

Sunday 16 September 2018

GRUNT WINS THE GROUP 1 MAKYBE DIVA STAKES



Grunt scored a dominant win in the Gr.1 Makybe Diva Stakes at Flemington (Bruno Cannatelli)

A return to Flemington has brought out the best in **Grunt (NZ)** (O'Reilly) in the Gr.1 Makybe Diva Stakes (1600m).

The Mick Price-trained Grunt had been unplaced in his first two spring starts at Caulfield but relished getting back to the bigger track on Saturday, racing away to win the 1600m

weight-for-age race.

The four-year-old entire's dominant win was his second at the elite level and he continued his good run of form at Flemington after also recording wins in the Australian Guineas (1600m) and CS Hayes Stakes (1400m) last autumn.

"He had to stand up today," jockey Damien Oliver said.

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(Continued from page 1)

"His runs have been OK. He was only beaten a length first-up and two-and-a-half lengths second-up.

"But I suppose for a horse with the hype that he's had, we would have liked to have seen him finish closer.

"I've always maintained to Mick he appreciates Flemington so much better, the big open track.

"And he showed that today."

Grunt enjoyed a perfect run just off the pace in fifth before he ranged up at the 300m to issue his challenge.

Giving Oliver his fifth Makybe Diva Stakes win, Grunt burst clear to defeat Kings Will Dream (Casamento) by two lengths with another half-length to the Murray Baker and Andrew Forsman-trained Jon Snow (NZ) (Iffraaj) third.

The win has presented Price with a dilemma on which way to go for the rest of the spring with Grunt, who is entered for all the major races.

Price is yet to decide whether Grunt will go on a Caulfield Cup or Cox Plate path, while the Melbourne Cup at Flemington is also a consideration.

"It wouldn't worry me if we ended up in the Melbourne Cup with a lighter weight," Price said.

"All I know is he's a beautiful, big Flemington horse and it was a really dominant win today."

Bred by Trelawney Stud, Grunt was sold through their 2016 New Zealand Bloodstock Premier draft for \$220,000 when purchased by Mick Price in partnership with bloodstock agent Cameron Cooke.

- AAP

Race	VRC Makybe Diva S. Gr.1 1600m.
Winner	Grunt (NZ) 2014
Owners	R & C Legh Racing Pty Ltd, Wright Racing, Gurners Bloodstock Co, Mr R Smith, Mr G Pulitano, Mr S Tsalikidis, Mr C Cortese
Trainer	Mick Price (Caulfield)
Breeding	by O'Reilly out of Ruqqaya by Van Nistelrooy (USA)
Breeder	Trelawney Thoroughbred Ltd
Sales	2016 NZB Premier Yearling Sale V: Trelawney Stud Ltd \$220000 P: M G Price Racing/Cameron Cooke B/stock



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I AM A STAR LANDS G2 LET'S ELOPE STAKES

After feet problems ruined an autumn campaign, **I Am A Star (NZ)** (I Am Invincible) returned to winning form by the narrowest possible margin at Flemington.

I Am A Star collected her fourth victory at the track when she won Saturday's Gr.2 Let's Elope Stakes (1400m).

Trainer Shane Nichols has further black-type riches in mind for the mare in coming months culminating in the Myer Classic (1600m) at Flemington, a race she won in 2016.

Ridden by Ben Melham, I Am A Star outbobbed Bella Martini (Stratum) on the line to score by a nose.

Nichols explained I Am A Star has shelly feet and developed a splint-bone injury that forced her to miss the autumn

after a successful spring last year.

He said owner Mathew Sandbloom had given the go ahead for a spring campaign although the mare could have been sent off to the breeding barn if her form didn't warrant racing on.

"We were run-to-run in the first part of the prep because we had time," Nichols said.

"If she had a run or two and she failed, we could still send her to stud."

Nichols is planning on returning to Moonee Valley for the Stocks Stakes (1600m), a race she won last year, on September 28 after which he'll make a decision on which way to head into the Myer Classic.

"The only thing we need to think about is where we go after the Stocks Stakes into the Myer," Nichols said.

"Do we run in the Toorak or do we wait and go straight into the Myer.

"Ideally I would like to try her at a mile and a quarter (2000m) at the end of the Flemington carnival, but let's just go one step at a time."

