

TONY MORRIS



Pedigree analysis
Zenyatta

NORTH AMERICA has been crowning a Horse of the Year since 1936, and to date only five fillies have earned the coveted honour.

But there must now be a strong possibility that Zenyatta, having completed a flawless season with a dominating triumph in the Ladies' Classic at Santa Anita, will join Twilight Tear (1944), Busher (1945), All Along (1983), Lady's Secret (1986) and Azeri (2002) as a member of that exclusive club.

In recent years, events at the Breeders' Cup have regularly decided the issue, with Ghostzapper, Saint Liam, Invasor and Curlin all wrapping up the title with their victories in the Classic, and if the last-named had done what was expected of him last Saturday, he would surely have been a shoo-in for a repeat.

Curlin will still be in the running for the award, in spite of his defeat, because his achievement of becoming the first from his nation to register earnings in excess of \$10 million will sway some voters in his favour, and it is worth remembering that the horse whose record he beat, Cigar, did take a second title in 1996 after losses in three of his last four races, including a third to Alphabet Soup in the Classic.

But those lobbying on behalf of Zenyatta will have a powerful case to argue. What can be better than a perfect racing record – nine wins in all, seven of them this season, four in Grade 1 and three in Grade 2?

Okay, so she still hasn't beaten one of the other sex, but in Europe we were saying the same about Zarkava and when the opportunity occurred she rose to the occasion.

There is no reason to doubt that Zenyatta would hold her own against male competition, and she may well prove the point in 2009, but meanwhile the current absence of that proof constitutes no barrier to her winning the award.

Azeri, ridden throughout her 2002 campaign by Zenyatta's regular partner, Mike Smith, competed only against those of her own sex, winning six of the same races taken by this year's star, and she did not go unbeaten throughout the campaign.

Zenyatta is a huge, outstanding physical specimen, standing over 17 hands, and the style of her victories, habitually coming from way off the pace to demolish her opposition with an overwhelming surge of speed, has brought her an aura of invincibility which Curlin, for all his fine performances, never had. She has never looked like being beaten, and only once this season did she fail to win by a daylight margin.

Zenyatta was bred by Maverick Productions Ltd, a tradename which disguises the identity of Eric Kronfeld, who became well known in these parts as the owner of that outstanding filly Mrs Penny, winner of the 1979 Cheveley Park Stakes, and in the following year of both the Prix de Diane and the Prix Vermeille, with a gallant second to Ela-Mana-Mou in the King George VI & Queen Elizabeth Stakes in between.

Kronfeld boards his breeding stock at Winter Quarter Farm, near Lexington, and it was from there that Zenyatta was submitted to Keeneland's September yearling sale in 2005.

She was already large and leggy, would not have impressed anyone as a filly who was likely to come to hand early, and to make matters worse from a selling perspective, she was suffering from an unsightly skin disease about the shoulder.



Zenyatta notches her seventh Graded race win of the season when landing the Breeders' Cup Ladies' Classic

Strong shout for Horse of the Year

Super filly among nine Graded winners in Street Cry's first crop

SIRE STREET CRY

Bred by Sheikh Mohammed in Ireland. Won 5 (6.5f-1m2f) of 12 starts, viz. 1 out of 5 at 2 years, 1 out of 3 at 3 years, 3 (inc. Dubai World Cup-Gr1, Stephen Foster Handicap-Gr1) out of 4 at 4 years. Also placed 2nd 6 times (inc. Gr1), 3rd once (Gr1). RPR 127 at 3, 127 at 4. Earned \$5,150,837.

16.1hh, lengthy, good-bodied, somewhat plain individual. High-class 2-y-o, progress halted by injury at 3, but top class at 4. Retired through injury after most impressive win. Untried on turf. Blinkered/visored last 2 starts at 3, sometimes tongue-tied.

Among the best sons of his sire, a high-class 2-y-o and miler. Brother to stakes-placed Helsinki (dam of Shamardal). Half-brother to Listed winner Historian, to stakes-placed Sovetsky, and to dam of Magna Graecia and Graikos. Dam won Irish Oaks, from a good middle-distance family developed by Ballymacoll Stud.

Stands at Darley, Lexington, Kentucky, at a 2009 fee of \$150,000. Sire of 3 crops of racing age, inc. notable winners: Majestic Roi (Sun Chariot S.-Gr1), Street Boss (Triple Bend Invitational H.-Gr1, Bing Crosby H.-Gr1), Street Sense (Breeders' Cup Juvenile S.-Gr1, Kentucky Derby-Gr1, Travers S.-Gr1), Street Sounds (Gr2), Zenyatta (Apple Blossom H.-Gr1, Vanity H.-Gr1, Lady's Secret H.-Gr1, Ladies' Classic S.-Gr1), Cry And Catch Me (Oak Leaf S.-Gr1), Desert Party (Gr2), Street Hero (Norfolk S.-Gr1). Also sire of Whobegotyou (Caulfield Guineas-Gr1) in Australia.

DAM VERTIGINEUX

Bred by Maverick Productions Ltd in Kentucky. Unsold \$120,000 Keeneland September yearling. Won 2 of 7 races at 3 and 4 years. Earned \$60,480.

