

Sunday 21 April 2024

MAGICAL FINISH SECURES CHAMPIONSHIP STAKES



Moonlight Magic powers down the outside to claim the Gr.3 Trelawney Stud Championship Stakes (2100m) at Ellerslie on Saturday. (Kenton Wright (Race Images))

Underrated three-year-old filly **Moonlight Magic (NZ)** (Almanzor) employed a barnstorming finish from last to secure a valuable stakes victory when she captured the Gr.3 Trelawney Stud Championship Stakes (2100m) at Ellerslie in spectacular fashion.

The Andrew Forsman-prepared daughter of Almanzor had been

thereabouts in all of her recent racing without having much luck but ensured her maiden victory would be a memorable one in a race that will significantly boost her value when she eventually heads to the broodmare paddock.

Punters hadn't missed her unlucky fourth at her most recent start when hampered in the home straight as she

finished fourth in the Gr.3 Manawatu Classic (2100m), and sent her out a strong \$3.80 second favourite on Saturday.

That inspired support looked in jeopardy when she trailed the field in last place for most of the journey, before rider Craig Grylls got busy on the filly approaching the home turn as

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MAGICAL FINISH SECURES CHAMPIONSHIP STAKES

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she looped the field to make a long, sustained run.

Angled to the outside, Moonlight Magic produced an electric turn of foot at the 300m to burst clear and dash to a three-length victory over Solidify (NZ) (Redwood) with another Forsman runner in First Innings (NZ) (Contributer) charging into third.

Forsman admitted he had some mid-race questions for Grylls to answer if the filly hadn't been successful.

"She deserved that as she has been desperately unlucky in some good races right the way through," Forsman said.

"She is a good filly who will keep getting better.

"I had wondered what Craig was up to approaching the home turn and I thought he must have a lot of horse under him to take off like he did.

"I think they had gone steadily enough up front, and he had confidence in her to take off like that.

"It was just nice to see her get a good crack at it."

Forsman is in a quandary as to whether to press on with his charge to a possible Queensland campaign or to back off her and get ready for spring racing.

"She has had a lot of racing now and hard racing over ground, but to her credit she seems to be thriving," he said.

"We will just reassess now, see how she comes through the run and work it out."

Grylls was pleased the filly could get

the victory after being stopped in her tracks at her last start.

"Last time down at Trentham she was luckless as she got knocked over halfway down (the straight), but picked herself up for fourth," he said.

"She should have been right in the finish that day.

"I was a little bit concerned how far back I was, but there was good speed and that played into her hands as we tracked to the outside and she had a really good turn of foot."

Bred and raced by the Sunlight Trust, Moonlight Magic is out of the Encosta De Lago mare Japonica and comes

from an extended family that includes triple Group One winner Serenade Rose (Stravinsky), the 2006 champion three-year-old filly in Australia along with dual Group One winner Trekking (Street Cry).

- LOVERACING.NZ News Desk

Race	Auckland TR Championship S. Gr.3
Winner	Moonlight Magic (NZ) 2020
Owners	The Sunlight Trust
Trainer	Andrew Forsman (Cambridge)
Breeding	by Almanzor (FR) out of Japonica (AUS) by Encosta De Lago (AUS)
Breeder	The Sunlight Trust



Craig Grylls guides Moonlight Magic to claim the Gr.3 Trelawney Stud Championship Stakes (2100m) at Ellerslie on Saturday. (Kenton Wright (Race Images))





GREEN LUCK REIGNS SUPREME IN CANTERBURY GOLD CUP

The trend of big wins for lower-profile stables during Riccarton’s autumn carnival continued in the Gr.3 Coca-Cola Canterbury Gold Cup (2000m) on Saturday, where well-travelled veteran **Green Luck** (Street Cry) delivered a career highlight for Timaru trainer Stephanie Faulkner.

The \$120,000 weight-for-age feature followed hard on the heels of last Saturday’s inaugural \$350,000 TAB Southern Alps Challenge (1600m), which was won by Matscot (NZ)

(Haradasun) for local owner-trainer-breeder Sharon Robertson.

