

# Mirra shock for King's Ransom

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**WINNER BY A LENGTH:** Jockey Antony Raj guiding the Bangalore challenger Mirra to a shocking victory over favourite King's Ransom in the Indian Derby at the Mahalaxmi Racecourse on Sunday

MUMBAI: The Indian Derby, the most prestigious race of the Indian turf, has always been considered a graveyard for favourites as not many have gone on to win. On Sunday too, public choice King's Ransom met her match in Mirra, the 10/1 Bangalore challenger who slipped into the lead 300 metres from the winning post and staved off a spirited challenge from the favourite to land the coveted crown.

To avoid traffic issues in a big field, jockey Pradeep Chouhan brought Pesi Shroff-schooled filly King's Ransom from wide of the field to come into contention heading down the homestretch and that perhaps went in favour of the Arjun Mangalorkar-trained and Antony Raj-guided winner.

"There were always many issues in such a reputed race where the best of the horses are in the hunt, so I did not try to track any rival and rode as if I was riding alone," the 34-year-old Antony, who had won the Hyderabad Derby astride Salento last Sunday, told TOI.

It was the third time lucky for Antony who rode in the previous two editions of this mega race.

"It's a dream come true for me as like every jockey, I had always dreamt of winning Indian Derby," he added.

Antony had settled down Mirra in the rear bunch of contenders from the start alongside King's Ransom and Once You Go Black. As the field travelled for the final turn led by Shamrock, Antony, who was making gradual progress atop Mirra all along, hit the front and established a winning lead.

Chouhan brought King's Ransom from the wide of the field to chase the leader but failed to overtake her and lost by a length.

Trainer Mangalorkar said he had the faith in his filly.

“I brought her to Mumbai skipping the Bangalore Derby. I could have brought her here earlier but waited for her to win a classic. It was only after she won the Bangalore Oaks almost a month ago, we decided to bring her here,” said the 51-year-old for whom it was his first Indian Derby success. He is having the most successful season in his 25 years as a trainer having won four classics through Salento in Hyderabad. For Mirra’s owner Ameeta Mehra, who runs a very successful stud farm called Usha in Gurugram, Haryana, it was 15th Indian Derby success but the first in her colours.

“It is a great moment for us as we created Indian Derby history when all the first four finishers were bred at our stud farm in the golden jubilee year of its existence.”

Wall Street, owned by former RWITC chairman Vivek Jain and other partners, whom not many believed even existed in the race having available at 100 to 1 and above, finished an impressive third. It was the most successful Derby day for the Royal Western India Turf Club too in recent years as more than 15000 people thronged the Mahalaxmi racecourse to soak into the glamorous atmosphere of the big day it is known for. The ninth and the last race of the evening, the NorthAlley Million was canceled- due to smog.

“The jockeys made a representation to the stewards stating due to smog the visibility was extremely poor hence the stewards of the club, taking the same into consideration for the safety of the horses and jockeys, decided to cancel the last race of the day today,” read the statement issued by the RWITC.