

THE HK WINNING FACTOR REVIEW
HAPPY VALLEY, Wednesday, September 17, 2025
B rail, R1-2 track good, R3-8 track good to firm

HEAT MAP LEGEND	
FAST 2 Len+ fast	
FASTER THAN AVERAGE (1-2 Len)	
AVERAGE	
SLOWER THAN AVERAGE (1-2 Len)	
SLOW 2 Len+ slow	

			+0.3 L	+0.8 L	-0.1 L			
029	C5	1000m	12.67	21.46	22.95			

Dropping to Class 5, Silver Spurs started a big night for the Fownes yard, leading all the way for his first win and his rating here matched his previous best. He was returning from an injury break and had not raced since March, so there's plenty of merit to that and would expect him to be competitive at the bottom of Class 4. That said, this race can't be viewed without noting the late scratching of Happy Horse at the gates with a leg issue, and the rider of Spicy So Smart ending up on the track after a barrier incident as the start happened. We all have our opinions on whether Spicy So Smart should have been declared a starter or not, considering a barrier attendant was holding on to him at the time, but these two things changed how the race set up. Happy Horse and Spicy So Smart were the likely frontrunners coming over from wide gates and putting more pressure into the race but not having them there allowed Ellis Wong to get a very comfortable lead. Spicy So Smart did eventually come around riderless and caused some minor interference to both Silver Spurs and runner-up Golden Friendship in the straight but it made no significant difference. Camp Fire and Noble Deluxe were sound but not unlucky, Triumphant Warrior was disappointing but pulled up lame in a foreleg. Cosmo Navigator had some Class 4 form early in his career, lost his way as last season progressed and was poor by the finish but was much better here.

			+1.8 L	+2.3 L	-3.1 L			
030	C4	1200m	23.83	23.04	22.78			

Mighty Commander had been just handy winning 1 from 15 before this but had excuses in a few of them and this was clearly the best he has produced and wouldn't put it past him to now return successfully to Class 3, where he had not won in 9 starts previously. Coming from midfield, he had no help at all from the lead tempo, which was moderate, but he unwound one of the top last 400m sprints of the night. He did win at 1650m last season but his best ratings have all been running on hard over 1200m so it will be interesting to see how he is programmed. California Blitz is still only lightly-raced, ran to his best here and a first win isn't far off, while Telecom Powergot a good ride from Chadwick out of gate 9, was helped by the slow early tempo but he's honest even though he doesn't win often. Favourite Always My Folks was disappointing after every chance but, with all horses at this time of the season, we tend to be a bit forgiving for a run or two. He is only an average horse so the light handicap here appealed but he's now in Class 5 with a big weight next time, so he faces a different set of challenges. Champion Method had a tough wide run, Rewarding Buddy was slightly better ridden quietly but there were runs from Know At Heart and Amazing Kid that suggested they can be followed.

			-1.2 L	-1.1 L	-1.2 L	-0.3 L	+2.3 L	
031	C4	1800m	13.40	22.61	24.00	24.21	24.45	

At his first run for new trainer Danny Shum, Forever Folks really appealed here on form but was coming off two of the worst barrier trials you would ever see. He missed the jump significantly in both of them and ran tailed out and, when he missed the start clearly again here, it looked like he was set for something similar. But the heat map shows how solid and sustained the lead tempo was, that suited his run on style and Karis Teetan, probably the most never-give-up rider in Hong Kong, just kept at him and the result was a win with a bit of authority. The rating he produced was as good as anything the horse has ever done, so he's capable of another and has now won on all three surfaces in Hong Kong, but his style is always going to count against him. There were some disappointments amongst the better backed runners – Atomic Beauty, Yiu Cheng Glory and the surprise favourite Firefoot, all just average horses who can do better but won't win out of their turn – and Samarkand was ridden too close. Supreme Agility might be one to follow in the near future – he ran his best early last season then didn't back it up afterwards, albeit with mixed fortune, but this was him back to his best in second and Can't Go Wong is consistent. Improvers will be Perfect Pairing, who had the right race shape but didn't have totally clear room down the straight, and Dilbagh, who run here was one of his best, he's lightly-raced yet and capable of more.

			+5.2 L	+0.2 L	+1.8 L	-2.7 L		
032	C3	1650m	28.64	23.78	24.37	23.12		

This looked a slow, messy race on paper and that's what it was. Extremely slow early, it picked up a little through the midstages, before a solid sprint down the last 400m. Rocket Spade didn't have the ideal race shape for a run-on horse but has always been capable of a good final sprint off a slow pace and that's what he did here despite pulling up lame behind post-race. Three lengths covered most of the field across the line, everything rated well below their capabilities and this is a race to treat with suspicion as a guide to the future.

-0.6 L +0.6 L +1.9 L

033	C4	1200m	23.39	22.73	23.68			
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Master Champion had been unlucky to lose on his first run of the season so it was a little surprising that he wasn't favourite here in an average bunch but he had a similar trailing run from gate 1, this time avoiding traffic in the straight and won clearly, if not spectacularly. His rating actually fell just short of his first-up rating, which was nothing special. He might be competitive with a light weight in Class 3 but it won't be a pushover. Patch Of Watch began better this time than first-up, still had a tough run working over to lead from a wide draw and boxed on second so he is just needing a draw. The other leader working across from wide was Mega Bonus who eventually tailed off but made a contribution to the result anyway, badly checking the favourite Honest Witness at the 550m. Honest Witness lost a length quickly and lost his momentum, never got going again so he's worthy of a forgive, although we are still to see anything special from him. Exceed The Wish ran on well in a nice effort, though his lack of tactical speed is always a concern, while IPO Bros, having moved from Hayes to Tsui in July, caught the eye running on from the rear. Across Da Universe pulled up lame.

