



Africa's Greatest Horserace



DYNASTY DELIGHTS IN DURBAN

Without contradiction it can be said that the R1,5-million Vodacom Durban July of 2003 was one of the greatest races ever run in this country, a race that encapsulated the essence of the great sport of thoroughbred racing.

It confirmed what the likes of Ipi Tombe, Victory Moon, Horse Chestnut, London News and many more before them had shown: that South African racing is undoubtedly of international standard.

The three-year-olds Dynasty and Yard-Arm stepped forward to claim the respect of racing enthusiasts throughout the nation and to give notice that they were ready to compete in the international arena.

First and second past the post, as the betting and many racing tipsters had predicted, each had achieved a personal milestone and both deserved the praise that has been heaped upon them.



Dynasty completed what Jockey Robbie Fradd had predicted a year before when he rode the Fort Wood colt in his very first race as a two-year-old and won over a mile by two lengths. On that day trainer Dean Kannemeyer warned Fradd as he was given a leg up that the colt could give problems at the start.

On Saturday July 5 Kannemeyer said: "Robbie said to me - Dean, this is the best horse in South Africa – unraced, not a bad judge is he?"

Fradd soon after predicted the colt would win the Vodacom Durban July and be moved to Hong Kong. He returned from Hong Kong late this June for South Africa's premier meeting where he was originally engaged to ride Free My Heart. But, he was re-united with the three-year-old colt for the official gallops and then for the big race itself, unfortunately as a result of regular jockey Karl Neisius having been injured in a fall in the Cape.



So Dynasty has fulfilled his destiny in this country and, while final plans for his future are still to be discussed with owner John Newsome, there is every chance that he will move to Hong Kong to follow a similar path taken by London News some years back.

Fradd described the Fort Wood colt as "too good for the others in the race and too good for the other horses in the country," suggesting that he should move overseas to continue his career.

"This horse has got a lot of heart and he's only a three-year-old. He was just too good for them – it's that simple."

Looking back on the race he said he was in trouble right from the start racing four wide then five wide up the hill and battling to settle the colt who was pulling hard and wanting to get on with it. He finally

managed to settle the colt and "then he was in my hands and going good.

"I was happy to be where I was and in a position to move him up and I looked across at Yard-Arm and he was also travelling good with Piere. I said to myself I didn't want to be more than two lengths behind him when I turn for home.

"At the top of the straight I let him run and he kicked. He is a big striding horse and you've got to give him room to gallop. I didn't want to have to check him or switch him, I just wanted to let him roll up the straight and let him kick on and use his action."

And what of Yard-Arm, the big son of Western Winter who still has scope to furnish and realize his full potential?

He was beaten fair and square by a horse that was given the toughest task in the

race, but his performance must be seen in the light of his personal circumstances. As stated, he has yet to develop to his full stature and, as a long striding horse, he is not really suited to the tight Greyville track.

He is a one-pacer to some degree but has a fair turn of speed and he too was facing his toughest task. But he put it all together under Piere Strydom and completed the task better than possibly even his owner and trainer might have expected.

Settling early and up with the pace before going to the front through the 1 400 metre mark to make it himself, Yard-Arm was looking every bit the potential winner when they swept through the last part of the turn and accelerated off the false rail.

“Early in the race, after we had gone the first 200 metres, the way he was moving and the way he settled I felt we could win the race. Then when he kicked in the straight I knew they would battle to beat him. Dynasty came but when he ducked out I thought we might come back and beat him, but he was too good,” Strydom explained in the weighing room later.

Owner and breeder of the gelding, Mike Rattray, commented before the race that they did not believe the gelding could win but they expected a good, honest run. Later, he beamed with delight at just how close they had come.

Asked about the gelding’s future, Mr Rattray said depending on how he ran in the race he could be sent to compete in Dubai. “But he’s not going to be sold,” he said, and one remembers how he bought back Set Afire to keep him in South Africa after he had already been sold to Mauritius!

The performance of Dynasty was praised from many quarters, including one of South Africa’s greatest racing personalities, former multiple South African champion jockey and British champion jockey, Michael Roberts.

Chatting with friends in the parade ring and asked how Dynasty would “shape overseas”, Roberts replied “why not?” He said the colt had run an incredible race, in trouble from the start as he fought for his head and running wide early from a bad draw, then accelerating in the finish to win.

With the attendance and turnover figures outstripping those for 2002, the 2003 Vodacom Durban July was another mammoth success for Africa’s greatest racing and social function.

Attendance topped the 52 000 mark and was the biggest since the introduction of television while turnover was boosted by about 10% on last year’s figures.

