

A Regal Affair To Write Home About

MRS DECORUM

Ready, set, go... Like a frenzied fowl abruptly weaned from its dam, the scramble to the final preparations for the 159th L'Ormarins Queen's Plate Racing festival had begun.

Okay, I must admit, the fundamental preparations had been made weeks in advance, but how could I resist the excitement-induced, and possibly self-created, panic of designing and creating an ensemble to honour the royal patronage that epitomises this prestigious occasion. So, there I was, less than twenty-four hours before my flight was due to depart into the fragrant blue and white clouds, with a blue feather clutched in my one hand, a needle in the other and a string of thread hanging from my pursed lips, ready to add a touch of magic to the fascinator that would create an allure of royalty to my ensemble.

As I skillfully attached the feathers and tidied the mane of my fascinator, ironed out the creases from my silken coat, and laid out the perfect shods for my hoofs, it was finally time to pack my saddle and head to my stable for some rest.

Following what felt like a split second after I had dozed off, the sound of my alarm rattled in my ears and reality slowly began unveiling itself. I had fallen victim to excitement-induced insomnia. In anticipation of the events to come, I found myself wobbling drunkenly out of bed and making a beeline for the shower.

The experience of gearing up into my armor was magical. I effortlessly buttoned up my snow white blouse and tucked it into my high-waisted sky-blue pants that hugged my waist in an earnest embrace and, as I threw my matching sky blue blazer in the air and over my shoulders, it fell perfectly over my torso, like peaceful clouds on a hot summer's day. My navy-blue and white scarf complemented the feathers in my fascinator and the petite princess bag that hung casually around my wrist, which was tastefully adorned with precious jewels fit for a queen. If royalty were personified, I'd say it was the image that I gazed at, awe-struck, as I made my way through the passageway and past the mirrors that deliberately hung vertically in the doorway to capture my stature as I departed.

In no time, I had boarded my flight and was sailing through the blue and white clouds that enviously imitated the colours of my attire.

Upon landing, I stepped gracefully into my carriage that dutifully awaited me at the airport and I was whisked off to meet my royal entourage at the L'Ormarins Queen's Plate Racing festival. As I walked into the arena, I was welcomed with wide eyes and approving nods as a blue band was tied around my wrist, earning me a right of passage into the Stud Club. After taking a few graceful steps down the green pastures and, as my eyes pierced through the veil that fell down from my fascinator, there it was... a bed of blue and white roses, precisely laid out on the iconic "LQP" sign that was elevated on a white stage with a blue carpet that appropriately symbolized royalty.

I had seen many famous faces grace the “LQP” sign before and imagined the privilege of sitting on the “L” sign with my legs stretched out before me, then elegantly sitting cross-legged on the “Q” sign, and then leaning with my back against the ‘P’ sign as camera flashes hurriedly struck around me wrestling to capture my attention in every pose.

As I walked towards the stage to live out my long-awaited dream, I was halted by what I had imagined would be the audience designated to cheer me on as I occupied the spotlight, standing patiently in a que leading to the stage. As they climbed onto the stage, like thieves in disguise sneaking up on their target, I felt as though they had come to rob me of my long-awaited glory.

I reluctantly joined the que and watched on as they got on stage in succession, posing in and around the “LQP” sign and striking admirable poses like professional models, and it became patently clear that this game was reserved for Kings and Queens. Ace and Jack were not invited. Everyone was fit to assume their moment of fame on the quintessential stage. As the moments drew closer, it was finally time to put plan to action. Strutting as I had planned, with my partner assuming the role of my designated photographer, the camera sent blue flashlights before my eyes and I was transported into a world of glamour. Like a Queen, I had stepped up to the Plate.

Once I had my moment of fame on the “LQP” stage, we began making our way towards the Stud Club. There, we were shown to a comfortable seating area decked with blue and white cushions, where we nestled ahead of the festivities. As we relaxed with refreshments in hand and our legs stretched out before us, we looked around, appreciating the synergies that were created by the different shades of blue that interacted as people gracefully strolled past one another. It was a sight to behold.

Following our much-needed time of leisure, we decided to explore what the L’Ormarins Queen’s Plate Racing festival had to offer. As we exited the Stud Club, we were welcomed into the Style Lounge, where a lean blue and white horse statue stood proudly in the wings. Looking over at the elegant beast, I thought to myself, “coming here was the best decision I’ve taken in 2020...I have to do this again!” That thought immediately reminded me that I had to place a bet on my favourite racehorse, Do It Again. Although I must admit, I am more of a stylish socialite than a horseracing enthusiast and I spend more time planning out my outfit than devising betting strategies, I wanted the full experience at my first L’Ormarins Queen’s Plate Racing festival, which meant that I had to place a bet and it only made sense to elect the reigning champion to do it again. So, there I was, unreservedly tugging at my partners arm and leading him towards the nearest betting station.

Standing on the other end of the window, I stiffened slightly and summoned up a blankly courteous smile, “*race seven, horse four for winner please.*” I accepted my ticket from the teller like a veteran bettor and we made our way back to the Stud Club to mingle with the crowd and exchange betting advice before the much-awaited final field. Listening intently at the commentary amongst the group, I was confident that I had placed a winning bet.

Following a few anxiety-triggering delays, it was finally time to watch the beast showdown. I stood slightly hunched over, with my hands tightly gripping on the fence, and intensely staring at the gates, and as they flung open, the contenders were unleashed and, like a proud supporter, I began imperiously cheering on my stallion.

I watched him slowly lagging behind, but I was not disheartened. I understood that, in a sixteen-hundred-meter race, the last few meters could change the game. I continued blurting out encouraging cheers and I soon began to feel like Do It Again and I had become one. I was the contender and I was racing to defend my title.

I heard the crowd chanting my name, “Do It Again!”, as the race drew to its final seconds, but it seemed as though I was straggling further as the cheers grew louder. Reality slowly sunk in, as Vardy sprung to the lead and knocked the crown off my head. I had relinquished the throne.

Sanity prevailed and my defeat became clear as Vardy’s name was displayed on the panels and he was declared the 2020 champion. Although disheartened by the loss, I was still enchanted by the festivities and there was still so much to look forward to, particularly the coveted best dressed female award, which any style devotee would appreciate.

Following some banter with some victors in our lounge, we made our way to the “LQP” stage for the announcements. We watched on with broad grins as the snappy dressers in each category graced the stage and were acknowledged for their impeccable style.

The best dressed female award was the finale and, as the finalists occupied the stage, it was truly a sight to behold. The crowd could be heard contemplating who the winner would be, whispering amongst themselves and pointing out their favorites. In the mist of the chatter, the announcement was made, “... *the best dressed female award goes to Roxy!*” and the crowd roared in approval.

She walked up to receive the award, with her sky-blue pleated dress elegantly waving at the crowds as the Cape winds delicately blew on cue. Like a queen, she acknowledged the praise, as she gazed out at the masses that gathered before her, her eyes piercing from the veil that fell tastefully over her face, attached to a matching hat that she wore tilted on the side of her head. She encapsulated elegance and sophistication and the award was richly deserved.

Leaving the festivities, I knew that the 159th L’Ormarins Queen’s Plate Racing festival, which was my very first attendance, was something to write home about and as I reminisced about my experiences on my flight back home, I found myself pulling out my journal and beginning to write:

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