Green Luck ran an eye-catching seventh in that race last weekend, crossing the line three and a half lengths behind the winner, and he backed up seven days later and did something very special for Faulkner and his owners.

Ridden by Kylie Williams in Saturday’s Canterbury Gold Cup, Green Luck jumped from gate two and soon strode forward to take the lead. He was

able to set a sedate pace down the back of the track, and then Williams began to up the ante coming down the side.

Green Luck’s race appeared to be coming to an end as Harlech (NZ) (Darci Brahma) and Dazzling Miss (NZ) (Proisir) collared him in the straight, but the nine-year-old summoned another mighty effort to claw his way back into the lead and prevail by a half-neck.

“That was a good win,” Williams said.

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Stephanie Faulkner with Green Luck after his emphatic victory in Saturday’s Gr.3 Coca-Cola Canterbury Gold Cup (2000m). (Race Images South)





GREEN LUCK REIGNS SUPREME IN CANTERBURY GOLD CUP

(Continued from page 4)

“Steph didn’t really want me in front, but he jumped so well. I thought that if we could dictate the race, he’d be pretty hard to roll after he produced such a good performance under 60kg last week.

“Down the back, I was thinking ‘Where are they?’ So I had a sneaky look back and they were a wee way behind me, but he was doing it easily and I got some pretty soft sectionals. From about the 800m and 700m, I quickened them and quickened them.

“He got headed in the straight, but he stuck to his guns and came back. I thought he’d battle away and end up about sixth, but then I was like, ‘Oh, he’s coming back again here. Come on, buddy!’ He dug deep and got the win.”

It was the first black-type victory for Green Luck, who began his career in Queensland with three starts for two wins at Ipswich in February of 2018.

The Street Cry gelding’s next 39 starts were in Hong Kong, where he recorded six wins and seven placings. He then joined the Canterbury stable of the late Paul Harris, for whom he made a winning New Zealand debut on Riccarton’s synthetic track in June 2022 and finished fourth in the Gr.1 Livamol Classic (2040m) that October.

Saturday’s big win was Green Luck’s eighth start for Faulkner and capped a consistent run of form that featured a third at Riccarton last March, a fourth in the Listed Timaru Stakes (1400m) in January, a fourth at Ascot Park, a third and a fifth at Riccarton, and his close seventh in the Southern Alps Challenge.

The Canterbury Gold Cup was the



Jockey Kylie Williams winning aboard Green Luck in Gr.3 Coca-Cola Canterbury Gold Cup (2000m) (Race Images South)

second black-type success for Faulkner, who had previously won the Listed Timaru Stakes (1200m) with Petrify (NZ) (Scaredee Cat) back in 1998.

“This is right up there,” Faulkner said. “It’s kind of unbelievable, really. I don’t know what to say.

“He’d been in Hong Kong and won a lot of money over there, and then he came to New Zealand. We had a bit of bad luck with him last year – he went amiss and was out for five months. It’s been a long, slow process to get him back. This is a great result and I’m very happy for his owners.

“I don’t really have any plans from here. I’ll probably chuck him out in the paddock for at least a month now, and then we’ll have a look at what we do after that.”

A half-brother to the multiple Group One-winning Western Australian gelding Luckygray (Bradbury’s Luck), Green Luck has now had a total of 59 starts for 10 wins, 11 placings and more than \$1.2 million in stakes.

– **LOVERACING.NZ News Desk.**

Race	Canterbury Gold Cup Gr.3
Winner	Green Luck 2014
Owners	D Grant, C J Jane, N S Kingston, Willie Leung, J W Mawhinney, B & R N Preston, K & K S Walsh & G Watt
Trainer	Stephanie Faulkner (Timaru)
Breeding	by Street Cry (IRE) out of Damah Lady (AUS) by Mukaddamah (USA)
Breeder	Mr J Drake





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ACE JUVENILE DOMINATES IN STARWAY STAKES

Exciting juvenile **Domain Ace (NZ)** (Swiss Ace) maintained his perfect record with a dominant win in Saturday's Listed TAB Starway Stakes (1200m) at Ellerslie.

