

ARIMA RACE CLUB
RACE DAY REVIEW
DAY 19 MONDAY 31ST MAY 2010

Grand Riviere is boss

A WEEK after Kamla Persad-Bissessar became the country's first female Prime Minister, Grand Riviere kept the "woman is boss" flag flying high on the Indian Arrival Day Holiday Card at Santa Rosa Park, Arima. The Poon Tip Stud Farm Limited-owned daughter of A Great Team not only became the third member of the fairer sex to capture the opening leg of the triple crown since Centralisation in 1994, she also struck a blow for the local horse racing industry against the powerful Jamaicans. Grand Riviere displayed a powerful finishing kick as she erased more than three lengths in the homestretch to catch Treasure Hunt just before the finish line in the Carib Brewery Limited Guineas. Eight of the 11 West Indian-bred three-year-olds in the richest event of the first half of the season were bred in Jamaica, and the winner was the only non-Jamaican to finish in the top five in the \$315,000 contest.

The best the Jamaicans could finish in last year's Guineas was fourth, but they roared back with a vengeance in the other two legs to occupy the first seven places in the Midsummer Classic and the first six in the Trinidad Derby. Kickupastorm, third in the Gleneagle Stakes on May 1, ended up a decent sixth and was the only other locally-bred horse to finish this year as Dionysus threw his rider Edward Rojas during the 1,800-metre affair. Still, trainer Douglas Bennett must have been on top of the world when his main contender Treasure Hunt, who had narrowly lost the battle for favouritism to Go For The Gold, shot clear of early leader Another Challenge at the far turn. Last year's St James Stakes winner was looking ominous and Go For The Gold, who had scored by an incredible 17 lengths last time out on May 8, was already beaten after being on the haunches of Another Challenge since the first turn.

But as smoothly as Treasure Hunt was travelling, victory was far from certain as Grand Riviere was also looking dangerous at the far turn and was not that far back. Treasure Hunt turned for home leading by more than three lengths, but had already started to shorten his stride and the large gathering of fans started to roar as Grand Riviere was closing the gap. They were expecting a photo-finish to the Grade I contest, but Treasure Hunt had virtually nothing left in the tank in the last 100 metres as the little filly cruised by to prevail by an entire length. Sam's Hero, a rank outsider who won a maiden race last time out after finishing "off the board" in his first three starts, ended up 4 ½ lengths behind Treasure Hunt in third, but two lengths ahead of a very disappointing Go For The Gold. Grand Riviere, the 5/2 third favourite, has only faced the starter eight times in her career, but she already made a tremendous impact. She has lost just once and her six victories in a row include the St Ann's Stakes, the Royal Colours Classic, the Ibis Stakes and the "Gleneagle". Of course, the Guineas is the biggest and she collected a whopping \$189,000 to push her career earning to within \$15,000 of the \$600,000-mark. Owner Poon Tip Stud Farm had previously taken the Guineas with the great Royal Colours in 1982, while trainer O'Brien, who had won the race as a owner with '86 triple crown winner Sky Rocket, had previously saddled Bound To Dance in 2000 and Millenium Reign, who also went on to win the Trinidad Derby two years later.

Grand Riviere was Brian Harding's fifth Guineas winner, coming three years after he had piloted another filly, Willing To Spend to beat the colts. The multiple champion jockey had also been successful in '88 with Hikari – when the race was still contested at Union Park, Marabella – as well as with Steven Alan in the first edition at Santa Rosa seven years later, and in '99 with Infallibility. Treasure Hunt, racing for the first time over two turns, passed \$350,000 with the \$63,000 he earned and he would still be unbeaten had he never come up against Grand Riviere. The chestnut son of Tracking has won four times in convincing fashion but has now had to play second fiddle to Grand Riviere twice. And on the subject of being the bridesmaid, Treasure Hunt is owned Joanne Kanta-Persad, whose husband Rawdon is the owner of last year's Guineas runner-up Dring Brinks.

Santa Rosa Boy, the horse which beat Dring Brinks to win last year's Guineas, scored for the very first time since that shocking triumph at over 80/1. But this time he was the favourite and David Mahabir's four-year-old impressively won the 1,750-metre Carib Beer Conditional Handicap A contest by over two lengths. And in the very next race, Mission King, beaten favourite in last year's Guineas who went on to finish second in the Derby, scored for the second straight time when the odds-on favourite won the Black Wolf Restricted Handicap by a similar margin over course and distance. Santa Rosa Boy stopped the clock in 1:51.94 seconds, almost a second faster than Mission King. And in the second feature of the Carib Brewery Limited-sponsored card, top class locally-bred horse Mister Kingston, the fourth-placed finisher in last year's Stewards Cup, passed Stewards Cup runner-up Sweet Alex close home to win the Shandy Carib Handicap 1 & Lower contest by almost two lengths.

Sweet Alex completed a one-two for trainer O'Brien in his third runner-up performance in succession. Racing continues on Saturday.