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Pedigree analysis
Fantasia

LET'S be honest about it: Fantasia was not presented with a difficult task in last week's Nell Gwyn Stakes. If she had failed to win, we would have lost all faith in the form book.

But wow! She didn't just win. It's not often that we see a Classic trial won in quite such devastating style.

Held up in rear under a confident Dettori ride, the filly came through her field effortlessly to lead over a furlong from home, and a shake of the reins later she was out on her own, leaving her pointless pursuers further and further behind. The eventual seven-length margin over Damaniyat Girl did not begin to express the degree of her superiority.

In a normal year that performance would have ensured that Fantasia returned to the Rowley Mile on the first Sunday in May, at least vying for favouritism for the 1,000 Guineas. But once George Strawbridge had opened his cheque book to add the daughter of Sadler's Wells to his collection, this became something other than a normal year.

The Pennsylvania-based owner has last year's juvenile champion filly, his home-bred Rainbow View, as his preferred candidate for the Newmarket Classic, so he has understandably decided to divert Fantasia to Longchamp for the Poule d'Essai des Pouliches a week later.

Rainbow View, still unbeaten and seemingly in good heart when she had her public gallop before racing last Thursday, inflicted Fantasia's only defeat to date when they finished 1-2 in the Fillies' Mile at Ascot last September. Fantasia had previously performed above expectations to score on her debut over 6f on Newmarket's July course, then won the Group 3 Prestige Stakes (7f) by a length over Rose Diamond, while suggesting that she had rather more to spare.

There was no excuse for Fantasia when Rainbow View claimed the Ascot prize and the championship that it conferred; she was beaten fair and square – by 2½ lengths – on the day. For all that, many formed the impression that as three-year-olds their relative merits might be different, with the small, highly strung Dynaformer filly seeming less likely to progress than her scopey, sober victim.

There is no doubt that Fantasia has progressed over the winter. She attained a new level of form in the Nell Gwyn despite a modest early pace and an inadequate trip, and she looks the type to continue thriving as the season develops.

What we do not know yet, and only time will tell, is the limit of her stamina. She has been quoted at short odds for the Oaks – perhaps for no better reason than it would seem folly to offer her at long odds – but punters would seem well advised to wait for further evidence before jumping in. Her pedigree conveys conflicting messages.

Fantasia comes from the 21st crop by the now-retired Sadler's Wells, whose 14-year reign as champion sire ended in 2004, but whose influence has by no means abated.

Last year he was the sire of the champion sire (Galileo), he has led the broodmare sires' table in each of the last four completed seasons, and he continues to make an impact with his own racing progeny; the Nell Gwyn provided Pattern victory number 309 in his unparalleled career.



Fantasia and Dettori stretch clear of the Nell Gwyn field to win the Classic trial in devastating style

Filly with ability to match her pedigree

Classic calibre at a mile but the Oaks may prove a trip too far

Because there is such an enormous body of evidence about the sons and daughters of Sadler's Wells on the racecourse, it might seem that it should be possible to predict what lies ahead for Fantasia in terms of her staying capacity.

But we must never forget that every horse is a unique individual, with its own complement of genes, and even in the case of a prepotent sire whose stock are all bay with splashes of white about them, there can be – and frequently are – marked differences in what they are able to accomplish as athletes.

We can generalise, asserting that the typical Sadler's Wells product is not precocious, rarely making an impact before the latter half of its first season, it tends to be better at three, especially beyond 1m, and if it's allowed to race past the age of three, it might be expected to improve again. In addition, some give in the ground seems to suit.

There are any number of Sadler's Wellses who conform to that pattern, but all too many exceptions for such a generalisation to be acceptable as a hard and fast rule.

He has had his share who produced their best form at two, he has had runners who did not improve for venturing past 1m, and in 2007 he was represented by a total aberration in Liscanna, his one and only winner of a Pattern race sprint, other than a juvenile.

Yes, Sadler's Wells was prepotent, but that doesn't mean that his mates had no influence on their offspring.

AS IT happens, the cross of Sadler's Wells on mares by Darshaan, of which Fantasia is an example, has been tried on numerous occasions, and we might be tempted to draw some conclusions from previous results.

Among them we may cite Ebadiyla, who won the Irish Oaks and Prix Royal-Oak, Milan, successful in the St Leger, High Chaparral, winner of two Derbys and two editions of the Breeders' Cup Turf, Islington, twice a winner of the Yorkshire Oaks, and Septimus, who ran away with last year's Irish St Leger.

If those examples read like a recommendation to lump on Fantasia for the Oaks, think again. The fact that she has elements in her background in common with those superior stayers does not make her a certainty to follow suit.

Her genetic make-up is her own, unique to her, and, for all we know, very different in terms of stamina endowment.

We do not need to look much further back into Fantasia's pedigree to understand why she may be different. Her grand-dam, by Danzig, won the Queen Mary and the Cheveley Park Stakes. And she was out of a daughter of Habitat who won the Prix Maurice de Gheest.

Those influences may just have been a factor in Fantasia's debut victory over 6f in July, when punters let her go off at 8-1, assuming that a daughter of Sadler's Wells out of a Darshaan mare would want more time and distance.