Useful, lightly raced turf performer. Half-sister to 8 other winners, inc. National Service (by Master Willie), Restrained (by Robellino) and Blash (Master Willie), all Listed, and Gr2-placed On The Staff (by Master Willie).

Dam minor winner, half-sister to 4 other winners, inc. Helenska (Gr3). Grand-dam won 3 races, half-sister to 8 other winners, inc. Dancing Champ (Gr2), Sweet Alliance (Gr2, dam of Shareef Dancer), and Whydidju (Listed, also Gr3-placed). Excellent North American family.

To stud at 5 and dam of: Where's Bailey (2002 f by Aljabr; stakes winner on turf), Balance (2003 f by Thunder Gulch; triple Gr1 winner), Zenyatta (2004 f by Street Cry; four-time Gr1 winner), Treasure Trail (2006 f by Pulpit; unraced to date). She has a yearling colt by Giant's Causeway (sold \$1.15 million at Keeneland last month) and is in foal to Bernardino. Barren in 2001 and 2008, produced dead foal by Aldebaran in 2005.

CONCLUSION

Top-class performer with a fine turn of foot. Acts on dirt and synthetic surfaces. Should stay 1m2f, and probably capable of beating some of the best males.

ZENYATTA

b f 1-4-2004

Mr Prospector	Raise A Native	Native Dancer Raise You
Machiavellian	Gold Digger	Nashua Sequence
Coup De Folie	Halo	Hail To Reason Cosmah
Street Cry (b 1998)	Raise The Standard	Hoist The Flag Natalma
Helen Street	Petingo	Petition Alcazar
Troy	La Milo	Hornbeam Pin Prick
Riverman	Riverman	Never Bend River Lady
Waterway	Boulevard	Pall Mall Costa Sola
Roberto	Hail To Reason	Turn-to Nothirchance
Kris S.	Bramalea	Nashua Rarelea
Vertigineux (b 1995)	Princequillo	Prince Rose Cosquilla
Sharp Queen	Bridgework	Occupy Feale Bridge
Fori	Aristophanes	Hyperion Commotion
For The Flag	Trevisa	Advocate Veneta
In The Offing	Hoist The Flag	Tom Rolfe Wavy Navy
Mrs Peterkin	Mrs Peterkin	Tom Fool Legendra

Bred by Maverick Productions Ltd, Kentucky. \$60,000 Keeneland September yearling

In the circumstances, \$60,000 did not seem a bad price for a backward filly from the first crop of her sire out of a mare whose only runner to date, the Aljabr filly Where's Bailey, had recently run third in a modest stakes event on grass at a minor track.

As it turned out, Zenyatta was so backward that she did not get to the races until the November of her three-year-old season, when she announced her arrival on the scene with a three-length victory in a Hollywood Park maiden. By then, Where's Bailey had become a stakes winner, and her younger half-sister Balance (by Thunder Gulch) was a dual Grade 1 winner, en route to becoming a millionaire.

Street Cry stood at only \$30,000 in his first season at Darley's Jonabell Farm, but it comes as no surprise to learn that his fee, which advanced to \$50,000 in 2007 and \$100,000 in 2008, is being increased again to \$150,000 for next spring.

The rise reflects all-round achievement, rather than a reaction to Zenyatta's prowess, for she is one of nine Pattern or Graded winners from his first crop of 94, which also features the Kentucky Derby hero Street Sense, dual 2008 Grade 1 scorer Street Boss and Majestic Roi, successful in last year's Sun Chariot Stakes.

The second crop has also yielded a Grade 1 winner in Cry And Catch Me, the only one of 90 to have collected at Graded level to date, but there are two already from his youngest racing crop, including Street Hero, who notched a Grade 1 success in the Norfolk Stakes before his third in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile on Saturday.

WE took some time to appreciate Street Cry's merits as a runner and, ironically, no sooner had we come to realise his star quality than he suffered a career-ending injury. He won only one of his five starts as a juvenile in the States, though his third place in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile marked him as a colt with clear potential.

Switched to Dubai that winter, he began his second campaign with a comfortable victory in the UAE 2,000 Guineas before failing narrowly against his stablemate Express Tour in the UAE Derby.

He was then targeted at the Kentucky Derby, only to damage a fetlock at the 11th hour, and he was not seen in action again for seven months. It was no disgrace then to fail by a length against Evening Attire in a Grade 3 event at Aqueduct.

Back in Dubai, he trotted up in his prep race for the Dubai World Cup, then won the big one in some style, but as a Saudi Arabian-trained supposed no-hoper was runner-up and hot favourite Sakhee failed to show his true form, the plaudits for his performance were a little muted.

The display that established his class beyond doubt was his facile victory in the Stephen Foster Handicap at Churchill Downs, where he never came off the bridle and won by more than six lengths. There was no better performance from an older horse in the States that year.

He ran to something like the same mark again when runner-up under top weight in the Whitney Handicap, and he would have been a popular choice for the Breeders' Cup Classic, if his recurrent fetlock trouble had not caused his retirement.

His loss to racing was a blow for which his rapid rise to stardom as a sire comes as ample compensation.