecourses, Greyville, Clairwood and Scottsville.

Paul Lambert, who was formally the CEO of the USA company, Lynx System Developers, and is now a director, was in the province to install the two new cameras and the software that is linked to it.

One of the cameras allows a resolution that is 25 times greater than KZN's old cameras, while the other camera has four to nine times better resolution.

KZN's old cameras shoot 769 frames per second, while the best of the

two new cameras is capable of 5000.

The cameras, one of which is just used as a back up, will be set to around 2000 frames per second.

The cameras are very light sensitive and, unlike the old ones, adjust automatically to changes in lighting.

It is not only the cameras that will improve the photo-finish efficiency, but also the software.

One of the main advantages of the software is that the image can be lightened without losing clarity.

This is particularly advantageous in the case of a shadow being thrown

NEW PHOTO FINISH *(cont)*

across the track, as is often the case at Greyville and Clairwood, and also for night racing.

The two cameras are very easy to install and will be moved from race-course to racecourse.

Lynx photo-finish technology is used in about 120 countries around the world and for a variety of sports including horseracing, formula one motor-racing, Indy car racing, motorcycling and world championship athletics.

For horseracing it is used on 98% of the tracks in the USA, 95% of the tracks in Australia as well as in Hong Kong, Singapore, Ireland, UAE, France, Canada, South America and even in China, which is gearing up to introduce horseracing.

It is the best product of its kind in the world.

The cameras record everything that passes in front of them and the software then unravels the images into a photo finish where the horses can be separated visually and through the use of a very thin, mouse-driven line that is part of the software.

Due to the substantially higher resolution, the image can be blown up to a size whereby only the noses of closely placed horses are seen on the computer screen without losing definition.

The best camera Lynx produces can record 10,000 frames per second.

It is used at that speed for Indy Car racing and is thus an important back up in case a transponder, that records each lap, falls off a car.

The new software equipment and cameras will bring a saving in maintenance costs to Gold Circle as they are all very reliable, whilst Lynx maintains a long term relationship with its clients.

Lynx provides installation, training and have a support line.

Lambert described the company as having a "very responsive philosophy" and added that it was very seldom that a technician had to travel to fix equipment.

The most modern Lynx photo-finish product is fifth generation, but many Lynx clients are still happily using as old as third generation equipment. The equipment was used as a back-up to the old system at Friday night's Greyville meeting and at yesterday's Clairwood meeting.

Bev McMurray, the chief photo-finish operator, described it as "wonderful."

"The image is so much sharper," she said.

Rob Moffat, one of the racecourse judges, agreed and said, "The incredible sharpness of the image will definitely make it easier for us to decide the very tight finishes."

One of the other judges, Colin Buckham, said, "When money is wisely spent it will always bring an improvement."

WHIP RULES

The recent "whip rule" fiasco in Australia stirred up some heated emotions and strike action by jockeys before, what appears to be a reasonable compromise, was reached.

Egged on by do-gooders who have in mind nothing but the eventual destruction of horse racing, and the jobs and government taxes it generates, racing officials have attempted to ingratiate themselves with such groups by imposing restrictions on the frequency of whip use at stages in the home straight.

This week's tweaking of the rules has made the best of a difficult situation after jockeys were also forced to carry padded whips, a move that seemed like overkill when it first came up and the chickens came home to roost and leave their droppings in every corner last week.

The jockeys now have five months to see how they go with a less complicated set of obligations, but the emotions surrounding the matter brought a couple of tasty quotes from prominent citizens.

Shane Dye, now king of Mauritius, had some relevant home truths for Australian authorities when he spoke against the rules in an interview on radio, though he also managed to produce this little gem: "I wish I was there riding in Australia to support the jockeys by not riding."

However, he is not the award winner. That went to the head of the Royal Society For Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the state of Victoria, Hugh Wirth, in response to claims that the padded whip doesn't hurt horses.

"I've had a padded whip applied to my backside and, while I wouldn't say it was excruciatingly painful, I knew I'd been belted," one Australian paper quoted Wirth, who did not reveal whether this was dealt by friend or foe and has either gone well beyond the call of duty in this matter or revealed rather too much of his private life.