VDJ2018

THOUGHTS

The Favourite



African Night Sky has been favourite in the July betting ever since it opened in January. That's on the strength of his close-up finish in the Met in Cape Town last January. But can the form of that race be taken at face-value, given subsequent runs of other close-up finishers? He's about 2/1 in the betting at time of writing. July-winners in the last three years started at 20/1, 22/1 and 17/1...

The Great Trainer

Yakeen is a winner of four races in just six lifetime starts. The Australian import tries the distance for the first time, and carries more weight than he should under true handicap conditions. But he's trained by Mike de Kock, which will be a big factor for many punters.

THE CHAMPION JOCKEY Tilbury Fort is stable companion to Matage

companion to Matador

Man, and will be ridden by this season's Champion Jockey-elect Lyle Hewitson. Both horse and jockey are in great form, and his 20/1 odds look tantalizing.

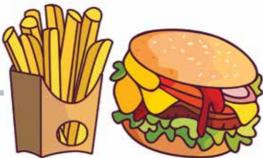
The Top Rated

Matador Man is Sporting Post's top-rated best-handicapped July runner, and showed his wellbeing at the public July-gallops last week. Against him is that he's not certain to stay the 2200m distance of the big race. He's drawn



The Classic

Sean Tarry, reigning SA champion trainer and former SA champion jockey S'manga Khumalo are the only combination in Saturday's lineup with a July win to their credit. That was with Heavy Metal in 2013. Can the SP top-rated Matador Man give the duo a double?





The Stars Of The Saddle

Piere Strydom(Abashiri) and Anton Marcus (Do It Again) are the winningmost July jockeys in the field. Marcus first won it in 1993 on Dancing Duel and his last win was in 2007 with Hunting Tower. He may thus be a bit hungrier than Strydom, who picked up his maiden July in 1996 on London News, but has won it twice in the last six years - on Pomodoro (2012) and also The Conglomerate (2016).

THE CHAMPION SIRE

Silvano, dual SA Champion Sire, has two representatives in the big race – 5yo gelding Elusive Silva and the mare Star Express. The son of Lomitas has 4 July winners to his credit in the shape of Bold Silvano (2010), Heavy Metal (2013), Power King (2015) and Marinaresco (2017). Silvano also produced



The Fairer

Ipi Tombe was the first of a trio of the fairer sex to win the July this century. She won for Mike de Kock and Kevin Shea in 2002. In 2008 Dancer's Daughter dead-heated with Pocket Power for Justin Snaith and Bernard Fayd'herbe. Igugu won for the irrepressible De Kock and Anthony Delpech in 2011. None of the three were bred in SA! Can local lasses Star Express, Fiorella or Secret Potion break the ice on Saturday?

The Lucky

Mike de Kock leads the 2018 Iuly charts where the race has been won 12 times between the total of 13 trainers who could saddle runners on Saturday. De Kock (4), Sean Tarry (2), Justin Snaith (2), Geoff Woodruff (2), Glen Kotzen (1) and Candice Bass-Robinson (1) are the past winners of Africa's Greatest.