Later evidence from Fantasia herself has provided proof that she gets 1m and a strong hint that 1m2f will be within her compass.

The Oaks is by no means out of the question, but those Danzig and Habitat factors just might come into play to inhibit her.

SIRE SADLER'S WELLS

Bred by Swettenham Stud & Partners. Won 6 (7-10f) of 11 starts, viz. 2 (inc. Beresford S.-Gr3) out of 2 at 2 years, 4 (Irish Derby Trial-Gr2, Irish 2,000 Guineas-Gr1, Eclipse S.-Gr1, Phoenix Champion S.-Gr1) out of 9 at 3 years. Also 2nd in Gladness S.-Gr3, Prix du Jockey-Club-Gr1, King George VI & Queen Elizabeth S.-Gr1. Earned £576,500.

A top-class performer from 1m-1m4f, handsome, tough, courageous, consistent. Superbly bred. By the most successful sire of modern times out of the dam of Fairy King, Tate Gallery, Fairy Gold, Hermitage, Perugino, etc.

Dam (unbeaten Gr3 winner) half-sister to stakes-winners Nureyev (also an exceptional sire), Number and Bound. Grand-dam won her only start, sister to Thatch (Gr1) and Lisadell (Gr3), half-sister to King Pellinore (Gr1).

To stud at 4, retired from duty 2008. Stood at Coolmore, Fethard, County Tipperary; last fee private. Sire of 22 crops of racing age, including Gr1 winners: Braashee, French Glory, In The Wings (3), Old Vic (2), Prince Of Dance, Scenic, Salsabil (5), Opera House (3), Runyon, Saddlers' Hall, El Prado, Johann Quatz, Masad, Baratheia (2), Fatherland, Fort Wood, Intrepidity (3), Carnegie (2), King's Theatre (2), Northern Spur (2), Moonshell, Muncie, Poliglote, Chief Contender, Dance Design, Darazari, Luna Wells, Cloudings, Ebadiyla (2), Entrepreneur, In Command, Kayf Tara (4), Dream Well (2), Greek Dance, King Of Kings (2), Leggera, Commander Collins, Daliapour, Montjeu (6), Saffron Walden, Aristotle, Beat Hollow (4), Subtle Power, Galileo (3), Imagine (2), Milan, Perfect Soul, Sequoyah, Sligo Bay, Ballingarry, Black Sam Bellamy (2), Gossamer (2), High Chaparral (6), Islington (4), Quarter Moon, Sholokov, Alberto Giacometti, Brian Boru (2), Doyen, Powerscourt (2), Refuse To Bend (4), Yesterday, Quiff, Yeats (6), Playful Act, Alexandrova (3), Linda's Lad, Saddex (2), Septimus, Listen.

DAM BLUE SYMPHONY

Bred by Gainsborough Stud Management Ltd in England. Won 1 (1m2f) of 13 races, viz. 0 out of 5 at 2 years, 1 out of 8 at 3 years. Also placed 4 times at 3. Earned £6,759.

Rather small. Modest form at 2, fair performer in ordinary company at 3. Well bred. By a top-class middle-distance performer, also excellent sire and broodmare sire. Dam Gr1 winner, champion 2-y-o filly, sister to Gr1 winner Zieten, half-sister to Listed winner Slow Jazz (by Chief's Crown; grand-dam of dual Gr3 winner Jazz Princess. Grand-dam won Prix Maurice de Gheest (then Gr2). Good formerly French family.

To stud at 4 years and dam of: Blue Rhapsody (2005 f by Cape Cross; winner), Fantasia (2006 f by Sadler's Wells; dual Gr3 winner), Pink Symphony (2007 f by Montjeu; with Paul Cole, unraced to date). She has a yearling colt by Pivotal, and was covered by Nayef in 2008.

CONCLUSION

Impeccably bred, with ability to match her pedigree. Surely Classic calibre at 1m, promises to stay 1m2f, and may well get further.

FANTASIA

b f 10-2-2006

Nearctic	Nearco	Pharos Nogara
Northern Dancer	Lady Angela	Hyperion Sister Sarah
Natalma	Native Dancer	Polynesian Geisha
Sadler's Wells (b 1981)	Almahmoud	Mahmoud Arbitrator
Bold Reason	Hail To Reason	Turn-to Nothirdchance
Fairy Bridge	Lalun	Djeddah Be Faithful
Special	Forli	Aristophanes Trevisa
	Thong	Nantallah Rough Shod
Shirley Heights	Mill Reef	Never Bend Milan Mill
Darshaan	Hardiemma	Hardicanute Grand Cross
Delsy	Abdos	Arbar Pretty Lady
Blue Symphony (b 2000)	Kelty	Venture Marilla
Danzig	Northern Dancer	Nearctic Natalma
Blue Duster	Pas De Nom	Admiral's Voyage Petitioner
Blue Note	Habitat	Sir Gaylord Little Hut
	Balsamique	Tourangeau Bruyere

Bred by Ronchalon Racing UK Ltd in England.