

TONY MORRIS



Pedigree analysis
Intense Focus

WHEN Teofilo and New Approach won their editions of the Dewhurst Stakes, we did not have to wait for confirmation from the official handicappers that they would be crowned as European champion two-year-olds. They had completed undefeated campaigns in style, and thoroughly earned their recognition. But it is a different story with the third consecutive Dewhurst hero from Coolcullen, who had only a maiden victory to his name from eight previous starts. Unless Saturday's Racing Post Trophy produces a scintillating winner, the likelihood is that the title will go to Naaqoos, who had Intense Focus back in third place when landing the Prix Jean-Luc Lagardere at Longchamp earlier this month.

Saturday's race gave us a stirring finish, and it seems fair to say that Intense Focus deserved the spoils for the courage he displayed in squeezing through a narrow gap to claim the lead, then for his tremendous tenacity in resisting the serious challenges that developed in the closing stages.

But while it was a thrilling spectacle, this could hardly be termed a vintage Dewhurst, with less than two lengths separating first from seventh, and it was unsurprising to learn afterwards that Intense Focus was lightly esteemed by the bookmakers, who quoted him at 25-1 for next season's 2,000 Guineas. He is tough, and he is honest, but his overall record does not read like that of a prospective Classic winner.

Intense Focus broke his maiden at second asking, over 6f at the Curragh, and he acquitted himself well in Group 2 company on his next two outings over the same trip, as runner-up in the Coventry Stakes and a close third to Mastercraftsman in the Railway Stakes. But he failed to match that standard in three subsequent Curragh efforts, as a modest fifth in the Anglesey Stakes, a disappointing sixth on heavy ground in the National Stakes, and a just respectable third in the Goffs Million.

He ran to a much higher mark again at Longchamp to earn his place in the Dewhurst field, but was easily held by both Naaqoos and Milanais, who had him two lengths in arrears, so he did not appear overpriced at 20-1 on Saturday, when the first-time visitor and tongue tie probably aided his cause.

Intense Focus comes from the fifth crop by the six-time Group 1 winner Giant's Causeway, who bowed out of racing with a career-best effort as runner-up to Tiznow in the Breeders' Cup Classic at Churchill Downs, his only outing on dirt. Having proved his mettle on both surfaces, with top-level victories from 7f to 1m2f on his cv, he had natural appeal as a stallion in both Europe and America, and he has duly made his mark on both sides of the Atlantic.

Hailed by many as the best son of Storm Cat on the racecourse, Giant's Causeway has since been labelled by some as the best at stud, but that tag is harder to justify, as his tally of 26 individual Pattern or Graded winners has been compiled from huge crops, and his best results have come from his first and only season at Coolmore, and his initial season at Ashford, which has been his base since 2002.

Giant's Causeway's fee in Ireland was Ir100,000gns, more than three times the price commanded by Montjeu, who started at stud in the same year. He was visited by no fewer than 181 mares, and 149 foals



Intense Focus (centre) shows his toughness as he lands the Dewhurst by the narrowest of margins

Causeway pattern points to progress

Maturing runners a hallmark of Dewhurst winner's sire

SIRE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY

Bred by Opendale & Michael Tabor in Kentucky. Won 9 (6-10.5f) of 13 starts, viz. 3 (inc. Curragh Futurity S.-Gr3, Prix de la Salamandre-Gr1) out of 3 at 2 years, 6 (Gladness S.-Gr3, St James's Palace S.-Gr1, Eclipse S.-Gr1, Sussex S.-Gr1, York International S.-Gr1, Irish Champion S.-Gr1). Also 2nd in 2,000 Guineas, Irish 2,000 Guineas, Queen Elizabeth II S. and Breeders' Cup Classic. RPR 121 at 2, 131 at 3. Earned £2,031,426.

A striking individual, and a tough, top-class performer from 8-10.5f. Big, strong, consistent, effective on fast and soft turf and on dirt. Very well bred. By a champion North American sire out of a winner of 6 Graded races from a family successful on both sides of the Atlantic.

To stud in Ireland at 4, switched to Ashford Stud, Versailles, Kentucky, at 5, and stands there at a fee of \$125,000. Sire of 5 crops of racing age, including notable winners: Aragorn (Shoemaker Mile S.-Gr1, Eddie Read H.-Gr1), Charm The Giant (Gr3), Footstepsinthesand (2,000 Guineas-Gr1), Giant Wrecker (Gr3), Maids Causeway (Coronation S.-Gr1), My Typhoon (Diana H.-Gr1), Naissance Royale (Gr2), Oonagh Maccool (Gr2), Shamardal (Dewhurst Stakes-Gr1, Poule d'Essai des Poulains-Gr1, Prix du Jockey-Club-Gr1, St James's Palace S.-Gr1), Bridge Game (Gr3), Carriage Trail (Spinster S.-Gr1), Diamond Omi (Gr2), Drilling For Oil (Gr3), Fairbanks (Gr2), First Samurai (Hopeful S.-Gr1, Champagne S.-Gr1), Frost Giant (Suburban H.-Gr1), Heatseeker (Santa Anita H.-Gr1), Niagara Causeway (Gr3), Primary (Gr3), Win McCool (Gr3), Giant Gizmo (Gr3), Red Giant (Clement L Hirsch Turf Championship H.-Gr1), Sunshine For Life (Gr3), Swift Temper (Gr3), Cowboy Cal (Gr3), Intense Focus (Dewhurst S.-Gr1). Also sire of Juste Momente (Gr1 in Australia), Santagostino (Gr2 in NZ) and Murjana (Gr3 in Australia).

