Thunder Snow did it in the Dubai World Cup in March. Tiger Roll did it in the Grand National in April. And now Do It Again has done it in the July.

Who’d have thought it was possible that three of the most iconic races on the international calendar on three different continents could be won by the same three horses consecutively.

Well, this incredible feat is now in the record books.

And with this victory, Do It Again has inked his name into the annals of South African racing history as a superstar.

As far as the Vodacom Durban July is concerned, it was a day of records – good and bad.

The Pick 6 Pool was estimated to reach R15 million partly thanks to a carryover. But when the gates opened for Race 4 at Greyville on Saturday 6 July, the Pick 6 Pool had reached a whopping R22 316 079. That’s around 50% more than anticipated and a 69% increase compared to 2018.
“The July is without a doubt still the only race in the country that gets everyone excited,” said Rob Scott, Betting Executive at Phumelela. “All the roleplayers in Phumelela did an incredible job to promote the raceday, and with Hawwaam the favourite, it was always going to be a race to remember.”

Of course, the scratching of Hawwaam at the starting gates had an enormously big effect on the tote. Refunds on the day, principally because of Hawwaam’s withdrawal, totalled R24 660 038 (versus R229 758 in 2018).

The bulk of the refunds – more than R15 million – was on Quartet bets.

The Quartet pool on the main race eventually closed on R9 726 489 versus R20 476 561 in 2018. But if the refunds are added back, the pool would have been R24 947 831. That is R4.4 million (21.8%) more than in 2018.

Overall, total gross turnover for the day was R122 547 509 after refunds versus R133 997 043 in 2018. But refunds totalled R24,660,038. If that is added back, total turnover for day was R147 207 547. That is R13 million (9.85%) up on 2018.

This year’s Vodacom Durban July also saw outstanding attendance figures, with a capacity crowd at the Greyville Racecourse and all the tickets for the July in Jozi hospitality suites at the Turffontein Racecourse sold out.

“All our venues at Turffontein were taken up. That alone was in excess of 1800 people, and together with the free entrance for the grandstand, made for a super vibe,” said Clyde Basel, Events, Hospitality & Sales Executive at Phumelela.

“I am convinced that the July in Jozi event is set to become one of the big racedays on the Highveld. The potential is huge.”

Of course, the big question now, is when Hawwaam will face the likes of Do It Again, Rainbow Bridge, Twist of Fate, Eyes Wide Open, and the rest of the country’s equine stars - all in one race.

With trainer Justin Snaith on record that Do It Again will now be rested until his preparation for the Queen’s Plate and Sun Met, the racing fraternity will probably have to wait until 2020 for what could be the race of the decade.

Another question which punters will only get answered on 11 January 2020, is if Do It Again can repeat his July-Queens Plate double.

No matter how one looks at it, the Queens Plate is not to be missed.

The Vodacom Durban July drew a capacity crowd this year.
South African jockey Douglas Whyte is only the third person to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Hong Kong Champion Awards.

The others are trainers Ivan Allan (2004) and Brian Kan (2003).

The South African is honoured for his incredible career in the saddle, which saw him crowned Hong Kong’s Champion Jockey for 13 consecutive seasons from 2000/01 to 2012/13.

Whyte retired in February this year as the all-time leading rider in Hong Kong with 1,813 race victories, his mounts having accrued more than HK$1.5 billion (£2.72 billion) in prize money.

He numbers the Hong Kong Cup, Hong Kong Mile and Hong Kong Vase among his several major Group 1 victories, as well as multiple wins in the QEII Cup and the Hong Kong Derby.

His first major was achieved atop the South African raider London News in the 1997 QEII Cup. Soon after, Whyte and his family made Hong Kong their permanent home and he went on to partner some of Hong Kong’s biggest names, the likes of Oriental Express, Ambitious Dragon, Indigenous, Akeed Mofeed and Glorious Days.

He officially commences his new career as a Hong Kong Jockey Club licensed trainer in July and trains out of Sha Tin’s Olympic Stables.
Hong Kong offers R2.36 billion for 2019/20 season

Total prize money for the 2019/20 season’s 88 meetings at Sha Tin and Happy Valley is up by 6.5% on the 2018/19 season to HK$1.3 billion (R2.36 billion).

Lucrative increases to FWD Champions Day’s three Group 1 races and the BMW Hong Kong Derby feature among the Hong Kong Jockey Club’s upward adjustments.

The FWD Champions Day fixture has proven to be a huge success in two editions so far. In keeping with its world class status, the G1 FWD Queen Elizabeth II Cup (2000m) has received a HK$1 million (R1.82 million) boost and will be worth HK$25 million (R45.45 million) in 2020; the G1 FWD Champions Mile (1600m) is up HK$2 million (R3.64 million) to HK$20 million (R36.36 million); and the G1 Chairman’s Sprint Prize (1200m) is worth HK$18 million (R32.73 million), an increase of HK$2 million (R3.64 million).

The historic BMW Hong Kong Derby is Hong Kong’s most important domestic contest and will be worth HK$20 million (R36.36 million), a HK$2 million (R3.64 million) increase on the 2019 renewal.

Andrew Harding, Executive Director, Racing, at the Hong Kong Jockey Club said: “FWD Champions Day has proven to be an excellent addition to Hong Kong’s world-class portfolio of elite events. The Hong Kong Jockey Club never rests on its laurels though, and, with a view to enhancing the success of the first two Champions Days, we have increased the value of all three Group 1 races to align with the increases we made to our four LONGINES Hong Kong International Races ahead of the 2018/19 season.

