THE HK WINNING FACTOR REVIEW
HAPPY VALLEY, Wednesday, September 9, 2020
B rail, track good

A welcome quick turnaround in fortunes for subscribers after failing to cash a ticket on opening day, with 4 of the 8 winners and some of the night's major bets all landed, including the best bet Harmony N Home and nice wins on Faithful Trinity and Guy Dragon, and we recovered everything lost then added a similar amount.

That's racing doesn't always have to be a negative!

The track was as we would expect after a lay-off of almost two months, on the slightly faster side of good and played well and in accordance with tempo – form and race shape looked the most important aspects of the night's racing.

HEAT MAP LEGEND

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

			+0.8 L	+0.4 L	+0.4 L			
011	C5	1000m	12.84	21.61	23.15			

Perhaps some were surprised that Wins All could win after finishing no closer than 8th in his prior 5 starts but one or two of those races had hidden merit and, after a rapid tumble in the ratings, his improvement for new trainer Chris So was anticipated well by the market. The race overall rated moderately, even for a C5, and the heat map shows that all sections were run slightly slower than average time although none slow enough to qualify as slow sections. In fact, the winner rated below our previous best for him and won a bit cosily in the end so he is capable of going in again. Gouten Of Garo on the other hand just finds ways to lose. He was not overly pressured in front and still couldn't get to the line – he may win another race some time but not convinced he needs to be sent out favourite again, as he was here. We liked Island Winner getting back to the scene of his only win but he failed yet again and that win now looks like a stark and inexplicable spike in an otherwise terrible career. La Bomba had some excuses as he missed away then got a check midrace at the back of the field so he may be a forgive but if there is anything to take away from a poor race it was Flying Money, sitting wide and holding on for third. Aurora Steed was disadvantaged by the draw and got a poor race pan – he is also forgivable when he gets a race to play out perfectly for him.

			+1.6 L	+4.7 L	-2.3 L	-4.7 L		
012	C4	1650m	28.11	25.01	24.03	22.93		

Like the first winner and owned in the same interests, Faithful Trinity had moved from Gibson to So, advertised himself in a decent trial and was so well handicapped on old form that he had to run well in a race without speed that was going to suit him. He had a little bit of luck as Jack Wong on Bulb Elite was at pains to restrain the grey outside Faithful Trinity in very slow sections early rather than going on to take the front himself. By the time Bulb Elite started to get the better of the wrestle, at the 700m, and the pair sped up in the lead, the damage was done with that very slow 1200-800m section and the times Faithful Trinity was able to run under the light weight from then on gave his rivals too much to do. On his best, he can win again on his current handicap mark, but by and large beaten runners here are entitled to a forgive due to the manner of the race. Charity Grand has had limited racing in the last year and a half and you had to go back a long way for a decent rating as far as we were concerned but he was sound here making ground against the tempo. Of the others Electric Lightning overraced, Har Har Heart covered ground but not a race that suited many of the runners.

			-0.5 L	-0.3 L	+0.7 L			
013	C4	1000m	12.51	21.31	23.22			

Nextmodel is one of those difficult horses to rate as he is having to spend all his tickets early from wide gates and isn't finding the line – in terms of sectionals times – so we found him hard to like in this knowing that but he did a good job and was just vulnerable late to a handy enough horse Momentum Galaxy, who had an easier run. The heat map shows the times slightly faster than average early then soft late and it looks average C4 form, which made the efforts of Wild West Wing and especially G Unit, very disappointing. Both had better runs than Nextmodel in the race and weren't able to beat him home. Perhaps they are going to take something from the run under the belt at the start of their campaign so they aren't hopeless causes yet but more was expected. Forza Angel was caught wide, there were a few that made up ground without really catching the eye – Seventh Sea, Winning Ways and Wonder Brahma were on note but none of them posted anything special in the sectionals.