DAM DANELETA

Bred by J S Bolger in Ireland. RPR 104 at 2. Won 2 races, viz. 1 out of 4 at 2 years, 1 out of 5 at 3 years, 0 out of 5 at 4 years, 0 out of 1 at 5 years. Also placed 7 times, inc. 3rd in Railway S.-Gr3 at 2, 3rd in French Listed at 3. Earned £43,632.

Useful performer. Stayed 1m. Well bred. By a multiple champion sire. Sister to Gr3 winner Danelissima, half-sister to 4 other winners, inc. Benicio (by Spectrum; Gr3-placed) and Simonetta (by Lil's Boy; Listed-placed). Dam smart winner of 5 races, inc. Listed, half-sister to 8 winners, inc. Sholokhov (Gr1), Affianced (Listed, Gr3-placed; dam of Heliostatic [Gr3] and Soldier Of Fortune [Gr1]), Napper Tandy, Nordic Fox and Raghida (all Gr3-placed).

To stud at 5, and dam of Plenty Coups (2005 c by Gone West; unraced), Intense Focus (2006 c by Giant's Causeway; Gr1 winner). She has a yearling colt by Mr Greeley.

CONCLUSION

High-class, progressive colt, sure to stay 1m, and may well get 1m4f.

INTENSE FOCUS

b c 24-2-2006

	Northern Dancer	Nearctic Natalma
Storm Bird
Storm Cat	South Ocean	New Providence Shining Sun
Terlingua	Secretariat	Bold Ruler Somethingroyal
Giant's Causeway (ch 1997)	Crimson Saint	Crimson Satan Bolero Rose
Rahy	Blushing Groom	Red God Runaway Bride
Mariah's Storm	Glorious Song	Halo Ballade
Immense	Roberto	Hail To Reason Bramalea
	Imsodear	Chieftain Ironically
	Northern Dancer	Nearctic Natalma
Danehill	Danzig	Admiral's Voyage Petitioner
	Pas De Nom	Ribot Flower Bowl
Daneleta (b 1999)	His Majesty	Buckpasser Natalma
	Spring Adieu	Nijinsky Roseliere
Kahyasi	Ile De Bourbon	Blushing Groom Kalkeen
Zavaleta	Kadissya	Sir Gaylord Sticky Case
	Lord Gayle	Home Guard Gradiva
La Meilleure	Gradille	

Bred by Robert N Clay & Airlie Stud in Kentucky. €340,000 Goffs Million yearling

resulted, including three European Group 1 winners in Footstepsinthesand (2,000 Guineas), Maids Causeway (Coronation Stakes) and Shamardal (Dewhurst Stakes, Poule d'Essai des Poulains, Prix du Jockey-Club, St James's Palace Stakes), and among five who have won Graded stakes in North America, two have done so at the top level.

But whereas the three who triumphed in Europe all had abbreviated careers, Aragorn waited until he was four before registering in the Shoemaker Mile and the Eddie Read Handicap, while My Typhoon was five when she scored her biggest win in the Diana Handicap.

In his first year at Ashford, when his fee was \$135,000, Giant's Causeway was busier still, covering 237 mares, and the outcome was a crop of 164 in 2003. Given those numbers, the fact that the group has so far produced 11 Pattern/Graded winners is not especially remarkable. What does seem remarkable is that until this season only one had scored in Grade 1 company, the smart First Samurai, who collected wins in the Hopeful and Champagne Stakes at two before falling by the wayside in the run-up to the Triple Crown. Three others have reached the top as five-year-olds in 2008, Heatseeker in the Santa Anita Handicap, ex-Irish Frost Giant in the Suburban Handicap, and Carriage Trail in the recent Spinster Stakes.

THE ratio of major stakes winners to foals has not improved. Giant's Causeway had 120 foals in his third crop, conceived at \$125,000, and only four have won at Graded level. Giant Gizmo, Sunshine For Life and Swift Temper are all Grade 3 winners this season, while Red Giant, successful in the Clement L Hirsch Turf Championship Handicap at Santa Anita last month, is the only one to score in Grade 1.

In his fourth season, Giant's Causeway covered 161 mares at only \$75,000, and the crop of 109 is thus far notable only for the dual Grade 3 grass-course winner Cowboy Cal, both of whose successes came at three this year. The pattern we are witnessing suggests that there will be more to come from the foals of 2004 and 2005, as they improve with age, but that was not what many expected of a horse who was himself an accomplished juvenile, notching the first of his Group 1 wins in the Prix de la Salamandre.

Over the next four years Giant's Causeway has continued to cover vast numbers. He had 215 mares in his book for 2005, and Intense Focus is the first of the 174 resulting foals to collect in Pattern or Graded company, emulating only Shamardal and First Samurai as a top-level 7f winner as a two-year-old.

Results from Giant's Causeway's trips to Australia have not been great, as only three winners above Listed level have been recorded. Two of them were, like Intense Focus, out of daughters of Danehill, but they offer us no clues about the Dewhurst winner's future, as both scored their big wins over 6f.

Intense Focus's family, with which Jim Bolger has become familiar as both breeder and trainer, gives reason to believe that he will want further than 7f as a three-year-old and that the Guineas mile may even be too short for him. It would be no great surprise if he were to emulate Soldier Of Fortune with sufficient stamina for 1m4f.