

VDJ2018

BIG RACE 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 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 wide, but is a notoriously slow beginner, so the draw will not be of consequence. If the slow pace, predicted by many, materializes he might well outspurt them all – assuming that he's not too far back. Worth a chance at 25/1.



Matador Man

The Classic Combo

Sean Tarry, reigning SA champion trainer and former SA champion jockey S'manga Khumalo are the only combination in Saturday's line-up 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 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 trifecta in 2015. Can the Maine Chance flagbearer make it a fifth July?



Power King – 2015 winner

The Fairer Sex

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-headed with Pocket Power for Justin Snaith and Bernard Fayd'herbe. Igugu won for the irrepressible De Kock and Anthony Delpuch 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

13

Mike de Kock leads the 2018 July 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.