			+1.5 L	-2.5 L	+1.4 L			
014	C4	1200m	23.90	22.43	23.60			

Harmony N Home came into this race with a peak run on our figures of 88 and only 9yo Harrier Jet of the others had ever rated above 82 in his life, so there was a class edge there if the Danny Shum-trained gelding turned up in any sort of form, especially with the soft draw. That was how it proved, he was never in doubt against the lesser opposition and was convincing enough at the finish. It was interesting to note Purton said post-race that horse had nothing left but we think there is a little more there on his previous ratings. The Abraxas carved out

some solid time in the lead through the middle of the race and Purton kept the winner into touch with him in that section so he paid a price for that with a slow section down the straight, at his first run in 2 months with a big weight and no barrier trial going into it. Class 3 will probably be his Waterloo ultimately but he can still win in that grade with a light weight. Simply Fluke's ratings have never suggested he is any certainly to ever escape C4 and he raced to his best here after every chance and just battling to go the speed when the pace switched up. Perhaps Whyte will try him over further based on that but we will continue to oppose him at short odds. Old Harrier Jet is going as well recently as he has in years and raced well enough – the way the race was run, he should have challenged the winner in the final stages considering his known capabilities but only plodded. He's certainly capable of another win. Sparkling Star worked to the line steadily from well back and he has a C4 win in his future but his lack of tactical speed is going to make life difficult and there was not a lot else to take out of this other than the fact some may be better for the race. Momentum Lucky worked too hard from a wide gate, and Bullish Brother and This Is Charisma raced wide and both can do better, but all three are modest talents and very much "right time right set up" horses.

			-0.4 L	-0.8 L	+0.3 L			
015	C4	1200m	23.56	22.73	23.41			

Melbourne Hall is a horse who had been screaming to win a race at the end of last campaign, all he needed was a draw and race to pan out the right way and that is what happened here. There was no wide run, Purton was able to save him to finish the race off and get the job done and maybe he will get better with more racing and more distance as he has been a typical Northern Hemisphere PPG type – a bit small, a bit less advanced than the Southern Hemisphere PPGs from Australia and New Zealand. But, in saying that, Power King, the runner up, was caught wide all the way outside the leaders and conceded the winner 13 pounds so he is more interesting going forward in the immediate future. He has also been a slow burner – quite typical of the ISG horses from the Jockey Club's sale – and he will also run further. Obviously the big question in the race was what happened to Jazz Steed, a logical warm favourite for the race but it seems both Purton and trainer Caspar Fownes reported that he got his tongue over the bit and that was the excuse for him simply appearing to give up after a nice trip. Expect to see him with a Tongue Tie next time. Here Comes Ted finished handily into third but he was in front of the winner at the 400m so that takes some merit from him and Best For You also closed the race out ok from the rear with Authentic Champ. Namjong Sings was entitled to a forgive – he didn't have to go especially fast from wide out to lead them but it did take him the entire first half of the race to get there so his effort to be beaten 2.5 lengths was sound. The bunched finish does not put a flashing light on this form but the times and performance ratings from most of the runners suggest it is average C4 form rather than anything substandard.

			+0.9 L	+1.5 L	-1.3 L	-1.2 L		
016	C3	1650m	27.89	24.23	24.20	23.41		

The key moment in this took place a few seconds after the start, or perhaps before it. Urban Dancer's scratching at the gates did remove a possible pace influence from the field but with the field that did actually jump, Purton's initiative paved the way for the win. There would not have been a map anywhere that didn't have the top weight Alpha Hedge behind and having to chase down Lighting Steed with their 16-pound weight difference if he was to win. There was no question that Alpha Hedge was the best horse in the race, it was all about whether he could be outpointed tactically, as he had been when Zac Purton ran second on him last time in July. But that fear went out of the equation when Purton beat Lightning Steed out of the gates, bluffed Moreira out of the lead then simply controlled the race. Perhaps Moreira should have used his weight pull to hold the lead or make Alpha Hedge work harder to get around him, perhaps he was worried his mount – who is only average – might not cope with the extra work himself and trusted the weights to make the difference later in the race. Either way, it didn't and Alpha Hedge led home the others in the first four the whole race, Flying Sword, Reel Bizzy and Lightning Sword, who could not outsprint him in the circumstances. The winner's best rating last season with us came in C4 and was an indication he would make it to C2 and will not be out of place in that class either. Amongst the beaten runners, the race shape forced bad tactics on Badel on Best Alliance, looping from the rear and he had too much work to do, while Namjong Plus, who has always possessed a decent sprint, made good ground at the finish against the tempo and isn't far from a win. The new horse, Xanthus, had trialled terribly but was much better here under race conditions and worked to the line ok. He might be a run or two off winning one but this was a worthwhile start.

