

FROM SOUTH AFRICA'S *SPORTING POST* COMES: THE MOON AND BEYOND



The divide between a true champion and a good horse was numerically illustrated by the length that separated the brilliant Ebony Flyer from her closest opponent in the R500 000 Gr1 SA Fillies Sprint run at Scottsville on Saturday. Justin Snaith's Jet Master overcame the odds in dazzling style to win this prestigious title.

With the knowledge of Ebony Flyer's now well publicised chequered medical history, one is inclined to start heaping praise for this unlikely victory on the paid support team of professionals, like the trainers and veterinary surgeons. But without a horse with the heart of a lioness and the oodles of natural ability to match, the fairytales just cannot be scripted. Ebony Flyer is one such filly and she showed her magic mettle in no uncertain terms again on Saturday.

She came up against a classy bunch of fast females. Last season's Equus 2yo Champion filly Princess Victoria, had won the Poinsettia Stakes last time and came in here off a perfect prep. Mike de Kock's Welwitschia had pulverised the opposition at her last start in the Gr2 Camelia Stakes. Like Princess Victoria, another former Gr1 Allan Robertson Championship winner and a filly who campaigned with success in Dubai, Chocolicious, was also in the line-up. We can go on and on and simply put, it was a star-studded line-up of good girls.



Ebony Flyer jumped right alongside the odds-on favourite and, like Princess Victoria, was relaxed early on and a few lengths off the pace as She's A Stunner and the well-supported Chocolicious cut out the fractions up front to the middle to inside of the track.

The way above average She's A Stunner looked to be going strongly still at the 400m as Delpech produced Welwitschia from five lengths off. At this point Sean Cormack was getting vigorous on Princess Victoria, who looked to be batting to quicken and was going up and down having stuck to her outside station.

But just as the old familiar song of De Kock, Delpech and Wilgerbosdrift was being played and Welwitschia looked to safely have the measure of Chocolicious, Bernard Fayd'herbe scythed through the middle on the Snaith's champion. And Ebony Flyer drew off to win readily. The picture changed dramatically in that crucial 50m and the Jet Master with the massive stride comprehensively annihilated them. She won in a time of 70,04 secs.



Notice the fancy new Team Valor logo headband used for the Grade 1.



It was a commendable feat by Justin Snaith who got her back in fighting trim after a four month absence from racing. Ebony Flyer was ridden for the third time by Bernard Fayd'herbe, who has a 100% strike rate on her, having previously won the Gr2 Odessa Fillies Championship and the Gr1 Cape Fillies Guineas on her. And how can we forget the latter race? That was the afternoon she downed subsequent Horse of the Year, Igugu.

Ebony Flyer flies home first, ahead of her Team Valor mate Comtesse Dubois in the SAF flag silks of co-owner Anant Singh.

The biggest disappointment of the race, if not the entire day, was last year's Allan Robertson

Championship winner Princess Victoria who went off at 9-10. She raced down the outside and never got into the race at any stage. She finished seventh and some 4,75 lengths behind. We can look for excuses for her and analyse the going, the ride, and anything else that catches our fancy. The bottom line is that she should have beaten the whole lot and appears to really just have had an off day. This was by far her worst career performance ever. She deserves a chance to redeem herself.

A R700 000 National Yearling Sale graduate, she races in the power partnership of Drakenstein Stud, Team Valor International and Vanashree and Anant Singh. With one hot-strike after the next, how the American Mr Barry Irwin has enjoyed his association with our racing industry!

Ebony Flyer is a half-sister to another champ in Captain Al's daughter, Captain's Lover. She is by recently deceased champion sire Jet Master out of the Badger Land mare Sunshine Lover. And what a sire of broodmares, Badger Land is proving to be! She was bred by Willempie Engelbrecht.

She is made of sterling, star stuff, having only ever run unplaced once in eleven starts. That was in the 2012 L'Ormarins Queen's Plate, when finishing 5,90 lengths behind new Varsfontein stallion Gimmethegreenlight.

Co-owner Anant Singh and son lead in G1 winner Ebony Flyer



She has won three Gr1 races as part of her eight- from-eleven career win record for two places, and has accrued gross stake earnings of R1 650 000.

If she stays fit and well and is over her breathing issues, the sky really is the limit for her. And the world her oyster.