

ARIMA RACE CLUB
RACE DAY PREVIEW
DAY 24 SATURDAY 3RD JULY 2010

Grand Riviere looks 'Oaks' cert

IT is said that nothing is a certainty in sport, but it will take something of a miracle to stop Grand Riviere on Saturday when horse racing continues at Santa Rosa Park, Arima. The Poon Tip Stud Farm filly is expected to be as short-priced as a favourite could be in the Oaks Stakes, feature attraction of the 24th round of the Arima Race Club's 2010 Season. The \$200,000 contest looks no more than a battle for second, especially as Grand Riviere returns to face her fellow West Indian-bred three-year-old fillies after beating the "boys" to win the Carib Brewery Guineas at the end of May. But even without that sensational victory over Treasure Hunt in the opening leg of the triple crown, it would have been very difficult to oppose the daughter of A Great Team here.

Grand Riviere has lost just once in her eight-race career and the last time she came up against female opposition resulted in a commanding eight-length triumph in the Gleneagle Stakes over 1,750 metres. The John O'Brien inmate was going further away from runner-up Inconclusive at the end on May 1 and the distance on Saturday will be 50 metres further. This was the same trip of the Guineas when Grand Riviere finished strongly to overhaul Treasure Hunt in the closing stages. Inconclusive did not race in the Guineas, but Juan Navarro's chestnut has the distinction of being the only active horse to beat Grand Riviere (in the Stud Farm Association Breeders Stakes in November) and finished less than a length behind her nemesis over 1,350 metres in the Ibis Stakes on Easter Monday (April 5). Kickupastorm has finished fourth in the "Ibis", third in the "Gleneagle" and sixth in the "Guineas" and the Shaffique Khan-owned and trained daughter of Storm Report seems certain to end up "on the board" here.

But if there is a horse from among the 10 challengers who could make it interesting for the big one then it would be stable companion I'm Coming Baby. This Jamaican-bred has only faced the starter three times but has been triumphant in her last two outings, including a very impressive score over \$25,000 Optional Claimers last time out on June 5. I'm Coming Baby won that 1,750-metre contest in a smart time of 1:53 second, more than a second faster than the time produced by Grand Riviere in the "Gleneagle." But we all know by now that Grand Riviere does just what is necessary to win and I'm Coming Baby may need a little more experience to provide a serious challenge. The "Oaks" is the penultimate event of the nine-race card and is billed to be run off at 4.53 p.m. Last year's winner Be Nice will be in action three races earlier and the Harold Chadee-bred, owned and trained daughter of Kdanzc will be attempting to complete a hat-trick of victories.

Skyline Pigeon, Nandani and American-bred newcomer Lady Sage are among the nine who will be in opposition at 2.50 p.m. in this Conditional Handicap A, which will also be the first of three HI-5 betting events. Kickupastorm and Grand Riviere will not be the only 'Guineas' contenders in action on Saturday as Sam's Hero, who finished third in the Grade I contest at very long odds, and the fifth-placed Will Power will be involved in the day's third event at 1.30 p.m. The Jamaican-bred Majestic, who placed ninth in the Guineas in between winning two sprints in his three starts in Trinidad, is also in the field of nine, while also includes last year's shock Guineas winner Santa Rosa Boy and Silent Reproach, the third-placed finisher in both the Guineas and Midsummer Classic two years ago.

Donut Prince, who won the 2008 Guineas and went on to lose the Royal Oak Derby that year by a whisker, will line up in the next race against last year's Republic Bank Derby runner-up Mission King to kick off the Pick 6 at 2.08 p.m. There are seven others in that 1,750-metre Starter Allowance, including American-breds Misshighoctane and Honest Hero, the fourth-placed finisher in last year's First Citizens Gold Cup. The largest fields are in the seventh and curtain events and these 1,100-metre turf events will be HI-5 betting races. Fourteen \$7,500 Optional Claimers have been declared for the seventh at 4.13 p.m. and the programme will conclude with a race for West Indian-bred three-year-old maidens at 5.40 p.m. This field is so big that there are seven reserves among the 20 and the list also involves debutants Don't Blink, Unzipit, Zarkosy and Pole Position.

Post time is 12.15 p.m.