With the day dawning partly cloudy and chilly, the early sunshine that there was and the promise of even better conditions





later encouraged all to don their special outfits and head for the central Durban venue, just as hundreds of thousands have done over the 106 years before them. The scene soon grew to become a kaleidoscope of colour, a mirror of South Africa's diverse communities and cultures, all portrayed in the fantastic creations of the designers.

And, as the glamour and glitz was paraded out on the track and in the numerous hospitality venues around the course, and as the excitement of the occasion grew as the minutes passed, tension was beginning to mount towards the rear of the grandstand where the stars of the day, the majestic thoroughbreds, were being prepared.

The scene was set from the very first event on the card when Paddy Kruyer's 16-10 favourite, Field Marshall, cruised home to the cheers of the punters. Trainer David Ferraris obliged in the second event with favourite Treachery just getting the better of 16-1 chance Split Decision and jockey Anthony Delpuch completed an early double.

Then Geoff Woodruff entered the winner's circle to greet his filly Candaliza in the third race and, at 8-1, she steadied the ship for the bookmakers who had taken an early knock in the first two events.

The first of the features was the R100 000, Listed, Sugar Mill 2200, the "consolation" race for those runners missing the Vodacom Durban July cut. Favourite was Gary Alexander's Jallad filly, Icy Air, who was rumoured to be virtually unbeatable on her work.

But things did not go according to plan and when the field swept into the straight jockey MJ Odendaal found there was nothing to come. The track was clear before her but she failed to kick on and it was the 12-1 outsider, Surf The Web, who stormed through under Sherman Brown to win going away by nearly three lengths.

Paddy Kruyer's Kournikova ran on strongly for second place ahead of Sugar Daddy, King's Beach and African Grey, with Surf The Web stopping the clock in 135,3secs, just 0,1 sec slower than Dynasty's time in the big race.

For many punters Charles Laird's gelding Amphitheatre in the Topsport Gold Vase was a banker for the exotic bets and the four-year-old Braashee gelding did them proud with a scintillating performance. He came from the back of the field under Anthony Delpuch to fight out the finish with last year's Gold Cup winner, Highland Night, and the two raced neck and neck before Amphitheatre gained the upper hand to win by 1,25 lengths.

The Grade 1 Garden Province Stakes was the main supporting event before the Vodacom Durban July and the three main contenders appeared to be Escoleta Fitz, Duchess Daba and Tara's Touch. After the way she beat Tara's Touch in the SA Fillies Guineas, Duchess Daba was priced up as 18-10 favourite.

But the Geoff Woodruff filly failed to run up to expectations and was never a factor as Secret Heart again made the running as she had in the



Guineas and again she failed to find extra in the finish when Joey Ramsden's filly burst on the scene and cruised away to an easy two lengths win over Rainbow Flag, Secret Heart and Escoleta Fitz.

After the excitement of the Vodacom Durban July had settled down, it was time for the first of the two juvenile features, the Grade 2, Durban Africa Golden Slipper over 1 400 metres. The David Ferraris filly, Sabina Park, was seen as the potential winner and was posted as the 9-10 favourite. But there had been a lot of talk about Mike de Kock's Elliodor filly, Warning Zone, and she was second favourite at 5-2.

Sabina Park made the running from the start ahead of Jalberry and when they entered the home straight Anthony Delpuch was looking to score his fourth win of the meeting on the favourite. But Kevin Shea produced Warning Zone with a strong finish and they fought it out to the line where Warning Zone had the edge by half a length. The minor placings were filled by Jalberry and Philippa Johnson.

The word was out early in the day that the National Emblem colt, National Icon, was unbeatable in the Grade 2, Golden Horseshoe and in spite of having only one race under his belt, was priced up as even money favourite.

But the colt failed to run as expected and it was the 20-1 outsider, Port Of London, who powered his way to victory, beating second favourite Fallon by nearly two lengths. This London News gelding that upset many Pick 6 bets, was bred by Laurie

and Jean Jaffee who also bred the 12-1 outsider, Surf The Web, who had caused the early damage to the exotic bet by winning the first leg.

The run of the fancied horses was over and with 10-1 chance Blaze Of Honour winning the 10th race and favourite Candelada running closer to last than first in the 11th won by 7-2 chance Battle Maiden, it was left to the Listed Darley Arabian Open to help punters out of it.

But the rain had finally come, having obliged so graciously with its absence earlier in the day, and it was 14-1 chance Allied Prospect who closed down the official racing, winning from Superwood and Master Gold with favourite Bullet having misfired somewhat to finish out of the money.

**Undeterred by the cold and the wet turf,
the thousands of racegoers dispersed to
the many hospitality marquees and
partied into the night.**

