

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

Grand Riviere does enough in Oaks

IT was far more difficult than anyone expected, but Grand Riviere still got the job done in the Oaks Stakes during the 24th round of the Arima RaceClub's 2010 Season at Santa Rosa Park, Arima. The last time the Poon Tip Stud Farm-bred and owned daughter of A Great Team came up against her fellow West Indian-bred fillies she won the Gleneagle Stakes by eight lengths on May 1. Then after whipping "the boys" in the Carib Brewery Guineas at the end of the month, it seemed like Grand Riviere would prevail by even more than eight lengths when she came up against "the girls" again. But it was not to be as the 1/5 favourite was only a length ahead of her stable-companion I'm Coming Baby at the end of the \$200,000 contest. Grand Riviere, who has won seven in a row and eight of her nine career starts, may not have been at her best, but did enough to hold off I'm Coming Baby and Kickupastorm after entering the homestretch with a slender lead.

And her trainer John O'Brien, a master of conditioning stakes race winners, again showed his class as his three starters finished "on the board" in the 1,800-metre contest. Grand Riviere and I'm Coming Baby were favoured to finish one-two, but very few could have predicted that early leader Golden Millennium would have hung on for fourth. The first foal of former Trinidad Derby and Gold Cup winner New Millennium was racing for only the third time and had given no hint that she could come close to being in the superfecta from her two previous efforts over 1,200 metres. I'm Coming Baby also had only three previous outings at Santa Rosa after racing twice in her native Jamaica. But Howard Hamilton's daughter of Dayton Flyer went into the Oaks after impressively defeating a bunch of \$25,000 Optional Claimers over 1,750 metres for her second straight success and must now be considered a threat to Grand Riviere and company in the remaining classics. But I'm Coming Baby had to hold off a fast-finishing Kickupastorm by half-length to maintain her record of finishing in the top two in her four starts in Trinidad.

Despite finishing fourth in the Royal Colours Classic and Ibis Stakes and third in the Gleneagle Stakes, it was very surprising that Kickupastorm was sent off at 50/1 and it was another genuine effort by the Shaffique Khan-owned and trained daughter of Storm Report. Inconclusive, the only horse in training to have beaten Grand Riviere, ended up fifth and it was the first time in eight career starts that the "Gleneagle" runner-up has not crossed the finish line in the first three. Owner Juan Navarro still collected a check, but the \$6,000 was a far cry from the \$120,000 the Poon Tip's picked up as Grand Riviere moved to within \$6,000 of reaching \$800,000 in career earnings. Last year's Oaks Stakes winner was also in action during the nine-race card, but Be Nice only ended up fourth in her attempt to complete a hat-trick of victories.

Be Nice is bred, owned and trained by Harold Chadee, but the 1,350-metre Conditional Handicap A was won by Skyline Pigeon, who is bred, owned and trained by David Ojar. It was the fourth event on the programme and was preceded by last year's Republic Bank Derby runner-up Mission King edging out Honest Hero and 45/1 shot Young Elite in the most exciting finish of the day over 1,750 metres in a Starter Allowance. Mission King has now won three times in his last four starts with the only blemish being when he threw his rider at the start of his previous start. Ryan Hasranah was the unfortunate victim on that occasion but the two-kilo claimer has also been aboard for all three wins. Just before, two horses which have finished third in the Guineas battled to the wire in the \$25,000 Optional Claimer and Sam's Hero, who placed in the opening leg of the triple crown on May 31 at very long odds, got the better of '08 Guineas third Silent Reproach by a head.

Odds-on favourite Santa Rosa Boy, who won last year's Guineas at odds of more than 80/1, finished a very disappointing sixth of eight in the 1,750-metre affair. O'Brien was the most successful trainer as he saddled Appealing Harvest in the sixth race to a second consecutive win and then took the final two events with Grand Riviere, O'Brien's third Oaks winner, and Bananachips. Both were partnered by Brian Harding and the multiple champion jockey shared riding honours with Nicholas Patrick and two-kilo claimer Brian Boodramsingh, who booted home Appealing Harvest after riding Finch in the opener. Patrick piloted Onlyamonkey and Sam's Hero in the second and third races, respectively. Like Harding, O'Brien and Patrick, trainer Khan also had back-to-back victories - with Finch and Onlyamonkey in the first two events.

Horse racing continues at Santa Rosa Park on Saturday.