



Mark Johnston's

JAPAN'S STAR CONTINUES TO RISE

LAST YEAR's Dubai World Cup meeting was, for me, the best I had ever attended thanks to the scintillating performance of Subjectivist but, for most others, it was a very muted affair. The public were unable to attend due to Covid restrictions and many of the usual festivities were abandoned and replaced with a tribute to the late Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al Maktoum who had died just a few days before. It was a sad occasion for horse racing and Dubai.

This year was a return to something like normality with a sizeable crowd and tremendous racing, but it was unique for other reasons: in particular, the resounding dominance of the Japanese raiders.



Shahryar, ridden by Cristian Demuro, wins the 2022 Sheema Classic for Japanese trainer Hideaki Fujiwara

WE have known for a very long time that the quality of Japanese racing is increasing, probably faster than any racing nation in the world, and it has to be said that the success is thoroughly deserved. They have stuck to the principles on which the thoroughbred breed was based and have invested

heavily in the best breeding stock with an emphasis on those that have raced over what we consider to be the 'classic' distances of a mile to a mile and a half. In Europe, Coolmore have kept their faith in the Epsom Derby and have done extremely well as a result, but most other commercial breeders have followed the obsession with speed, precocity, and

retiring horses early and lightly raced to cash in on stud careers.

James Willoughby covers the topic in his column (p.10) and points to the value to be had from sires such as Golden Horn. For me, it is notable that most of the sires in the top 20 on James's list are very well-known at Kingsley Park despite our relatively low average

breeding and running style' and that is when I started to wonder what qualifies Dr Angel to criticise Charlie Appleby and William Buick's handling of the horse.

Why would a stronger pace help the horse to stay further? Of course, pulling at any pace wastes energy and a stronger pace might help a pulling horse to settle, but a stronger pace also uses energy and ensures

ON FLICKING through the Racing Post, I stumbled upon a letter from a Dr Stephen Angel of Southampton titled 'The importance of pacemakers'. The author states that: 'Too many contests are run slowly at Group level these days' and that 'trainers need to understand that it is a good way to lose a race'.

He makes particular reference to the two-mile Group 2 at Meydan, saying that the pace was 'ludicrous', and that the Charlie Appleby-trained Manobo, the mount of William Buick which finished second, 'could not win pulling as he did'. That may be so – you know how much I hate to see horses pulling – but Dr Angel goes on to say that 'he is clearly a 12-furlong horse both on

Straight Talking

Trilogy a triumph

AND NOW for something completely different. John Scanlon, as Kingsley Klarion Jack of all trades and master of many, is normally our book reviewer. John, presumably thanks to his many years in legal practice, seems to be able to devour books at an incredible pace and he can churn out a review before the pages have had a chance to dry. He has reviewed all sorts of racing books for this publication and I hope that his efforts have led to some enjoyable and informative reading for many of you.

I, unlike John, am a slow reader and, although I usually have a book on the go, I have a large backlog awaiting my attention. The issues of reading slowly and struggling to find time to read used to be compounded by the fact that, once I had started a book, I would always finish it, however much I hated it. This meant that some might drag on for weeks or months. I was cured of that affliction by The Lord of the Rings, which I found so dreadfully boring that I succumbed half-way through

and vowed to adopt my son Angus's principle of giving a book 60 pages, and no more, to convince me that it is worth reading.

The Sturmtaucher Trilogy makes Tolkien's tome look like a short story but, having just completed it, I feel compelled to review it and recommend it to you, despite the only connection to racing in its 1.1 million words being a reference to Doncaster racecourse being used as a prisoner-of-war camp. The three books – The Gathering Storm, Flight of the Shearwater, and The Turn of the Tide – follow the fortunes of a retired and re-instated

German general, his family, his Jewish employees and their family through the rise to power of Adolph Hitler and the Second World War. It is a truly compelling story and the quality of the writing belies the inexperience of the author Alan Jones (nee Jeans), who had previously written three relatively short crime novels and is, by trade, a vet -- and a friend of mine from university.

Alan is not German, nor Jewish, he was born long after the Second World War ended, and he is not a historian. And yet the detail in these books would have you believe that he had to be there

or have some very close connection with someone who was. Nor does he have any connections in the world of writing or publishing and, as with his first three books, these works are self-published.

Although Alan has come to writing

after a long and successful career in veterinary practice, I see parallels with my desire to enter and succeed in the world of horseracing. The barriers for Alan are every bit as high as they were for me, and it would be a tragedy if his talent was to go unrecognised and unappreciated. I hope, therefore, that you will understand my diversion from the usual theme of the Kingsley Klarion to give these books a plug.

Anyway, when the Sturmtaucher Trilogy is a blockbuster movie or a TV series, I'm sure Alan will buy some racehorses and Charlie and I will be there to train them for him!



Alan Jones



The Sturmtaucher Trilogy