			+1.1 L	-0.4 L	+1.3 L			
034	C4	1200m	23.69	22.54	23.57			

If there was a highlight horse on the card away from the Class 2, we felt it was King Lotus from the Mark Newnham yard. He had 3 starts as 3yo, found a lot of trouble in the first of them, didn't look totally suited by 1400m from a wide gate at Sha Tin in the most recent but, in between, posted a big rating over this course and distance in May when he won despite the race shape being against him. That rating of 92 put him into our top ten 3yos for the whole season and here he was returning to the scene of the crime. It wasn't all plain sailing, as he got a bump out of the gates in a minor scrimmage with Our Lucky Glory and Super Universal. In truth, Our Lucky Glory ended up last and Super Universal covered ground, so King Lotus probably got the best of that as Lyle Hewitson then found the rail, three back and following the other quality horse in the race, The Perfect Match. He stayed inside, took some winding up before he got to the leaders then came clear to win by almost two lengths. His rating here was a level below that peak from last season so he can improve on this and should have no problem winning in Class 3. He certainly shapes like he wants further and is bound to be tried at that – if he does stretch, and especially if he can perform at Sha Tin as well, perhaps they'll be looking at the Classic Mile as a target. The Perfect Match did a good job, rating well below his best but that was understandable at his first start since November last year. He is lightly-raced and looked very handy before a series of internal bleeding issues, which is a concern, but he'll add to his record if Shum can keep him healthy. Another surprise favourite here was 6th-placed Vulcanus, a last start winner in July and capable of another victory, but he has never looked like he will ever escape Class 4 while the first two home are going to better class races. Super Universal was good after doing extra work, Nebraskan had a similar excuse though he has made a habit of excuses.

			-0.4 L	-0.1 L	+1.1 L			
035	C3	1000m	12.40	21.04	22.97			

It's funny how a 6yo with 34 starts and 6 wins can suddenly produce a career best but that's what happened here with Superb Capitalist, who probably has never had a race work out any better for him than this. Youthful Spirits did his usual thing and charged to the lead, pushed by Candlelight Dinner initially, so there was a good but deceptively civilized pace, and what that meant was Superb Capitalist didn't have to work too hard to be near behind them, had targets to chase in the straight and just enjoyed himself. During his career, he has often had tough runs chasing fast tempos, sometimes from wide draws, but has been quite genuine and was a class regular repeat rater around the 90 mark who, theoretically, had a 95 rating in his locker the day that he got a perfect race. This was the night. He's up to the middle of Class 2 after this and can still win again but will he get the race set up the same way? Youthful Spirits was ok after that early work and the 4yo La Forza pulled early, boxed on for third and he also produced a new best. Jamie Richards has handled him quite patiently since his first runs at 2yo – only 8 starts now in 18 months, 3 of them wins – so further improvement is possible. Justifying was quite solid here first up – he didn't have excuses here (though he returned post-race with a cut to his left hind leg) so we got more of a look at him. He's by Justify, whose stock mostly perform over further so perhaps his impressive high-rating 1000m debut win was on ability along and gave us the wrong impression of him as a speedster. He's racing now like he wants 1400m so we aren't dismissing him. Romantic Son was wide, while, on a night of some surprise favourites, Friends Of Shajing was the early market leader before being displaced by the winner near race time and had his chance finishing ninth.

			-3.0 L	-2.3 L	+3.7 L	+0.3	L	
036	C2	1650m	27.19	23.20	24.44	23.43		

A decent field for this, all first-up for the season and Lo Rider broke through for his first HK win, giving Fownes 4 wins for the night and confirming the promise this horse had shown as a 4yo last season. He led in a slowly-run Derby and ran well, had not had much luck in a couple of other runs and looked a handy type, but the story of this win was a low draw, perfect trip, light weight and a pace that really put the race on a plate for him. He and the runner-up Encountered came clear of the rest, a good sign, but whether the winner's a horse to follow is up in the air. There was nothing in his rating to say he has improved, Fownes does have his horses fit early in the season and Lo Rider had had two trials, so we'll wait and see about whether to get too excited about what he does from here but, in fairness, he has been honest so far and hasn't run any poor races. The runner-up was the third starter for new trainer Brett Crawford and all of them have now run second – Crawford can be pleased with what he has done and the first victory must be coming shortly. Rising 7yo Encountered has spent a lot of the last year or two running in Group races without success but is a decent type at his best and this was back to his best rating. He could get away with a minor Group race if he can hold this form, though he was another suited by the pace shape, but there should certainly be a Class 2 for him. Unsited by the pace were Voyage Samurai, Telecom Fighters and Soleil Fighter, who all deserve a forgive after setting the speed, and there were decent runs from some other 5yos who went around in the Derby last season, Steps Ahead and Californiatotality. They were just

short of their best but a pass mark and likely fighter for the race. So, too Jumbo Legend running on well behind the strong speed from last. Woodfire Bro tailed out with vet problems.