

# Double delight on the July course

Killybegs Warrior wins under Kevin Stott

## Sacred Angel and Killybegs Warrior deliver the goods with super wins at Newmarket

**I**N HIS first year as the sole licence holder at Kingsley Park, Charlie Johnston is especially keen to make his mark at the principal meetings. So he was delighted by the yard's performance at the Newmarket July Festival; from nine runners, Johnston Racing could boast two excellent winners and three seconds.

The yard's campaign got off to a flying start on July 13 when **Sacred Angel** landed the spoils in a valuable maiden fillies' event. The Dark Angel filly, bought by Nurlan Bisakov following this win, had made her debut in June at Pontefract where she finished third.

On the July course she faced nine opponents over six furlongs, and William Buick took the ride. Racing down the centre of the course, she was prominent throughout.

Dubai Treasure hit the front with two furlongs to race, but Sacred Angel was travelling strongly and, on hitting the rising ground, she proved the stronger of the pair and kept on well to score by a length and a quarter from Dubai Treasure.

Charlie reflected on her improvement from her debut.

'Generally, our 2-year-olds are taking more of a step forward from their first runs to their second this year,' he told the Klarion.

'Perhaps that's to do with the weather and having less grass work at home this year. A lot of them have been running greener than we'd expect them to first time and, as such, are taking a big step forward on their second runs.'

'With that in mind she ought to have gone close in a maiden like this and she duly did.'

'William liked her and for a man who rides lots of nice horses, when he says that it fills you with a lot of confidence.'

Sacred Angel proved she was still progressing when she stepped up to win a Group 3 contest at the end of July. See p.16 for a report on that race.

Sacred Angel is out of the Haatef mare, Sacred Aspect, and was bought for £52,000 at Goffs UK Premier Yearling Sale last August.

Later that afternoon, Dash Grange Stud's Sirona ran well in the mile handicap, finishing strongly to finish second to Darkness, and on the following day **Killybegs Warrior** proved his liking for the July Course by landing the heritage handicap over a mile and a quarter.

This is a race the yard have targeted over the years, winning with Torchlighter (2014), Resonant (2015), Ode To Evening (2016), Communique (2018) and Zabeel Champion (2020).

In many ways, Mick Doyle's Killybegs Warrior, a three-year-old colt, is a typical example of a horse whose early successes have seen his handicap mark rise to the point where it has become a barrier to further success.

Last seen out in the Hampton Court Stakes at Royal Ascot, his mark was eased from 100 to 99 at Newmarket, and boasting a record of two wins from two starts on the July Course, hopes were high that the Saxon Warrior colt would produce a big run for jockey Kevin Stott.

Dropped into handicap company, albeit very classy handicap company, Killybegs Warrior was one of a dozen runners who went to post.

**H**E settled in midfield and after negotiating the bend he tracked stablemate Knockbrenn as the field made for the centre of the track.

He made progress towards the lead from three furlongs out, and when ridden, he began to edge left slightly. Meantime, Obelix was produced by Jamie Spencer for a late run on the outside and took the lead entering the final furlong. But Killybegs Warrior kept on well and stayed on to defeat Obelix by three-quarters of a length.

'He has been set some tough challenges this year in the likes of the Dante and the Hampton Court,' Charlie said.

'His only real disappointment was in the Silver Bowl at Haydock. We spent a lot of time debating whether a mile or a mile and a quarter was his trip, and it's definitely this trip today. His owner Mick Doyle loves Newmarket and York so we always try to target races there. I might see if I can get him to let us run at Goodwood in between!'

Elsewhere at the July Festival, Mick Doyle's Hope You Can Run and Barbara and Alick Richmond's In These Shoes both achieved creditable second places in competitive handicaps. ■