“It is important that we maintain our prize money at levels commensurate with our positioning in the top echelon of racing worldwide. Hong Kong now has the world’s two most lucrative turf sprint G1 races and the two races with the biggest purses at a mile, as well as the richest and the third most lucrative 2000-metre turf contests. This emphasises the Jockey Club’s unwavering commitment to top class international racing.”

Harding also noted the importance of the prize money increases to Hong Kong’s domestic races.

“Our owners invest heavily to bring high-quality horses to Hong Kong, which underpins our world-class racing. It is important that they are rewarded for their investments and this is reflected in the rises across our five classes of handicap races and the Derby. The BMW Hong Kong Derby is the race every Hong Kong owner wants to win: they scour the world looking to buy the right horse, their costs are rising in a competitive bloodstock market and it is vital that we offer generous incentives. Our purse increases, including the Derby’s new HK$20 million prize fund, are calibrated to recognise this.”

The LONGINES Hong Kong International Races received prize money increases last year and will remain the same for the coming season. All of Hong Kong’s Group 2 and Group 3 purses will remain at the same levels as during the 2018/19 season, having increased by 6% and 8% respectively ahead of that term.
Matsunyane does SA proud

Last month, In The Know reported on Kabelo Matsunyane, who was chosen to compete in the Prix Longines Future Racing Stars for apprentice jockeys at Chantilly racecourse.

Phumelela journalist Bonginkosi Nkosi caught up with the charismatic youngster fresh off his successful stint, where he did the country proud, finishing fourth aboard the Christophe Plisson-trained Egeria, beaten no more than three lengths by Espione, ridden by French apprentice Thomas Trullier.

“I came back home in one piece,” said an upbeat Matsunyane.

“I didn’t get to work my horse, but it was a really great experience nonetheless and I did my very best. She (Egeria) had decent form but had just broken her maiden and was running against horses who had won a few races.”

The Prix Longines Future Racing Stars has been very kind to South African riders, with our most recent winner being Mpumelelo Mjoka in 2017.

“I didn’t know the track or the horse so to get a clear understanding of how she likes to be ridden, I watched some of her race replays,” said Matsunyane. “After talking to her trainer, the initial plan was to get cover but I couldn’t. I was forced to sit third, two off the rail and she was unfortunately pulling hard.

“Had I got her to settle in running, I think we would have finished a lot closer than fourth place but from where we were she still managed to finish off great.”

Sadly, Matsunyane’s only other ride on the card was scratched.

The French experience didn’t end at Chantilly racecourse for the former Soweto schoolboy. He was given the opportunity to ride work for a trainer and the experience left him speechless.

“It is totally different from what we have at home. It is a must see, they work horses in the middle of a forest – it’s unbelievable. It is great doing track work there and the horses I worked had great temperaments.”

Matsunyane currently sits third on the national apprentice jockeys’ championship log and when asked what his future plans are he simply said: “Progress. I need to keep improving. (Trainer) Mr Tarry has been giving me giving me great rides of late, the plan is to win more races.”

Interestingly, Matsunyane revealed that jockey Pierre Strydom is his source of inspirations – his idol. “His riding style is amazing. Just as a jockey, Strydom is the right guy to look up to,” he said.
Phumelela’s Corporate Social Investment (CSI) projects focus on uplifting the most vulnerable communities in a manner which will contribute to their future growth.

That’s why the JSE-listed company is heavily involved in improving schools that serve the youth in the rural areas.

One of the schools benefitting from these CSI initiatives is the Walmer High School in the Eastern Cape.

Last year Phumelela sponsored Walmer Primary School with an interactive whiteboard.

In order to maintain the transition to E-Learning in both primary and high schools, Phumelela introduced E-Learning to Walmer High School this year. The educators were provided with basic computer training and interactive whiteboard functionality training. The sponsorship further included installing interactive whiteboards with speakers, overhead projectors with installation and cabling, teacher laptops, as well as mathematics software installed for the grade 10 to 12 curriculum.

The company further sponsored the school with 40 Science Lab stools and repaired their Fume Cupboard.

The total spend on the initiative this year at the Walmer High School was more than R140,000.

The key to a brighter future is education. And ensuring the children in rural areas are not left behind, is vital for the growth of the country.
In an unprecedented vote of confidence in South African trainers, two have been hand-picked to take up positions in Australia and Singapore respectively.

Former Summerveld-based trainer Chesney van Zyl has landed the position of private trainer to luxury jewellery and watch retailer James Kennedy in Australia and as an accolade to his horsemanship skills he was handpicked by the legendary “horse whisperer” Monty Roberts.

Gold Circle reported that Van Zyl will be based at a new training centre and racecourse called Pakenham Racing Club, which is about an hour outside of Melbourne.

This brand-new facility was built by Racing Victoria in response to overcrowding in the city which prevented the expansion of existing training centres and the building of new ones.

Kennedy Racing has spared no expense in an operation whose key characteristic will be Monty Roberts’ influence on the development of the horses.

All of the staff have been handpicked by Roberts.

This follows after Joey Ramsden had confirmed that he will definitely be going to Singapore.

“We are definitely going, and we are looking to open up there in October or November,” he said.

“It depends when all the paperwork goes through.

“Also, I am waiting to see what happens with the export protocol. I am hearing lots of good things about this so I could wait for a few months, certainly until Christmas.”
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