

THE JAMES WILLOUGHBY COLUMN



CHARLIE JOHNSTON unleashed the first exciting juvenile of his solo training career when Barnwell Boy won at Goodwood last month.

Jane Newett's home-bred colt scorched home to win by four and a half lengths and two and three-quarter lengths in the William Hill / British EBF Novice Stakes over six furlongs, despite running green on his debut. Now he will likely head to Royal Ascot; but in which race?

As Table 1 shows, since 2011 only three juvenile winners over the same course and distance have clocked a faster time

Rank	Date	Going	Winner	Race	Time
1	28/07/2022	GF	Royal Scotsman IRE	G2 Richmond Stakes	69.66
2	26/05/2018	G	Natalie's Joy GB	Maiden Fillies' Stakes	69.88
3	31/07/2014	GF	Ivawood IRE	G2 Richmond Stakes	70.09
4	26/05/2023	G	Barnwell Boy GB	Novice Stakes	70.09
5	30/07/2020	G	Supremacy IRE	G2 Richmond Stakes	70.13
6	01/08/2013	G	Saayerr GB	G2 Richmond Stakes	70.14
7	29/07/2011	GF	Harbour Watch IRE	G2 Richmond Stakes	70.23

Table 1: Fastest times over six furlongs at Goodwood since 2011

Rank	Date	Going	Winner	Career high	Time
1	26/05/2018	G	Natalie's Joy GB	Won Listed race	69.88
2	26/05/2023	G	Barnwell Boy GB	Won novice	70.09
3	27/05/2023	GF	La Guarida IRE	Won maiden	71.11
4	25/05/2017	G	Masar IRE	Won G1 Derby	71.32
5	24/05/2018	GF	Mutawaffer IRE	OR 89	71.51

Table 2: Fastest times in May over six furlongs at Goodwood since 2011

— and two of them did so in the G2 Richmond Stakes.

Race times, of course, do not translate to class without adjustment for ground conditions, wind and weight carried. What we can say is that Barnwell Boy has enough pace to run as fast as juveniles have been able to muster over six furlongs at Goodwood — and win impressively in the process.

The ground at Goodwood on May 26 was officially Good (Good to Firm in places). Despite what some racing analysts deemed by a coarse inspection of the times compared with the Racing Post Standard, this was an accurate assessment of conditions by the Goodwood clerk, Ed Arkell.

Ground conditions were on the quick side, but a tailwind also helped Barnwell Boy register a fast time. At the time of the race, the wind speed averaged 16mph and was gusting to twice that, helping times on the straight track by about a second per mile.

BARNWELL Boy's jockey, Oisin Murphy, felt that the colt had showed a lot of speed. With fast conditions and the tailwind, he dominated his rivals from the front and did not need the sixth furlong to show his superior

ability.

It's my view that the G2 Norfolk Stakes over five furlongs at Royal Ascot will suit Barnwell Boy better than the G2 Coventry Stakes over six. The latter is, on average, a better race and provides a stiff test for the more precocious of juveniles at this time of year. Barnwell Boy seems like he is all about speed.

If we consult Table 2, again showing times with no adjustment for conditions, only Natalie's Joy has run faster than Barnwell Boy at Goodwood in May.

The track has long staged separate six-furlong races for maiden (now novice) colts and fillies, and the distaff version the day after. Barnwell Boy was won by another impressive type in La Guarida. After judicious watering overnight, the ground was only slightly quicker for the daughter of New Bay, but the wind had dropped considerably and was helping by much less. La Guarida recorded a time 1.02sec slower than Barnwell Boy, but will also be heading to Ascot, all being well.

Once we do allow for conditions, Barnwell Boy's win comes out as one of the fastest performances by a juvenile in Britain in 2023 (considering form up to May 27). On my figures, I have only three faster races: the

Listed National Stakes (5f) won by Elite Status, the Ripon maiden (6f) won by Asadna and the Listed Marygate Stakes (5f, fillies) won by Got To Love A Grey.

Certainly, Elite Status would be a tough opponent for Barnwell Boy in the Norfolk, but it is better to heed the quality of a race than any opponent; any horse can run poorly, but races tend to be won by the same level of performance.

Barnwell Boy is bred to be fast too, being by the sprinter Starspangledbanner out of a daughter of a smart 5f mare. He is a good one, and a stiff five furlongs looks his ideal platform at Ascot.

Politico underlines the Point

MOST PEOPLE in bloodstock expected Blue Point to be a success at stud. He was a classy, consistent and tough runner by Shamardal and looked the part too.

No wonder he was well received at the sales, and already

his first two-year-olds have hit the ground running.

Politico is one of his smart early types and looked a good prospect for Kingsley Park when winning at Chester last month by three and a half lengths.

This performance did not have the brilliance of Barnwell Boy, nor was it so fast, but it was still impressive and great to see the colt had learned so much from his Beverley debut when fourth. He looks the typical Johnston horse to improve with racing.

It's no surprise that Politico is precocious. Blue Point made a winning debut in June of his two-year-old season, while his dam Servalan won a Listed race before Royal Ascot.

Three-year-olds thriving

FOR FANS of the Johnston yard, Goodwood and fast ground is a marriage made in heaven. Sure enough, the two-day fixture late last month delivered not just Barnwell Boy's stunning performance.

Urban Sprawl and Good Morals both looked just the type of progressive three-year-old which has been the stable's hallmark. Both made all under terrific rides from Joe Fanning in the silver colours of Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed al Maktoum. Stop me if you have heard that one before!

The tough Urban Sprawl has won his last three over seven furlongs. He appreciated the return to that specialist distance (it requires a horse can switch over quickly and efficiently to predominantly anaerobic energy in the second half of the race, so a unique blend of speed and stamina is required) with an

impressive win, hitting the line hard after still going strongly when his pursuers had come off the bridle. He could get a turning mile later in his career, but that trip allows longer-winded types to run at him for longer.

On the march with the Silver Army

WHILE SOME people compile lists of 50 to follow, 12 to follow or 10 to follow, my speciality is one to follow. And in 2023, that one is the cracking filly Good Morals.

As detailed last month, Good Morals is a daughter of my favourite sire Farhh, like a previous member of my one-to-follow club, Dee Ex Bee. Her imperious victory in the British EBF 40th Anniversary Handicap for fillies over 12 furlongs at Goodwood showed she is every bit as good as students of timing data thought.

Good Morals posted some unusual sectionals when winning a small race at Wolverhampton in April off a BHA mark of 75. She looked a strong galloping, enthusiastic type with the frame of a long-distance runner. She has the ability to pound out rhythmic fractions, but what was also clear was her capacity to reach a higher speed than cruising with little apparent difficulty. In plain language, she is a stayer with the priceless ability to change cadence.

Now, it was my belief that Good Morals would turn out a marathon runner. I could be wrong about this, because she showed more speed than even the Wolverhampton numbers suggested at Goodwood. Perhaps that trip is right for her, but she will be an even more formidable runner if able to keep up the gallop for longer.

Over the years, I have thoroughly enjoyed watching the yard's exploits with horses owned by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed. Charlie and Mark have done an amazing job getting every ounce of talent — and sometimes a lot more — out of the horses he has placed in their care. The yard's 2023 intake of juveniles contains many I cannot wait to see under a great portfolio of owners, and it is great that 'the Silver Army' will be marching on for another year.

