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**Isn't She Special (David Allan) Wins The Villoo Poonawalla Indian Oaks (Gr.1) at Mumbai**

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## Review



# Isn't She Special stuns Indian Oaks field

By: Frankel January 18, 2014

**P**admanabhan trained Isn't She Special proved that she indeed was special when outlasting the opposition with aggressive front running and won the Gr 1 Villoo Poonawalla Indian Oaks, the third classic of the Mumbai Racing Season on Sunday. The victory of Isn't She Special was due to the tactical brilliance of trainer Padmanabhan and the remarkable execution of the same by David Allan. Favourite Circle of Life failed to break the sequence of runner up efforts and fell short yet again. The victory of Poonawalla bred Isn't She Special was also the first Indian classic success for her sire Ace.

The victory of Isn't She Special was also poignant because Captain Jamshed J Appoo who is one of the most successful owners in big races when compared to horses to winners' ratio, had recently been operated to remove a cancerous tumor. Though the operation was hardly a fortnight ago, he was confident of the filly's chances especially after the horses brilliant preparatory gallop last week that he came to the racecourse to see Isn't She Special produce a stunner despite apparent discomfort. "I had the blessings of god and scores of racing enthusiasts which was the reason why my filly won the Indian Oaks," said an elated Appoo.

Very few gave Isn't She Special to upset in the Oaks considering the imposing credentials of Circle of Life though she had found the winning post elusive on a number of occasions. The focus of betting was on Circle of Life and Starry Eyes with the rest quoted at fancy odds. The connections of Isn't She Special had decided to exploit the stamina potential of Isn't She Special and her keenness to race freely by adopting aggressive tactics. The rest fell into the trap as Isn't She Special enjoyed a good break in front without having to expend her energies and she had enough time to get a good breather and later dig deep into her reserves when under pressure from the favourite to win the second classic of her career. She had won the Mysore 1000 Guineas during the monsoon season in heavy underfoot conditions. Incidentally her dam Rain Splasher had won the Golconda Oaks.



Isn't She Special (David Allan up) winner of the Villoo Poonawalla Indian Oaks (Gr.1), being led in by trainer S Padmanabhan & Capt. Jamshed J Appoo

Trainer Padmanabhan said that the plan to win from the front was well executed by the jockey. "When the filly overtook the pace setter, she was idling but when Snowing came to challenge her at the top of the straight, Isn't She Special got down to her task and showed her fighting qualities. The filly was going strongly at the finish. The victory of Isn't She Special was also to the fact that filly has immense ability and she proved she was the better horse in fray."

Jockey Richard Hughes said possibly he could have made his challenge a wee bit earlier but said the filly did not respond the way he expected.

Venus Marina did the job of setting the pace by bolting to the front with Isn't She Special in second position a few lengths adrift while the others were more than 10 lengths behind with the bunch headed by Snowing, Circle of Life, Haunting Moments and the rest with Starry Eyes in the rear position. The first two runners were so far ahead of the rest who did not make an attempt to bridge the gap. Isn't She Special



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Dr.Cyrus Poonawalla presenting the Villoo Poonawalla Indian Oaks (Gr. 1) to Capt.Jamshed J Appoo

was given a good breather before David Allan before he decided to take charge approaching the 1000 metres marker. The filly easily passed the pace maker and was traveling well within herself coming into the homestretch. Snowing moved up swiftly and came alongside but weakened after going some distance with the eventual winner. When Isn` t She Special kicked for home, Richard Hughes alerted Circle of Life and went in chase of her. Isn` t She Special was not inclined to give up and held on gallantly by a shade less than length with the lack of wining habit of Circle of Life ensuring that she finished second best yet again. To The Manor Born was overhauled by late finishing Keukenhof for the third slot in the final moments of the race. Starry Eyes made no show and this poor show indicated that her best is behind her.

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