The son of Swiss Ace made a strong impression on debut earlier this month at Otaki, warranting co-trainer Graeme Rogerson to consider backing up in the Gr.1 Manawatu Sires' Produce Stakes (1400m) the following Saturday.

Rogerson elected to bypass the Trentham showpiece in favour of targeting the Starway Stakes, where Domain Ace flew under the radar in betting starting at \$11.30 on the TAB tote, with two-time Group Three performer Love Poem (Snitzel) closing a hot favourite at \$1.60.

Domain Ace was a clear last at the jump, forcing jockey Craig Grylls to track three-wide and cover the most ground of any in the juvenile feature. Love Poem loomed large at the top of the straight but was no match for Domain Ace as the gelding scorched down the middle of the track to score by 1&1/2 lengths.

Rogerson has held the two-year-old in high regard throughout his preparation and believes there is plenty more to come.

"He's a very nice horse, and still very green and learning to be a racehorse," he said.

"Craig said he missed the start, he doesn't quite know what he's doing yet, but he is something special.

"The trials were cancelled, and he had to back up, so we didn't go to the Group One, but I think he's well and truly up to that company."

Rogerson plans to press onto the Listed Waikato

Veterinary Centre 2YO Stakes (1400m) at Te Rapa on May 4, with the Listed Staphanos At Novara Park Champagne Stakes (1600m) a long-term possibility in boosting his \$67,860 in stakes.

"We are pretty confident that he's a Group horse. He's going to run in two weeks' time at Te Rapa and maybe in the Champagne Stakes as well," Rogerson said.

Out of an unraced Hussonet mare Internet, Domain Ace was bred by Gerry Harvey and was set to be sold at the 2023 New Zealand Bloodstock Ready To Run Sales by Rogerson Bloodstock.

After Domain Ace was passed in, Rogerson elected to train the two-year-old himself alongside wife Debbie and granddaughter Bailey, while retaining part-ownership alongside several long-time clients including Merv and Meg Butterworth and Craig Leishman.

- LOVERACING.NZ News Desk

Race	Auckland TR Star Way S. L
Winner	Domain Ace (NZ) 2021
Owners	GA Rogerson MNZM, M & MT Butterworth, CA Leishman, L & B Gurney
Trainer	Team Rogerson (Tuhikaramea)
Breeding	by Swiss Ace (AUS) out of Internet (AUS) by Hussonet (USA)
Breeder	G Harvey



Domain Ace sprints clear to score in Saturday's Listed TAB Starway Stakes (1200m) at Ellerslie. (Kenton Wright (Race Images))





SOUTHERN RAID PRODUCES BLACK-TYPE GOLD FOR SASSY MERLOT

An autumn trip to Canterbury has turned out to be career-defining for Matamata mare **Sassy Merlot (NZ)** (Burgundy), who added a valuable black-type win to her record in Saturday's Listed Daphne Bannan Memorial Great Easter Stakes (1400m) at Riccarton.

A placegetter in the Gr.2 Wellington Guineas (1400m), Gr.3 Desert Gold Stakes (1600m) and Gr.3 Rotorua Stakes (1400m) as a three-year-old, Sassy Merlot had struggled to find her best form through her four and five-year-old seasons.

An encouraging third at Hastings on February 28 led to co-trainer Pam Gerard sending her down south, where she finished a close fifth in a 1400m open handicap at Riccarton before winning in Rating 75 grade at Ashburton on April 4.

But on Saturday the southern venture paid off in the best way possible with a Listed victory and the lion's share of the \$80,000 stake.

"She's been a tough horse all the way through," Gerard said. "It's just a little bit harder up north, especially when you get tracks that aren't quite to suit. I'm really pleased now that we talked the owners into coming down.

"She's come down here and had one-on-one attention over the last few weeks. Richie (Fallon) has just done the most amazing job and got her back into form.

