

NISREEN BEATEN NOSE IN GRADE 2, \$250,000 CAPE VERDI STAKES IN DUBAI FRENCH MARE NAILED ON WIRE IN DESPERATE BID FROM GODOLPHIN MISS CONSISTENT MARE (6 WINS, 3 PLACED IN 11 STARTS) WILL TRY AGAIN IN DESERT

Nisreen ran the race of her life in her 6-year-old debut, when she did everything right but hit the wire on the wrong head bob yesterday in a gutsy second-place finish in the Group 2 Cape Verdi Stakes at Meydan Racecourse in Dubai.



Completely disrespected or ignored by racing pundits, bettors and bookies, the super-talented senior citizen showed the international community what her connections had known all along—that she had the quality to compete at a high level under a variety of conditions.

Eight fillies and mares lined up for the mile with runners owned by host nation powerhouse Godolphin racing stable dominating the field in terms of known commodities and numbers. They wound up winning the race for the eighth time in the last 10 renewals, but they really had to work for it this time.

Pierre-Charles Boudot heading back to the walking ring to be unsaddled after Nisreen's gritty second-place run.

The tale of the running is simply told: one filly in Godolphin blue set a fast pace over another dressed in blue, racing as many as 5 lengths ahead of the stable mate. The stable mate, Magic Lily, won the race. She tracked in second until about the five-sixteenths pole while outside of the pacesetter, but before she could displace her, Pierre-Charles Boudot had slipped through along the rail from fifth, duly passed both blue-jacketed fillies with ease and suddenly Nisreen found herself lonesome on the lead well before PC had ever figured.

Once in front, Boudot employed enterprising tactics, squirting out to a full body lead. The winner went after her in midstretch. Nisreen looked home free until she unexpectedly switched leads, allowing the winner to get to her throat-latch as the pair hurtled pall-mall to the wire.

Magic Lily challenged Nisreen three times and each time the Team Valor colorbearer repulsed the bid, but in the final surge to the wire she could no longer hold sway. The mares hit the finish as one.

Exercise rider Lisa De Vries was very proud of her favorite mare.





The on-course analyst indicated Nisreen got there first. But a photo of the finish showed the Godolphin mare had eked out about a 4-inch victory. After the race, the winning rider said he thought the vanquished Nisreen actually beat him to the line. Boudot told John Hammond the hard ground stung Nisreen, she could not maintain her action using her right lead, and had to switch to the left, costing her too much momentum loss. Final time of 1:34.84 was nearly 1 full second faster than the old course record. Timing in Dubai begins when the gates open, not with a running start as in America, so that time is closer to 1:32.

The ground was hard—too hard for a mare used to the forgiving courses in France. Much was made before and after the race about the amount of moisture on the course. Normally it does not rain in Dubai, so the course is watered. But watering was ceased because the maintenance staff figured with 9 days of steady rain the course did not require additional water. They were wrong because it was brick hard.

Barry Irwin said “We produced a mare that ran a winning race under normal circumstances, but the course today was anything but normal. She will be double tough right back with more forgiving ground. She also looks to have been lighter than usual before the race and it seems likely that the travel had taken something out of her. We are proud of her. We think we can win the Grade 2 Balanchine next.’

In taking second in the Grade 2 Cape Verdi Stakes, Team Valor International maintained its sterling record of impacting major races in the United Arab Emirates. Next on tap for the stable is the Grade 2 Balanchine, which TVI accounted for in 2006 with *Irridescence*.

Nisreen improved her ratings at *Racing Post* (106, up 7 lbs) and *Timeform* (109, up 4 lbs).