

# TONY MORRIS

Pedigree analysis



HERE was a time, not so long ago, when we came to think of the Arc de Triomphe as a fillies' race. For five years in a row, the colts had to give best, as Three Troikas, Detroit, Gold River, Akiyda and All Along refuted the notion that theirs was the weaker sex. But the sequence ended when Sagace thwarted Northern Trick and All Along in 1984, and since then only Galileo's dam Urban Sea (1993) has been successful.

The Prix Robert Papin presents an altogether different picture, as the Maisons-Laffitte midsummer test for juveniles has always been regarded as the happiest hunting ground for fillies among major European open-sex contests. The race was instituted in 1901, and in the first four editions a female proved more deadly than the males. Since then it has provided the launching pad to fame for numerous fillies, including Pearl Cap, Mistress Ford and Coronation in its first half-century.

The Papin's importance was logically recognised by the award of Group 1 status on the inception of the European Pattern in 1971, and for many years it was regarded as the first jewel in France's juvenile Quadruple Crown, a set completed by the Morny, the Salamandre and the Grand Critérium. It took an outstanding colt, Blushing Groom, to land all four in 1976 – a feat only My Swallow had accomplished before – in the last year of the pre-Papin era, but fillies took four of the Papins in the 1970s, and their record in the race was about to improve further.

Between 1982 and 1986, the colts did not get a look-in, and the female winners – Ma Biche, Masarika, Seven Springs, Baiser Vole and Balbonella – were by no means mere fly-by-night performers utilising an advantage of superior precocity. Nevertheless, after the five-timer, the European Pattern Committee took the decision to reduce the Papin to Group 2 status, and since then the race has rarely been contested by a genuinely top-class colt; the one notable exception was Arazi, who in 1991 emulated My Swallow and Blushing Groom before going one better by adding a victory in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile.

The Prix Robert Papin is now so filly-dominated that only one of the other sex has won this century. In 2000 it went to Rolly Polly, and after the Zafonic colt Zipping's success the following year, Never A Doubt initiated a sequence of six female victories, continued by Much Faster, Divine Proportions, New Girlfriend and Boccasini, and further extended last Sunday by Natagora.

It seems that, more often than not, the Papin is a race the colts are happy to let the fillies have. It would probably have been right up Winker Watson's street, but Group 2? He's been there, done that twice; he won't get interested before the 6f Morny at Group 1 level. Britain did send colts to this year's Papin, but none were ever going to be serious contenders.

Natagora has come through the grades. She has won her last four, progressing through Listed and Group 3 (Prix du Bois) to Group 2, and though she was given something to do by the Italian Group 3 winner Magritte at the weekend, she was never going to get caught. She is undoubtedly smart, in a different league from her mother, a rather pathetic plater, and she has already



Natagora: sending her sire from Japan to stand in France now looks an inspired move

## Supporting lesser lights can bring its rewards

### Robert Papin winner's unconventional background

exceeded what might have been expected from one with her pedigree background.

But what was that I said? All I did was to cite industry perceptions, which rarely equate to reality. So the dam was no good on the racecourse. Did that necessarily make her a useless broodmare? And the sire raced five years in Japan without ever managing a win at Pattern level, or its equivalent? Did that automatically make him a failure at stud?

Fine, after nearly 300 years of developing the thoroughbred, we know of no better system than that of putting the best to the best and hoping for the best. But that fails more often than it succeeds. Where is success to be found? Nobody would have predicted that Edie Kelly, who won only an apprentice race at the Curragh worth £133, would breed a Derby and St Leger winner in St Paddy. Aunt Clara, dam of the dual Derby winner and Arc runner-up Santa Claus, was described by Timeform as "apparently useless" and given a rating of 48.

The fact is, we are still regularly surprised by the way that matings turn out. Not only do bad racemares sometimes produce top performers, but undistinguished runners like Night Shift (won only a maiden) and Fairy King (broke down in his only start) sire Classic winners. I am postponing serious thought about the antecedents of the astonishing Turbo Linn, who may yet rise higher than her already exalted rank.

WHAT some of these results suggest is that there are probably many stallions who are capable of getting high-class runners, but who in today's scenario are being deprived of the opportunity by breeders' slavish following of fashion – all too easy when there is a ready supply of nominations to almost any popular horse.

What did anybody know about Divine Light when he arrived in France from Japan? Would any breeder be prepared to express faith in such an obscure horse? Okay, he was by Sunday Silence, and nobody needed telling what a great sire he had proved in Japan. But this particular son was far from being one of his principal achievers; no Pattern wins in five active seasons did not say much for him, and it was easy to form the view that the Japanese might now be off-loading their supposed inferiors on Europe, reversing the trend so conspicuous 30-odd years ago.

