

Onwards and upwards

By John Scanlon

THE REHABILITATION of former Ascot Gold Cup winner Subjectivist continued in highly encouraging style at the Dubai World Cup meeting at Meydan on March 25.

The six-year-old was having just his second run since that stunning 2021 Royal Ascot success, after which he suffered a career-threatening tendon injury. But by finishing an impressive third in the Dubai Gold Cup behind the seasoned globetrotter, Broome, he raised hopes that he could be on the way back to his best.

'We were delighted with the run. It was special to see him back being competitive at that level again,' said Charlie Johnston.

'He wasn't quite back to his brilliant best, but to see him in the fight again was fantastic. It's not inconceivable that he will come forward again after Dubai. He might not be the invincible horse he was two years ago, but he's certainly back in the picture now.'

The aim will be another tilt at the Royal Ascot highlight in June.

'Touch wood, everything seems to have gone smoothly immediately after the race and his legs seem good, said Charlie.

'There are options like the Sagaro or Yorkshire Cup before Ascot, but I wouldn't be worried if he didn't run again in between as this was the route that worked with him two years ago and we know he's a good horse fresh.

The Dubai run came exactly a month after Subjectivist, by Teofilo and owned by Dr Jim Walker, returned to the track in Riyadh, where he ruined his chances of

being competitive in the Red Sea Turf Handicap (Group 3) by racing far too keenly throughout.

After much thought, connections decided to run Subjectivist in the Dubai Gold Cup (Group 2), a race he had won in great style in 2021.

The race attracted a quality field of 15 runners. In addition to Subjectivist, the seven-year-old Broome had won at Group 1 level, while no fewer than five of the other runners had won at least once at Group 2 level, and two more at Group 3. Joe Fanning took the ride on Subjectivist, who was drawn in stall 14 of 15.

Once more, the early stages of the race didn't go to plan. Subjectivist was racing keenly again, but additionally Quickthorn, drawn two places to his inner, was slow to cross to join the main body of the field and so for perhaps the first 40 seconds of the race Subjectivist was racing well wide of the field. Once Joe was able to cross over, Subjectivist settled, racing a few lengths behind the leaders, Global Storm and Quickthorn.

Approaching the home turn, Joe sent Subjectivist to challenge for the lead. For a few seconds, Subjectivist and Quickthorn pulled away from the field and briefly the Kingsley Park horse looked to have the race at his mercy. But then the favourite Siskany made smooth progress to take the lead with a furlong and a half to race, only to be collared by the late run of Broome, produced

perfectly from well off the pace by Ryan Moore.

To his great

credit, Subjectivist kept on well, and though he finished more than four lengths behind Siskany, he finished clear of the remainder, one and a half lengths ahead of the fourth horse, the Derby Italiano winner Ardakan. It was noticeable that he fared much the best of the horses which raced up with the pace throughout, and that in a race run in course record time.

Joe Fanning was clearly cheered by his partner's performance.

'I was delighted with that,' he told the press after the race.

'It felt like Subjectivist is back in himself and he seemed to pull up well. From the gate we were posted a bit wide but he settled for me a few lengths off the lead. I got going on him off the home turn and, although he got headed, he kept on for me to place.'

MARK Johnston is in no doubt as to Subjectivist's merit.

'I put him in the category of our best three horses ever, because as with the other two I never looked at the opposition,' he said.

'Those two horses were Shamardal and Attraction, and it's the same with Subjectivist – we don't look at the opposition. We look at whether he can run to his best and, if he does that he'll be tough to beat.

'We firmly believed that in 2021 he was the best stayer in the world and it's just going to be whether he can get back to that level.'

After such a serious injury, nothing can be taken for granted as to Subjectivist's career. But this latest performance showed us enough of the horse's old spark to provide encouragement for the future. ■



Subjectivist and Joe Fanning