

EBONY FLYER MAKES QUEEN'S PLATE HER FINAL SOUTH AFRICAN RACE, UNBEATEN SKEIN ON LINE VERSUS HORSE OF THE YEAR POCKET POWER, CO-OWNER GAYNOR RUPERT SPONSORS 150TH RUNNING OF WFA CLASSIC



Unbeaten three-year-old filly sensation Ebony Flyer, who made last Saturday's Grade 1 Avontuur Estate Cape Fillies Guineas at Kenilworth her fourth victory in as many starts for trainer Justin Snaith, will take on older horses next time out in the Grade 1 L'Ormarins Queen's Plate.

Contested under weight-for-age conditions over 1600m on January 8, the Queen's Plate is expected to feature the likes of Pocket Power, fresh off a victory in the Ocean Basket Green Point Stakes at Kenilworth, and Gibraltar Blue, best last time out in the Grade 2 Ipi Tombe Stakes at Turffontein.

Snaith commented "As I've said all along, we think this filly is special. Normally, the logical next step would be to race her the same afternoon as the Queen's Plate in the Paddock Stakes. But that race is over 1800m and the Queen's Plate is over 1600m.

"Right now, we want to keep her at 1600m. She is very explosive and we like the idea of racing over the same distance until she is more seasoned. I have told the owners that I see no problem with her running over 2000 meters a bit later on.

"But at this time in the development of the filly, who has only run 4 times, we prefer to keep her at 1600 meters. Physically she will match any older male pound for pound – she's a Giant"

Ebony Flyer will carry 52.5 kgs, receiving 5 pounds for her age and a further 2.5 kgs for her sex allowance. Pocket Power is set to carry 60 kgs, so he must concede 7.5 kgs. Based on current Merit Ratings of 117 for the Horse of the Year and 107 for the 3-year-old filly, Ebony Flyer on paper figures to be in with a chance.



Snaith's stable jockey, Felix Coetzee, will replace Bernard Fayd'herbe aboard Ebony Flyer due to the latter's weight constraints.

"Felix had been her regular rider, but he had to beg off of her last two races," explained Snaith. "He had hurt his hand and we needed a replacement that could gallop her for us and was certain to be able to ride her and we chose Bernard.

"Felix had previous engagements in Asia and never was going to be available for the Guineas. But now that Felix is available and can do the weight, he will be back on Ebony Flyer. Bernard can't get close to 52.5 kgs."

Barry Irwin, whose Team Valor International owns the majority and manages Ebony Flyer for a partnership that includes long-time partners Anant and Vanashree Singh, as well as recently added partner Gaynor Rupert of Drakenstein Stud, said "We are high on this filly and want to give her every chance to show exactly how good we think she is. It is most likely that the Queen's Plate will be the filly's last run before we place her in quarantine with the idea of exporting her to Europe.

"Running Ebony Flyer in the Queen's Plate will give her a chance to make history by becoming the first of her age and sex to win the race. It will be a formidable task, but we want to give the filly the opportunity."

Captain's Lover, the older half-sister to Ebony Flyer, won the Cape Fillies Guineas, placed behind Dancer's Daughter and River Jetz in the Paddock Stakes and was immediately sent afterwards to be trained by Andre Fabre in France, where she became a Group stakes winner at Longchamp before winning the Matchmaker Stakes in the United States. Team Valor International plans to follow a similar path with Ebony Flyer.

Irwin said "We buy all of our racing prospects with the idea of eventually exporting the ones that have the quality to excel on the world stage. Ebony Flyer looks like such an animal.

"We love South African racing and breeding, currently racing a stable of horses trained by Justin Snaith, Neil Bruss and Ormond Ferraris, and we have mares at several farms. We will continue to support South African racing.

"However, when we have a horse that shows us it can take its act on the road, we feel it behooves us to do so. While the loss to local racing will no doubt disappoint some fans, hopefully future victories abroad by Ebony Flyer will allow them more opportunities to show pride in this South African product."

