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Black dress to the races

Soraiya Fuda | The Daily Telegraph | April 08, 2011 12:00AM

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Source: The Daily Telegraph

MOST girls have that perfectly fitting little black dress hidden away in the cupboard. The David Jones Australian Derby Day is this weekend and our experts say whip that black dress out, throw it on and have a great time.

But before you head out the door, here are their suggestions.

Every Friday, three fashion experts and a woman who simply loves clothes will be put to the test with a "mystery item" of clothing or an accessory - the What - as well as social event the mystery will be worn - to Where?. The "mystery" will often be in your own wardrobe or at least affordable and easily found in most shops and the event will be one which most of us get invited to from time to time. Our three experts are Sydney stylist Annalisa Armitage, designer Sally Smith, Daily Telegraph Online Entertainment and Sydney Confidential Editor Paul Ewart and fashion lover / newsreader Michelle Taverniti.

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Here are some tips, which can make you look the part at the races this weekend:

Michelle Taverniti is a Newsreader and a fashion lover.

"Well, seeing as it's the races - this black dress is your canvas - accessorise, accessorise, accessorise!

I'm imagining it's a tailored, fitted black dress - not something summery and strappy - so I'd opt for a Mad Men-inspired look, matching it with some leather hand gloves and a black fascinator, something stylish and classy.

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"I'd top it off with a bold, red lip and some smouldering eyeliner.

"I'm not a fan of mixing black with bold-coloured shoes or a bag - if you're not accessorising with black, choose a more subtle hue like

camel.

"Also, it's a must to adorn your head with something - if you're not a fan of a full-blown fascinator or hat, go for a jewelled headband or flower-pin.

"On top of the accessories already mentioned, keep the jewellery to a minimum - I'd go with a simple, diamond earring. And complete the look with some suede camel slightly pointy pumps - I've got a pair I spotted in Wanted in mind.

"If you do choose suede shoes or even satin for that fact, make sure you waterproof them beforehand and try to stay off the grass.

"If you care even a little about your shoes, you won't be happy when the heels are scuffing and getting stained while you're sinking in the topsoil."

Annalisa Armitage is the Owner and Principal Stylist for My Image Consultant. Visit www.myimageconsultant.com.au for more expert advice.

"The LBD so fabulous on some and so awful on others. - this is the power the LBD has.

"The capacity to make some look elegant, slim, classic and sophisticated and to make others appear washed out, haggard and tired.

"If you are slim and fit into the former category embrace this look, and go all out with a black slim fitting dress, black long gloves, black shoes and a little black jacket.

"Channel Audrey Hepburn with white pearls. Of course it wouldn't be Derby day without some white.

"Perhaps your headwear will be black and white or shoes, black and white or even some white trim on the gloves. If you are not slim or if your personality is more creative or dramatic than the elegant/classic style just substitute the fitted dress for a dress that suits you.

"Perhaps the 'dramatics' will wear a 'black' dress that has large scale black and white pattern, a bigger hat/more feathers, brighter lipstick, higher heels.

"The 'creatives' will have the most amazingly unique head wear (probably that they designed themselves) and the wackiest shoes. Have some fun and make this humble LBD work for you!

"If black is not your colour wear it away from the face, for instance, have a dress with a low neckline, wear sheer fabrics or have a soft white trim between your face and the black.

"Remember this is the races not a cocktail party. There is a fine line to tread here. Keep accessories simple and refined. Pearls are great. No bling."

Sally Smith is the Director and Designer of her own business called Sally Smith. To find out more about Sally visit sallysmith.com.au.

"Well, it's Derby Day and I think too many girls make the error when dressing for the races by thinking it's an evening event.

"Wrong!

"It's a serious business, day event and therefore, the dress should be a bit structured and classic, not like you're off to a club. So think fitted dress, of course a great hat, solid heels, as anything stiletto will sink into the turf.

"Don't wear anything too short, too bare or too floaty.

"Accessorise with a hat, great shoes, gloves (maybe), a great leather bag - preferably a shoulder strap to leave hands free for glass of bubbly - and form guides.

"Remember comfort is important. It's a long day and nothing could look worse than an outfit which doesn't stay in tact until the bitter end, for instance, shoes that end up being carried rather

than worn.

"So make sure you are able to stand all day in those heels girls! "

Daily Telegraph Online Entertainment and Sydney Confidential Editor Paul Ewart:

"The ultimate style perennial and wardrobe staple - if you're ever having a style crisis then reaching for your fail-safe LBD is a sure fire solution. Make sure your LBD is ultra-tailored and not fussy. Headgear is no longer a prerequisite at race days - but when else do you get the chance to wear a hat or fascinator?

"Aside from accessories, don't make the mistake that the simplicity of an LBD needs to be balanced by additional items of clothing - there really isn't a need for a jacket, scarf or anything else.

"Don't be fearful - thanks to the simplicity of a classic LBD, you can really have fun with accessories.

"Throw out the 'less is more' mantra and raid your jewellery box.

"Pearls, gobstopper-like cocktail rings and chunky bracelets will all work. Top off with a boxy clutch and sky-high heels (obviously) and you're ready to rock.

"Pair this with a simple pashmina to stave off the chills."