-AAP

Race	VRC Let's Elope S. Gr.2 1400m.
Winner	I Am a Star (NZ) 2013
Owners	Mr M B Sandblom
Trainer	Shane Nichols (Morningson)
Breeding	by I Am Invincible (AUS) out of Star Band (USA) by Dixieland Band (USA)
Breeder	Eales Racing Pty Ltd
Sales	2014 NZB Weanling; Broodmare & Mixed Bloodstock Sale; V: Rich Hill Stud, P: Llanhennock Trust; \$12,000



Perseverance pays off with I Am A Star who won the Gr.2 Let's Elope Stakes at Flemington (Bruno Cannatelli)





WIDE RUN NO BARRIER **FOR SHE'S POPPY**



She's Poppy stretches her neck to snatch victory at Awapuni (Peter Rubery, Race Images Palmerston North)

Wanganui raider **She's Poppy (NZ)** (Alamosa) overcame a horror trip in transit to claim her biggest victory on Saturday when she prevailed in the Gr.3 Boehringer Ingelheim 1550 at Awapuni.

The lightly raced seven-year-old has raced exclusively in stakes company during her current campaign with a win first-up at Awapuni in the Listed Rangitikei Gold Cup (1550m) followed by a runner-up finish on her home track in the Listed Ag Challenge Stakes (1590m) in June. Following a brief let-up, she tackled the Gr.3 Winter Cup (1600m) at Riccarton last month where she produced another game effort when placed second behind Platinum Command.

Allowed plenty of time to get over the Riccarton exertions, trainer Raymond Connors had his charge in tip-top condition for her Awapuni assignment where she proved too tough in a driving finish, despite having to sit three-wide throughout the contest.

With regular pilot Shaun McKay in the saddle the Alamosa mare called on all her reserves to put her head in front where it counted as she out-finished the well supported pair of Art Deco (NZ) (Road To Rock) and Dez (NZ) (Zed) who filled the minor placings.

"I've never ridden a horse with a heart that size, she really tries," McKay said after the race.

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WIDE RUN NO BARRIER **FOR SHE'S POPPY**

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"I probably didn't get the best run but where she was she was travelling nicely. I got the roll when I wanted it and that last 100m she really tried to win.

"When she's fresh you know she's going to be hard to beat."

Connors agreed that spacing the mare's runs was the key to her success.

"She's had a great winter and is a good mare," he said.

"We seem to have worked her out and she definitely races better that way (fresh) with space.

"Everything has worked out to plan and it's all come together."

A \$40,000 purchase from the Venture Thoroughbreds Ltd.

draft at the 2013 New Zealand Bloodstock Ready To Run Sale, She's Poppy has now won eight of her 28 career starts and just over \$214,000 in prizemoney.

– NZ Racing Desk

Race	Boehringer Ingelheim Gr.3, 1550m
Winner	She's Poppy (NZ) 2011
Owners	Raymond, Mark & Eris Connors
Trainer	Raymond Connors (Wanganui)
Breeding	by Alamosa out of Cassandra by Centro
Breeder	R J Cottle
Sales	2013 Ready To Run Sale of 2yos; V: Venture Thoroughbreds, P: Phill Cataldo Bloodstock; \$40,000

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TILEY PICKS RIGHT OPTION FOR EXCITING FILLY

Pukekohe trainer Nigel Tiley's decision to take his exciting three-year-old **Melt (NZ)** (Iffraaj) back to Ruakaka on Saturday paid off handsomely when she dealt to her rivals in the Gr.3 Cambridge Stud Northland Breeder's Stakes (1200m).

The Iffraaj filly had opened her current campaign with a hollow win over 1000m at the venue a fortnight ago. With the Gr.1 Gavelhouse.com New Zealand 1000 Guineas (1600m) as her major spring target, Tiley began tossing up as to whether the Ruakaka contest was a better option for her next run as opposed to a lengthy trip away to the Gr.3 Hawke's Bay Breeder's Gold Trail Stakes (1200m) at Hastings next weekend.

In the end Tiley plumped for Ruakaka and Melt didn't let him down as she exploded through a yawning gap on the rails in the home straight to dash away to an effortless one and a half-length victory.

"We were tossing up whether to come up here or go to Hawkes Bay next week," Tiley said.

"In the end it's a six-hour round trip up here or a twelve-hour round trip down there.

"Christchurch is where we want to be, so we will take her home and decide where we are going to go from here, but Christchurch is going to be the grand finale."

