

ARIMA RACE CLUB
RACE DAY REVIEW
DAY 25 SATURDAY 10TH JULY 2010

Back On Top, 'Cactus' attack the clock

BACK ON TOP made a tremendous leap into the classic conversation and Cactus Amour ran the second fastest 1,750-metre race in the 16-plus years of centralisation when horse racing continued at Santa Rosa Park, Arima, with the 25th round of the Arima Race Club's 2010 Season. The best performance of the day came right at the end when Back On Top made hash of the opposition to win the \$20,000 Optional Claiming by over seven lengths. And despite being eased considerably by jockey Gary Laban, Junior Sammy's son of Put It Back still turned in the one of the fastest times recorded over 1,750 metres since the sport has been based exclusively in Arima. The 1:50.33 seconds clocked by Back On Top was the third fastest time over the trip this year, coming only 40 minutes after Cactus Amour had produced the fastest.

The previous fastest time run by a West Indian-bred three-year this season was a full two seconds slower and was registered on May 8 when Go For The Gold prevailed by over 17 lengths. To put into perspective how fast Back On Top ran, the Terrance Thomas-trained dark bay colt stopped the clock 2/5th of a second faster than the very Cactus Amour had done when he completed a hat-trick of wins on the same May 8. And we all know that First Citizens Gold Cup runner-up Cactus Amour is the only horse to beat the sensational Bruceontheloose in Trinidad. Favourite Silent Reproach, who finished third in the Carib Brewery Guineas and Midsummer Classic two years ago, came from way back to beat Special Ramsom and Gold Bead and prevent the West Indian-bred three-year-olds from sweeping the first three places on the board in the curtain event. Silent Reproach has won four times and also finished third on four occasions, but it was the 11th time in his 30-race career in Trinidad that Anthony Wight's Jamaican-bred chestnut was the bridesmaid.

Back On Top, who had not lived up to his glowing reputation in his five previous starts, did not compete in the Guineas and in fact turned in his maidens' certificate in the race after the opening leg of the triple crown. But this magnificent performance definitely puts him alongside the likes of leading contenders Go For The Gold, Treasure Hunt and Guineas and Gleneagle Stakes heroine Grand Riviere in the Midsummer Classic on August 2. Cactus Amour and 12/1 shot Proud Kentuckian treated the fans to a tremendous stretch duel in the feature event with the odds-on favourite just getting the better by a head in the Stakes & Lower Handicap. It turned out to be the second fastest race ever over the very popular 1,750-metre trip since centralisation in February 1994 and the final time of 1:49.20 seconds is only inferior to the 1:48 1/5 produced by the great Sugar Mike despite toting 60.5 kilos EXACTLY six years earlier. Cactus Amour has now won four of his five races this season with his only defeat coming in his previous start when Horse of the Year Bruceontheloose beat him by a length – and in a time of 1:49 3/5 – in the Eric "Colt" Durant Memorial a month earlier.

Two races before that, the American-bred four-year-old had become the only horse to finish in front of 'Bruce' at Santa Rosa – in the Arima Race Club Cup. With the weights heavily favouring a couple of his former rivals, Blackstone Street and Chief Commander were expected to make life difficult for Cactus Amour. But they were both very disappointing. Blackstone Street, who won six of eight races on the main course last season, has not been the same since his spectacular victory in the Stewards Cup on November 21, and finished a tame fourth. It has been clear for some time that age has caught up with Chief Commander. But the eight-year-old winner of over \$1million in career earnings was given an outside chance with his lightest weight in years. In the end the 46.5 kilos seemed like a lot more as the "Chief" ended up seventh and last in the \$70,000 contest.

Proud Kentuckian also got a big break at the weights and took full advantage as Cactus Amour had to pull out all the stops to prevent a major upset. The runner-up, who came down from the United States with quite a reputation, only raced with 50.5 kilos after being saddled with 57 when unplaced in his two other starts at Santa Rosa. Two-time defending champion jockey Ricky Jadoo was aboard and was overshadowed by his nephew Christopher Jadoo and the horse he (Ricky) had ridden in four of his six previous starts. The top two are handled by Glenn Mendez, putting the exclamation mark on a grand day for the champion trainer. Mendez began his three-timer in the second race when Sound Of Thunder, unplaced as the second favourite in the Republic Bank Derby last September, turned in his best performance of the season to slam a bunch of \$35,000 Optional Claimers by four lengths over a distance of 1,750 metres. Marathon Man, the fourth-placed finisher in the Derby, ended up third, more than four lengths behind ten-year-old Super Grey, an 18-time winner who was occupying the runner-up spot for the 21st time in his illustrious career.

Two races later another talented by inconsistent Mendez-trained runner looked awesome as Music Maestro scored an explosive 8 ½-length triumph over 1,350 metres in a very good time of 1:20.68 seconds. Last year's Santa Rosa Classic winner Hurricane Watch was second in the Restricted Handicap, while last year's Guineas winner Santa Rosa looked a tired horse as he trailed the six-horse field. Although Super Grey did not enter winners' enclosure, a ten-year-old horse did on the day as favourite Naturelly Classy took the fifth event – a \$7,500 Optional Claimer for locally-bred horses – by half-length. It was the 96th start of the gelding's career and his 12th victory. And Jadoo was again touched off as his mount Victory Dance finished half-length behind in the 1,350-metre affair. Apprentice Ronald Ali picked up the "spare" ride on Naturelly Classy and went on to score with Scent Of Money in the following race a 1,350-metre \$15,000 Optional Claimer – and end up the leading rider of the day.

Racing continues at Santa Rosa Park on Saturday.