

# TONY MORRIS



**PEDIGREE  
ANALYSIS**  
**War Command**

**O** PINIONS were divided over the merit of War Command's performance in last Saturday's Dewhurst Stakes. Sent off a shade of odds-on, the Ballydoyle colt was expected to win with some degree of authority, and the verdict of a length and a quarter over Cable Bay, whose only win to date came in a Leicester maiden, hardly seemed to come in that category.

Most bookmakers made no adjustment to his pre-race Guineas price of 10-1, adopting the line that the hype horse Australia was the O'Brien team's likelier winner of 2014's first colt's Classic. We shall see.

Through my race-glasses War Command won well enough. He clearly was not best suited by the rain-softened ground, but he quickened up nicely when called on for his effort, then got to the front too soon. He was idling in the closing stages and needed to be kept up to his work to claim his first Group 1 victory.

This seemed to be by no means a vintage Dewhurst, with only six runners, a couple of them obvious no-hopers. None had a top-level score on his cv. But we have wrongly crabbed winners of a number of previous renewals, most spectacularly in 1990 when we assumed that the form couldn't be up to much if Generous was able to win it.

Whether Australia proves as good as he is cracked up to be, War Command surely deserves a shot at the Guineas. He is a remarkably good physical specimen, a grand mover, and he will train on. He is proven on fast and yielding surfaces, and his first season's work has brought him four wins out of five, his only failure coming in the Phoenix Stakes, a race in which former Ballydoyle inmates Henrythenavigator and Power were both beaten en route to Guineas success.

War Command's style of racing backs up the impression formed from a study of his pedigree background that he will get a mile comfortably. It is not so easy to assess how much further he might stay next year; while there are a number of influences for stamina up to middle distances in his make-up, the blistering pace he showed when winning the Coventry at Royal Ascot promotes the thought that speed may be the dominant character.

This has been a sensational year for two Kentucky-based horses who would not have been automatic choices for stud stardom when they covered their first mares. Kitten's Joy, a son of El Prado, was available for \$25,000 when he retired to Ramsey Farm in 2006, and the year-younger War Front started out at only \$12,500 at Claiborne in 2007. The pair have been carrying all before them in 2013, and it's a safe bet that next spring both will

## Dewhurst hero adds to War's great year

### WAR COMMAND

**b c 27-4-2011**

|                            |                 |                  |                      |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|
|                            |                 | <b>Nearctic</b>  | <b>Nearco</b>        |
|                            | Northern Dancer |                  | Lady Angela          |
|                            |                 | Natalma          | Native Dancer        |
|                            |                 |                  | Almahmoud            |
| Danzig                     |                 | Admiral's Voyage | Crafty Admiral       |
|                            |                 |                  | Olympia Lou          |
|                            | Pas De Nom      | Petitioner       | Petition             |
|                            |                 |                  | Steady Aim           |
| War Front<br>(b 2002)      |                 | Fappiano         | <b>Mr Prospector</b> |
|                            |                 |                  | Killaloe             |
|                            | Rubiano         | Ruby Slippers    | Nijinsky             |
|                            |                 |                  | Moon Glitter         |
| Starry Dreamer             |                 | Forli            | Aristophanes         |
|                            |                 |                  | Trevisa              |
|                            | Lara's Star     | True Reality     | Round Table          |
|                            |                 |                  | Secret Promise       |
|                            |                 | Hail To Reason   | Turn-to              |
|                            |                 |                  | Nothirdchance        |
|                            | Roberto         | Bramalea         | Nashua               |
|                            |                 |                  | Rarelea              |
| Red Ransom                 |                 | Damascus         | Sword Dancer         |
|                            |                 |                  | Kerala               |
|                            | Arabia          | Christmas Wind   | <b>Nearctic</b>      |
|                            |                 |                  | Bally Free           |
| Wandering Star<br>(b 1993) |                 | Ribot            | Tenerani             |
|                            |                 |                  | Romanella            |
|                            | His Majesty     | Flower Bowl      | Alibhai              |
|                            |                 |                  | Flower Bed           |
| Beautiful Bedouin          |                 | Amerigo          | <b>Nearco</b>        |
|                            |                 |                  | Sanlinea             |
|                            | Gris Vitesse    | Matchiche        | Mat De Cocagne       |
|                            |                 |                  | Chimere Fabuleuse    |

Bred by Joseph Allen in the US

#### VERDICT

- ▶▶ Strong, strikingly handsome individual.
- ▶▶ Son of a horse who has exceeded expectations, and is currently the hottest property among Kentucky stallions.
- ▶▶ Pedigree indicates the Rowley Mile will be well within his compass.

stand at fees substantially higher than this year's, which were \$50,000 for Kitten's Joy and \$80,000 for War Front. The latter seems likely to go to \$150,000, which will make him the highest-priced stallion in the States.

