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PEDIGREE
ANALYSIS
Dawn Approach

No guarantee Guineas hero will stay the Derby trip

I REMEMBER the build-up to the 2,000 Guineas of 1968 very well. Everyone was convinced the Classic would be all about two colts – the Irish-trained favourite Sir Ivor and British-based contender Petingo, whose unblemished record in four races included an impressive triumph in the Craven Stakes. Inside the last quarter-mile the pair were together, but the anticipated battle royal failed to materialise, the Irish colt drawing clear for an easy victory.

Fast forward 45 years to last Saturday and for Sir Ivor read Dawn Approach and for Petingo read Toronado. Their duel was over in a few strides, with the raider from Coolcullen bounding away to score with complete authority. Flattening out, Toronado failed to withstand a challenge from unheralded longshot Glory Awaits and even forfeited third place to stablemate Van Der Neer close home.

The colt who won on the opening day of Ireland's turf season in 2012 and who completed a flawless first campaign with a title-earning victory in the Dewhurst Stakes clearly remains the undisputed champion of his generation, at least up to a mile. And judging by the way he finished in the Guineas, still stretching his advantage, he is going to stay further. But the Derby, half as far again, represents more than a short step into unknown territory, and his pedigree provides no guarantee that the distance will prove within his compass.

Indeed, Jim Bolger, Dawn Approach's trainer, is a partner with Emmeline Hill in Equinome, a genetics company that has developed a DNA test aimed at determining any thoroughbred's optimum trip. The colt was subjected to the test and it indicated he should prove most effective as a miler, and as long ago as last summer the Bolger line was that the Derby would not figure on his schedule.

Should we take it the trainer now

'The main reasons for doubts over Dawn Approach's stamina centre on Hymn Of The Dawn's sire, essentially a speed horse'

doubts the accuracy of the test, or is Epsom on the agenda simply because Sheikh Mohammed, as 51 per cent owner of the colt, wants him to have a shot at becoming the first Derby winner in the Godolphin blue?

The top half of Dawn Approach's pedigree looks solid. We have come to expect the Sadler's Wells/Galileo line to confer stamina, and although these are early days in the stud career of New Approach, he was himself a Derby winner – and a remarkable one, successful despite tugging fiercely and squandering energy in the early stages. Why wouldn't he get stock capable of lasting a mile and a half?

However, we cannot be sure that like will beget like, and we can already point to numerous differences between New Approach and his son. The sire was decidedly quirky, headstrong and needed to be ponied to the start of his races. He did not appear until July and never raced at less than 7f.

Dawn Approach, by contrast, seems perfectly amenable with an ideal racing temperament, and he was really precocious – a winner over 5f a month before his second birthday. We should perhaps also note that although New Approach mastered the Derby distance and Epsom's quaint contours, his best performance came over the straight 1m2f of Newmarket's Champion Stakes.

Dawn Approach's dam Hymn Of The Dawn cost Bolger only \$18,000 as a foal at the 1999 Keeneland November sale. She made a respectable start on the racecourse, finishing fourth in a 6f Curragh maiden, but did not progress and failed to make the frame in four subsequent outings up to a mile, sporting blinkers latterly.

The mare's rise to prominence as dam of a champion two-year-old and Classic hero has come as something of a surprise, as there was only one winner from her four previous foals to survive, that one being Comadoir (by Medecis), successful in a modest 7f handicap at Brighton as a gelded six-year-old. What might have been considered her best chances before her liaison with New Approach were two visits to Invincible Spirit which had unhappy outcomes; she delivered a filly who did not survive in 2008 and slipped in the following year.

