

ARIMA RACE CLUB
RACE DAY PREVIEW
DAY 17 SATURDAY 8TH MAY 2010

What a Santa Rosa Dash !!!

WITH five of the top six horses in the country set to clash on Saturday, the Santa Rosa Dash has got to be the best race of the year thus far at Santa Rosa Park, Arima. The only one of the top six missing is Cactus Amour, but fans will still get to see the Arima Race Club Cup winner on Saturday as he will be in action two races before the Grade II contest. Nine have been declared for the "Dash", including the five I have already alluded to - Bruceontheloose, Storm Street, Blackstone Street, Sweet Alex and Bristling. Weight and distance are always crucial factors in deciphering a race and are even more important when a collection of stars are involved.

As a result Blackstone Street will be the first horse to eliminate as he was allotted the top weight of 57 kilos, at least five kilos more than three of the four other leading contenders. And it should also be pointed out that this American-bred four-year-old, who just joined Maniram Maharaj's stable after being in the care of champion trainer Glenn Mendez, is not really a sprinter, despite the fact that he won the Stewards Cup in late November. It is also important to note that Blackstone Street has not been the same since that Grade I victory over Saturday's distance of 1,200 metres. Although no distance is a problem for him, there may also be more disadvantages than advantages associated with Storm Street at the moment.

The 2008 Horse of the Year may still be short of his best after coming back from a nine-month layoff on Easter Monday. But it could still prove very costly to overlook Storm Street as he was only beaten about seven lengths by Bristling and Sweet Alex in a 1,300-metre Stakes & Lower contest after missing the break on April 5. And the American-bred six-year-old, who is one of the most outstanding horses in the 16 years of centralisation, did crush his field to win this event by seven lengths last year. Sweet Alex and Bristling are also in the equation and the top five is rounded off by their John O'Brien-trained stable companion Bruceontheloose. 'Bruce' has been the overwhelming favourite in all seven of his starts since coming across from Jamaica in the middle of last year.

The grey, who has won six of these races - including the Republic Bank Derby and First Citizens Gold Cup and been named Horse of the Year, may still be the leading fancy on Saturday, but his stable mates are also expected to get significant support. The main reason for this is the fact that both Bristling and Sweet Alex are crack sprinters and Bruceontheloose has probably never raced over a trip this sharp. Of course, he is as classy as they come and should not be too inconvenienced by 1,200 metres. No horse will relish the distance more than Sweet Alex. This American-bred six-year-old has been better than ever since he returned from a ten-month injury break in October.

However he has been touched off in the last few strides of three of his four starts on the main course and the drop in weights by at least four kilos will probably make the Stewards Cup runner-up the horse to beat. Sweet Alex gave Bristling 6.5 kilos and went down by a neck on Easter Monday, but the fact that the distance will be 100 metres shorter and the weight difference will be half-kilo less this time is definitely to his advantage. It is certainly massive shoes to fill, but Bristling could be the Bruceontheloose of 2010. This American-bred three-year-old is unbeaten from three starts and his fans would be quick to point out that his narrow victory over Sweet Alex came in his first start in four months.

Also in the field for the \$150,000 contest at 4.50 p.m. is Proud Kentuckian, an American-bred five-year-old who will be making his debut more than four months after owner Allan Madoo had planned to introduce him in the Gold Cup on Boxing Day (December 26). The Santa Rosa Dash will be the penultimate and feature event of a nine-race card. Two races earlier, Cactus Amour, the only horse to have beaten Bruceontheloose in Trinidad, will come up against seven horses in a 1,750-metre Allowance at 3.27 p.m. Misshighoctane, who has also won his last two starts, Perfect Circle and Tap To The Tune, the runner-up and third-placed finishers, respectively, in the Grade I Champagne Stakes, are among the challengers, along with last year's Carib Brewery Guineas winner Santa Rosa Boy and Illusionist, who has won his last three starts.

There will be HI-5 betting in the fifth (2.50 p.m.), seventh (4.10 p.m.) and curtain (5.35 p.m.) events and the Pick 6 wager will begin in the fourth race at 2.08 p.m. There have been no winners for the last three weeks and the carry over is close to \$6,000. Post-time for the 17th round of the Arima Race Club's 2010 Season is 12.15 p.m.