

**ARIMA RACE CLUB**  
**RACE DAY REVIEW**  
**DAY 18 SATURDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2010**

**Sikhara makes it five straight**

SIKHARA prevailed for the fifth straight time when horse racing continued at Santa Rosa Park, Arima, on the 18th round of the Arima Race Club's 2010. The main bout of the nine-race card concluded in exciting fashion with the American-bred four-year-old holding off the other two main fancies to remain unbeaten for the season. She was travelling so effortlessly that when Sikhara came to challenge marginal favourite and leader Raging Halo at the far turn of the Stakes & Lower Handicap it looked like the light-weighted filly would end up a runaway winner.

However Raging Halo refused to give in and Perfect Circle also entered the fray to provide fans with a rousing 'stretch run in the 1,600-metre affair. With young apprentice Ronald Ali - who had piloted Horse of the Year to victory in the feature (Santa Rosa Dash) the Saturday before - working overtime, Sikhara held them off and prevailed by three-quarters of a length. Raging Halo nosed out Perfect Circle for second and the two-time Champagne Stakes winner was far from disgraced, especially as the American-bred four-year-old was toting the heavy burden of 58.5 kilos, 10.5 more than his conqueror.

It was another very game display by the Jamaican-bred Perfect Circle, who had finished just a neck behind Raging Halo in the "Champagne" on April 17 and had won twice and placed second four times in his six preceding starts. Sonata's Melody rounded out the top four just over four lengths back and Chief Commander may have again proved that age has finally caught up with him when the eight-year-old former Gold Cup winner, one of just four horses to earn over \$1 million in the history of local racing, could only end up sixth of nine starters. However Sikhara is clearly in her prime and Zanim Meah-John's daughter of The Cliff's Edge became the first horse of the season to have won five times in a row. And in true Chief Commander fashion, Sikhara has displayed great versatility by winning over 1,200 and 1,300 metres on the main course as well as scoring over 1,100 and twice over 1,600 metres on the grass.

It should be noted however that Sikhara's second triumph during the streak was a dead-heat as the photo-finish camera could not separate the Jose William-Samaroo-trained filly and Dream Girl over 1,600 metres on January 23. Grand Riviere has also won her last five starts, but her streak began last year (December 5) in the St Ann's Stakes. In the day's second feature, Mister Kingston, who has been holding his own against the top class sprinters in the country, scored for the first time since October when the fourth-placed finisher in last year's Stewards Cup impressively won the 1,200-metre Starter Allowance by three lengths in a very good time of 1:11.38 seconds. Despite the fact that the field was a high-quality one, punters were definitely on the ball as the Gerry Harding-bred and owned four-year-old was sent off as the 4/5 betting favourite.

Luca's Gold, the only other locally-bred horse in the field of eight, continued to defy the odds when the six-year-old joint 1,000-metre track record holder finished well to be second. Officer Ike was third and, after breaking loose before the start, Honest Hero, who had finished fourth in the Santa Rosa Dash a week earlier, again occupied that position and has now placed fourth four times in his last five starts. Mister Kingston was the third winner on the programme for two-time defending champion jockey Ricky Jadoo, who was denied his fourth winner right after when Appealing Harvest finished second after being caught in mid-stretch by I'm Coming Baby.

Both horses are owned by Howard Hamilton and trained by John O'Brien and featured in a sweep of the first five places by Jamaican-bred horses in the 1,200-metre event for West Indian-bred three-year-old maidens. Jadoo was off to a flying start when Windy Lass took the opener, the \$10,000 Optional Claimer over 1,350 metres by 2 ½ lengths. And two races later the veteran made almost all the running with Dance Machine in a Conditional Handicap C. This talented but injury-prone Jamaican chestnut colt was racing for the first time since finishing fifth in the Republic Bank Derby in September, and he held off Will Power to take the 1,750-metre event by 1 ¼ lengths.

The victory provided some compensation for owner Jonathan Hazel, whose other very talented but injury-prone horse Regal Honour had apparently "broken down" in the race before. After being in the lead early on, the favourite, who had finished in the top two in his last six starts, ended up sixth of seventh in the \$25,000 Optional Claimer. The 1,300-metre contest was won by last year's Derby runner-up Mission King, while his Douglas Bennett-trained stable companion Savvy finished a length adrift in second. O'Brien and Glenn Mendez, the dominant trainers since centralisation in 1994, were the most successful on the card. This year's leader O'Brien won the final two races with Mister Kingston and I'm Coming Baby, while defending champ Mendez saddled Dance Machine and Engine Rhythm.

The latter, who made up more than ten lengths as he thundered down the homestretch to win the 1,600-metre turf contest for West Indian-bred three-year-olds, became the first victory in Trinidad - from his 18 mount for Venezuelan rider Freddy Manrique. There will be no horse racing at Santa Rosa Park for the next two Saturday's, paving the way for a magnificent day when the Sport of Kings returns on Monday May 31.

The highlight of the Indian Arrival Day card will be the Carib Brewery Guineas, first jewel of the local Triple Crown, which will continue on Emancipation Day (August 1) with the Midsummer Classic and conclude on Republic Day (September 24) with the Derby.