While the progeny of Kitten's Joy have flourished exclusively in the States, War Front's stock have been thriving on both sides of the Atlantic. Tough and classy four-year-old Declaration Of War, successful in the Juddmonte International, is his highest-rated representative in these

parts, and War Command is not the only Ballydoyle juvenile to have made his mark at Group 1 level. Giovanni Boldini ran third behind Toormore in the National Stakes at the Curragh before scoring a Listed victory at Dundalk a week ago.

The Coolmore partners' involvement with War Front began when they teamed up with the horse's breeder, Joseph Allen, in the ownership of Declaration Of War, an arrangement also in force with War Command. It is evidently an open secret that

Coolmore have been trying to buy War Front, but Claiborne has resisted offers and will continue to stand him, adopting its routine policy of covering limited books and thus giving his stock a degree of scarcity value.

In 2013 a total of 44 War Front yearlings, conceived off a fee of only \$15,000, have been sold, and they have achieved the phenomenal average of \$385,654. One, a filly out of Dawn Chorus, realised 240,000gns at Newmarket last week, the others all changing hands in America.

Unsurprisingly, the Coolmore partners have been keen bidders for his progeny, two of their purchases realising seven-figure sums. The top colt was a son of Blading Gold Ring, acquired from the Woods Edge Farm consignment for \$2.5million at Keeneland's September sale, where they also laid out \$1m for a colt out of Guide, a Claiborne home-bred.

We are certain to see many more War Fronts in Europe in the near future, as Shadwell (with four buys up to \$875,000), Darley and Sheikh Fahad have also been successful bidders for his current yearlings, and as his reputation rises, to a large extent due to the performances of his stock on grass, others are bound to target his stock.

War Front was not himself a turf performer, but it is no great surprise when the progeny of any Danzig horse excels on that surface. Danzig was always equally successful with his runners on dirt and grass, and many of his sons and daughters thrived on this side of the Atlantic, 55 of them accounting for 101 wins in the European Pattern, 32 at the top level.

War Front won only four of his 13 races, the best of his victories coming as a four-year-old in the Alfred G. Vanderbilt Handicap at Saratoga. He was successful in one minor stakes event over eight and a half furlongs, but was campaigned chiefly at shorter distances, achieving his highest Racing Post Rating of 118 when runner-up to Pomeroy (who received 4lb) in Saratoga's Grade 1 Forego Handicap at seven furlongs.

War Front has been represented by seven individual Graded winners in the States this year, six of them on turf, the lone exception being three-year-old gelding Departing, who notched his second success at Grade 2 level in last month's Super Derby at Louisiana Downs.

War Command is the second

stakes-winner produced by Red Ransom mare Wandering Star, whose Tale Of The Cat colt Naval Officer took Group 3 honours in the 2008 Prix de Conde. A previous War Front covering resulted in Warbird, a colt whose only win from six efforts came in a minor event over 1m2f on dirt.

Wandering Star, 18 years old when she delivered War Command, was a smart performer at three, when she won the Listed Atalanta Stakes at Sandown and the Grade 2 E.P. Taylor Stakes at Woodbine for James Fanshawe's stable. She was effective up to 1m4f, the distance of the Grade 2 Long Island Handicap, in which she finished a length second to Ampulla.

Half-sister to another stakes-winner in Grade 3-placed Major Hero, Wandering Star was out of unraced Beautiful Bedouin, whose siblings included French Listed winner Blast Off (by Graustark), and, more significantly, Silver Hawk (by Roberto), who won the Group 3 Craven Stakes en route to creditable efforts in both the Derby and the Irish Derby – third to Golden Fleece and Touching Wood at Epsom and runner-up to Assert at the Curragh.

**N**EXT dam Gris Vitesse was a high-class filly on her day, notable for two significant wins at Deauville in the colours of Nelson Bunker Hunt. The Prix Yacowlef, always a well-contested newcomers' event, marked the occasion of her first success, and she signed off a year later with victory in the Prix Jacques le Marois.

Gris Vitesse was the product of what might have been considered a high-risk mating. Her sire Amerigo was a notoriously temperamental three-year-old when trained in England by Jack Waugh, and her maternal grandsire Mat De Cocagne was a talented stayer, but a very moody customer whose career ended with a disgraceful display in the second running of the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes.

Having flatly refused to line up with his rivals at the start, he suddenly bolted and crashed into them, lashing out and dealing Zucchero a hefty blow above the knee. Once his jockey had managed to take him back out of harm's way, the starter pressed the lever, opting for safety while ensuring that the miscreant was hopelessly left.

Mat De Cocagne then took off and gave chase, only to dig in his toes after 100 yards and come to an abrupt and complete halt. The ensuing stewards' inquiry into the four-year-old's unruly behaviour would probably have resulted in an order banning him from the racecourse, but his owner pre-empted such a declaration by giving an assurance that he would now be taken out of training.

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