

March 7, 2009

CHIQUITA TAKES LISTED BAUHINIA STAKES SPRINTING AT TURFFONTEIN, NATIONAL YEARLING SALE BUY REMAINS UNBEATEN IN 3 SPRINT STARTS, BECOMES STAKES WINNER NUMBER 98 FOR A BARRY IRWIN PARTNERSHIP

Chiquita this afternoon scored a facile, eased-down victory in the Bauhinia Stakes, a Listed stakes at Turffontein race course in Johannesburg, South Africa. The nearly jet-black filly was always close up on trainer Geoff Woodruff's stable rider Mark Khan, who let her open up in the final furlong. She was perhaps 2 ½ lengths clear with 100 meters left in the dash up the straightaway and was eased right down to win by 1 ¾ lengths. Time for the 5 furlongs on grass was :56 4/5. Purchased by Barry Irwin at the National Yearling Sale, the Western Winter filly becomes individual stakes winner number 98 to represent a partnership formed and managed by B. Eye since 1987.



Chiquita is among several black-type winners bought from the South African yearling sale over the past few years, the others including Captain's Lover (Champion Filly at 3, won Grade 1 Cape Fillies Guineas) and On Her Toes (won Grade 1 Allan Robertson Fillies Championship).



Khan apologizes on air for cold-watering co-owner Anant Singh before the stakes.

Bred to run over a Classic distance, Chiquita won sprints in her first two outings, one on grass in Durban and one on sand just outside of Johannesburg. Woodruff and Team Valor figured the filly was a cinch to stretch her speed at least over the mile trip of the Classic Fillies Guineas, even after she faltered over 7 furlongs in a prep in Johannesburg. But Chiquita turned in a couple of dismal efforts in the Guineas and the Sceptre Stakes in Cape Town. The trainer regrouped with the filly, got her going well again in the morning and entered her in another sprint. The result was nothing if not eye popping, as Chiquita was hardly off the bridle in taking the Bauhinia Stakes today in the manner of a tip-top sprinter.

“Geoff trained Jazzy before we bought her,” Irwin said of Team Valor's imported winner of the Grade 2 Gallant Bloom Handicap at Belmont Park, “and we are hoping that Chiquita will prove just as good when she eventually makes her way over here, perhaps next season or the one after that. She is plenty speedy, that's for sure. Because she is by Western Winter and out of a staying German mare, we figured a mile would be no problem for her. But she is a high energy type and just loves to sprint. All credit to Geoff and Mark for not losing faith in her and getting her to come back to her best today.”

Chiquita races for Team Valor International and Vanashree and Anant Singh of Durban, South Africa.