

## CELEBS, BEAUTY, WEATHER COME TO THE PARTY

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YEBO, IGUGU: Jockey Anthony Delpuch blows a kiss after Igugu crosses the line first in the 2011 Vodacom Durban July yesterday. Pictures: Sandile Ndlovu

Gorgeous Igugu ran her heart out in the climactic race at the Vodacom Durban July, and won the few remaining hearts she had not already captured.

A capacity crowd of 50 000 people screamed with one voice as she crossed the finish line a convincing winner. It was undoubtedly one of the most thrilling race days in recent memory, and no one who was anyone missed it.

From early morning a constant stream of luxury vehicles poured on to the race course, disgorging racegoers dressed (and some overdressed) in right royal regalia. Helicopters delivered A-listers, while government ministers arrived with full police escorts, sirens blaring.

Despite predictions of wind, it was a gloriously clear day without a cloud in sight. Excitement started building with the run-up to the fashion awards, as entrants strutted their stuff on the racetrack and cam-eramen vied for winning shots of beautiful women and their escorts.

At the MTV tent, the legendary Kevin Ellis, whose designs have won numerous awards at the race over the years, had opted to dress a series of moving mannequins – models in fantasy creations that unashamedly screamed “OTT”.



RED-DY TO RAZZLE: Nhlanhla Ndlovu and Nkosi Mbanjwa step out at the 2011 Vodacom Durban July.  
INLSA

“The keynote for this year’s July was restrained elegance but I rather fancied pulling out all the stops and this is the result,” he said, indicating a fabulously clad Janelle Rex, in peacock coloured silk and a spectacular feathered fascinator.

**Celebrities of every stripe were out in full force. Spotted at the Vodacom VIP Paddock were Miss South Africa, Bokang Montjane, Top Billing’s Jeannie D, DJ Sbu, Basetsana Kumalo and radiant Shashi Naidoo.**

Montjane was attending the Durban July for the first time and said she was loving every moment.

In a slinky black satin sheath dress and her sash, Montjane said she had placed a bet on Igugu and was elated when the filly won.

Jeannie D was accompanied by her fiancé, John Fith. She looked eye-wateringly attractive in a daring black and nude Gavin Rajah bustier and micro mini.

“I love being at the Durban July!” she enthused. “It’s always a blast. The people are great, the weather, oh my word the weather is amazing, and that’s why I make sure I come back to Durban in time for the July each year.” Fith, in a Valentino suit with a Hugo Boss shirt, is also a frequent Durban July reveller.



SHEER CLASS: Kajal Lutchminarain and Bevan Lynch looking luxurious. INLSA

**Businesswoman Kumalo said the Durban July was always a pleasure to attend because it was one of the few times she got a break and was able to see her friends and network.**

**“It’s become a tradition for me. Great company, great food and great fashion are a winning combination,” she said. Kumalo wore a black Gavin Rajah creation with matching Jimmy Choo boots.**

Metro FM’s DJ Sbu was dapper as usual in a C2 by Carducci suit.

“At the Durban July I work and have fun at the same time,” he said.

“It’s also great to see what the trendsetters have come up with.”

Bubbly Liezel van der Westhuizen, who presents Espresso, was in a dress made entirely of Cadbury’s chocolate wrappers, designed by Craig Jacobs. It was also her July.

“I didn’t know it was so awesome,” she said.

Shashi Naidoo, recently voted the sexiest woman in the world by FHM, attended without her husband. Wearing a supremely flattering yet simple soft pink dress by Pallu, she said the Durban July was an excellent excuse to party.

“I don’t know anything about horses, but my gran said I must bet on number 11 (The Apache) and 20 (Super Storm)” he said beforehand.

Irvin Khoza, Happy Ntshingila, Bobby Motaung and Roy Padayachee were sipping fine champagne and nibbling on canapés with Vodacom CEO Romeo Kumalo. Government spokesman Jimmy Manyi was accompanied by his wife Stella.

LIVE presenter Minnie Dlamini sported a cheeky outfit comprising a red bustier and lace hot pants, with lacy gloves and a pert red hat by Diamond Face Couture.

“My designer, Uyanda Mbuli, came up with this ensemble,” she said.

When hot-pot favourite Igugu hit the finish line, a huge roar of approval reverberated around Greyville as scores of excited punters made their feelings known.

Mark van Dyk, who wagered R200 on the three-year-old Australian-bred filly to run away with top honours in SA’s premier horse race, leapt into the air when she did.

“I was standing in the queue not sure where to put my money, but another punter told me he would refund my money if Igugu was beaten,” Van Dyk said. “I’m glad I took his advice. Now I have some extra cash to splash at tonight’s after-party,” said the occasional racegoer, who drove from Joburg.

Ravi Pillay from Chatsworth said he needed little convincing about the chances of Sheikh Mohammed Bin Khalifa’s horse breezing to victory on the 2 200m trip.

“My mind was made up three weeks ago that Igugu would win the July,” Pillay revealed.

“I bet R500 on this horse to win and I also won R1 838 for landing 50 percent of quartet (predicting the first four horses past the post). It has been a good day for me.”

But the result of the main race was not music to the ears of bookmakers, who had to contend with long payout lines after Igugu romped home to victory.

“There has been a steady flow of cash on Igugu since betting opened for the July. It was a bad result for the bookies,” said Ronald Rowley, an on-course bookmaker.

Predictions for the day’s takings, which saw snaking queues at portable ATM machines, put the figure at R36 million in bets on the main race alone. Total takings countrywide are expected to top R200m.

As night fell and the crowds began to thin, fashionistas hobbled back to their cars, stiletto heels in hand. Pain in the name of high style is a small price to pay to see and be seen at the July.

But in the opulent marquees in Tent City, the party was just beginning and the champagne flowed freely for the hoi poloi. In Durban, it really is about who you know.