"The Breeders' Stakes (Gr.3, 1600m) was originally the target, but she just didn't travel down all that well and we weren't sure about the distance. She had a nice run over 1400m instead, then went to Ashburton and won there and boosted her confidence.

"When I saw her after I got off the plane this morning, I thought she'd just gone to another level."

But even the most resurgent racehorses still need things to go to plan once the gates open, and rider Lisa Allpress had some nervous moments in the early part of Saturday's race. A slow start made Sassy Merlot's customary front-running tactics impossible, and she instead took up a position in midfield.

Allpress trucked up in Our Echo's (NZ) (Echoes Of Heaven) slipstream coming up to the home turn, then switched to the outside and asked Sassy Merlot to quicken. The response was immediate and Sassy Merlot swept to the lead with more than 300m remaining, then kept finding enough down the long Riccarton straight to turn back the late challenges of Third Decree (NZ) (War Decree) and Millefiori (NZ) (Iffraaj) and win by a length.

"That was a strong performance," Allpress said. "My



Sassy Merlot powers home to score a valuable victory in Saturday's Listed Daphne Bannan Memorial Great Easter Stakes (1400m) at Riccarton. (Ajay Berry (Race Images South))

instructions went out the window a few seconds before we jumped. She was just standing there like a statue, and I knew she wasn't going to jump well. There wasn't much I could do about it at that stage.

"I was supposed to ride her forward, but I had no choice but to go back and get some cover, then try to find a nice back to follow into the race. It all worked out nicely in the end and she kicked really well.

"Her last-start win was phenomenal, and I knew she had that residual fitness on her side as well. When I asked her in the straight, she just shot out from underneath me. It was a good feeling."

Sassy Merlot was bred by Advantageous Ventures Ltd, who offered her in Book 3 of Karaka 2020. The daughter of Burgundy was bought for \$24,000 by Paul Moroney Bloodstock and Ballymore Stables, and her 28-start career has now produced five wins, seven placings and \$181,145.

– **LOVERACING.NZ News Desk.**

Race	CJC Great Easter S. L
Winner	Sassy Merlot (NZ) 2018
Owners	Ballymore Stables NZ Ltd, M & W Bloomfield, D C & P M Dean, J P Gray, A & J Hayne, D Lean, M N & N McConnell, A H Panther & Savvy Racing Swamp Fox Syndicate (Mgr: Keith McDonald)
Trainer	Michael Moroney & Pam Gerard (Matamata)
Breeding	by Burgundy (NZ) out of Saveadance (NZ) by Savabeel (NZ)
Breeder	Advantageous Ventures Ltd
Sales	2020 National Yearling Sales Series V: Ms A Peterken \$24000, P: Paul Moroney Bloodstock/Ballymore Stables NZ



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NO RAIN EVER TOO STRONG IN WARSTEP STAKES

Central Districts filly **No Rain Ever** (No Nay Never) bounced back from an uncharacteristically poor performance seven days ago at Riccarton to secure a hard-fought stakes victory when taking out the Listed New Zealand Bloodstock Warstep Stakes (2000m).

The daughter of No Nay Never had been strongly supported in the Listed NZB Insurance Stakes (1600m) but never really figured when finishing ninth behind impressive winner Epee Beel (Epaulette), who brought up co-trainer Michael Pitman's 2000th New Zealand winner.

Trainer Bill Thurlow was prepared to overlook the run and with apprentice Lily Sutherland in the saddle for the first time, his charge repaid that faith courtesy of a peach of a ride.

Sutherland had the filly back beyond midfield against the rail in the early stages before sneaking closer at the 800m and then angling into a gap wider out rounding the home bend.

No Rain Ever burst to the lead and despite being hotly challenged by Sense of Timing (NZ) (Time Test) over the final 100m she found enough to hold her at bay with fellow northern raider Race Ace (NZ) (Swiss Ace) running on nicely to take third.

Sutherland was thrilled with the win and was quick to acknowledge the connections of the filly and the trust they placed in her.

"I'm just very thankful to be put on her," Sutherland said.

