

STRATOS VOTED CHAMPION OLDER FILLY/MARE IN JOHANNESBURG AREA, JET MASTER MARE WILL BE PART OF NEWLY FORMED BROODMARE BAND, TEAM VALOR WAS AMONG THREE STABLES UP FOR “OWNER OF THE YEAR”

Team Valor International's 5-year-old mare Stratos, winner of three consecutive Graded stakes at Turffontein race course, was voted the Champion Older Female in award ceremonies presented by the Racing Association. The awards honored the best of the best to race this season on the Highveld, that region of South Africa in which Johannesburg is situated and races are contested at The Vaal and Turffontein.



Grade 1 winner Stratos earned Highveld Award for Team Valor International.

Team Valor itself was among three stables up for the award of Owner of the Year, which was won by Mr. and Mrs. Markus Jooste.

Stratos was acquired privately two seasons ago and remained with her trainer Mike Azzie, who was able to develop the mare into the top female on the circuit with wins that included the Grade 1 Empress Club Stakes, the Grade 2 Ipi Tombe Challenge and the Grade 3 Yellowwood Handicap.

The daughter of Jet Master is now retired and has been moved to Summerhill Farm awaiting cessation of a ban on horses moving into the Cape Town area, where she will become a permanent boarder at Klipdrif Stud.

Team Valor is in the process of forming a select band of mares to be used as commercial producers with an eye on selling the produce at the National Yearling Sale held each spring (U. S. time) in the Highveld community of Germiston.

Set to join the budding band that already includes the dam of Grade 1 Cape Fillies Guineas heroine Captain's Lover and will include last year's Grade 1 Empress Club Stakes winner Little

Miss Magic, is She's on Fire, who was the only other mare up for the same award as Stratos.

Like Stratos, She's on Fire is owned by a Team Valor International partnership. But unlike Stratos, who has run her last race, She's on Fire still has a dance or two left on her card. A fast-closing fourth behind Stratos in the Grade 1 Empress Stakes (she was also fourth the year before), this daughter of runaway leading sire Jet Master came right back to win the Grade 2 Gerald Rosenberg Memorial by an astonishing 7 ¾ lengths and most likely ran even better in the Grade 1 GommaGomma Challenge when second in the richest race on the South African calendar. The event grossed \$463,000 and She's on Fire earned about \$93,000 for finishing second.

She's on Fire will probably contest the Grade 1 Durban July on July 5. The \$400,000 event over 11 furlongs is the most prestigious race contested on the South African Turf. There is a possibility that the mare could also essay the following month's Grade 1 Canon Gold Cup going 2 miles, a distance over which both her dam and granddam were successful in Graded stakes company. In fact, her legendary granddam Devon Air won the Durban July.

From *SAhorseracing.com* comes the following from Mark Anthony:

Champion Older Female was an interesting category as there were only two nominees and both race in the red and green of Team Valor. Stratos got the verdict on the back of an excellent hat trick of graded wins, culminating in the Gr 1 Empress Club Stakes, certainly the most competitive fillies event for the period under review. She's On Fire, by contrast, only had the one graded victory to her name in the form of the Gerald Rosenberg, which would have counted against her, but dissenters will point out that Stratos failed in her only assignment against the males, while She's On Fire was a gallant second in the Gomma Gomma. Either way, it was a case of two wonderful racemares and whichever way the decision went, one could only be genuinely happy for the recipient.

