

# Worthy Of Respect



by RUDI GROOTHEDDE  
Photos by MARCIE HEACOX

Despite facing a disadvantage of almost three to one against them among the total number of runners at this year's Sunshine Millions VIII, California-breds acquitted themselves well against their Florida-bred rivals at the Jan. 30 renewal of this popular annual event, which had endured reductions this year in both its available purse money and the number of stakes races.

With just one Cal-bred facing 24 Florida-breds at Gulfstream Park in Hallandale and a count of 14 to 16 against them at Santa Anita Park in Arcadia, their two victories and \$617,000 in earnings represented more than a one-third share of both the event's \$1.8 million in purses and its six black-type races.

In the points competition, the locally bred contingent were unable to peg back the 0-18 score after the first two legs of this year's series were completed on the East Coast and finished with a 17-37 deficit. On the plus side, they banked \$605,000 of the \$1,000,000 purse money that was paid out in the West Coast leg where they dominated the results in the wagering payment categories with two wins, a second and two thirds.

For the connections of the Cal-bred duo

of Bold Chieftain and Quisisana, it was a day to remember as the former won the \$500,000 Classic Stakes and the latter triumphed in the \$200,000 Filly and Mare Sprint Stakes. Winning the other race at Santa Anita, the \$300,000 Filly and Mare Turf Stakes, was Tight Precision who edged out the Cal-breds Bootleg Annie and Pretty Unusual. The other locally bred runners to earn wagering payoffs were third-placed Unusual Smoke and Dotsy Jean in the Classic and Filly and Mare Sprint, respectively.

At Gulfstream Park, the lone Cal-bred representative Tie Rod finished fifth to Jet Propulsion in the \$300,000 Turf Stakes, while Sweet Repent and This Ones For Phil were the respective winners of the \$300,000 Distaff Stakes and \$200,000 Sprint Stakes.

With an average field size of more than nine for the six Sunshine Millions races, racing fans both off-track and on-track, including 21,487 at Santa Anita, were given the incentive to boost the overall handle numbers to most respectable levels for this well-received day of racing that was the brainchild of Frank Stronach, the founder and chairman of MEC (Magna Entertainment Corporation) which own both host tracks. 🐾





## Sunshine Millions

# Shining At The Millions

by EMILY SHIELDS

Both California and Florida were graced with good weather on Jan. 30, giving reality to the eighth annual Sunshine Millions, a \$1.8 million event that has seen its share of stormy skies. Fifteen California-breds tackled 40 Florida-breds over a series of six races hosted at Gulfstream Park and Santa Anita Park. Although California's runners were outnumbered, they were hardly outmatched, and brought home two victories including the rich \$500,000 Classic Sakes.

The crowd of 21,487 anticipated a Cal-bred score in the Classic and made The Usual Q. T. a well-deserved 11-10 favorite. The four-year-old son of Unusual Heat entered the 1 1/8-mile contest riding a six-race win streak, but had yet to win on an all-weather surface. Under jockey Victor Espinoza, The Usual Q. T. pressed a solid pace early, never letting pacesetter Enriched have a breather. In mid-stretch, The Usual Q. T. stopped badly and was found after the race to have bled.

Enriched, the half-brother to dual California Horse of the Year Lava Man, maintained his lead through mid-stretch, then faltered as fellow Cal-bred Acclamation took over and Unusual Smoke gained ground. On the outside loomed Florida shipper Palladio, Canada's champion three-year-old of 2005, who appeared to be on the verge of stealing the win.

Suddenly, seven-year-old Bold Chieftain burst courageously between horses

and, in the blink of an eye, the muscular dark bay had stolen the race. Guided by the patient handling of jockey Russell Baze, the son of Chief Seattle and stakes-placed Hooked On Music had been forced to check in the stretch and then wait for a hole big enough to squeeze through. The old campaigner did so willingly, stopping the clock in 1:48.33, just a neck ahead of Palladio. The top six finishers were separated by less than three lengths at the wire, as Unusual Smoke finished third, followed by Jeranimo, Acclamation and Enriched.

