

HD Akavoroun caps for Maher and Payne

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AKAVOROUN and other big winners today.

Akavoroun stormed home to capture the Listed Winter Championship Final (1600 metres) a couple of hours after stable recruit Marksmanship held on to win the Banjo Paterson Series Final.

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Both horses were ridden by Michelle Payne and Maher will keep raising the bar for the two gallopers in the spring.

Akavoroun (\$6) had five wins and a second from his six starts heading into the 1600m off-season feature and confirmed his standing as a galloper on the rise as he chased down frontrunner The Cleaner (\$9) inside the final 50m to score by three-quarters of a length with Gig (\$18) a length away third.

"It's a huge thrill," Maher said after Akavoroun's victory.

"I've always had a lot of time and faith in the horse.

"His past two runs have probably been his best. He's travelled well and just started to really develop as a racehorse."

Maher and his father bred Akavoroun, a son of Lacryma Cristi, using the same cross that produced the trainer's maiden Group 1 winner Tears I Cry.

Akavoroun won twice as a late three-year-old and then spent 11 months off the scene due to "a few little issues" before starting to pick up where he left off this campaign.

His Winter Championship Final win has set the gelding up for a shot at spring carnival races.

"The spring is just about on the doorstep," Maher said.

"He will just have a freshen up and we'll map out a plan from here." Payne settled worse than midfield on Akavoroun as The Cleaner took up his usual position in front.

The jockey was concerned they may not have gone as hard in front as she expected but praised Akavoroun for chasing The Cleaner down.

"I straightened up and had a lot of horse underneath me but thought 'he has to be pretty good to be able to win today', and he was," Payne said.

Marksmanship, a former Lloyd Williams-owned galloper, was bought at a recent horse **sale** and has already recouped his **purchase** price after landing his third win in as many starts for Maher when he held on by a nose in the Banjo Paterson Final (2600m).

The Bendigo Cup could be a spring option for Marksmanship.

Pyrrolic bounces back from surgery

PYRROLIC has returned to racing with a strong win in the Listed AR Creswick Series Final after being given only an even money chance of racing again 14 weeks ago.

Trainer Mick Kent had to abandon an attempt to get the three-year-old to the Group 1 Australian Guineas when Pyrrolic's larynx began to cause problems.

"The infection in his throat started to tell and he started getting lazy and the larynx collapses so they just tie it out of the way," Kent said.

"It either works or it doesn't."

The operation succeeded, leaving Kent to prepare Pyrrolic for his first-up tilt at today's 1200m Listed race at Flemington.

Pyrrolic (\$11) was among the tailenders at the 800m but steadily improved throughout the middle stages before finishing hard to beat the game frontrunner Hard Stride (\$9.50) by a half-length.

Kent said Pyrrolic's maiden stakes win would cause him to rethink his late-season plans with the three-year-old but he would now give the Teofilo colt the chance to earn his way into top handicaps in the spring.

"He's going to turn four so he's got to go through his grades and get to a good level," Kent said.

"We'll put him in some of those big handicaps and that will be more of his go about a mile, the Toorak Handicap, if he gets to that level but there's a long way to go."

Pyrrolic's win completed a double for Rawiller after the jockey won the Silver Bowl Series Final aboard the Darren Weir-trained Refulgent.

Refulgent's job nearly done with Bowl win

TRAINER Darren Weir has one more target for Refulgent after the three-year-old's powerful win in the Silver Bowl Series Final at Flemington.

Refulgent only broke his maiden at Sandown in mid-May but today's success was the gelding's fourth in six outings and his second straight victory at Flemington.

Weir will switch Refulgent to Caulfield and step him up from 1600m for his next target, a VOBIS **Gold** race worth \$150,000 on July 26.

"Hopefully there's one more in him in one of those VOBIS **Gold** races worth a lot of money and it's over 1800 (metres), which I don't think will be a problem," Weir said.

The promising filly Dig A Pony franked the form out of Refulgent's last-start win when she swamped her opposition to win the Rivette Series Final, which prompted punters to back Refulgent from \$2.40 into the clear \$2.20 favourite.

