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It took Saturday's Gr3 Caradoc Gold Cup winning trainer Jurgen van Heerden 20 years to pick up his first Graded Stakes success.

The softly spoken 48 year old horseman and property developer only has 7 horses in training. He did his apprenticeship with Alec Laird, and under Garth Puller and Stephen Page in the Hilda Podlas era. He paid tribute to Mike de Kock for being so forthright about the 'decent horses' that he sells on the Michael Holmes Sale. "Mike really gives us smaller guys a chance." Jurgen thanked his long serving workrider Joseph and jockey Andrew Fortune for having put in the hard work on Ilitshe. "He no longer pulls so hard. Mike said he is an 82 MR horse and that we'd have fun. He has been spot on!"

Jurgen bought the Gr1 placed Anjaal in 2016 in much the same circumstances as Ilitshe. He suggested we keep an eye on the son of Lonhro.



Hill-billy Rules, OK



The Gr3 Kings Cup at Greyville last Friday was won by Bulleting Home. This was the sixth victory and first stakes-success for the 5yo gelding, who boasts a racing-pigeon pedigree. He's by Western Winter, while his dam Kapen Cat is Western Winter's half sister, both being offspring of the mare Chilly Hostess. So cool!

Ag Shane!

Milnerton trainer Shane Humby returns to his home province of KZN this week after many years in the Cape. He celebrated in style when his very last local runner won the last race at Kenilworth on Saturday. Donovan Dillon booted Waywood home for the Super Six Syndicate. Humby will be based at Ashburton, near Pietermaritzburg.

Hunk Status?

The workmanlike champion Horse Of The Year Legal Eagle won Saturday's HF Oppenheimer Gr1 Horse Chestnut Stakes in style and after his successful defence of his L'Ormarins Queen's Plate title in January now heads for the Gr1 Premier's Champions Challenge on 6 May. If he wins that he could be the first horse in half a century to defend 3 Gr1 titles in one season. Sea Cottage was the last in 1967.

Back With A Bang

Jockey Francois Herholdt turned 43 last month and struck at his first meeting back in SA following a stint with Neil Bruss in Saudi Arabia. Herholdt rode the outsider Pep Squad to victory in the seventh race on Monday for Clifflie Miller at her first Kimberley outing. At the same meeting, Winning Form sponsored Muzi Yeni and trainer Corrie Lensley were in dazzling form, registering four winners.



Game of The Name

Some love it, others hate it but it is estimated that a quarter of the UK adult population will bet on the Radox Health sponsored Grand National at Aintree on Saturday. Most people will have a small each-way bet on a horse they fancy for no other reason than they like the name. Of course there's nothing wrong with picking a horse for that reason, as pre-race favourites have a dire record in the race. The Grand National is famed for its unpredictable nature and rightly so - in the past century five 100/1 shots have triumphed over the famous fences.

17 for Winx?

Trainer Chris Waller took Australian superstar Winx to Randwick on Saturday to give her a day out ahead of the A\$4 million Queen Elizabeth this Saturday for which she is hot favourite to claim her 17th consecutive win. The race day outings have become part of Winx's routine leading up to major races and Waller believes they do as much for the humans around her as the mare herself. Saturday's meeting is the second anniversary of the last time Winx was beaten when second to Gust Of Wind in the Australian Oaks.

Poles Apart

Team Valor's Barry Irwin has identified this year's Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe and next year's Melbourne Cup as long-term goals for their Irish-bred five-year-old Polish Triple Crown winner Va Bank. "We're going to treat him like he's an Arc horse and put him in the right races," Irwin told Thoroughbred Daily News. Va Bank rose to prominence with a ten-race unbeaten streak before suffering the first defeat of his career last October while trying to give 9lb to Polish Derby winner Caccini in defence of his Wielka Warszawska crown.

Zero To Hero



A week is a long time in racing. Ask jockey Robert Khathi. On Saturday 25 March he fell heavily from Mountain Master at his first meeting at the Champ de Mars. He was told he would be off for two months. But he was back riding work on Tuesday 28 March and on Saturday 1 April his 5 rides produced 2 winners and 2 seconds and he won a jockeys championship on the day.

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Maine Chance Farms' resident sire Silvano was represented by his 19th individual Gr1 winner when Mike de Kock's Orchid Island won Saturday's G1 Wlgerbosdrift SA Fillies Classic at Turffontein.



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Drakenstein Stud stallion Duke Of Marmalade sired his 32nd stakes winner when Flemish Duchesse (4 m ex Fabiana by Ashkalani) won the Listed Preis Des Gestuts Rottgen over a mile at Hoppegarten in Germany on Sunday. The former Coolmore shuttler arrived here in 2014. His stakes successes include 4 Gr1 winners in Simple Verse, Sound Of Freedom, Star Of Seville and Nutan.

Safe Bet

The Elusive Fort filly Safe Harbour was just edged out in a desperate finish to the Gr1 SA Fillies Classic by Orchid Island at Turffontein on Saturday, after suffering similarly narrow seconds in the Gr1 Cape Fillies Guineas and Gr1 Paddock Stakes. She has earned stakes of over R2.36 mil from a succession of sterling efforts - great value on her R180k price tag at the CTS RTR Sale in 2015. Safe Harbour has a sibling (#31) from Highlands Stud at the upcoming Jhb Select Yearling Sale.

Progress

Inglis' Newmarket sales complex in Sydney will host the Australian Easter Yearling Sale for the final time, with the first of three days of selling having gotten underway on Tuesday this week. While the new complex at a new greenfield site at Warwick Farm will obviously be more modern and comfortable, visitors will no doubt miss the convenience of Newmarket in terms of its proximity to Sydney and the airport and harbour.