

BLOODSTOCK PEDIGREE ANALYSIS

TONY MORRIS

Gold Cup winner
Rite Of Passage

STAYING geldings have long inspired the affection of the British racing public, that attachment being perhaps best exemplified in the career of Brown Jack, a 'standing dish' at Royal Ascot for seven years in a row. In 1928 he took the Ascot Stakes and in each of the six seasons that followed he won the Queen Alexandra Stakes, the last coming at the age of ten.

The 1950s and 1960s brought several other examples, including Morecambe, who won a Cesarewitch in a canter by ten lengths, Trelawny, who achieved the Ascot Stakes-Queen Alexandra Stakes double in consecutive years, and Grey Of Fallosen, whose victories included a Doncaster Cup, a Cesarewitch and a Queen Alexandra Stakes.

Honest, gallant competitors all, but what they also had in common was their ineligibility for the Gold Cup, the season's premier staying event. The bar had been put up in 1904, the same year that geldings were excluded from the Derby, and it was to remain in force until 1986, when officialdom finally decided that relaxation of the conditions might provide a more competitive contest while having little or no impact on the breeding industry.

Times had changed. A Gold Cup winner, Alycidon, had been champion sire in 1955, but no Derby winner had contested the race since Blakeney, runner-up to Precipice Wood in 1970, and it no longer seemed relevant to breeders of Flat horses.

Geldings soon made an impression under the new arrangement and though Royal Gait was scandalously disqualified after his runaway 'victory' in 1988, Arcadian Heights scored for the unsexed brigade in 1994, Celeric followed suit in 1997, and Royal Rebel won twice, in 2001 and 2002.

Among those who tried and failed were Vintage Crop, who earned his chief renown in another hemisphere, and wonderful Persian Punch, whose seven efforts brought him two second places, one of them just a short head behind Royal Rebel.

On Thursday a new name figured on the roll of honour, and although Rite Of Passage's starting price of 20-1 indicated that his victory came as something of a surprise to most, it was one thoroughly earned, characterised by stamina and tenacity of a high order. Now unbeaten in three starts on the Flat, and still with few miles on the clock, he has the potential to become a great public favourite under two codes, and perhaps in two hemispheres.

Like Brown Jack, who had won a Champion Hurdle, Rite Of Passage came to Ascot via Cheltenham, where he finished third in the Champion Bumper in 2009 and in novice hurdle company this March. The latter effort impressed many as that of one with the potential to reach the top over hurdles, and nothing has changed in that regard, but his trainer had had his sights on the top Flat staying prizes in Europe and Australia ever since the gelding's runaway win over 20 rivals in last year's Leopardstown November Handicap.

It was unsurprising to learn that Dermot Weld had designs on the Melbourne Cup again. The only European trainer to have won the race would inevitably be keen for another shot, but Rite Of Passage will be at the mercy of the VRC handicapper, and after a victory in the Gold Cup he cannot expect many favours. He has now taken his form to

Stamina and tenacity of Gold Cup winner from 'iron horse' sire

The story so far
Useful hurdler and stayer on the Flat

Assessment
Ascot performance a revelation. An outstanding recruit to the staying ranks with excellent prospects of enhancing his reputation on the Flat and over jumps.

What now?
Melbourne Cup the long-term target



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SIRE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY

Bred by Orpendale and Michael Tabor in Kentucky. Won 9 (6-10.5f) of 13 starts, viz. 3 (inc. Curragh Futurity S.-Gr3, Prix de la Salamandre-Gr1) out of 3 at 2 years, 6 (Gladness S.-Gr3, St James's Palace S.-Gr1, Eclipse S.-Gr1, Sussex S.-Gr1, York International S.-Gr1, Irish Champion S.-Gr1). Also 2nd in 2,000 Guineas, Irish 2,000 Guineas, Queen Elizabeth II S. and Breeders' Cup Classic. RPR 121 at 2, 131 at 3. Earned £2,031,426.

A striking individual and a tough, top-class performer from 8-10.5f. Big, strong, consistent, effective on fast and soft turf and on dirt. Very well bred. By a champion North American sire out of a winner of 6 Graded races from a family successful on both sides of the Atlantic.

To stud in Ireland at 4, switched to Ashford Stud, Versailles, Kentucky, at 5, and stands there at a fee of \$100,000. Sire of 7 crops of racing age, including notable winners: Footstepsinthesand (2000 Guineas-Gr1), Maids Causeway (Coronation S.-Gr1), Shamardal (Dewhurst Stakes-Gr1, Poule d'Essai des Poulains-Gr1, Prix du Jockey Club-Gr1, St James's Palace S.-Gr1), Carriage Trail (Spinster S.-Gr1), First Samurai (Hopeful S.-Gr1, Champagne S.-Gr1), Rite Of Passage (Gold Cup-Gr1), Swift Temper (Ruffian H.-Gr1), Ghanaati (1,000 Guineas-Gr1, Coronation S.-Gr1), Intense Focus (Dewhurst S.-Gr1), Internallyflawless (Del Mar Oaks-Gr1). Also sire of Gr1 winners in Australia and South Africa.

DAM DAHLIA'S KRISSY

Bred by Evergreen Thoroughbreds Inc. in Kentucky. Unraced at 2, won 5 (all on turf) of 19 starts, viz. 2 out of 6 at 3 years, 2 out of 7 at 4 years, 1 out of 4 at 5 years, 0 out of 2 at 6 years. Placed 3rd in Listed event at 5. Earned \$138,904.