Brad Rawiller had been aboard Refulgent in his three previous wins and adopted the same tactics as his most recent ride on the horse, giving him time to settle in the second half of the field before the handy prospect produced a strong last 400m.

Refulgent overran Turnitaround (\$16) to score by a length while The Terricks (\$31) closed from beyond midfield to grab third ahead of Artie's Shore (\$26).

Both Weir and Rawiller paid tribute to the pre-race planning from tactical adviser Peter Ellis which has helped the team to many of its 82 city wins and propelled the Ballarat horseman to a maiden Melbourne trainers' premiership.

"It's one thing thinking yourself but when you have got back-up from a man like him (Ellis), it just makes it easier going out there," Rawiller said.

Nearest To Pin springs Flemington surprise

AS the shortest-priced favourite on Finals Day at Flemington faulted in the All Victorian Sprint Series Final, it was interstate visitor Nearest To Pin who capitalised to land his first stakes victory.

Adelaide-based Nearest To Pin (\$13) defeated Le Bonsir as \$1.60 favourite Vain Queen failed to show the same dash as in her dominant win at the track two weeks earlier, and came in fourth.

Nearest To Pin's half-neck success justified the late decision by his connections to nominate the four-year-old for today's \$150,000 event over 1200m.

Andrew Gluyas, who trains in partnership with Leon Macdonald, was surprised at the victory but said it was a reward for the gelding's consistency.

"We thought it was worth a shot," Gluyas said.

"His form was good. His winter racing has been excellent.

"We entered for a race in Adelaide and didn't enter him here originally, but he came in as a late nomination given the strength of the field in numbers."

Nearest To Pin had finished fourth and second in two of the series heats.

He settled in behind the speed in the slow conditions today as Vain Queen raced just behind leader Corsica Lad.

Glen Boss asked Vain Queen for her effort around the 300m mark but she was quickly overhauled by Le Bonsir (\$12) on her inside who dashed to the front before Nearest To Pin got the better of him over the concluding stages.

Shanghai Warrior (\$10) hit the line well to finish 1½ lengths behind Le Bonsir in third with Vain Queen another length away. Boss was at a loss to explain the performance of Vain Queen, who had won by 3¼ lengths at her previous start but did rise 4 kilograms in weight in her first Listed race.

"She was going to win by two (lengths) and got beaten by three. I don't know what happened to her," Boss said.

Marksmanship on target in Banjo Paterson

MARKSMANSHIP was Ciaran Maher's sole target at a recent **sale** and the import repaid the trainer's investment after just three starts following his win in the Banjo Paterson Series Final at Flemington.

Maher paid \$120,000 for Marksmanship at a dispersal **sale** of Hudson Conway Racing stock in late May before the trainer quickly ironed out any kinks in the Galileo six-year-old.

Wins at Cranbourne and Caulfield preceded Marksmanship's all-the-way success over 2600m at Flemington, which took his earnings to more than \$130,000 for his new connections.

Michelle Payne rode Marksmanship to victory over 2000 metres at Caulfield last Saturday and the jockey earned Maher's praise after rating the entire well enough to get home by a nose over the Chris Waller-trained Sacred Flyer as a \$4.40 equal favourite.

"Michelle rode him perfectly today and we planned before the race to bowl along at a good tempo. We wanted to roll along and make it a genuine staying test," Maher said.

"We thought he was strong and fit and on a light weight and she (Payne) was able to get the job done."

Marksmanship and Sacred Flyer (\$5.50) were the first two throughout the race while Zabeelionaire (\$21) and Zuma Roc (\$4.40) finished well from the second half of the field for third and fourth respectively.

Maher said he would keep setting tougher tasks for Marksmanship in the coming months with an eye on country cups in the spring.

"We'll just keep raising the bar and just keep putting him in some races and see, he might end up in a Bendigo Cup or something like that," Maher said.

Dig A Pony too strong in Rivette final

A POWERFUL finish from Dig A Pony in the Rivette Series Final at Flemington has capped a successful winter campaign for the filly.

