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Pedigree analysis
St Nicholas Abbey

THE Beresford Stakes has long been one of the key races in the Irish calendar when it comes to identifying Classic aspirants for the following year.

The roll of honour includes the undefeated Windsor Slipper, who won it in 1941 en route to his sweep of the Irish colts' Classics, and it was in that event that Nijinsky had a close call against Decies before his triumph in the more consequential Triple Crown across the water in 1970.

Assert and Sadler's Wells featured among the winners of the 1980s and, since the turn of the century, Alamshar, Azamour and Septimus were all successful before their elevation to Group 1 status. And nobody should need reminding that it was in last year's Beresford that Sea The Stars collected the first of his Pattern honours.

The lesson from this particular slice of history is that what happens in that 1m Group 2 event bears close inspection, with particular regard to middle-distance and staying events at the top level in the season to come. And it is a lesson not lost on the bookmaking fraternity, who promptly made Sunday's winner, St Nicholas Abbey, favourite for the 2010 Derby.

The Montjeu colt went into the race a virtual novice, with only one start behind him. In that mid-August Curragh maiden, run on ground described as soft to heavy, he started at 11-10 in a field of 11 and accomplished his task in fine style.

He was still some way off the pace coming to the seventh furlong, but he closed smoothly without having to be asked a serious question, led inside the last and drew clear readily to win by four lengths. Maybe the opposition was not up to much, but St Nicholas Abbey could hardly have had a more pleasing introduction.

It is common knowledge Ballydoyle two-year-olds are always better for their initial outing, so the swift leap into Group 2 company at the weekend and the presence of two British raiders – one of them supplemented from Godolphin – proved no deterrent to punters, who backed him to 2-5.

They never had much worry. He came from behind again, travelling easily, seemed to hesitate through greenness momentarily when asked to pick up, but once shown the whip he soon got the hang of things, led inside the last and stayed on strongly to win with a lot more in hand than the three-quarter-length margin over Layali Al Andalus might imply. Godolphin's Passion For Gold was a length and a half farther back, having run on under pressure without looking to threaten the principals.

The bare form does not amount to a great deal, given that Layali Al Andalus had finished a well-beaten fifth in the Champagne Stakes on his previous appearance, and Passion For Gold had won nothing more exciting than a Thirk maiden. In addition, the time – on good ground – was relatively slow, rather slower than that taken by Shakespearean in the Goffs Million Mile some half an hour later, though the two races were not run over an identical course.

Of course, the bare form of any race often does not disclose much. What counts is how we interpret the performances.

In this case I take a positive view of St Nicholas Abbey's running. We may be sure the runner-up did not show his true form at Doncaster, where he sweated up beforehand, hung under pressure, and the 7f trip seemed inadequate for him. He was much



St Nicholas Abbey beats Layali Al Andalus at the Curragh and races to the head of the Derby market

Abbey has bit of Montjeu magic

Beresford winner will be even better over Derby trip

SIRE MONTJEU

Bred by Sir James Goldsmith in Ireland. Won 11 (1m-1m4f) of 16 races, viz. 2 out of 2 at 2 years, 5 (Prix Greffulhe-Gr2, Prix du Jockey-Club-Gr1, Irish Derby-Gr1, Prix Niel-Gr2, Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe-Gr1) out of 7 at 3 years, 4 (Tattersalls Gold Cup-Gr1, Grand Prix de Saint-Cloud-Gr1, King George VI & Queen Elizabeth S.-Gr1, Prix Foy-Gr2) out of 7 at 4 years. Also 2nd in Prix Lupin at 3, and in Champion S. at 4. RPR 113 at 2, 136 at 3, 133 at 4. Earned €2,263,831.

Tallish, well-made, but not strikingly handsome individual. Possessed a tremendous turn of foot. One of the best 12f horses of recent times.

The best son of his outstanding sire. Out of a lightly-raced high-class stayer (won Prix de Lutèce-Gr3, 2nd in Prix Royal Oak-Gr1), who was among the best daughters of her sire, a Prix du Jockey-Club winner.

Stands at Coolmore Stud, Fethard, County Tipperary; fee private. Sire of 5 northern hemisphere crops of racing age, inc. G1 winners: Corre Caminos (Prix Ganay), Hurricane Run (Irish Derby, Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, Tattersalls Gold Cup, King George VI & Queen Elizabeth S.), Montare (Prix Royal-Oak), Motivator (Racing Post Trophy, Derby S.), Scorpion (Grand Prix de Paris, St Leger S., Coronation Cup), Authorized (Racing Post Trophy, Derby S., York International S.), Frozen Fire (Irish Derby), Montmartre (Grand Prix de Paris), Fame And Glory (Criterium de Saint-Cloud, Irish Derby), Jukebox Jury (Preis von Europa).

Also sire of notable winners in Australia and New Zealand, inc. Sharvasti (Avondale Gold Cup-Gr1), Nom Du Jeu (Australian Derby-Gr1), Roman Emperor (Australian Derby-Gr1).

DAM LEAPING WATER

Bred by Sheikh Mohammed in Britain. Unraced. Sold 3,200gns at Tattersalls as July Sale 3-y-o.

Quite well bred. By high-class miler who proved a disappointing sire. Half-sister to Gr1 winners Starborough (by Soviet Star), Aristotele (by Sadler's Wells) and Ballingarry (by Sadler's Wells) and to Gr3 winner Spanish Falls (by Belmez). Dam 2-y-o Gr1 winner, sister to 1 and half-sister to 2 minor winners. Grand-dam stakes-winner in US, Gr3-placed.

