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Pedigree analysis
Sariska

IN recent weeks this column has featured two sons of outstanding sprinters in Virtual (by Pivotal) and Main Aim (by Oasis Dream) – the former a Group 1-winning miler whose future objectives may include attempts at longer distances, and the latter a colt who seems equally good at 6f and 7f and may next be tried as a miler at the top level in the Queen Anne Stakes at Royal Ascot.

When I examined the record of Pivotal's winners in Pattern company, I noted that there had not yet been one above Group 3 over 1m4f, but that Sariska might remedy that situation quite soon. Similarly, I discovered that Oasis Dream had no Pattern winner beyond 7f, but as Middy had already proved successful at Listed level over Lingfield's 1m3¹/₂f, her sire could not be regarded as exclusively an influence for speed.

Of course, it is history now that on Friday Sariska and Middy fought out the finish of the Investec Oaks, the pair clearly outstaying rivals who included four whose sires were Derby-winning sons of Sadler's Wells.

There are clues to be gleaned from pedigrees, but as often as not they are inclined to mislead. We must remember what the scientists tell us – that genetics probably count for no more than 35 per cent of performance – and recognise that every thoroughbred is an individual with its own characteristics.

The best clues, particularly where stamina is concerned, are to be derived from what the individual horse discloses on the racecourse. After York there was no doubt that Sariska would relish 1m4f, and Lingfield told us that in Middy's case we should not assess her Oaks chance on the basis that her sire was a sprinter and she was out of a mare by a miler.

But it is possible that when considering colts such as Virtual and Main Aim and fillies like Sariska and Middy, we might be comparing apples with oranges. In my early days as a student of pedigree I formulated the theory that the female of the species was likely to stay better than a similarly or even identically bred male.

Just why that should be so, I don't know, but it is a view that I continue to hold. I would have been prepared to issue a cast-iron guarantee that a daughter of Cape Cross and Urban Sea would stay 1m4f, but as Sea The Stars is a colt, I was just optimistic, rather than confident, about his Derby prospects.

It is not something that I propose as a hard-and-fast rule, but it is perhaps worth noting that over the last 50-odd years there have been Oaks winners by Solonaway, Sparkler, Saritamer, Kris (two) and Diesis (three), all of whom represented speed rather than stamina, whereas only Hard Sauce and Ahonoora, from that category, had got winners of the Derby.

When I examine Pivotal's record, I find that to date he has 36 individual winners of Pattern or Graded races, of whom 11 are colts, three are geldings and the other 22 are fillies. Of the colts and geldings only Needwood Blade and Windsor Knot, at Grade 3/Group 3 level, earned a prestige win beyond 1m. Ten of the fillies have accomplished that, five of them in Grade 1/Group 1 company at 1m2f and beyond.

Normally I tend to resist labelling any horse as a colt sire or a filly sire, because no sooner has one reached



Sariska (left) and Middy, both sired by sprinters, fight out the finish of the Oaks at Epsom

Sprinting sire no bar to Oaks win

Pivotal's top fillies seem to have few stamina doubts

SIRE PIVOTAL

Bred by Cheveley Park Stud Ltd in England. Won 4 (5-6f) of 6 races, viz. 2 out of 3 at 2 years, 2 (King's Stand S.-Gr2, Nunthorpe S.-Gr1) out of 3 at 3 years. RPR 103 at 2, 120 at 3. Earned £148,023.

Powerfully built, attractive sort, 16.3hh, who always impressed in appearance and condition. High-class sprinter on fast ground (which he evidently needed). Best form at 5f, but probably capable of running to same mark at 6f. By a high-class sprinter-miler who died young, having made a promising start at stud. Half-brother to Listed-placed winner Brave Revival (f by Dancing Brave; dam of Listed-placed winner Bravado).

Dam smart performer, 2-y-o winner, Gr3-placed. Grand-dam Gr1 winner over 1m2f in Italy, half-sister to 7 other winners. 3rd dam won twice at 2, daughter of Listed 2-y-o winner. Good, if not exciting, family.

Stands at Cheveley Park Stud, Newmarket, at a fee of £65,000. Sire of 10 crops of racing age, inc. notable winners: Golden Apples (Del Mar Oaks-Gr1, Beverly D S.-Gr1, Yellow Ribbon S.-Gr1), Kyllachy (Nunthorpe S.-Gr1), Low Pivot (Gr3), Needwood Blade (Gr3), Ratio (Gr3), Silvester Lady (Preis der Diana-Gr1), Captain Rio (Gr2), Chorist (Pretty Polly S.-Gr1), Megahertz (John C. Mabee H.-Gr1, Yellow Ribbon S.-Gr1), Pivotal Point (Gr2), Somnus (Haydock Sprint Cup-Gr1, Prix Maurice de Gheest-Gr1, Prix de la Foret-Gr1), Lucky Spin (Gr3), Peeress (Sun Chariot S.-Gr1, Lockinge S.-Gr1), Violet Park (Gr3), Penkenna Princess (Gr3), Saoire (Irish 1,000 Guineas-Gr1), Windsor Knot (Gr3), Danak (Gr3), Heaven Sent (Gr3), Leo (Gr2), Nick's Nikita (Gr3), Alzerra (Gr3), Beauty Is Truth (Gr2), Brazilian Bride (Gr3), Chantilly Tiffany (Gr3), Enticing (Gr3), Excellent Art (St James's Palace S.-Gr1), Briseida (Gr2), Falco (Poule d'Essai des Poulains-Gr1), Halfway To Heaven (Irish 1,000 Guineas-Gr1, Nassau S.-Gr1, Sun Chariot S.-Gr1), Infallible (Gr3), Virtual (Lockinge S.-Gr1), Sariska (Oaks S.-Gr1).

