

December 4, 2010

EBONY FLYER IS DAYLIGHT WINNER OF GRADE 1 CAPE FILLIES GUINEAS, ODDS-ON WINNER BEATS MIKE DE KOCK'S IGUGU TO REMAIN UNBEATEN, MATCHES FEAT OF HALF-SISTER CAPTAIN'S LOVER TO CAPTURE CLASSIC



Trainer Justin Snaith is maintaining his goal of keeping 3-year-old filly Ebony Flyer unbeaten, as he sent out the massive 17-hand 1-inch filly to score a clear victory this afternoon at Kenilworth race course in the Avontuur Estate Grade 1 Cape Fillies Guineas. Winning owners Team Valor International, Mrs. Gaynor Rupert of Drakenstein Stud, and Anant and wife Vanashree Singh congratulated Snaith for the Classic victory and birthday number 36, which came yesterday.

Offered at odds of 2 to 5 by bookmakers as her market rival Igugu drifted from 6 to 5 up to 9 to 5, Ebony Flyer was a big favorite to make the one-mile first Classic of the South African season her fourth victory without defeat.



Bernard Fayd'herbe confidently handles Ebony Flyer to Grade 1 victory.

A portent of things to come occurred in the race immediately prior to the \$110,000 Guineas when the 3-year-old Covenant skipped home over older rivals to take the Grade 2 Southern Cross Stakes going 5 furlongs. In improving her race record to 3 wins in 6 starts, Covenant franked the form of Ebony Flyer, who had toyed with Covenant over 5 furlongs on the occasion of their respective debut.

Ebony Flyer won by 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ lengths and it 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ lengths back came Emerald Cove. The field was stretched out more than 25 lengths from first to last.

Although Ebony Flyer looked to be head and shoulders above her rivals on form, the specter of Mike de Kock from the north had racegoers' attention diverted to his once-beaten filly Igugu, because when de Kock is in town and focuses on a big race, he can make magical things happen.

Jockey Bernard Fayd'herbe, back from a riding suspension, placed the favorite in a good position early, as he tracked the leaders in about fourth place, with Igugu just behind and outside of her. As the field turned into the straight, Fayd'herbe sat chilly, but he allowed the filly to go into the lead, as she was traveling so sweetly. Ebony Flyer opened an advantage of some 3 lengths about halfway down the lane.

Snaith's brother Jono, the stable manager said "Bernard told me he made a mistake by letting the filly go to the front so early, because she started to pull herself up. He squeezed her a little to take closer order and she responded too well. Then she switched legs and began to drift a bit. Bernard said he wouldn't let that happen again. He said he would hold her up next time."



Anant Singh, Justin Snaith, TVI partner Frank Michelsen, Gaynor Rupert and Vanashree Singh (L to R) led in the G1 winner.

Fayd'herbe reckoned Ebony Flyer was not tired at the end and could be expected to run a mile and a quarter later in the South African season.

Trainer Snaith complimented the lightly raced filly on her businesslike attitude and voiced support for the notion of running her in the J & B Met at the end of January against top older males. Barry Irwin, CEO of Team Valor International, will be speaking with Snaith about the filly's plans next week.

The win was the latest big-race triumph for Team Valor, coming on the heels of Pluck's Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf and Gypsy's Warning's Grade 1 Matriarch. Team Valor has won major races on three of the last four weekends.

Gypsy's Warning was bought in South Africa and Pluck was foaled by a South African mare, whose half-sister is today's Grade 2 Southern Cross victress Covenant.

Ebony Flyer's victory is one fraught with import and meaning to several of her relatives that are owned by Team Valor International and its racing and breeding partners.

She joins her older half-sister Captain's Lover as a winner of the most prestigious prize on the Turf in South Africa for a 3-year-old filly. Captain's Lover is still owned by Team Valor and is in foal to A. P. Indy's Grade 1-winning son and sire Pulpit. Captain's Lover is a stakes winner on three continents, having won a Group 3 against males in France and the Matchmaker Stakes in the United States.

Ebony Flyer is the second Classic winner produced by Sunshine Lover, a mare still owned by Team Valor and partners. She currently has a Captain AI colt that will be offered late in January at the first ever Cape Premier Yearling Sale and another Captain AI sibling born this year, making both of them full siblings to Captain's Lover. Ebony Flyer is by Jet Master. Sunshine Lover was bred back this year to Count Dubois.

Milestone-wise for Barry Irwin's stable of syndicated racehorses, Ebony Flyer becomes Grade 1 winner number 23 for the stable, Grade 1 victory number 31 and stakes victory number 17 in 2010. Team Valor in the last 6 renewals of the Guineas now has 2 wins and a nose loss (Alexandra Rose got pipped by a nostril in 2005) as it has become the major player in the Fillies Classic.

Barry Irwin bought Captain's Lover for \$27,000 as a yearling at public auction, he bought Ebony Flyer privately when she was a foal and he bought a half-interest in Alexandra Rose when she was 2.