

FLAT JOURNAL

BY JODIE STANDING AND DAN BRIDEN



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Edition 3 - By Jodie Standing

Hello!

Casting our minds back a couple of weeks, **Kodiak Breeze** took a nice step forward from his debut to get off the mark at the second attempt in the 6f maiden at Redcar. The Kevin Ryan-trained two-year-old broke well and travelled strongly and, although he still looked a little ungainly under pressure, he stuck on nicely and pulled away in the closing stages to score by three lengths.

On the same afternoon, the 300,000gns breeze-up purchase **Wild Blossom** produced a scintillating debut performance at Carlisle for Karl Burke, beating some well-bred newcomers and a reliable yardstick in **Crownbreaker**. Venetian Sun won the corresponding race last year and this filly looked to ooze class as she devoured the hill to win by 10 lengths. Connections have the Albany and the Queen Mary as her Royal Ascot options and she has more than earned her ticket.

Moreedd was perhaps a fortunate winner of the novice stakes over a mile at Nottingham on Tuesday (19 May), edging out **Lucky Camino**, who was forced to switch when short of room on the rail before losing out by a short head. That horse has since returned to the same course and distance and filled the runner-up spot again.

On Wednesday **The Flaggy Shore** opened her account over hurdles with a commanding 12-length victory over Fiskardo. She had looked talented when winning a bumper at Warwick last November and connections are already considering long-term spring festival targets.

Thursday 21 May brought testing ground at Haydock, which played to **Outback Legend**'s stamina. **Scarlett Legend** was sent off at odds-on after running Ranga Tang to a short head on debut but he may not have been suited by the soft conditions. Outback Legend stuck on well in the closing stages and connections mentioned the Melrose as a possible target later in the season.

On Friday **Night In Vegas** confirmed the promise of his winning debut at Ascot by scoring nicely under a penalty at Goodwood, beating Love Is and Shadow King. He could now head to the Coventry and his claims would be strengthened by the fact his Ascot form was boosted over the weekend when **Alfred Wallace** won at Thirsk.

Saturday brought top-quality racing in Ireland, where **Purview** picked up where he left off last season by winning the Listed Stakes over 1m 4f impressively by six lengths. A step into Group

company now awaits. He is bred to stay well and it will be interesting to see what route connections take.

In the 2,000 Guineas, **Gstaad** didn't have Bow Echo standing in his way and he went one better than he did at Newmarket, beating **Distant Storm** by three lengths, while that horse's stable companion **Pacific Avenue** outran his odds to finish third at 40/1.

Later on the card we saw three smart colts in the Group 3 over 1m 2f, which was won by **Causeway**. Aidan O'Brien's Wootton Bassett colt had won his last three starts and, although the cheekpieces he wore to success in a Listed race over a mile were left off here, it made no difference as he pulled out extra when challenged by **Zia Zabel** inside the final furlong. Described as 'lazy' by his trainer, Causeway seemed to get the trip well and now has several options, including the Irish Derby.

Zia Zabel, who stayed on well over a mile at Cork in April, raised his level considerably, while **Shaihaan** in third bounced back to form after running a little flat at Leopardstown earlier in the month. He is a big, heavy-topped horse with a round action, and I suspect we won't see the best of him until he encounters soft ground.

At Goodwood **Golden Story** was a determined winner of the Cocked Hat Stakes. Although he is not entered in the Derby, his jockey Pierre-Louis Jamin felt he would stay the trip and possibly even further later in the season, perhaps bringing the St Leger into the conversation.

Richard Hannon appears to have a smart filly in **Dark Issue**, who made a winning debut in the 6f maiden, defeating Knock Three Times by five and a half lengths. Nearly two lengths behind her was Wondervision, who had run to a good level at Ascot when filling the same position behind Bint Archange. Dark Issue looked professional, quickened smartly inside the final furlong and pricked her ears on the line. Being out of a dam who won over 1m 2f, she should stay further, but connections have highlighted the Albany as a possible target.