The Peter Moody-trained three-year-old was a well-supported \$2.45 favourite in today's \$120,000 race and powered home from well back in the field to notch her third win from four starts this campaign.

Her victory today stamped her authority during this year's six-race series for fillies over winter having also won the only two heats she contested.

While Moody is not getting carried away with Dig A Pony's off-season form, he will look to give her a chance in better **company** next season.

"A couple of weeks ago we thought she might have nearly come to the end of it but she has done well the past 10 days and done a good job," Moody said.

"We're not getting carried away with winter form but we've probably got to lift the bar a bit now.

"Maybe we'll take the foot off the pedal and chase a little bit of black type at the end of the spring, dodging the A-graders."

Dig A Pony had only a few behind her on the turn but overhauled her rivals to score by 1¼ lengths over Ardelle (\$41) with a short half-head to Cuban Lass (\$8) third.

Filly crafts Taj Rossi Series win

TRAINER Robert Smerdon has flagged a big future for Qatar Bloodstock in Australia and has played a small part to ensure his prophecy comes true by preparing Crafty to win at Flemington.

Smerdon first made the statement after preparing the operation's inaugural city winner at Sandown last month and the Caulfield horseman has now provided the team with a stakes success in today's Listed Taj Rossi Series Final (1600m) at Flemington.

Punters showed little interest in Crafty, allowing her to drift from \$10 to \$15, but backed Zebulon from \$4 to start the \$3.60 favourite while Allergic also firmed from \$8 into \$6.50.

Zebulon had little luck, facing the breeze throughout the race but had the cheek to hit the front 100 metres from the line before the first two placegetters, Crafty and Triple Gold, swamped him late.

"He had his chance but he felt like he might have felt his shins and might need a freshen up," Zebulon's jockey Glen Boss said.

Mark Zahra guided Crafty to victory in his first week back from his annual trip to Mexico.

Zahra said the two-year-old finished the race strongly while he still hadn't caught his breath five minutes after he weighed in. "I think she'll improve as she gets over further. She's got a great temperament and she switches off and hits the line," Zahra said.

"I think going to 2000 (metres) wouldn't be a problem and if she can run 2000 as a three-year-old they can usually run in the Oaks."

Zebulon's co-trainer Peter Morgan said the colt's defeat would not prompt him to change his plans to run the rising three-year-old in the Caulfield Guineas in the spring.

Blake Shinn rides treble

BLAKE Shinn has signed off from Sydney racing for the time being with a treble at Randwick in Sydney today.

Shinn, the former stable jockey for the late Guy Walter, rode Weinholt for Peter Moody, Burbero for Bjorn Baker and Rifleman for Tony McEvoy.

He heads to Mudgee in NSW tomorrow to ride four horses for David Vandyke before starting a careless riding suspension which keeps him out until July 27.

Burbero won the McGrath Estate Agents (1300m) by the smallest of margins, with the five-year-old getting the nod over Society Man by a nose.

"I was quietly confident I had got the bob in," Shinn said.

"I had to change my path during the race but he hadn't done a lot of work and I had a lap full of horse."

Shinn's win on Rifleman was a little more comprehensive with the gelding beating Nuclear Class by a length while Weinholt beat Dowdstown Charlie by a short neck.

Shinn and Tye Angland dominated the program with the latter also racking up a treble for premier trainer Chris Waller.

Shinn's Weinholt win starts new phase

BLAKE Shinn has begun a new phase of his career, kicking home Weinholt for Peter Moody at Randwick today.

Shinn was the stable rider for the late Guy Walter whose wife Wendy sent out the last runners in the family name a week ago. Weinholt is trained by Moody who has stables in both Melbourne and Sydney with the three-year-old travelling north late in the week.

Shinn brought the recently-gelded Weinholt (\$3.80) from midfield to claim the Sportsyear (1400m) by a short neck from Dowdstown Charlie (\$10).

Claire Cunningham, who runs Moody's Sydney operation, said Weinholt had always had promise.

