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CAPTAIN'S LOVER TRIUMPHANT IN FRENCH DEBUT TODAY AT LONGCHAMP, ANDRE FABRE CONDITIONS SOUTH AFRICAN CHAMPION TO GRAB GROUP 3, GROUP 1 PRIX DE LA FORET NEXT ON AGENDA FOR \$27,000 YEARLING BUY

Captain's Lover swept to the fore with half a furlong remaining and pulled out a three-quarter length victory in the Group 3 Prix du Pin at Longchamp on Sunday in her first start outside of South Africa. She was sent off a tepid 9 to 2 favorite in the field of 10 runners in the 7-furlong trial for the Group 1 Prix de la Foret, which will be renewed on October 4 over the same distance and course.



Andre Fabre sent out the 4-year-old daughter of Captain Al and Sunshine Lover, by Badger Land to win the 80,000-euro (\$115,000) fixture and said "Captain's Lover has been with me six months and, like all horses from the Southern Hemisphere, she took some time to adapt. I am very happy with the way she won and she will now go for the Foret."

Rain fell overnight and during morning on the Parisian race course hard by the Bois de Boulogne, but the ground did not receive a soaking, with the ground listed as good to soft. Fabre had expressed some concern earlier in the week about how the filly would handle some cut in the ground, but he never had a worry as the contest was run.

Captain's Lover broke out to her left at the start, but Stephane Pasquier quickly righted her and knew he was on a live wire shortly after the start, with the filly being keen. The jockey had not trouble settling her in second, as Garnica set what appeared to be an honest enough pace. The field was stretched out and Captain's Lover raced about 3 lengths behind the leader and a couple of lengths ahead of the nearest pursuer.



With about 150 meters left in the race, the pacesetter started to look vulnerable, Captain's Lover had a challenger lapped halfway up her body and Spirito del Vento was building up a full head of steam on the outside.

Barry Irwin (left), who had bought Captain's Lover for \$27,000 at the National Yearling Sale in South Africa, said "She looked like she was going to be either swallowed up or put in a box, but the jockey had a lot in hand. When he switched her off the rails and allowed her to quicken, she gave him a sharp response to go clear inside the final sixteenth of a mile."

Captain's Lover always looked in control in the run to the wire and she prevailed by three-quarters of a length, running the distance on softish sod in 1:20.30. Spirito del Vento, who owns a *Timeform* master rating of 122, came up to get second, HH The Aga Khan's 3-year-old filly Alnadana third in a close photo.



The win improved Captain's Lover's career record to 6 wins and 2 seconds from 8 outings, among which is the Grade 1 Cape Fillies Guineas. She had legitimate excuses for both of her losses, one coming when she was denied a run until it was too late in a sprint and the other coming when her saddled slipped and nearly came off.

Captain's Lover carried the hunter green and white personal colors of Team Valor International's owner Barry Irwin, who revealed that Sunshine Lover is due this week to foal a full sibling to the winner at Klipdrif Stud in the Western Cape. A Team Valor partnership acquired her last

Captain's Lover was Champion Filly at 3 in South Africa for 2007-2008.

season in South Africa and plans to breed her back to Captain Al, who stands at Klawervlei Stud.

"All credit goes to Andre Fabre," said Irwin. "The filly took a bit of time to come around and as late as a month ago, she was not looking or training well enough to warrant a run this season. I told Andre that if she didn't come around well enough to make a start this season that he should not fret over it. I gave him every opportunity to wait until next year.

"But he told me not to panic and to be patient, because she still had time to come around. Sure enough, about 10 days before the Prix du Pin she worked a good three-quarters of a mile and we were on. If I said I was not worried about this race, I would be fibbing.

"We have a ton of confidence in the filly and reckon she may be the best South African horse we have exported outside of Ipi Tombe. When I said after the Guineas that I thought she was better than Irridescence, a few eyebrows were raised and a few wincen noticed. I think those facial tics may be a bit more relaxed following this race."

Captain's Lover was voted the Champion Filly at 3 in South Africa for the 2007-2008 season, despite missing the second half of the campaign, as Team Valor sent her to France to be trained by Fabre (right).

"She is probably best over 7 or 8 furlongs," noted Irwin. "She handles the soft, she runs well on a short curve of a straightway. And has a turn of foot. I thought she had the right profile to fit French racing."



Following the Group 1 Prix de la Foret, Team Valor will reassess its plans with Captain's Lover, as trainer Andre Fabre has sold his yard and will become more or less a private trainer for Sheik Mohammed of the United Arab Emirates.

"In the best of all possible worlds," said Irwin, "Andre Fabre might be able to squeeze her into his yard. But if not we have other trainers in France we can use. A trip to the United States is not out of the question either."