

**RACING POST**



# 100 WINNERS



**HORSES TO FOLLOW – FLAT 2024**

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(ages as at 2024)

### **ABSURDE (FR)**

*6 b g Fastnet Rock - Incroyable (Singspiel)*

A dual winner over 1m2f for Carlos Laffon-Parias in his native France in 2021 and 2022, Absurde joined Willie Mullins in May last year and he ran out an impressive winner of a 2m4f novice hurdle at Killarney for his new trainer that month. That race was one he was entitled to win but, switched to the Flat in June, he very much caught the eye by finishing second to his stablemate Vauban in the Copper Horse Handicap over 1m6f at Royal Ascot. He raced keenly behind a slow gallop and, in the circumstances, did well to finish where he did. That marked him down as an Ebor type and he duly won that contest in August (following one disappointing run over hurdles in between) where, under an inspired Dettori ride, he managed to get the better of the favourite Sweet William, despite having to contend with a wide draw. He ran another cracker in the Melbourne Cup on his next outing in November, finishing seventh of 23 runners, comfortably ahead of Vauban who finished fourteenth.

He next ran over hurdles over Christmas but was pulled up in unsuitable heavy going at Leopardstown, an effort which can easily be forgiven. He then ran okay behind Ballyburn in a Grade 1 at the Dublin Racing Festival on soft to heavy ground in early February and he may take in one of the big festivals over the Jumps in the spring, but after that he will surely be switched to the Flat again and he already looks an ideal type for the Irish St Leger, which is run over 1m6f in September. Another tilt at the Melbourne Cup may also be considered but, whatever targets are chosen for him, this progressive gelding looks sure to rack up further wins. WILLIE MULLINS

### **ALIGN THE STARS (IRE)**

3 br c Sea The Stars - Kitcara (Shamardal)

Unexposed 3yo handicappers have been the Johnston staple diet down the years and, although only Charlie's name is now on the licence, it's unlikely that anything will change in that respect in the near future. Align The Stars showed form bordering on useful in three starts as a juvenile from 1m to 1m2f and, given the stamina in his pedigree, he could be the type to run up a sequence once he gets to tackle 1m4f and possibly beyond. He's yet to tackle a sound surface (his runs have been on good to soft, soft and Polytrack) but there's no reason why he shouldn't prove as effective on quicker ground and this brother to Group 3 winner/Group 2 placed Al Aasy, who won from 1m2f-1m5f, is capable of leaving the bare facts of his juvenile career behind at some stage. CHARLIE JOHNSTON

### **ALMAQAM**

3 b c Lope De Vega - Talmada (Cape Cross)

Ed Walker, who has held a training licence for the best part of fifteen years, has trained over 500 British Flat winners in that period and has a deserved reputation for improving his horses. Almaqam is one of the many

unexposed 3yos in his care and he is open to progress judged on his encouraging display in a Newmarket novice on his debut in October. Despite showing greenness, this half-brother to Listed-placed 7f-8.6f winner Saleymm picked up well in the last quarter mile to finish fourth of twelve behind previous winner Feigning Madness at odds of 25-1. He should have no problem with 1m2f and, while he'd have to improve to win a similar event at one of the better tracks, this Irish Derby entry should come into his own once he's qualified for a handicap mark. That debut run came on soft ground but his aforementioned half-brother proved smart on a sound surface. ED WALKER

### **AL MUSMAK (IRE)**

3 b c Night Of Thunder - Parton (Kitten's Joy)

A 95,000gns yearling, Al Musmak got his career off to the perfect start over 7f at Ascot in July where he got the better of the favourite Under The Sun, despite rearing as the stalls opened. The pair drew well clear of the remainder and his rider David Egan said afterwards: "He's got a bit of a knee action and I think a bit of ease in the ground just helped him get on top in the last furlong. I think he's next year's horse and should step forward for the run." He reappeared just two weeks later in a Listed race over the same C&D and he ran well again despite finishing four lengths behind Rosallion, who would frank the form later in the season by winning a Group 1 in France. Behind Al Musmak were Ancient Wisdom, Alnayaabi and Dancing Gemini, who would all go on to win their next outing. Al Musmak also won his next start, this time a Listed race over 1m at Haydock in September, although he probably didn't have to improve much. This time Ben Curtis rode him and he said: "It was very pleasing. He floated across the ground and that was probably the question mark as the ground up until now has been a bit slower, but he handled that

beautifully. He has the right mind for it and he took it well.” His final assignment was the Group 2 Royal Lodge Stakes at Newmarket, where he finished second behind Ghostwriter, who was completing a hat-trick. The third home was the highly-touted Capulet, so the form stacks up. He was not seen again but he looks a promising type for the year ahead, with Group races at around 8-10f on ground with a bit of cut no doubt on the agenda. ROGER VARIAN