"He is a big, strong, classy horse," Cunningham said.

"I think he has been looking for seven furlongs (1400m).

"He only travelled up last week so I haven't had to do anything except make sure his temperature was right and he was happy.

"He didn't do much wrong when he was a colt but just wasn't living up to his promise so Peter made the decision to geld him."

Shinn will begin a careless riding suspension after he rides for Warwick Farm trainer David Vandyke at Mudgee tomorrow.

"He (Weinholt) travelled really nicely and quickened up when I asked him," Shinn said.

"It has been a tough time but it was great to get a winner for the Walter stable last week and it was a fitting farewell."

Another three-year-old, Tarangower, also created a big impression with his all-the-way win in the 2000m benchmark 75. Trained by Paul Messara, Tarangower (\$10) was taken straight to the front and held on to beat favourite Pajaro (\$2.10) by a half neck.

"He is a massive unit and still six months away from filling out his frame," Messara's foreman Barry Wintel said.

"He is going to be a very serious horse."

The win took Clipperton to 77 metropolitan winners, just three short of outriding his 1.5 kilogram claim.

The 20-year-old also has an eight win **lead** over Serg Lisnyy in his quest for back-to-back junior premierships.

Waller and Angland dominate Randwick

THE Chris Waller-Tye Angland show has continued at Randwick with the pair combining for three winners including **I'm Imposing** who claimed a sentimental victory in the Shoot Out Handicap.

Shoot Out was trained by Waller to win three Group 1 races after arriving at the stable as the winner of the Randwick Guineas and Australian Derby.

Angland, who returned to Sydney in May near the end of his fourth riding season in **Hong Kong**, racked up four winners at Rosehill two weeks ago, three for Sydney's premier trainer.

Waller believes the **Hong Kong** experience has been the making of Angland who drove **I'm Imposing** (\$16) to a one length win over Single (\$8).

"**Hong Kong** irons out mistakes in jockeys and Tye has come back a very, very good rider," Waller said.

"We like to use the best jockeys we can and we are having a lot of success with Tye."

I'm Imposing almost left the Waller stable with his owners, who include racing commentator Richard Callander, considering a recent offer which failed to materialise.

The eight-year-old came back to 1600m today from the 2000 of his previous race a month ago.

"He has had a freshen-up," Waller said.

"I have always thought he is a good horse over a mile and I wanted to win a race named after Shoot Out.

"Even though we are a big stable, we still get attached to the horses, especially a horse like Shoot Out and **I'm** thrilled we have won."

Shoot Out's owner Linda Huddy was on hand for the win named after one of her best horses who now lives on her Sunshine Coast property.

Waller and Angland also combined with Specific Choice in the TAB Rewards (2000m) and Forever Crazy in the Spring Carnival (1600m). Specific Choice had not won since November 2012 and Waller admitted he had worked hard on his mental attitude.

"He was over racing, so we have had to concentrate on those shorter races," Waller said.

"It was just a matter of getting him in the right head space. He has always shown ability and now he is in the right zone I think he should keep going." It was Angland's first ride on the four-year-old and he said he had studied his races.

"I have seen his last couple of runs and he is not 100 per cent honest but, in saying that, he did a good job today," he said.

"I was in a lovely position in behind the speed and working my way up. I had cover right around the corner and he let down nicely." The treble took Waller to 153 wins for the season, 14 short of his record total in 2012-13 with six meetings remaining.

Jetset Lad scores all-the-way Tatts' win

FORMER Kiwi galloper Jetset Lad ended a long run of outs when he went within a whisker of breaking the course record in the Listed Tattersall's Mile today.

A change of tactics proved a winner when Jetset Lad (\$5) led all the way to beat his stable mate Kingdoms (\$4.40) by 1¼ lengths.

It is rare for a horse to get under 1.35mins for the 1600m around Doomben but Jetset Lad clocked 1.34.55 which was just outside Boys On Tour's record of 1.34.4.

Jetset Lad had not won in 875 days which included 28 starts of which 12 were in Queensland.

