

# CARDSHARP ACES JULY STAKES

By  
**JOHN SCANLON**

## Lonhro colt powers home in Newmarket Group 2, while Permian is pipped at the post in France

**F**RESH from finishing third in the Norfolk Stakes at Royal Ascot, Cardsharp turned in a thrilling performance to land the Group 2 July Stakes at Newmarket's July meeting on July 13, giving the yard its first-ever winner of the race.

Established in 1786, the July Stakes is the oldest surviving event for two-year-olds in the British racing calendar. It was restricted to colts and geldings in 1977, and elevated to Group 2 status in 2003.

Before Ascot, Mark had been thinking of running the colt in the Coventry Stakes over six furlongs. However, when Cardsharp landed the Brian Yearlley Continental Two Year Old Trophy at Beverley in June, the pace that he showed over five furlongs there persuaded connections to rethink plans and send him to the Norfolk Stakes instead.

"I rode him in the Norfolk Stakes at Ascot and he ran a hell of a race there," jockey James Doyle told the Klarion.

"The American horse there on the lead kept edging left and bumped him a bit. It

took a while to get him organised and then he finished really well. I just thought stepping back up to six furlongs would be ideal."

The July Stakes attracted a field of 12 and, as might be expected, featured some horses which had excelled at Royal Ascot.

### Impressively

Rajasinghe, the unbeaten Coventry Stakes winner and Sound and Silence, the Windsor Castle Stakes winner, both took their chance, as did US Navy Flag, who had won a Curragh maiden impressively since running in the Coventry, and Invincible Army, an impressive winner of a novice event over course and distance in late June.

Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed's Lonhro colt was full of himself in the preliminaries, and sweated up a little before the start. When the stalls opened, Cardsharp led a trio of colts who elected to stay towards the centre of the track.

The remainder raced towards the far rail,

and the early pace was set by US Navy Flag. Cardsharp was travelling noticeably well, but, when asked for his effort by James Doyle with perhaps two and a half furlongs to run, he began to hang a little to his left.

Relishing the return to a trip of six furlongs, Cardsharp stuck on well, and having taken the lead inside the final furlong he finished powerfully to win by a length and three-quarters from US Navy Flag.

"We've seen today Cardsharp was better for the six furlongs," confirmed a delighted Mark.

"He certainly wasn't stopping at the end. I wouldn't rule out seeing him over further later in the season."

James Doyle, for whom this was also a first success in the race, was equally delighted with the colt.

"He felt a different horse there," he told the Klarion after the race.

"Today he travelled much smoother, and when I gave him a little squeeze he came alive underneath me."

Cardsharp has now won three of his

six races, and has been rated at 110.

Having landed a Group 2 event, there must be some temptation for connections to look at Group 1 targets at this stage. The horse holds an entry in the National Stakes (over seven furlongs) at The Curragh in September but all options will be considered for

this talented colt.

**C**ARDSHARP is by the Australian sire Lonhro who won no fewer than 11 Group 1 races at distances from six furlongs to a mile and a quarter.

He is one of 15 black type performers

for his sire this year. He is out of the Danehill mare, Pure Illusion, a daughter of the Group 3 Princess Margaret Stakes winner, Saintly Speech. In addition to winning twice herself, including over Newmarket's July course, the dam has now produced four winners from her four foals to have raced. ■



## Permian denied Group 1 by shortest of margins

**Y**OU have to hand it to Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed's Permian. The son of Teofilo has already scooped two Group 2 prizes this year from a campaign comprising seven tough races, yet he seems to have retained all his ability and zest for racing.

On Bastille Day in Paris, he turned in another fabulous effort under jockey William Buick in the Group 1 Grand Prix de Paris. Taking up the running from the early leader Falcon Wings after a furlong, he was never headed and seemed to have secured his first Group 1 prize . . . until, that is, the result of the photo-finish was announced.

It seems he just lost out to the fast-finishing Shakeel, on the nod of his head. A heartbreaking way to lose it's true, but hopefully this likeable colt will get his just desserts. The search for Group 1 glory continues! ■



*Permian and William Buick*



*Clockwise from top left: Cardsharp wins the July Stakes; jockey James Doyle receives his trophy from Arqana's Eric Hoyeau; Cardsharp with Savroop Singh; Senior Travelling Manager Robynne Watton gives Cardsharp a drink after the race*