On Sunday **Great Barrier Reef** was made to work harder than on debut to land the Group 3 Marble Hill, while in the same race I had my eye on **Otherworldly**, who disappointed and finished down the field.

Precise comprehensively reversed the Newmarket Guineas form, beating her stable companion **True Love** by two and a half lengths despite missing the break. She could head to Epsom if this race hasn't taken too much out of her.

This week has been relatively quiet but on Bank Holiday Monday I was keen to see how **Mickthesoldier** shaped on his handicap debut for Philip Kirby, as an opening mark of 83 looked workable. A medium-sized sort in the paddock, he had shown a hint of ability in a couple of Irish points before moving to Britain to join James Cookson, for whom he struggled to land a blow in GB points. He was switched to Kirby at the end of April and had two quick spins around Hexham before being allotted his mark.

At Cartmel he was ridden quietly and anchored at the rear, but he crept into it down the woodside under a bit of cajoling and stayed on steadily up the home straight to finish a never-nearer fourth,

beaten two and a half lengths despite being hampered at the last. Bred to stay well, he's the type to come forward again and looks one to keep onside in low-grade handicaps.

Another who caught my eye was **Masekela**. Jimmy Moffatt is no stranger to lining one up to strike at his beloved Cartmel, and that appears the intention with his relatively new recruit. The seven-year-old was rated as high as 108 on the Flat for Andrew Balding before sliding down the weights for Tim Easterby, eventually joining Moffatt for just £5,000 when down to a mark of 62.

He has had two spins over hurdles so far: first at Hexham, where he was held up throughout and trailed home 63 lengths adrift of the winner, and then on Wednesday evening when he took a firm grip in front before being headed between the last couple of flights and fading to finish 21 lengths behind the winner. He'll be eligible for a handicap mark after one more run, and it wouldn't be a surprise to see him reappear with more purpose at the July and August fixtures at Cartmel.

Little else stood out at the mid-week fixtures, but at Down Royal on Friday I was keen to see **Chestnut Palace** again after her promising run in defeat at Leopardstown. Dropped 4lb to a mark of 68 and back in trip to 1m 2f, she again ran with credit, finishing fourth at 25/1 behind the easy six-length winner Harmani. Hopefully connections can find her a handicap against her own sex.

This weekend Carlisle benefitted from Haydock's ground issues and we saw some strong performances from the William Haggas team. **Opportunity** landed the opening 1m 3f handicap comfortably by just over two lengths, staying strongly up the hill and enhancing his Royal Ascot credentials, with the Duke of Edinburgh the likely target.

Realign then followed up in the Reverence Handicap, winning by a length and a quarter. He took a firm grip and would have preferred a stronger pace but, once asked to stretch, he quickened clear inside the final couple of furlongs and stuck on well up the hill. The Wokingham is his aim.

Later, **Blue Courvoisier** was a good winner of a strong renewal of the Silver Bowl but it may be worth keeping **Daydreama** in the notebook despite the fact that he finished a well-beaten ninth. The Tim Easterby-trained gelding is bred to stay well but he showed enough speed at two to win over 6f. His second to Startled last time at York over 7f is a strong piece of form and he has the potential to crop up in a competitive handicap, perhaps back at York.

In the Two-Year-Old Trophy at Beverley, **Matteo** was a gutsy winner for Kevin Ryan, extending his unbeaten record to two, having scored over the same course and distance earlier in the month. He was forced to dig in on Saturday, but when he was challenged inside the final furlong he found plenty and repelled the runner-up to win by a short head.

Looking ahead...

We start the week at Wolverhampton (8.00), where **Seven Sisters** looks to build on her promising debut at Salisbury. She was slowly away and looked green until the penny dropped late on, sticking to her task and narrowing the deficit with the experienced winner to three-quarters of a length. Being a half-sister to Barney Roy, this step up in trip should suit.

There's a competitive maiden hurdle at Southwell on Tuesday (4.00), where **Kingofthefrontier** can build on his eye-catching Rules debut at Uttoxeter at the start of last month. He made good progress from the rear down the home straight to finish third to Final Surprise, beaten by less than 5l. John Dawson has a nice bunch of young horses and this stoutly-bred sort should appreciate the step up from 2m to 2m 4f.

