

Dream finish to dream weekend

Vivek Jain

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Vandrevala Foundation



Leadership Through Quality Communities

The Indian Turf Invitation Cup, which returned to Mumbai after six years with the munificent association of Hirco and the Vandrevala Foundation was always expected to be a mega affair; what with RWITC's splendid record in promoting its big events as carnivals and the sponsors pulling out all the stops to give the Indian Derby a run for its money in visibility and profile. The Day was a winner all the way and the universal opinion was that it was the biggest and most successful Invitation Cup ever.

The Invitation Day packed in everything that makes a racing day at Mahalaxmi so special. The quality of racing was at its best with the finish of the feature living up to its pre-race hype. Filling the lawns were many famous faces from the corporate world as the Vandrevala family, with Cyrus and Priya at the helm, played perfect hosts. And when Saif Ali Khan and Bipasha Basu

walked in before the big race as the star guests, for a moment the attention was riveted away from the show stopping action on the track.

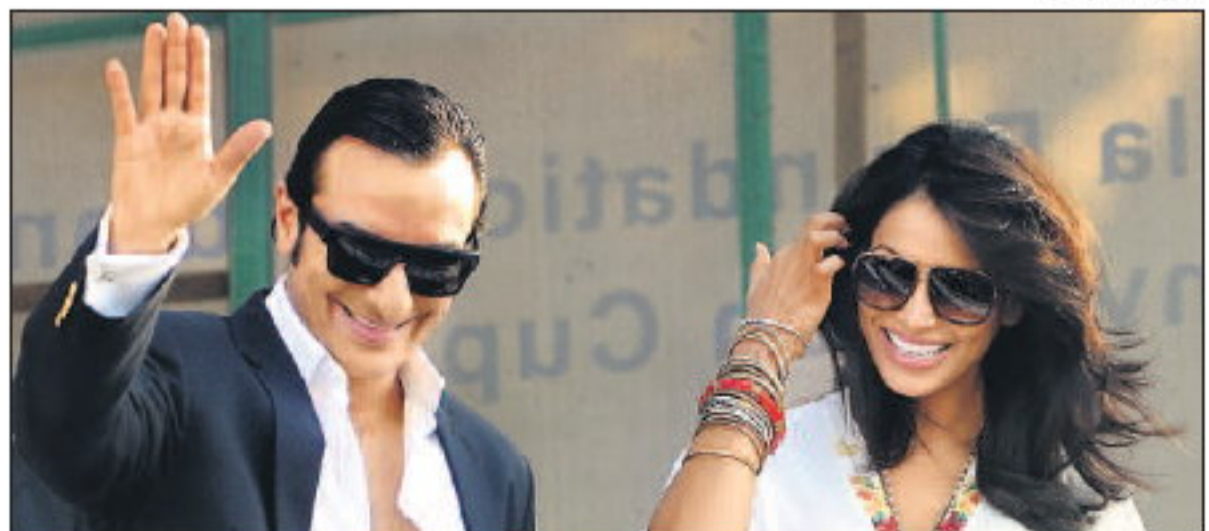
The Invitation Cup itself was a thriller and the challenger played his part to perfection to upset the champion. Kept off the pace throughout the mile and a half with a well planned change in strategy, the son of Hawk Wing came through a troubled passage to get Jacqueline on the post. It is rare to see two champion horses of such a high standard so closely matched and if they cross swords again in The Indian St.Leger on March 28th, it could well be yet another full house at Mahalaxmi.

Jacqueline was hardly disgraced as the filly, bred at the same farm — Sohna — as Becket, was having her sixth run of the season and all but pulled off what no horse in history has ever done. With very little left to prove, it will come as no surprise if the filly is now retired to the stud of her co-owners as an international sojourn seems unlikely, especially after recent happenings in Dubai.

It was a golden weekend for the RWITC. The Invitation Day attendance of 15,119 was excellent and one of the best days ever held on our turf. The cash registers jingled and the betting surged past the Rs 3 crore mark for the day which was also very impressive, as such numbers are seen only on Derby Day. The Club also hosted the Racing Awards on the eve of the Day which drew nearly 2,500 to witness an extravagant ceremony that drew applause throughout the evening. Quite easily, the best Awards ceremony ever hosted by a host centre, full of surprises and top end entertainment.

The RWITC can take a well deserved bow. A superlative race, huge crowds, innovative promotion, unprecedented media attention, and finally the pretender de-throning a champion in the race of the season. This is what makes racing the sport of Kings.

Santosh Bane



STARRY ATTRACTION: Bollywood stars Saif Ali Khan and Bipasha Basu provided the glamour quotient at the races on Sunday