The main pedigree reasons for doubts over Dawn Approach's stamina centre on Hymn Of The Dawn's sire. Phone Trick, foaled in 1982, was essentially a speed horse, a winner nine times out of ten, including three Grade 2 events, two of them at 6f and one at 7f; he also equalled track records at the shorter trip. He did quite



Dawn Approach: his trainer suggested last summer the Derby would not be figuring on the colt's agenda

DAWN APPROACH

ch c 23-4-2010

	Northern Dancer	Nearctic Natalma
	Sadler's Wells	Bold Reason Special
	Fairy Bridge	Mr Prospector
Galileo	Miswaki	Hopespringseternal
	Urban Sea	Lombard
	Allegretta	Anatevka
New Approach (ch 2005)	Lorenzaccio	Klairon
	Ahonoora	Phoenissa
	Helen Nichols	Martial
Park Express	Match	Quaker Girl
	Matcher	Tantieme
	Lachine	Relance
	Icecapade	Grey Sovereign
	Clever Trick	Loved One
	Kankakee Miss	Nearctic Shenanigans
Phone Trick	Finnegan	Better Bee
	Over The Phone	Golden Beach
	Prattle	Royal Charger
Hymn Of The Dawn (b 1999)	His Majesty	Last Wave
	Pleasant Colony	Mr Busher
	Sun Colony	Tsumani
Colonial Debut	Alydar	Ribot
	Kittihawk Miss	Flower Bowl
	Kittiwake	Sunrise Flight
		Colonia
		Raise A Native
		Sweet Tooth
		Sea-Bird
		Ole Liz

Bred by Jim Bolger in Ireland

VERDICT

►A Guineas winner well up to standard, the dominant colt of his generation up to 1m.

►A straightforward individual who races as though a longer trip will suit.

►Pedigree does not guarantee him stamina for 1m4f, the odds are cramped, and worthy Derby rivals may yet emerge.

well as a sire, notably getting a juvenile champion of each sex – the filly Phone Chatter in 1993 and the colt Favorite Trick in 1997.

A few of Phone Trick's products won in Graded company over 1m1f, Favorite Trick among them, but more were sprinters and plenty showed precocity. Still, none of that means

Phone Trick will necessarily inhibit his second-generation descendants when it comes to the expression of stamina. It is only a minority of American horses who are ever required to race at and beyond 1m1f, and if they are not tested for staying power, we cannot be sure they are bereft of it.

I recall Sir Ivor, Nijinsky, Mill Reef

and Roberto all had doubters before their Derby victories because their sires – respectively Sir Gaylord, Northern Dancer, Never Bend and Hail To Reason – had either not stayed a mile and a half or were untried at the distance.

There are some readily recognisable stamina factors in the bottom quarter of Dawn Approach's pedigree. Grand-dam Colonial Debut is by Kentucky Derby victor Pleasant Colony, and featured in her third generation are Ribot and Sea-Bird, universally acknowledged as the two best winners of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, as well as sires renowned for generating quality middle-distance and staying performers.

THERE is class, too, in the tail-female line, as Colonial Debut's dam Kittihawk Miss (by narrow Triple Crown runner-up Alydar) was a sister to Miss Oceana, whose three Grade 1 victories earned her the title of America's champion two-year-old filly in 1983 and who trained on to collect three more top-level stakes at three. Their Nureyev half-brother Kitwood won the Group 1 Prix Jean Prat, while Grade 2-winning half-sister Larida (by Northern Dancer) produced Magic Of Life, the best of Seattle Slew's European-raced daughters, heroine of a Coronation Stakes.

The fourth dam of Dawn Approach was Kittiwake, who came from the second crop sired by Sea-Bird at Darby Dan Farm in Kentucky. She did most of her racing before the North American Graded stakes scheme came into operation, so is credited only as a Grade 2 winner of the Columbiana Handicap as a five-year-old, but six of her other victories had come in races of comparable status. Tough as well as classy, recognised as the best of Sea-Bird's American-raced daughters, Kittiwake packed 54 runs into her four-season career, collecting 18 wins and 21 minor placings.

Dawn Approach evokes memories of such as Wollow, El Gran Senor and Dancing Brave by scoring an emphatic Guineas victory to remain unbeaten, underlining his dominance of his generation, and becoming a hot favourite for the Derby. Can he now avoid emulating them again at Epsom?