



The Grade California-Breds

by **EMILY HUFFORD**

For the first half-mile, it looked as if Hollywood Park's grade I Vanity Invitational Handicap on July 7, was going to be an exact replay of the Inglewood track's June 3 Milady Breeders' Cup Handicap.

The \$294,000 Vanity's four starters—grade I winners Balance and Hystericalady, stakes winner Ballado's Thunder and the undefeated California-bred Nashoba's Key—had previously faced off in the Milady at 1 1/16 miles and as apprentice jockey sensation Joe Talamo on Nashoba's Key waited patiently behind the frontrunners, he had to be feeling confident.

In the Milady, Nashoba's Key had swung wide into the stretch and took off after runaway leader, Humana Distaff (grade I) winner Hystericalady, wearing her down for an impressive come-from-behind victory. However, Hystericalady's jockey David Flores did not allow his rival that option a second time in the 1 1/8-mile Vanity. Instead, his mount sat just to Nashoba's Key's outside, boxing her in towards the rail.

Turning for home, the front-running longshot Ballado's Thunder drifted out just enough for Nashoba's Key and Talamo to burst bravely through the narrow opening. Within a few strides, Nashoba's Key was streaking up the rail, surging past her rivals and striking the front. When multiple grade I winner Balance moved up to challenge, the game Nashoba's Key dug in, pinning her ears and lowering her head, driving boldly to the wire. She held Balance at bay by three quarters of a length, giving Talamo the first grade I win of his short career.

Nashoba's Key became the 14th Cal-bred winner of the Vanity, placing her in the same company as top racemare Gourmet Girl who won the race and the Eclipse as Champion Older Mare in 2001. It was also the first Vanity win for trainer Carla Gaines, who has carefully guided the high-

Nashoba's Key: Pure Perfection

strung four-year-old daughter of Silver Hawk through five undefeated starts on two surfaces. Prior to the Milady, Nashoba's Key had won three straight races on the turf, including the Fran's Valentine Stakes on April 29. Gaines was delighted following the win, and is basking in the glow of a bright future on multiple surfaces for Nashoba's Key.

"I'm just so lucky to have her," Gaines said. "The long-term plan would be the Breeders' Cup, probably the Filly and Mare Turf and not the Distaff. This summer, we could run in either the Clement Hirsch or the John Mabee. She's been training very well on the Polytrack here at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club."

Gaines trains Nashoba's Key's for CTBA member Warren Williamson, who also bred the filly. Nashoba's Key's dam, the Caerleon mare Nashoba (Ire), was purchased as a racehorse in Ireland by Williamson, who brought her to the United States in 1999. Nashoba's starcrossed career saw her through only five races in three years, but she won four of those starts.

Her dam Grise Mine (Fr), winner of the group I Prix Saint-Alary in her homeland during 1984, has produced six winners to date, including Pillars of Society (Ire), a full sister to Nashoba and the dam of 2007 graded stakes winner Good Mood (Ire). While Nashoba's Key boasts a pedigree littered with black-type, perhaps the most successful runner was Grise Mine's half-sister Kostroma (Ire) who set a new world record for 1 1/8 miles on the turf—1:43.92—while racing at Santa Anita Park in 1991. In addition to that feat, she also won three grade I turf events for older females.

Nashoba's Key has the pedigree to be outstanding, and her talent on both the turf and the artificial surfaces makes her a formidable foe. If all goes well, the gritty determination that carried her to the wire in the Vanity will carry the \$443,460-earner through a successful run to the Breeders' Cup at Monmouth Park this summer. 🐾

Grade I Vanity Invitational Handicap—Hollywood Park—Saturday, July 7, 2007



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