He was originally trained by John Wheeler in New Zealand but has been with Brian Smith at Eagle Farm for his past three starts. Smith has been a developing fan of Jetset Lad who had run fourth in Listed races at his other two starts for him.

"I have been more impressed with him after each run," Smith said.

"Last time Jetset Lad got too far back in the Glasshouse at Caloundra and I told Anthony (jockey Anthony Allen) to go forward and run along. This is a good horse and we will look for some more feature races for him."

Smith was also happy with Kingdoms, who is being set for the Group 1 ATC Metropolitan Handicap.

"It was a nice run and he is probably looking for further now," Smith said.

Bewhatyouwannabe (\$26) ran a great race to be three-quarters of a length back in third after chasing Jetset Lad most of the way.

Meanwhile, improving Traveston Girl earned herself a crack at Group 1 **company** during the Melbourne spring carnival with her win in the Breakfast Creek Hotel Two Year Old (1200m).

Traveston Girl (\$11) overcame a wide barrier to **lead** most of the way before winning by 5-1/2 lengths to Miss Cover Girl (\$1.80). Trainer Tony Gollan has no doubt Traveston Girl is up to Group 1 Thousand Guineas at Caulfield on October 15.

"I thought the 1200m might have been a bit short for her today. You will see the best of her at 1400m to 1600m," Gollan said.

Adebisi breaks drought at Doomben

SPEEDY veteran Adebisi broke an 18-month winning drought and in the process showed he doesn't have to **lead** at Doomben today.

The first shock of the day was when country mare Miss Mega Herz led Adebisi in the early stages of the Hardy Brothers Jewellers Open (1010m).

However, six-year-old Adebisi (\$4.20) sat second to the turn before he shot away in the straight to beat Mr Favulous (\$3.30 fav) by three-quarters of a length with 1-1/2 lengths to Lennies Choice (\$14).

Adebisi's previous win was in the Caulfield Rubiton Stakes in February last year.

He had mixed his form in his 13 runs since then but trainer Desleigh Forster was confident Adebisi would race well today.

"I know he was well beaten at Eagle Farm last start but he doesn't race as well there. We were back at Doomben and at the 1000m," she said.

Forster had simple instructions for apprentice Sam Payne and he followed them to the letter.

"I told him to jump Adebisi out and then settle back and enjoy the ride," Forster said.

Meanwhile, promising stayer Shotover River (\$2.80) will miss the Melbourne spring carnival despite his impressive win in the Wayne Wilson Memorial Hcp (2100m).

Shotover River is trained by the Meagher family combination of John and his sons Dan and Chris.

Dan Megaher said the trip had been the making of Shotover River but they would use different tactics with him this time.

"He will go for a spell and come back for some summer races in Brisbane before tackling the winter carnivals staying events next year."

Darley stallion Commands dies

POPULAR Darley stallion Commands has died suddenly at the age of 17 at Kelvinside Stud in NSW.

A son of Danehill, Commands was a Group 3 winner and dual Group 1 placegetter who made his mark as a stallion.

Among his progeny is the recently retired Appearance, a four-time Group 1 winner who will be served by Darley stallion Street Cry this spring.

Commands was among the stallions Sheikh Mohammed acquired when he bought the Woodlands operation from Bob Ingham.

He is one of only two stallions in Australia to have sired 10 or more stakes winners in each of the past four racing seasons, the other being his Caulfield Guineas conqueror Redoute's Choice.

"Commands has had a profound influence on the success of our racing team since the Woodlands **purchase** in 2008," Darley Australia managing director Henry Plumptre said.

"His consistency and ability to produce a Group 1 horse every year has underpinned the **purchase** and he will be sorely missed.

"Fortunately his legacy will live on through his progeny and we are lucky enough to have two of his Group 1 winning sons in Epaulette and Skilled standing on our roster this year."

Commands shuttled to both France and Japan throughout his career and is the sire of 1452 foals, with another 160 mares covered last season.

His progeny have so far earned almost \$84 **million** prize money.

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