Very well bred. Half-sister to 4 other winners, inc. tough turf campaigner River Image (by Irish River). By a champion sire. Dam stakes-placed sister to multiple Gr1 winner Dahar and Gr2 winner Llandaff, half-sister to Gr1 winners Rivlia, Delegant and Dahlia's Dreamer, and to Gr2 winner Wajid, herself dam of St Leger winner Nedawi.

Granddam exceptional racemare, winner of 10 Gr1 races in France, England, Ireland and US. Next dam tough racemare, won 16 of 71 starts over four seasons in training.

To stud at 6, and dam of: Jazz At The Sands (2003 c by Forest Wildcat; unplaced), Rite Of Passage (2004 g by Giant's Causeway; Gr1 winner), Agustagrand (2005 f by Royal Applause; unraced), Bibury (2006 f by Royal Applause; winner), Dahlia's Spirit (2008 c by Invincible Spirit; unraced to date). She has a yearling filly by Royal Applause and a colt-foal by Green Tune, and was covered by Mount Nelson this spring. Barren to Danehill Dancer in 2007.

RITE OF PASSAGE

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| | Northern Dancer | Nearctic Natalma |
| Storm Bird | South Ocean | New Providence Shining Sun |
| Storm Cat | Secretariat | Bold Ruler Somethingroyal |
| Terlingua | Crimson Saint | Crimson Satan Bolero Rose |
| Giant's Causeway (ch 1997) | Blushing Groom | Red God Runaway Bride |
| Rahy | Glorious Song | Halo Ballade |
| Mariah's Storm | Roberto | Hail To Reason Bramalea |
| Immense | Imsodear | Chieftain Ironically |
| | Hail To Reason | Turn-to Nothirdchance |
| Roberto | Bramalea | Nashua Rarelea |
| Kris S. | Princequillo | Prince Rose Cosquilla |
| Sharp Queen | Bridgework | Occupy Feale Bridge |
| Dahlia's Krissy (b/br 1996) | Northern Dancer | Nearctic Natalma |
| Lyphard | Goofed | Court Martial Barra |
| Dahlia's Image | Vaguely Noble | Vienna Noble Lassie |
| Dahlia | Charming Alibi | Honeys Alibi Adorada |

Bred by Newsells Park Stud in England. 20,000gns Tattersalls October (Part 1) yearling.

a higher level than that of his stablemate Profound Beauty, who has ruled as Melbourne Cup favourite since her defeat of Age Of Aquarius at Leopardstown last month.

Rite Of Passage was bred by Newsells Park Stud, which enjoyed a fabulous Ascot, underlined by the victories of homebred Strawberrydaiquiri in the Group 2 Windsor Forest Stakes and of Equiano, secured as its stallion recruit for 2011, in the Group 1 King's Stand.

It was not such a great day when the stud parted with Rite Of Passage for only 20,000gns at Tattersalls in October 2005, but he was a backward sort who was only going to appeal to a patient buyer, and there are no regrets now that he found one in Weld.

Rite Of Passage's dam, Dahlia's Krissy, was bought by Newsells Park for \$325,000 when she was carrying to Forest Wildcat at the Keeneland November Sales in 2002. Rather than bring her straight home to Hertfordshire, it was decided to leave her in Kentucky for a mating with Giant's Causeway, who had proved popular in his first season in Ireland and had covered a huge book when transferred to Ashford a year later.

THE so-called 'iron horse', with his five consecutive Group 1 wins in Europe and narrow defeat in the Breeders' Cup Classic, had established himself, in the opinions of most, as the best of Storm Cat's numerous top-class runners, and at stud he was getting the kind of opportunities that allowed the belief that he might replicate his sire's success at stud.

Subsequent events have shown that Giant's Causeway has made the most of his chances, earning renown through the exploits of sons and daughters on grass, dirt and synthetic surfaces over a variety of distances. He kicked off with European Classic winners in Footstepsinthesand and Shamardal among his first crop, followed with a batch who included 13 who scored at Pattern or Graded level, and there was a further Classic triumph last year with Ghanaati.

This term he was expected to reach greater heights than ever in the States by dint of his son Eskendereya, whose brilliant performances in the Grade 2 Fountain of Youth and Grade 1 Wood Memorial Stakes made him a hot favourite for the Kentucky Derby.

A career-ending injury a few days before his bid for the Churchill Downs Classic put paid to that notion, but nothing has happened since in America's three-year-old division to suggest that his chance of being declared champion of his crop has been in any way reduced.

Rite Of Passage's Ascot triumph naturally evoked memories of his third dam Dahlia, who beat Rheingold to notch her first King George VI & Queen Elizabeth Stakes in 1973 just a week after her success in the Irish Oaks, came back a year later to repeat with victory over Highclere, and as a five-year-old chased home Grundy and Bustino in that enthralling 'race of the century'.

A marvellous racemare who wound up with ten Group 1 or Grade 1 wins to her credit in a career that took in 48 starts over five seasons, Dahlia went on to refute the idea that a demanding innings at the track was detrimental to a filly's prospects at stud. She bred four top-level winners, one of them, Dahar, a sister to Rite Of Passage's granddam.