Next dam winning half-sister to Graded-calibre gelding R. Thomas. High-class family of Targowice, Miswaki, Lacovia, Manila, etc.

To stud at 4 years, and dam of: Mekland (1995 c by Pips Pride; winner), unnamed (1996 f by Pips Pride; died as a foal), Daylily (1997 f by Pips Pride; placed), Grammarian (1998 c by Definite Article; dual Gr2 winner in US), Way Out Of Bounds (1999 f by Boundary; unraced), unnamed (2000 c by King Of Kings; unraced), Esher (2001 f by King Of Kings; unraced), Highwater Dancer (2004 f by Sadler's Wells; unraced), Cascata (2006 f by Montjeu; winner), St Nicholas Abbey (2007 c by Montjeu; Gr2 winner). Barren in 2002, not covered in 2007, covered by Dylan Thomas in 2008.

CONCLUSION

Well bred, unbeaten and, as yet, barely tested colt. Sure to stay middle distances as 3-y-o, and may well be of Classic calibre.

ST NICHOLAS ABBEY

b c 13-4-2007

Northern Dancer	Nearctic	Nearco
	Lady Angela	Native Dancer
Sadler's Wells	Natalma	Almahmoud
	Bold Reason	Hail To Reason
Fairy Bridge	Special	Lulun
	Forli	Thong
Montjeu (b 1996)	High Top	Derring-Do
	Top Ville	Cameneae
Floripedes	Sega Ville	Charlottesville
	Tennyson	La Sega
Toute Cy	Val De Loir	Tidra
	Adele Toumignon	Zeddaan
Kris	Sharpen Up	Atan
	Doubly Sure	Rochetta
Sure Blade	Home Guard	Reliance
	Double Lock	Soft Angels
Leaping Water (ch 1990)	St Padina	Forli
	Damascus	Stay At Home
Desert Wine	Anne Campbell	St Paddy
	Sadair	Rose Of Medina
Flamenco Wave	Sadair	Sword Dancer
	Armada Way	Kerala
Hurry Call	Hurry Call	Never Bend
		Repercussion
		Petare
		Blue Missy
		Nasrullah
		Fleet Flight

Bred by Barton Bloodstock & Villiers Syndicate in Ireland. 200,000gns Tatts Oct. (Part 1) yearling

better suited by Sunday's mile, and under an aggressive ride gave his best display to date.

We should also note the first half of the Beresford was run at just a steady pace, and that St Nicholas Abbey showed a sharp burst of acceleration, coming home with a rare rattle under minimum encouragement. I have to regard him as a serious horse, a few pounds superior to his stablemate Joshua Tree, who won the Royal Lodge on Saturday, but I dare say even Aidan O'Brien may be unsure of the pecking order at Ballydoyle as yet.

Both St Nicholas Abbey and Joshua Tree are by Montjeu, as was last week's Derby favourite, Coordinated Cut, and they are not the only sons of that remarkable stallion who have been cited as possible Classic candidates next year. High Twelve, who did not do himself justice at Ascot, and Jan Vermeer, who trotted up in maiden company at Gowran Park at the weekend, are others. There have even been whispers about Captain James Cook, one of the Ballydoyle dark horses, still unraced.

But it has become second nature to think of Derbys where sons of Montjeu are concerned. His first foals arrived as recently as 2002, but he already has a score of seven Derby winners – Motivator and Authorized in Britain, Hurricane Run, Frozen Fire and Fame And Glory in Ireland, Nom Du Jeu and Roman Emperor in Australia. That is a phenomenal record, surely unprecedented for any stallion so early in his career.

WHAT we can readily deduce from those names is that Montjeu, an outstanding 1m4f performer himself,

confers stamina and class on his progeny. We can add other Group 1 winners to the list to confirm that point, such as Montare, Scorpion, Montmartre and Jukebox Jury. Most have been out of mares by sires who were themselves stayers, but that was not the case with Motivator, Montmartre, Roman Emperor and Jukebox Jury, whose respective broodmare sires were Gone West, Linamix, Last Tycoon and Kenmare.

St Nicholas Abbey is out of Leaping Water, an unraced mare by Sure Blade, who earned his reputation as a miler, failed as a sire, and has cut little ice as a broodmare sire. Can we believe he might have supplied a dash of speed for the Beresford winner to make him perhaps a contender for the Guineas as well as the Derby?

It is hard to see Sure Blade being a positive influence for anything, and it will be better for St Nicholas Abbey's prospects of top-level success if he is a pure Montjeu, a faithful scion of the Sadler's Wells tribe.

Leaping Water has had an odd career, changing hands for only 3,200gns as a three-year-old, spending her first three seasons in the company of Pips Pride, then venturing to America with a Definite Article colt inside her who proceeded to win a couple of Grade 2 turf events in California. Her spell in the States, visiting indifferent sires, proved unproductive, but she then came home for coverings by Sadler's Wells and Montjeu – an upmarket move explained by the emergence of her young half-brothers Aristotele and Ballingarry, both sons of Sadler's Wells, as Group 1 winners.

This is a family in which stamina predominates, and it is a fair bet we shall see the best of St Nicholas Abbey when he has the opportunity to stretch out to 1m4f next summer.