Ironically, the Sunshine Millions was to be Bold Chieftain's final contest in Southern California. After winning his second California Cup Classic Handicap on Oct. 3, during last year's 41st Oak Tree Racing Association meet at Santa Anita, the burly stallion shipped back to his home base of Golden Gate Fields to take the \$60,200 San Quentin Stakes by three lengths. Trainer Bill Morey Jr., who owns and bred the son of Chief Seattle in partnership with Dwaine Hall, Langbein Trust and Kenneth Robinson, opted to send Bold Chieftain back to Southern California as he appeared to be in the best form of his career.

Bold Chieftain took on grade II competition in the San Pasqual Handicap on Jan. 9, finishing a game fourth, beaten by two lengths for the win. After that effort, Morey stated that the Sunshine Millions would likely be Bold Chieftain's last hurrah in Southern California.



**Bold Chieftain—\$500,000 Sunshine Millions Classic—January 30, 2010**

After winning the Classic, Bold Chieftain may have other ideas. Although Morey and his horse returned to Golden Gate shortly after the race, future plans have been put on hold. "He came out of the race very well, and he is going to get a light vacation with no race in mind for the future," Morey explained. One option taken off the table is a run at the Santa Anita Handicap (grade I). "I don't see the Big Cap as our next race."

The win, Bold Chieftain's fifteenth in 34 starts, boosted his earnings to \$1,406,411.

There is nowhere to go but up for the other Cal-bred winner on the day, Filly and Mare Sprint Stakes heroine Quisisana. The five-year-old daughter of Decarchy (Magali Farms) had been knocking on the door for a stakes win since finishing third in both the \$100,000 Cal Cup Distaff Handicap last year and the \$100,000 Fleet Treat Stakes in 2008.

Ridden by Rafael Bejarano, Quisisana dropped back to mid-pack for the six-furlong journey on the main track. The pair started picking off horses four-wide into the stretch, then barreled tenaciously between horses to get up by a nose over Florida-bred Dubai Majesty. Just a half-length back along the rail was another Cal-bred, Dotsy Jean, while the only other Golden State representative in the field, U R All That I Am, finished seventh.

The victory in the \$200,000 race was a long time coming for breeder Todd Gerbovaz, who suffered through numerous disappointments as horses he bred were injured or left the state for bigger purses elsewhere. Quisisana is the final horse left racing in his name in California, and although Gerbovaz sold her to Ran-Jan Racing Inc., he couldn't be happier.

"Tom Hudson at Magali presented me

with the opportunity to breed the dam, Mink Kiss, and he recommended Decarchy," Gerbovaz explained. "Decarchy was just getting started, but Tom asked me to 'trust' him."

At the time, Gerbovaz was looking to breed sprinters and primarily used sprint sires. Decarchy, a successful turf miler, didn't fit what Gerbovaz wanted in a stallion, but he went along with the plan. Quisisana was foaled at Magali in Santa Ynez and, ironically, has emerged as a sprinter.

"I owe it all to Tom," Gerbovaz said. "He knew it was going to work, and sure enough, it did. It worked out perfectly, and Quisisana is just getting better every time she runs. I'm as happy as can be." Quisisana has won half of her 10 starts with \$275,758 to her name.

Although the \$300,000 Filly and Mare Turf Stakes went to Florida-bred Tight Precision, Cal-breds ran well. The 2009 Cal Cup Distaff winner Bootleg Annie finished second after setting the pace and recent grade II winner Pretty Unusual held on for third after taking the lead in the stretch. Cal-breds You Lift Me Up, Saucy Evening and Catsalot finished fifth through seventh, respectively.

The lone Cal-bred to compete in the series at Gulfstream was longshot Tie Rod, a son of Old Topper who finished a troubled fifth behind the victorious front-runner Jet Propulsion in the \$300,000 Sunshine Millions Turf Stakes. Defending champion Soldier's Dancer finished fourth in a nine-horse field.

Nine runners also contested the \$300,000 Distaff Stakes, a race won by the four-year-old filly Sweet Repent. The \$200,000 Sprint Stakes saw This Ones for Phil engage Pashito the Che in a stirring stretch drive, finishing a mere nose apart while coming home a staggering 10 1/2 lengths ahead of third place finisher Drift King.



Quisisana—\$200,000 Sunshine Millions Filly and Mare Sprint—January 30, 2010