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PEDIGREE
ANALYSIS
Chicquita

Wayward lass a rare Montjeu female star

BY VIRTUE of their historic importance, the Epsom Classics are commonly regarded as the be-all and end-all of a three-year-old's campaign, but the reality is rather different. Rather than a culmination, they represent a beginning, setting down markers for the tests to come.

The first tests of the form in 2013 are telling us now that we still have a lot to learn about the quality of the crop; we may well have a while to wait before we can identify its true leaders.

Having retained his unbeaten record with an apparently clearcut victory in a Derby run to suit him, Ruler Of The World flopped in an Irish Derby contested at a proper pace throughout. Oaks heroine Talent appeared to have been compromised in her bid to double up at the Curragh by taking a tug behind a steady pace, eventually winding up stone last.

To use an old adage, it's the pace that makes the race, and falsely run races over middle distances make sound judgement well-nigh impossible. My best guess at present is that France is home to Europe's best of both sexes, Intello standing out amongst the colts and Treve dominating the fillies, but it is quite possible that we will need to see the Arc and the Champion Stakes before being able to award the titles. Nothing wrong with that – it's what end-of-season championship events are supposed to be about.

Chicquita was a deserving winner of Saturday's Irish Oaks. She was always handily placed, travelling smoothly for Johnny Murtagh until he asked her to pick up. The response was not immediate, but she got the message soon enough, only to indicate, not for the first time, that engaging top gear also involved a wild deviation to the left. She would surely have won by daylight if she had been able to keep a straight course.

This is the filly who was going to break her maiden at Saint-Cloud in May until she swerved abruptly, resulting in a collision with the hedge and the loss of her rider. She then drifted left on her following start when chasing Treve home in the Prix de Diane at Chantilly. Supposedly perfectly well behaved in exercise at home, she reveals decided quirkiness on the racecourse, and although Saturday's wayward behaviour never seemed likely to cause the stewards to take down her number, it is a worrying trait in one so obviously talented.

She has established her right to contest the top races in Europe and has the Vermeille and the Arc on her schedule. The thought she might cause mayhem in the predictable big fields for those events is not one to be relished.

Chicquita has the benefit of a consummate horseman in Alain de Royer-Dupre as trainer, but she is a daughter of Montjeu and it may well be that her errant behaviour is in her DNA, always apt to be expressed.

We like to remember Montjeu best as number one among all the fine sons of Sadler's Wells – a dual Derby winner, an Arc hero, and the horse who gave a scarcely credible display in the King George, which he won in a veritable canter. But we also have to recognise he had his quirks, albeit ones he tended to exhibit before his races rather than in them.

When he retired to stud many expressed two doubts about him. The first was that his pedigree seemed so stamina-loaded he might get plodders rather than Classic horses, the other that he might pass on temperamental

CHICQUITA

b f 21-1-2010

		Nearctic	Nearco
		Lady Angela	.....
	Northern Dancer	Native Dancer	.....
		Almahmoud	.....
	Sadler's Wells	Bold Reason	Hail To Reason
		Lalun	.....
	Fairy Bridge	Forli	.....
		Thong	.....
Montjeu		High Top	Derring-Do
b 1996		Camene	.....
	Top Ville	Charlottesville	.....
		La Segre	.....
Floripedes		Tennyson	Val De Loir
		Tidra	.....
	Toute Cy	Zeddaan	.....
		Alvorada	.....
		Danzig	Northern Dancer
	Danehill	Pas De Nom	.....
		Razyana	His Majesty
		Kahyasi	Spring Adieu
	Hasili	Ile De Bourbon	.....
		Kadissa	.....
Prudenzia		Kerali	High Line
b 2005		Sookera	.....
	Gone West	Mr Prospector	.....
		Secrettame	.....
	Zafonic	The Minstrel	.....
		Mofida	.....
Platonic		Darshaan	Shirley Heights
		Delsy	.....
	Puce	Ahonoora	.....
		Soumana	.....

Bred by Ecurie des Monceaux & Ecurie Skymarc Farm in Ireland. €600,000 Arqana Deauville August yearling.

VERDICT

- ▶▶ Classy performer, well suited by 1m4f, but a distinctly quirky character.
- ▶▶ From her sire's ninth crop, but only his second Group 1-winning daughter.
- ▶▶ Representative of a fine family noted especially for its fillies in recent generations.

traits that would compromise the careers of his stock.

We did not have to wait long to conclude the fears in one respect had been groundless. Sure, his stock tended to be thorough stayers, but they had class in abundance. Four Derby winners among a host of other middle-distance stars said enough on that score. Quirkiness in his stock? Well, Papal Bull wasn't exactly straightforward, but how many others among his colts exhibited wayward tendencies?

What we can say now, having seen nine Montjeu crops aged three and over in the northern hemisphere, is that his overall record is excellent. He has 39 individual winners of 94 European Pattern races to his credit, and, most unusually, he has more in Group 1 than in Group 2, and more in Group 2 than Group 3; the respective scores are 37, 30 and 27. What also seems unusual is that of those 39 individual winners, only ten have been fillies, and they have contributed only 13 of the victories. In fact, after his first-crop daughter Montare won

four times in Pattern company, the other nine have managed only one win apiece at that level. The ratios are strange for a horse so widely represented.

TRAINERS have been saying for a long time that Montjeu fillies are difficult. Those statistics appear to prove their point, and Chicquita is just the highest-profile example of one with a quirky temperament. I wonder if Grant Pritchard-Gordon realised how brave he was being when he gave €600,000 for the yearling Chicquita at Arqana in August 2011!

Of course, statistics vary over time, and although Montjeu died at the end of March last year he has plenty of progeny who are yet to appear on the racecourse.

Things might look a bit different when we come to analyse his complete record, but there will be no getting away from the fact his sons have generally been considerably better than his daughters. For the record, Galileo also shows a bias in favour of



Chicquita: Irish Oaks heroine has inherited some of Montjeu's quirks

colts, but one much less marked; 29 of his 70 individual Pattern winners have been fillies.

Chicquita is not all about her sire. She is the first foal of her dam Prudenzia, who won twice in France, including the Listed Prix de la Seine over 1m3f at Longchamp.

Her second and third foals are also fillies, each a daughter of Galileo. The two-year-old, as yet unraced, is Sinnamary, who fetched €1.1 million at Deauville last year, and the yearling will feature as lot 33 in the same ring on August 17. Another deal in seven figures seems on the cards.

The first daughter of Dansili to produce a Group 1 winner, Prudenzia is a half-sister to Pacificque, herself a smart performer by Montjeu. She collected Group 3 honours in the 1m7f Prix de Lutece at Longchamp, subsequently finishing third in the

Group 2 Prix Chaudenay over the same course and distance.

Chicquita's granddam Platonic was modest enough, winning once in France, but she had a couple of better siblings in the Barathea filly Pongee, winner of the Group 2 Lancashire Oaks and second in the Group 1 Yorkshire version, and the Montjeu colt Lion Sands, twice a Listed winner and placed in Group 3 company.

The star turns in recent generations from this family were products of Shouk, a half-sister to Chicquita's third dam, Group 3-placed Puce.

Only a minor winner herself, Shouk delivered Magical Romance, a daughter of Barathea who earned Group 1 laurels in the 2004 Cheveley Park Stakes, and the Sadler's Wells filly Alexandrova, who had a glorious summer in 2006, landing the top-level treble of Oaks, Irish Oaks and Yorkshire Oaks.