"I was supposed to ride her more

forward but I thought I'd better not panic (when she was further back).

"She has come through them really easily and got the front too soon, wobbled around but it was a really good win.

"Bill (Thurlow) has supported me since I was a 4kg claimer and I'm very thankful to him."

No Rain Ever is a daughter of Group Two winner and multiple Group One placegetter November Rain (NZ) (Stravinsky) and is raced by her breeders, former New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing chairman Matthew Goodson and his wife Dianna Perron.

Her extended family includes a host of International stakes performers

including American Group One winners Will's Way, Willa On The Move and Tizway (Tiznow).

The victory took her career record to three wins and five placings from 12 starts and over \$136,000 in prizemoney.

- **LOVERACING.NZ News Desk**

Race	CJC Warstep S. L
Winner	No Rain Ever 2020
Owners	Goodson & Perron Bloodstock Partnership
Trainer	Bill Thurlow (Waverley)
Breeding	by No Nay Never (AUS) out of November Rain (NZ) by Stravinsky (USA)
Breeder	Goodson & Perron Family Trust



Lily Sutherland guides No Rain Ever to a hard-fought victory in the Listed New Zealand Bloodstock Warstep Stakes (2000m). (Ajay Berry (Race Images South))





DISTURBIA ALL THE WAY AT MORNINGTON

A week after his remarkable front-running heroics on Pride Of Jenni (Pride of Dubai) in the Gr.1 Queen Elizabeth Stakes (2000m), in-form jockey Declan Bates pulled off another wire-to-wire performance with New Zealand-bred mare **Disturbia (NZ)** (Turn Me Loose) in Saturday's Evergreen Turf Handicap (1600m) at Mornington.

A second placegetter in all of her last three appearances, the four-year-old daughter of Turn Me Loose dominated Saturday's A\$80,000 race from the moment the gates opened. Bates sent her forward from the outside gate and she swept across to the rail and dictated terms throughout.

Disturbia produced a strong kick approaching the home turn and put herself out of the reach of the chasers, keeping up a strong gallop down the Mornington straight to win by a length and three-quarters.

"I'm getting a bit of a reputation for this – it would be nice to ride a winner from the back for a change," Bates quipped. "But it worked out nicely for this mare today and she toughed it out really well.

"I just let her roll forward from the wide gate. She gave a good kick coming down the side and then sustained it enough to hold them out well."

Disturbia has now had 23 starts for three wins, nine placings and A\$135,480 in stakes.

"We were pretty happy to get Declan on today, we thought he could probably do the job around Mornington," said Emma-Lee Browne, who trains in partnership with her husband David.

"I'm super proud of this horse. She was up in class today, but she's as honest as they come. She always puts her hand up and tries very hard. She's as

tough as anything, loves stable life and loves going to the races. We're just rapt.

"We're taking it race by race with her, but she's in a great space at the moment, a great frame of mind, so I don't see why we wouldn't keep going in this campaign."

Browne paid just \$2000 to purchase Disturbia on gavelhouse.com in March of 2021. She was bred by Windsor Park Stud and is out of the winning Fastnet Rock mare New Age Rocka – a half-sister to Gr.1 Flight Stakes (1600m) winner Danglissa (Danzero).

New Age Rocka later produced a colt by Vanbrugh in 2022, and she was served last season by Waikato Stud's Noverre. – **NZ Racing Desk.**

Race	Evergreen Turf Handicap
Winner	Disturbia (NZ) 2019
Owners	D S & Mrs E Browne & Bruce Wilson
Trainer	Emma-Lee & David Browne (Pakenham OC)
Breeding	by Turn Me Loose (NZ) out of New Age Rocka (AUS) by Fastnet Rock (AUS)
Breeder	Windsor Park Stud Ltd
Sales	Gavelhouse.com Thoroughbred 08 March 2021 Auction - V: Rodney Schick \$2000, P: Emmalee Browne



Declan Bates gives Disturbia a front-running ride to win the Evergreen Turf Handicap. (Bruno Cannatelli)





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