In opposition, **Katarcice** is yet to get off the mark for Fergal O'Brien but he has run several solid races in defeat and looks sure to win one soon. **Hawk's Rock** produced an improved effort at Cartmel 12 days ago but he was very fractious beforehand and this slight drop in trip could help him finish better.

Later, **Captain Cool** bids for a hat-trick as he reverts to hurdles after winning twice over fences at Stratford and Plumpton, the latter race by 21 lengths from a mark of 114 just a week ago (5.00). This looks a weak event but he is clearly better over fences and this is no foregone conclusion. He is also entered over fences at Newton Abbot on Wednesday (3.00).

At Nottingham on Wednesday, **Vitality** is worth noting on her handicap debut from a mark of 69 (3.48). She shaped well behind **Runman** at Epsom at the start of the season but didn't get home after racing keenly at Bath last time. She can make her mark now handicapping.

Later, **Bluecoltrane** makes his first start since September and now joins Michael Appleby in the colours of The Horse Watchers, having been bought from Owen Burrows for 36,000gns (4.18). A mark of 71 looks a workable starting point.

Up at Ripon there's a decent fillies' maiden (6.35) where **Gone By** could make the breakthrough after finishing second on both her starts, including last time at Ascot when beaten just over a length at 10/11 by Light Of Paris. Tarrant, who finished third, is a solid yardstick, having been beaten just over two lengths on debut at Newbury by the useful Synchronicity.

On Thursday at Hamilton, **Botanical** is worth a look in the handicap over the extended 1m (3.51), as is **Altareq**, who was very eye-catching last time at York. He was detached in the rear early on before finishing with a real rattle inside the final couple of furlongs to grab an unlikely third. Raised 3lb, he still looks capable of landing a blow from 83.

At Uttoxeter **Presentandcorrect** could be worth siding with in the novices' hurdle (2.30). The Rebecca Menzies-trained six-year-old ran with promise in a bumper at Kelso in February and made a pleasing switch to hurdles at Cartmel over 2m 6f, keeping on well exiting the back straight and finishing third, beaten just over four lengths by the Gordon Elliott-trained Loch Cuan. Bred to stay well, the extra furlong here should suit.

Next, **Top Coeur** is one to monitor closely for Christian Williams (3.00). The five-year-old steps up to 2m 7f for the first time after showing little on three starts for these connections. However, he had ability when trained in Ireland by Gavin Cromwell and after a series of lacklustre runs he is slipping down the ratings - now on 111, having started out for the yard on 119.

At Lingfield's evening meeting, I'll be giving **Doodling** another chance despite her near seven-length defeat on handicap debut from a mark of 70 at Salisbury (7.40). She held a prominent position early

but was squeezed for room over a furlong out and couldn't pick up, weakening into eighth. The handicapper has eased her 2lb to 68 and she may be better suited to this less demanding 7f. She is also entered at Thirsk on Friday (2.15).

On Friday it's Oaks Day at Epsom, with **Amelia Earhart** holding favouritism ahead of her stable companion **Precise** and Musidora winner **Legacy Link** (4.00). All are bred for the trip, but the most improvement may come from John & Thady Gosden's filly, who won the Musidora despite over-racing early. Given it was her seasonal return and her first try at the trip, it looked the perfect prep and I liked how she showed plenty of grit to repel Felicitas close home.

At a bigger price, **A La Prochaine** is interesting after staying on well to finish third to Amelia Earhart on just her second career start, having won nicely on debut at two over a mile. A big filly who is bred to stay, she can step forward from Chester and she may outrun her odds of 20/1.

At Doncaster there's a must-watch Group-class novice which could feature **Serenetta**, **Seet** and **Moreedd** (6.20), while later **On The River** will appreciate the forecast rain in the 0-85 handicap over 1m (7.30).

I'll be back in a couple of weeks with the build-up to Royal Ascot.

Best wishes,

Jodie