

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

Sam's Hero is super in 'Midsummer'

SAM'S HERO again made punters pay for not showing him enough respect with a commanding triumph in the NLCB (National Lotteries Control Board) Midsummer Classic on the Emancipation Day holiday card at Santa Rosa Park, Arima. The Jamaican-bred chestnut came with a late sweeping run to blow by the opposition in mid-'stretch and cruise to a 2 ¼-length victory in the \$450,000 second jewel of the triple crown. The triumph made certain that there would be no triple crown winner since Top Of The Class in 2003 as Grand Riviere, who opened the series by taking the Carib Brewery Guineas at the end of May, could only finish fifth as the 6/5 betting favourite. Sam's Hero had stunned everyone by finishing third in the Guineas at staggering odds of 90/1, and despite coming back to defeat Silent Reproach – the third-placed finisher in the '08 Guineas and 'Midsummer' – in a Midsummer Classic 'prep', he was still sent off at the generous price of 9/1.

Cecelio Penalba was brought in from his base at Calder Park, Florida, USA, to partner Sam's Hero and the Panamanian, who had been denied by a head in his only other mount three races earlier, rode his charge with supreme confidence in the 1,900-metre contest. After being way down at the back until the half-way stage, Penalba got down to work and Sam's Hero responded impressively as they ploughed through the field effortlessly on the sloppy track. Second favourite Treasure Hunt made a similar move to the home turn, but could not keep up as Sam's Hero cruised by leader Back On Top and was eased up at the finish line. The victory in the richest race of the race thus far must have immediately erased the pain experienced by owner Steve Samaroo, trainer Johnathan Lyder and Penalba in the sixth race when High Dollar Harry just failed to catch favourite Skyline Pigeon in a 1,200-metre Conditional Handicap A. Incidentally, like Sam's Hero, High Dollar Harry was also sent off at odds of 9/1.

Lyder created history as the 29-year-old become the youngest trainer to ever saddle the winner of the Grade I event for West Indian-bred three-year-olds, which was contested for the first time way back in 1952. The youngster has done a phenomenal job with Sam's Hero, who failed to find the board in the first three starts of his career, but has since gone on to win three times and finish third in the Guineas in his last four. The gelding secured a whopping \$270,000 for owner Samaroo, while Back On Top, who also went into the 'Midsummer' with less than \$70,000 in the bank, collected \$90,000 for Junior Sammy. By stark contrast, Grand Riviere began the day with career earnings of \$694,000 and would have gone past \$950,000 with victory. The Poon Tip Stud Farm-bred and owned filly had won her other six starts this season and was going after her eighth victory in succession and her ninth in a stellar ten-race career. But after being right in the thick of things until the far turn, Grand Riviere started to labour and ended up a tame fifth. Still, the daughter of A Great Team collected \$13,500 to go past \$700,000.

Treasure Hunt, just caught by Grand Riviere in the closing stages of the Guineas, went past \$400,000 with the \$45,000 he earned for Rawdon Kanta Persad. But his third-place finish was the worst in a career which contains four wins and three seconds from his other starts. Back On Top, who did not even run in the Guineas, became a serious contender with a spectacular 'prep' victory in one of the fastest times over 1,750 metres in the 16-plus years of centralisation. The Terrance Thomas-trained son of Put It Back moved steadily through the field and looked all over a winner when he passed long-time leader Go For The Gold entering the 'stretch. But his inexperience cost Back On Top as he shied away from the whip when jockey Gary Laban pressed him with Sam's Hero breathing down his neck.

Back On Top, who like Sam's Hero was racing for the seventh time, was the only non-Jamaican-bred horse to finish on the board. Go For The Gold faded to finish fourth, the same position that Balkrishen Sagan Maraj's chestnut had occupied as the favourite in the Guineas. The 8/1 shot did not race between the classics and with only five starts under his belt is only expected to get better. Mission King, who placed fourth in last year's "Midsummer" and went on to finish second to Bruceontheloose when the triple crown concluded with the Republic Bank Derby in September, took the spotlight just before the feature when he easily won a Starter Allowance by over four lengths in driving rain. Just five horses began the 1,350-metre contest and the field was reduced further when hat-trick bound Music Maestro threw rider Freddie Manrique as the gates opened. Sound Of Thunder, unplaced as the second favourite in last year's Derby after being the runner-up to 'Bruce' in the Midsummer Classic, was also attempting to complete a hat-trick of wins, but folded tamely with the lead at the top of the stretch and finished behind Personal Exchange in third.

Mission King was not on a hat-trick, but the runner-up last time out was scoring for the fourth time in his last five completed starts. Fourteen West Indian-bred three-year-old maidens took the track after the Midsummer Classic and Kingmaker, who had not hit the board in his four previous career starts, pulled away to win the 1,200-metre event by almost five lengths as he brought down the curtain on the ten-race card in style at odds of 22/1. Douglas Bennett saddled both Mission King and Kingmaker to take some sting out of the disappointment of being unable to take the "Midsummer" with Treasure Hunt. Sharing training honours with Bennett was Barbadian William Clarke, who saddled Juanistheman and Powerball in the first two races, both over 1,750 metres. Juanistheman, the second favourite in the \$7,500 Optional Claimer, paved the way for a grand day for senior citizens on the 28th round of the Arima Race Club's 2010 Season. The nine-year-old scored his 18th career victory, but two horses even older than him were also successful.

Naturelly Classy, sent off at 10/1 in the fifth, won for the 13th time when he defeated a bunch of \$10,000 Optional Claimers over 1,200 metres, and then two races later another ten-year-old came late to beat a bunch of \$20,000 Optional Claimers over 1,350 metres. Super grey was scoring for the 19th time in his career and with four wins and two seconds in his last six outings, the former classic contender seems on the way back to his best in his old age. Apprentices Ronald Ali (Juanistheman, Naturelly Classy) and Ryan Hasranah (Mission King, Kingmaker) had doubles to lead the riders, but the United States-based Wilmer Galviz did not leave empty-handed.

Like Penalba, the former champion jockey had come down to ride (Treasure Hunt) in Midsummer Classic, but the Venezuelan got some consolation when he booted home Nad Al Sheba in the fourth race – a 1,200-metre Conditional Handicap F affair for locally-bred horses. Despite the fact that the card was very competitive, punters were mainly on the ball and as much as five favourites -- Powerball, Silent Reproach, Skyline Pigeon, Super Grey, Mission King -- were triumphant in the ten events. Horse racing continues at Santa Rosa Park next week Saturday (August 14) when Horse of the Year Bruceontheloose and Cactus Amour could clash over 1,900-metres in the Grade II President's Cup.