Tiley admitted there was plenty of confidence in the camp around the filly's chances after the improvement she had shown from her first-up effort.

"She didn't get the best of runs early but she got a nice split at the top of the straight," he said.

"I knew how much that other race had brought her on so to be honest I was pretty confident she could do it today."



Rider Sam Spratt has reason to smile as she guides Melt home at Ruakaka (Trish Dunell)

There was near sensation before the start of the race when pre-post favourite Sword Of Osman (NZ) (Savabeel) proved fractious in the barrier which forced a vet inspection to be conducted before he was passed fit to start.

That stir-up proved his undoing as he faded noticeably in the home straight to finish mid-field after issuing a brief challenge on the point of the home turn.

– NZ Racing Desk

Race	Cambridge Stud Northland Breeders' Stakes Gr.3 1200m
Winner	Melt (NZ) 2015
Owners	Andrew Fowler
Trainer	Nigel Tiley (Pukekohe)
Breeding	by Iffraaj (GB) out of Ticklish by Maroof (USA)
Breeder	C J Cochrane & W A Fowler





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BRUTAL TOUGHS OUT FIGHTING FLEMINGTON WIN

A number of options are on the table for **Brutal (NZ)** after the O'Reilly colt remains unbeaten with another fighting win at Flemington.

After chasing down the leader at Moonee Valley last month, Brutal lead from the outset to claim his first 1400m victory in the Antler Luggage Plate on Saturday.

Pushed along from his inside draw by Dwayne Dunn, Brutal,

Race	VRC Antler Luggage Plate L. 1400m
Winner	Brutal (NZ) 2015
Owners	R & C Legh Racing (Mgr: R P Legh), Pulitano Thoroughbreds (Mgr: G Pulitano), B & C Thoroughbreds (Mgr: B A Dorman), S J & Mrs D L Bates, H J Chapman, Mrs J S Willis, D V Russo & Gurners Bloodstock (Mgr: M Ramsden)
Trainer	Michael, John & Wayne Hawkes (Flemington)
Breeding	by O'Reilly out of Alberton Princess by Golan (IRE)
Breeder	Mrs R Kerr-Taylor & Mrs A K Storey
Sales	2017 National Yearling Sale – Premier Sale; V: Mapperley Stud, P: Hawkes Racing; \$220,000

the \$2.90 favourite, fought back after being headed by runner-up Leonardo Da Hinch (Hinchinbrook) to win by a half-head.

Co-trainer Wayne Hakes said a decision was likely on Monday in which direction the stable takes with the three-year-old they purchased out of Mapperley Stud's New Zealand Bloodstock Premier yearling draft for \$220,000.

Options include backing up next Saturday in the Golden Rose at Rosehill, pressing on towards the Caulfield Guineas (1600m) or freshening for the Coolmore Stud Stakes (1200m) at Flemington in November.

Hawkes even indicated the stable could send the colt for a spell.

"Those races are there and they're very tempting, but we're going to let him tell us what he wants to do," Hawkes said.

"It's his first prep and he's going to be a hell of a horse in the autumn."

Hawkes said Brutal had to do it the tough way on Saturday by leading and racing into a fierce headwind.



"You don't make excuses when they win and that is what he is, a winner," Hawkes said.

"He's not the fully furnished racehorse but he's had three starts for three wins.

"He's won a stakes race over 1400 metres at Flemington, so for where he is at this stage of his career, it doesn't get any better."

-AAP

Brutal (yellow cap) remains unbeaten with victory at Flemington on Saturday (Bruno Cannatelli)





THE KING REIGNS SUPREME AT AWAPUNI

Promising galloper **King Cougar (NZ)** (Alamosa) delivered an emphatic statement to those who questioned his credentials on firmer ground when he stormed to victory on his home turf on Saturday.

The Awapuni local has fashioned a more than useful record to date on mainly wet tracks with four wins and three placings from just nine starts. His only failure came when he finished last at Otaki in December on a Good3 rated surface which had some pundits questioning whether he was as effective on better going.

Although successful on a Slow9 track at Riccarton last month, trainer Mike Breslin believed his charge had strengthened further since then and would prove highly competitive in Saturday's rating 82 1200m event that was contested on a rapidly improving Slow7 surface.

Handled confidently by Johnathan Parkes, King Cougar stalked pacemakers Gift Of Power (NZ) (Power) and Manhattan Street (Manhattan Rain) throughout before bursting to the lead with 200m to run. Gift Of Power rallied gamely but King Cougar had momentum on his side as he fought off her challenge to nail a telling victory.

