

ARIMA RACE CLUB
RACE DAY PREVIEW
DAY 42 SATURDAY 27TH NOVEMBER 2010

'Bruce' hard to stop in Stewards Cup

THE richest and most prestigious open sprint race of the local horse racing calendar will headline a nine-race card at Santa Rosa Park, Arima, on Saturday. Eight top class horses have been declared to compete over 1,200 metres in the Stewards Cup, penultimate event of the programme with a post time of 4.20 p.m. However, since the \$250,000 Sprint Championship of the South Caribbean is a Grade I affair, it may not turn out as competitive as fans would surely be hoping for as the country's leading horse will be receiving a significant advantage in the weights. Beaver-trick bound Bruceontheloose, who would most likely have been the favourite even with the top weight of 56 kilos, will actually carry three kilos less as all West Indian-bred horses get this weight reduction in Grade I events.

The last time it happened was in the Independence Cup on August 31 and the Jamaican-bred four-year-old cruised to victory after narrowly going down to Cactus Amour when they squared off at almost level weights two weeks earlier in the Grade II President's Cup. Bruceontheloose is clearly the highest rated horse in the country and certainly does not need any break at the weights. But last year's Horse of the Year will be getting weight from four of his seven challengers and giving weight to only one of them. He has been allotted the same weight as fellow "creoles" Mister Kingston and Skyline Pigeon, but the latter will actually compete with more than 53 kilos as his Panamanian rider Nobel Abrego has never "caught" this weight since he started competing here over a decade ago. Bruceontheloose has been virtually unstoppable since he came across from Jamaica in the middle of last year, winning 12 of his 14 outings and finishing second to Cactus Amour in the other two.

The John O'Brien-trained grey colt is already the leading money-spinner in the history of local racing and is on course to cross the two-million-dollar mark before the end of the year. 'Bruce' could finish as low as fourth on Saturday and still get there once he repeat in the \$500,000 First Citizens Gold Cup on Boxing Day (December 26). Last year's Republic Bank Derby winner and two-time defending Caribbean Champion Stakes winner has raced once over the Stewards Cup distance in Trinidad. And Bruceontheloose was not only triumphant but he also broke the 1,200-metre track record in the process of winning the Santa Rosa Dash in May. Ronald Ali was aboard for the first time on that occasion and the apprentice gets his first chance on the Tres Amigos-owned son of Wheelaway since then on Saturday. Big City Diva, who broke Bruceontheloose's record on October 9, is the only horse in the field with a lighter impost and she will carry one kilo less. Despite the fact that the track was faster than ever before when she took over the record, it was her first and only start in Trinidad and this highly-regarded American-bred three-year-old certainly has a very bright future.

However, it is difficult to imagine the inexperienced Big City Diva getting the better of the likes of Sweet Alex, Storm Street, Bristling and Bruceontheloose so soon. After two sensational performances as a juvenile last year, Bristling was expected to graduate into the champion sprinter in the country this season. But the brilliant son of recent American triple crown contender Congaree has been affected by injury and has only raced four times this season. Bristling finished a tame fourth as the favourite when he returned from a four-month break one month ago in a "prep" race for the Stewards Cup. The Michael Scott-owned bay colt may not be 100 per cent, but he certainly has the class and has proved it by winning four of his six career starts. Storm Street cannot be left out of any discussion about class. However he has not been the same horse which dominated the scene in 2008 and the first half of the following year after coming back from a nine-month absence due to injury in March.

It should be pointed out, however, that the '08 Horse of the Year won this very race in '08 and '09, but was unable to go after a hat-trick last year because of injury. No one in the field has been bothered by injury over the years more than Sweet Alex, but at the age of six the quickest horse in training has finally been able to go through an entire season without interruption. And what a fine season it has been for the probable second favourite as he has won three times, finished second on three occasions and third twice from eight starts on the main course. However Sweet Alex, who was caught in the last few strides of last year's Stewards Cup by Blackstone Street after "breaking down" and trailing the field as the favourite the year before, has lost both encounter against 'Bruce' getting weight and he will be giving his stable companion three kilos this time. The field also includes the classy locally-bred horse Mister Kingston, who finished fourth in last year's Stewards Cup and has enjoyed another very consistent season.

Divine Bull, runner-up in the Stewards Cup two years ago, will be in action two hours earlier and the six-year-old has been allotted the top weight of 56.5 kilos for the Restricted Handicap. Eleven will be in opposition over 1,100 metres on the turf in the day's fifth race, including fellow American-bred horses De Jewel, Exquisite Touch, Sattriya and High Dollar Harry along with the returning The Bangor Baron and Santa Rosa Classic runner-up Will Power. Last year's Santa Rosa Classic winner Hurricane Watch and Princess Indra will only compete if the second of four HI-5 races is switched to the main course. There will also be HI-5 betting in the third, seventh and curtain events of the 42nd round of the Arima Race Club's 2010 Season and it will be the first time that all four HI-5 events will be contested over the same trip and track - 1,100 metres on the turf. The third (1.06 p.m.) and seventh (3.40 p.m.) events are two divisions of the same race with the 24 locally-bred three-year-old maidens split equally.

Twelve horses will also be involved in the curtain event, a \$20,000 Optional Claimer at 5 p.m. There have been no winners of the Pick 6 over the last couple race days and as a result there will be a carry over of close to \$3,500 added to the wager this week. It starts at 1.42 p.m. in the fourth race with seven horses declared for a Starter Allowance over a distance of 1,750 metres. The other race over this trip would play second to the Stewards Cup only in terms of interest as Derby runner-up Go For The Gold has been declared to match strides with the likes of Oaks Stakes runner-up I'm Coming Baby, last year's Carib Brewery Guineas winner Santa Rosa Boy, Silent Reproach, the third-placed finisher of both the Guineas and Midsummer Classic two years ago and Smartman. This \$35,000 Optional Claimer is the second event

of the card and should be contested at 12.26 p.m. First post is 11.50 p.m.