			+0.1 L	-2.4 L	+0.7 L			
017	C3	1200m	23.57	22.37	23.36			

There were some beaten runners without luck here but it was hard not to give all the points to California Rad, all the same. He carried weight, he put himself into the race when the pace set by overracing leader Flying Bonus was solid in the midstages, he ran time and was made to earn the win with a little bit of style at the finish. The question for him really is where he goes as the season progresses. This win puts him into C2 and C2 races at Happy Valley are not as frequent as he would want and C1 races even rarer, so his ability to really progress this season will probably rely on whether he can take his form to Sha Tin, where he has had little exposure. The way he races, 1400m looks suitable but he can only get that at the main track and, being a 4yo in C2, the question will possibly be asked about whether the Classic Mile should be on his agenda. That's all ahead – he looks tough to beat in the next grade up next time. The pace suited Hardly Swears, who worked home well enough into second without ever looking a serious threat to the winner and Victory Power and Master Albert did something similar in sound efforts. None of the leaders held on – Little Bird pulled up lame post-race – and the race shape was key in the outcome for the horse we liked to knock off California Rad, Triple Triple. The leader got to the lead so quickly that the first 400m was not as competitive as expected, the field didn't string out to allow Joao Moreira to slot in midfield so he could finish off, and he was caught with terrible options after 300m and wide and forced to press forward in the fastest part of the race. He dropped out but gets a total forgive for this. The disappointment for most punters was Aurora Pegasus, who had a nice enough position in midfield then didn't find the line. We might be a bit forgiving as he had leg problems in the 8 months since he last raced and may be better off for the run,

but it's worth noting his figures have never suggested he is destined for greatness and this is probably his level. Sacred Ibis missed the jump clearly then finished off as the leaders tired and we know he wants further, while California Levee was making ground too but was also slightly flattered.

			-0.3 L	-1.9 L	+2.5 L			
018	C3	1200m	23.49	22.46	23.69			

The key for Guy Dragon was the solid pace and he took advantage of the weakness of the leaders – note the slow final 400m – to get over the top of them late at his first run for Fownes. California Gungho went fast enough establishing the lead initially but any attempt to steady the speed once there went out the window when Cantstopthefeeling and Stanley Park surged forward wide around them to kick it up again midrace. They went quick enough that Fantasy couldn't keep up and even Loriz had difficulty staying with the lead, so the inference is that the frontrunners were out of their comfort zone and it was not a surprise to see the quinella come from defensive early positions and the speed horses largely failed. Having said that, the run of First Responder did have merit as he was 3 wide without cover through the race and probably would have won with an easier trip. Guy Dragon may have appreciated his first attempt at Happy Valley, perhaps he just found a race where he had it all fallen into place, which was our view pre-race. He did overcome a checked to win here but his ratings for Chris So never suggested he is any better than C3 and he rated below his best here, but he will get another chance in the grade. Mehboob was taken back early and like Winning Endeavour, who missed the start clearly, he benefitted from the weakening leaders and made good ground, as did first starter Wealthy Delight from the Size yard. Wealthy Delight had consistent Australia form without looking anything special but certainly wants further. Keep You Warm hung, which is a concern if he has some problem somewhere, while Fantasy was poor and making a breathing noise, which is a real problem as it is not the first time he has done that. Poised To Strike was dreadful but pulled up with post-race distress so there may have been unseen issues.