

# Listed success for Dear My Friend

**T**HE three-year-old colt Dear My Friend gave the stable its first Listed success of 2023, and Charlie Johnston his first black type winner since taking over the licence in his sole name, when stylishly landing the Burradon Stakes at Newcastle on Good Friday, April 7, writes **JOHN SCANLON**.

Owned by Middleham Park Racing XXV and Michael Lai, the Pivotal colt enjoyed a promising juvenile career. After landing two novice events at Carlisle and Beverley, Dear My Friend ran creditably in the Vintage Stakes (Group 2) at the Qatar Goodwood Festival.

That effort was followed by a decent third behind Victoria Road in a Listed race at Deauville, and the colt ended his season by running third in the Group 3 Zetland Stakes over a mile and a quarter at Newmarket.

On his seasonal debut at Newcastle he was in a field of 11 for this year's renewal of the Burradon Stakes, a race established in 2017 and elevated to Listed status in 2018. Johnston Racing also entered Susan and John Waterworth's Benacre. James Doyle took the ride on Dear My Friend, while Hollie Doyle partnered Benacre.

The Johnston-trained horses enjoyed differing fortunes at the start: Benacre, who was drawn nearest to the stands' rails, was quickly away, and raced in the lead on the near side of the track, while Dear My Friend was badly hampered on leaving the stalls and had to race towards the rear of the

field in the early stages.

The complexion of the race changed when Tenjin, who had been pulling hard throughout, pulled his way into a clear lead after three furlongs and went several lengths clear of the field. As Tenjin began to tire with a quarter of a mile to run, Benacre regained the lead but was soon challenged by Flight Plan, Dear My Friend and Galeron.

Flight Plan seemed to be getting the upper hand, but well inside the final furlong Dear My Friend produced more, travelling strongly to the line to score a shade cleverly by a neck from Flight Plan, with Galeron finishing two and a quarter lengths back in third, just in front of Benacre.

Charlie Johnston was delighted to witness Dear My Friend's success.

'A lot went wrong early and Dear My Friend had to make a lot of ground up through the middle part of the race and that can often tell in the closing stages,' he said.

'But fair play to the horse, he toughed it out well. He has a big, long stride, so you would be confident about going up in trip in due course.'

**A**SKED about future plans for the Pivotal colt, Charlie confirmed he would be upped in class and trip.

'The obvious thing now is to go straight to the Group 2

Dante at York, I'd have thought, and then take it from there. He's only going to keep getting better as he's still a big shell of a horse - he is very exciting for the long term.'

Middleham Park Racing's Mike Prince was equally excited by the win.

'Dear My Friend was always a bit keen as a two-year-old but he enjoyed the cover there,' he said after the race.

'We always thought he'd need further and his stamina came into play in that last furlong. He'll certainly go for a Derby trial and the plan is to go to Epsom.'

**T**HE syndicate who own Dear My Friend are hugely excited by the horse's Derby entry and it will be fascinating to see how he comes out of this exciting seasonal debut.

The colt is by Pivotal out of the Teofilo mare, Dusty Red.



Dear My Friend's winning connections on the podium above James Doyle and Charlie

She raced three times and appeared to stay a mile and a quarter. However, her dam, Dust Dancer by Suave Dancer, did stay a mile and a half, so there is reason to hope Dear My Friend might stay the Derby distance.



Dear My Friend and James Doyle (light blue) battle to the line to win at Newcastle