



The Grade California-Breds

by LISA GROOTHEDDE

A perpetual bridesmaid in some of her generation's most prestigious races over the past three seasons, California-bred Memorette finally caught the bouquet in Hollywood Park's grade II Beverly Hills Handicap on June 24. The four-year-old filly, whose impressive résumé includes six graded stakes placings, got to wear her own tiara at long last after upsetting the 1 1/4-mile turf test at 8-1.

The odds of Memorette stepping down into lesser company any time soon are much higher than that, however. Trainer Bill Currin, who conditions the filly for his wife, Betty, has entered their charge in 15 stakes races—11 graded—since her August 2004 debut at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, and indicated her next target would be that seaside track's grassy, grade I John C. Mabee Handicap on July 22.

Although she did not win her initial outing two years ago, Memorette did break her maiden two weeks later, and she has remained in heady company ever since. A second-place finish in the Generous Portion Stakes, followed by a third-place effort behind Eclipse champion Sweet Catomine and dual grade I winner Splendid Blended in the grade II Oak Leaf Stakes and a year-ending victory in the California Breeders' Champion Stakes, secured her the title of California Champion Two-Year-Old Female of 2004.

Memorette was winless in 2005, but a glance at the rivals she faced reveals the exceptional company she kept. In eight starts, she was second four times and third twice, earning

Memorette: Finally A Bride

more than a quarter-million dollars while running just behind standout fillies such as Sweet Catomine in the grade I Santa Anita Oaks and Sharp Lisa in the grade I Las Virgenes Stakes. She also ventured to Kentucky to try some of the spring classics for sophomore fillies, finishing third behind Sis City in the grade I Ashland Stakes and fifth behind Summerly in the grade I Kentucky Oaks.

The dark bay filly returned to her Southern California base last summer for a second-place finish in the grade II Hollywood Breeders' Cup Oaks, then tried turf and 10 furlongs for the first time in the grade I American Oaks, in which she ran sixth among 12 starters, 7 1/2 lengths behind Japanese superstar Cesario. Memorette remained on the grass for her next race, dead-heating for second behind subsequent grade I winner Shining Energy in the grade II San Clemente Handicap.

Rested for nearly seven months, Memorette was eased back into turf allowance company at Santa Anita Park for her first two races of 2006, but fared no better than third. Moved across town for Hollywood's annual California Gold Rush Day for state-breds on April 30, she found the winner's circle for the first time since December 2004 with a fast-closing victory over firm turf in the \$150,000 Fran's Valentine Stakes.

Memorette kept the 1 1/16-mile distance but switched back to the dirt for a flat, fifth-place effort in the grade II Milady Breeders' Cup Handicap on June 3, then returned to the turf three weeks later for the Beverly Hills.

Sent postward under Victor Espinoza as the sixth wagering choice in the field of nine starters, which included distaffers bred in Ireland, France, Germany, New Zealand, Argentina and Peru, Memorette rated behind the front runners through most of the \$150,000 contest, moved out in the stretch for a late rally and collared Live Life (Fr) in the final yards to win by three-quarters of a length in 2:00.16.

Former California Horse of the Year Moscow Burning got up for third as the 2-1 favorite, bringing her 29-race bankroll to \$1,305,000 in her quest to supplant Fran's Valentine (\$1,375,465) as the all-time richest female Cal-bred.

"This filly's got the best kick and when she's right, she's dead right," Bill Currin said of Memorette, who joined 1972 heroine Hill Circus as the only state-breds to win the Beverly Hills.

Bred by the Currins in the name of their Oak Tree Farm, just like her dam, Forever Fondre, by Shahrastani, Memorette has won four of 19 starts, with nine placings, for \$620,753 in earnings. She is the top female money-winner for her sire, Ridgeley Farm's Memo, a champion in his native Chile. 🐾

Grade II Beverly Hills Handicap Hollywood Park Saturday, June 24, 2006



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