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“RIBBONS” IS IRWIN’S 200TH PARTNERSHIP STAKES HORSE IN 25 SEASONS



Ribbons for Thee ran second Saturday at Kenilworth in South Africa sprinting 5 ½ furlongs in the Laisserfaire Stakes, to become runner 200 from 423 starters for a partnership formed by Barry Irwin in the last 25 years to win or place in a black-type race recognized by the International Cataloging Standards. Irwin has a 47-percent strike rate for stakes horses.



The Captain Al filly has shown promise at 2, progressing nicely after bleeding in her first race, just as Sting Operation did. She was forced to miss racing for 90 days in the fall of her season at 2, as South Africa bans bleeders from the nostrils for 3 months following the insult to their respiratory system.

Ribbons for Thee (green, red silks) has won 3 races, but was pretty much of an in and out. “I always had the feeling that Ribbons for Thee, based on her racing record and her conformation, was better running short dashes, like 5 or 5 ½ furlongs, than 6 furlongs,” said Barry Irwin, who bought her as a yearling at the National Yearling Sale in South Africa.

“So month before last I asked trainer Justin Snaith to point for the Laisserfaire Stakes, because it was run at 5 ½ furlongs, and I wanted him not to over race her before then. I asked him to point her for that race, which I thought she was capable of winning.”

Ribbons for Thee got into the fray at 53 kilograms (117) and, under the conditions of the race, she would receive 7 kilograms (15 ½ pounds) from State Blue, a stablemate that is only slightly superior to Ribbons for Thee when she is at her very best.

Irwin said “The key with Ribbons for Thee is for the race to be as short as possible, with a biggest field possible, because these two aspects insure a rapid pace, which allows her finishing kick to be at its most effective. She got that scenario on Saturday.”

Last but 2 after a furlong in a field of 16, Ribbons for Thee was position near the rear of the field towards the outside of the course. When jockey Richard Fourie, who was married to his sweetheart of the last 5 years right after the races on Saturday, looked for a way through, he was stymied and dropped back to last. Fourie gave up seeking a path through the middle of the field and opted to make his run inside. When the filly was set down, with Fourie posting powerfully in great rhythm with the horse, Ribbons for Thee exploded and caught every horse but one.

“I needed two more jumps and I’m there,” he said. “It’s a shame she did not have a better trip, because this was her day.” Ribbons for Thee was beaten half a length by 51 to 1 longshot Pisces Star, who was in receipt of 4 ½ pounds from the Team Valor/The Singhs’ 4-year-old filly. Ribbons for Thee had a head to spare over State Blue, who was the lukewarm race favorite at odds of 9 to 2 under co-second high weight of 132 pounds.