

ARIMA RACE CLUB
RACE DAY PREVIEW
DAY 28 MONDAY 2ND AUGUST 2010

Grand Riviere going for seventh straight

GRAND RIVIERE will attempt to stay on the triple crown path when horse racing continues on Monday at Santa Rosa Park, Arima. The Midsummer Classic is the feature attraction of the ten-race Emancipation Day holiday card and the Poon Tip Stud Farm-bred and owned filly will oppose 11 West Indian-breds three-year-old for the mammoth first prize of \$270,000. Victory would extend Grand Riviere's winning streak to seven and would leave the daughter of A Great Team less than \$50,000 short of becoming just the fifth horse in the history of local racing to cross the million-dollar mark in career earnings. And that would not be all as Grand Riviere would also be just one race away from becoming the first filly to ever win the triple crown since the Sport of Kings was centralised in Arima in 1994. The John O'Brien-trained bay captured the opening leg on May 31 when she was victorious in the Carib Brewery Guineas.

The series will conclude with the Republic Bank Derby on September 24. And in addition to closing in on seven figures and the triple crown, Grand Riviere is also the main flag bearer for the local breeding industry against a powerful Jamaican contingent. Back On Top has recently joined the conversation and will also be representing Trinidad and Tobago, but he was foaled in the United States. Visible Wind is the only other local horse in the 1,900-metre race as nine Jamaicans will be in the line up at 4.55 p.m. in the day's penultimate event. The leading foreigners in the Grade I contest are Treasure Hunt and Go For The Gold, but Sam's Hero and I'm Coming Baby are improving rapidly and cannot be overlooked. However Grand Riviere remains the horse to beat as none of the others in the field has ever finished ahead of her. The horse which has suffered just one defeat from nine career starts may also relish the trip more than any of the other main contenders.

Grand Riviere was finishing the strongest of them all to catch Treasure Hunt in the Guineas and the extra 100 metres on Monday will definitely be to her advantage. Unlike Go For The Gold and Grand Riviere, Treasure Hunt did not have a "two turn" prep for the Guineas and still ran a tremendous race. This brilliant Douglas Bennett-trained chestnut has won on four occasions and finished second three times in seven career starts, but the question mark is stamina and we will see how he answers on Monday. Go For The Gold was sent off as the Guineas favourite after winning a 1,750-metre contest by an incredible 17 lengths three weeks before. Balkrishen Sagan Maraj's chestnut went on to finish a tame fourth, but it was just the fourth start of his career and he must have improved significantly in the two ensuing months. However, unlike Grand Riviere and Treasure Hunt, Go For The Gold has not faced the starter in that time and it is left to be seen if that would work against him. After shocking everyone by finishing third in the Guineas at odds of 30/1, Sam's Hero came back to beat a bunch of \$25,000 Optional Claimers over 1,750 metres a month ago.

The chestnut gelding is improving at the right time and has to be respected by the connections of the top three – Grand Riviere, Treasure Hunt and Go For The Gold. And owner Steve Samaroo has brought down United States-based Panamanian jockey Cecelio Penalba to partner Sam's Hero. I'm Coming Baby has hardly put a hoof wrong since coming to Trinidad a few months ago. A second-place debut effort was followed by two victories and then Howard Hamilton's filly finished second to stable companion Grand Riviere in the Oaks Stakes over 1,800 metres on July 3 – beaten by just a length. The overwhelming favourite was probably not fully wound up for that fillies only contest, but it was still a fantastic effort by I'm Coming Baby and it would not be a surprise if she ends up in the Superfecta on Monday. Back On Top, who did not compete in the Guineas, is probably the toughest horse in the field to assess. After failing to live up to expectation in four of his five previous career starts, he scored the most impressive victory by a West Indian-bred three-year-old for the season last time out on July 10.

Junior Sammy's son of Put It Back not only slammed a bunch of \$20,000 Optional Claimers by over seven lengths, he prevailed in one of the fastest 1,750-metre time in the 16-plus years of centralisation. Back On Top's 1:50.53 seconds was almost two seconds faster than the time registered by Go For The Gold in his runaway 17-length triumph and if he runs like he did three weeks ago it would be very difficult to stop him. Indian King is the most interesting of the others as this Jamaican-bred horse will be racing in Trinidad for the first time. Movietowne Gal and Special Ransom are improving, but with just three starts each under their belts they are not ready for this level of competition as yet. Majestic seems to be a sprinter, while Gold Bead and Visible Wind need to improve considerably to even get close to the superfecta. The \$450,000 Midsummer Classic is the richest race of the year thus far and will be preceded by a Starter Allowance involving three classic stars of the previous two seasons and a couple of quality importations. Donut Prince, who won the 2008 Guineas, but was unplaced in the "Midsummer" before rebounding to finish second by a nose in the Derby, will be up against seven horses over 1,350 metres, including Mission King, last year's Derby runner-up who had finished fourth in the "Midsummer", and hat-trick bound Sound Of Thunder, the unplaced second favourite in last year's Derby.

Music Maestro will also be attempting a hat-trick here and the field also includes Honest Hero, the fourth-placed finisher in the First Citizens Gold Cup and Santa Rosa Dash. Punters have been stumped by the Pick 6 for the last three weeks and as a result there is a carryover of almost \$6,500 into this week's pool. The wager will start with a Conditional Handicap F event at 1.22 p.m. with nine locally-bred horses running over 1,200 metres in the fourth race. The first of three HI-5 betting races will follow immediately afterwards (2.07 p.m.) and 14 have been declared for the \$10,000 Optional Claimer over the same trip. The \$20,000 Optional Claimers will be involved in the next HI-5 race and 15 of them have been declared for the day's seventh race over a distance of 1,350 metres at 3.32 p.m. And there will also be HI-5 betting on the curtain event at 5.40 p.m. when 15 West Indian-bred three-year-old maidens are scheduled to line up over 1,200 metres.

Post time for the 28th round of the Arima Race Club's 2010 Season is 11.30 a.m.