DAM MAYCOCKS BAY

Bred by Bishop Wilton Stud in England. 32,000gns Tattersalls October yearling. Won 2 (1m2f-1m6f) of 17 races, viz. 0 out of 1 at 2 years, 0 out of 10 at 3 years, 2 (1 Listed handicap) out of 6 at 4 years. Also placed 8 times. RPR 59 at 2, 78 at 3, 97 at 4. Earned £32,384.

Compact, well made sort. Useful, honest, consistent handicapper. Stayed 1m6f. Well bred. By a high-class runner who had limited opportunities at stud. Half-sister to Listed-placed winner Indian Light (by Be My Chief). Dam unraced, half-sister to Gr3 winner Compton Ace and Listed winner Turbine Blade. Grand-dam won Irish St Leger, out of half-sister to Collyria and Varinia. Family of Mossborough and Hyperion.

To stud at 4 years and dam of: Cassava (2003 f by Vettori; unraced), Gull Wing (2004 f by In the Wings; Listed winner), Sariska (2006 f by Pivotal; Classic winner), Zigato (2007 c by Azamour; unraced to date). Has a yearling colt by Cape Cross, and was covered by Singspiel in 2008.

CONCLUSION

Thoroughly worthy Oaks winner with excellent temperament. Belongs in the best company from 1m2f to 1m4f.

SARISKA

b f 14-2-2006

Nureyev	Northern Dancer	Nearctic Natalma
Special	-----	Forli Thong
Polar Falcon	Jefferson	Charlottesville Monticella
Marie D'Argonne	Mohair	Blue Tom Imberline
Pivotal (ch 1993)	Caro	Fortino Chambord
Cozzene	Ride The Trails	Prince John Wildwood
Fearless Revival	Bustino	Busted Ship Yard
Stufida	Zerbinetta	Henry The Seventh Yucatan
Alleged	Hoist The Flag	Tom Rolfe Wavy Navy
Muhtarram	Princess Pout	Prince John Determined Lady
Ballet De France	Northern Dancer	Nearctic Natalma
Maycocks Bay (b 1998)	Fabulous Native	Le Fabuleux Alyne Que
High Top	Derring-Do	Darius Sipse Bridge
Beacon	Camenae	Vimy Madrilene
Mountain Lodge	Blakeney	Hethersett Windmill Girl
Fiddlededee	-----	Acropolis Eyewash

Bred by Lady Bamford in England

that conclusion than along comes abundant evidence to refute the notion. But there are now nine crops by Pivotal aged three or over, and the record indicates that his fillies tend to be better, and to stay better, than his colts.

Yes, I could fancy that Sariska would win the Oaks. Would I fancy a son of Pivotal to win a Derby? I couldn't on the available evidence, but that doesn't preclude the possibility that the exceptional individual will turn up and demonstrate a capacity to stay 1m4f in the future.

Long experience has taught me that it is unwise to be dogmatic about anything in this business; one must always be prepared for contradictory evidence to emerge and to change one's mind.

As I have pointed out on previous occasions, for all that in his brief career Pivotal earned his reputation as a sprinter collecting his two best wins over 5f in the King's Stand and the Nunthorpe, there were elements in his pedigree background to suggest that he would not prove to be a sire only of sprinters.

His sire Polar Falcon had been just as accomplished as a miler as he was as a sprinter, and he was by Nureyev, known chiefly as an influence for speed, but sire also of the exceptional Arc winner Peintre Celebre among a group of high-class middle-distance performers.

Indeed, when Fearless Revival, Listed-placed over 1m2f, visited Polar Falcon, the last thing that might have been expected was a specialist pure sprinter. The mare was out of Stufida, a daughter of St Leger hero Bustino, and her claim to fame was a Group 1 score over 1m2f in the Premio Lydia Tesio.

JUST as Pivotal's sprinting prowess was unpredictable at his conception, so it has often been hard to guess what aptitude his stock might show.

He had Kyllachy, who emulated his sire in the Nunthorpe, among his first crop, but there were also two other Group 1/Grade 1 scorers in Golden Apples and Silvester Lady, both accomplished over double the distance that suited him.

And what has followed has been much of the same – a varied selection of sprinters, milers and middle-distance performers, and often little indication from the dam's side as to the category in which they fall.

In the case of Sariska there were clues to be gleaned about her destiny on the distaff side. Her dam Maycocks Bay, who was by the under-appreciated Alleged horse Muhtarram, won only two of her 17 races, but she might have improved on that record if her staying qualities had been realised sooner.

As it was, she gave her best performance on her first try at 1m6f, as winner of a Listed handicap at Nottingham, and then it was too late to exploit the new knowledge, as she was already in foal and future racing was impossible.

Her staying power might have been conjectured, as Maycocks Bay was out of an unraced daughter of High Top – a Guineas winner but an influence for stamina – and Mountain Lodge, winner of an Irish St Leger.

In fact this is a family so chock-full of staying factors that a resort to speed must have seemed appropriate, but I don't suppose Lady Bamford is too disappointed that Pivotal's input resulted in an Oaks winner.