Unsurprisingly, Divine Light was neglected in his first season at the Haras de Lonray; his 2005 crop amounted to no more than eight foals. But Natagora, shrewdly bought by Patrick Barbe for €30,000 at Deauville last October, was one of them. She now heads for the Prix Morny, and any challenging colts had better be on their mettle.

The importation of Divine Light might have seemed a strange move at the time, but it is beginning to look inspired. Dare we hope that other European studmasters will act as enterprisingly in an era when pedigrees in these parts are tending to look so samey?

And if they were to do that, could we rely on breeders providing support for horses whose backgrounds seem outlandish? The Natagora experience might just exercise some minds in that regard.

#### SIRE DIVINE LIGHT

Bred by Shadai Farm in Japan. Won 4 (7f-1m1f) of 26 races, viz. unraced at 2 years, 2 out of 7 at 3 years, 1 out of 3 at 4 years, 1 out of 4 at 5 years, 0 out of 5 at 6 years, 0 out of 7 at 7 years. Placed 2nd 6 times, 3rd twice, 4th 4 times. Placed in Gr1 and Gr3 over 6f. Earned ¥216,359,000.

Plain, rather unprepossessing sort. Medium-sized. Seemed effective at 1m2f as 3-y-o, but campaigned later as sprinter-miler, and generally competitive with the best at 6f and 1m.

Well bred. By a champion racehorse, outstanding sire and major stud influence. Brother to 3 winners, half-brother to 3 winners, inc. Cutting Edge (by Faberge; Gr3). Dam, by multiple champion sire, unraced, sister to 3 winners, inc. Shadai Cosmos (Gr3), and to dam of Dyna Cosmos (by Huntercombe; Japanese 2,000 Guineas). Grand-dam won 6 races, half-sister to grand-dams of Gr3 winners Hokuto Kimpai and Muguet Royal.

Distantly related in the female line to Mill Reef, Blushing Groom, Gold River, etc.

Stands at Haras de Lonray, Colombiers, France, at a fee of €3,000. Sire of 1 European crop of racing age, inc. notable winner: Natagora (Gr2).

#### DAM REINAMIXA

Bred by Jean-Luc Lagardere in France. Ran only at 3 years, won 1 (1m2f) of 5 starts. Earned FF72,600.

Very modest performer, winner of seller on heavy ground at Saint-Cloud, placed 2nd and 3rd in similarly poor company.

Quite well bred. By a champion sire. Half-sister to 6 other winners, inc. Reinstate (by Kaldoun; Listed) and Reine Lasty (by Last Tycoon; Listed-placed). Dam a 2-y-o winner, half-sister to Listed-placed winner Rask and to the unraced dam of Resless Kara (Prix de Diane), and Restiver (Gr3).

Grand-dam winner, placed 3 times at Gr3 level. Same family as Falbrav (sharing 4th dam). Also remotely related to Ile de Bourbon and Quest For Fame.

To stud at 4 years and dam of: Smile Dream (2000 c by Lyphard's Wish; winner), Sel Et Poivre (2001 f by Lyphard's Wish; winner over jumps), Queen Dream (2003 f by Spadoun; placed over jumps), Natagora (2005 f by Divine Light; Gr2 winner). She has a yearling filly by Agnes Kamikaze.

#### CONCLUSION

A speedy and precocious filly, representing a boost for her little-known sire. Seems likely to prove best at sprint distances.

#### NATAGORA

gr f, 18-2-2005

	Hail To Reason	Turn-To Nothirdchance
	Halo	Cosmic Bomb Almahmoud
Sunday Silence	Understanding	Promised Land Pretty Ways
	Wishing Well	Montparnasse Edelweiss
Divine Light (b 1995)	Northern Dancer	Nearctic Natalma
	Northern Taste	Victoria Park Lady Angela
Meld Sport	Lady Victoria	
	Marino	Worden Buena Vista
Shadai Prima	Night And Day	Ratification Nightlight
	Bellypha	Lyphard Belga
Mendez	Miss Carina	Caro Miss Pia
Linamix	Breton	Relko La Melba
	Lunadix	Alcide Mona
Reinamixa (gr 1994)	Lutine	
	Diatome	Sicambre Dictaway
Margouillat	Tita	Tim Tam Always Sunny
Reine Margie	Mincio	Relic Merise
	Reine Des Sables	Fairey Fulmar Sena
	Begrolles	

Bred by B. Gouin & G. Duca in France. €30,000 Arqana Deauville Oct yearling