"I've just been loving the progress he has made since he came back from Christchurch," Breslin said.

"His work has been super and I was half-pie expecting what he did today, although against one like Gift Of Power you never quite know.

"I think this horse is going to be



King Cougar (left) wins a titanic struggle with Gift Of Power at Awapuni (Peter Rubery, Race Images Palmerston North)

some miler in the autumn next year."

Breslin believes that the patient approach he has adopted with the Alamosa five-year-old will reap plenty of benefits in the future although he does have in mind a greater challenge for his charge as early as next month.

"He's just a horse that does what the rider wants," he said.

"He's learning his trade and I think he is a very talented horse.

"We've taken our time and I think we are going to be repaid in bucket loads.

"I'll see what the track conditions are like the last day at Hawkes Bay, and how he does, as to whether he can step up to that Group Three race on the minimum, but it will depend on

how he does between now and then."

That race is the Gr.3 Red Badge Spring Sprint (1400m) at Hastings on October 6 which is the one of the feature events on the last day of the Hawkes Bay Spring Carnival.

– NZ Racing Desk

Race	Pilet Contracting/Pioneer Seeds 1200m
Winner	King Cougar (NZ) 2013
Owners	Pee Gee & W J Bloodstock Ltd, R W Potter & Wellfield Holdings Ltd
Trainer	Mike Breslin (Awapuni)
Breeding	by Alamosa out of Red Cougar (AUS) by Lion Heart (USA)
Breeder	M J Morton, Pee Gee & W J Bloodstock Ltd & R W Potter





ALL FUN AND GAIN FOR GRAY'S NEWCOMER

Newcomer **No Fun No Gain (NZ)** (Pins) lived up to his solid barrier trial form and \$15 favourite tag with a gutsy winning debut in the S\$85,000 Restricted Maiden race over 1200m on Friday night.

A NZ\$130,000 purchase as a yearling from the 2017 New Zealand Bloodstock Premier draft of Rich Hill Stud, the three-year-old colt by Pins had to contend with a wide alley (nine), but as he mustered early speed on the outside, he just kept rolling to eventually take up the running without burning too much petrol.

Shamarman (Shamardal), who flew the lids and then tried to stack up the speed, handed up the lead when No Fun No Gain came upsides three wide at the 750m mark.

Keeping up a steady pace, No Fun No Gain pressed on and was the first to greet the judge at the corner, but was soon set upon by second fancy Mach (Casino Prince) and Trapio (Shamus Award).

How he would handle the pressure was the real acid test, but No Fun No Gain showed he had been well prepared for that first assignment, topped off no doubt by his winning barrier trial on August 30.

A picture of resilience inside the last furlong, he held his two challengers safely at bay, going on to score by half-a-length from Mach with Trapio third another 1 ¾ lengths away. The winning

time was 1min 10.33secs for the 1200m on the Short Course.

Winning trainer Stephen Gray said he bought No Fun No Gain himself with his eventual Australian owners deciding to make him the trainer as well.

"I bought him as a yearling, and the owners are a group from Australia who decided to keep him to themselves and send him up in Singapore to see how he goes," said the Kiwi handler.

"If he goes okay, they might send more over. So, it's quite exciting the horse won first-up tonight.

"The thing is he's a bull and I was a bit nervous he might be naughty at his first race. He jumped so good that Dan had no other choice to go forward.

"The horse then went through his gears in the straight to win a nice race."

Moor confirmed that No Fun No Gain was blessed with ability, but was

not quite the finished article yet.

"I wanted to ride him cold and educate him at his first run, but he got a bit stirred up in the early stages," said the Australian jockey.

"I was comfortable just getting him to the front and he hit the line very well in the straight. He still needs a lot of education and he could potentially become a very nice horse."

-STC

Race	STC Restricted Maiden 1200m
Winner	No Fun No Gain (NZ) 2015
Owners	Go Go Racing Stable
Trainer	Stephen Gray (Singapore)
Breeding	by Pins (AUS) out of J'Lo by Unbridled's Song (USA)
Breeder	B W & Mrs N K Blatch
Sales	2017 National Yearling Sale – Premier Sale; V: Rich Hill Stud, P: Mr S Gray; \$130,000



No Fun No Gain makes a flying start to his Singapore career with a debut win on Friday night (STC)