### **ALBASHEER (IRE)**

*6 ch g Shamardal - Mutebah (Marju)*

Sixth in the 2020 Dewhurst Stakes behind St Mark's Basilica for Owen Burrows, Albasheer's career didn't really progress at three and, after two disappointing runs for that trainer in 2021, he wasn't seen again for about 18 months. Following an underwhelming first run for his new handler Archie Watson in April of last year, he was soon gelded and he gradually began getting his career back on track afterwards. Having been rated 112 at the end of his 2yo season, his mark had fallen to 95 by August of last year and he was able to take advantage by winning a Class 2 Heritage Handicap at York over 6f, albeit in a dead-heat with the veteran Summerghand. Three more good runs in big-field handicaps followed, notably his fourth place in the Ayr Gold Cup in September, in which he finished fast to be beaten less than one length by the winner Significantly. He was switched to the AW afterwards and, following a good third in a 6f Listed race behind Tacarib Bay at Newcastle in November, he ran out a decent winner of a handicap over the same C&D on New Years Day. No doubt all of the big sprint handicaps will be on the agenda for him throughout the summer and, now that he has found his groove again, you wouldn't be too surprised if he were able to win one. ARCHIE WATSON

**ALYANAABI (IRE)***3 b c Too Darn Hot - Alyamaama (Kitten's Joy)*

If Alyanaabi either catches City Of Troy on an off day or can be kept away from him in the early months of the season, there's a reasonable chance he could pick up one of the colts' 2,000 Guineas judged on the form he showed as a juvenile. He looked a smart prospect when justifying strong market confidence on his debut over 6f at Salisbury last June but, although he was unable to follow up in a Listed event at Ascot when upped to 7f the following month, he shaped better than the bare form in a race that worked out exceptionally well; the winner, Rosallion, going on to win the Group 1 Prix Lagadere on Arc Day, the runner-up Al Musmak taking a Listed event next time and the third, Ancient Wisdom, winning the Autumn Stakes at Newmarket as well as the Group 1 Kameko Futurity at Doncaster in October. Alyanaabi stepped up to the tune of 10lb on Racing Post Ratings when getting up late to win the Group 3 Tattersalls Stakes at Newmarket two months later, staying on powerfully in the closing stages (having met trouble) to get his head in front in the final stride. That effort confirmed him as a potential top-notcher and he was allowed to take his chance against City Of Troy in the Group 1 Dewhurst Stakes only 16 days later, on what would be his first start on a soft surface. Although he was put in his place by the winner, that one is an exceptional sort and the Owen Burrows runner again showed improved form on the figures. He's just the sort to make further progress over the winter and, although connections will undoubtedly be keen to land the first colts' Classic at Newmarket, the percentage call may be to sidestep another match with City Of Troy and he may be worth aiming at the 2,000 Guineas at the Curragh or at Longchamp. Whichever route is taken in the spring, he looks likely to take a hand in several of the leading 3yo contests around 1m and/or 1m2f as the season progresses.

OWEN BURROWS

## **AMERICAN BAY**

*3 c New Bay - All I Need (Peintre Celebre)*

This New Bay colt was far too green to do himself justice over 6f at Newbury on his debut in July but he caught the eye when finishing a nose behind Dragon Leader in a 6f Salisbury novice just three weeks later, with the front pair pulling about four lengths clear of the remainder. It was a particularly noteworthy effort given that he was hampered soon after the start and he again took a ferocious hold in the early stages. The form was franked too with the winner bolting up a 22-runner sales race on his next start and there were also next-time-out wins for the fourth and fifth. American Bay 'only' finished third behind Ghostwriter in a 7f novice stakes at Ascot in early September but the winner, who now has an official rating of 109, would go on to take the Group 2 Royal Lodge Stakes on his next outing, while two horses who finished well behind American Bay would also go to boost the form by winning races next time out. His final assignment of the year was a 7f Kempton novice in October, in which he finished a neck behind Tchaikovsky, with the pair pulling clear of the rest. American Bay again took a keen hold in the early stages which may ultimately have cost him the win. It is surely only a matter of time before he gets that elusive first victory and, once he learns to settle, he will surely be able to prove himself to be much better than his current official rating of 83.

HARRY CHARLTON

## **ARABIAN CROWN (FR)**

*3 b c Dubawi - Dubai Rose (Dubai Destination)*

A 600,000euros brother to 7f/1m winner Everest Rose, Arabian Crown was well backed to make a winning debut in a 7f Sandown novice in early July, but he took too long to get organised and ultimately had to settle for a close-up third behind Starlore, despite finishing on the front foot. The Raceform race reader said afterwards : "He'll know

a lot more next time and could step up significantly.” Those words proved spot-on as he remained unbeaten on his next three starts, improving each time. Firstly, he got off the mark in a maiden over the same C&D as on his debut later the same month, after which he was sent to Salisbury to contest a Listed race over 1m, which he also won with the minimum of fuss. William Buick said after that run: “Arabian Crown has really progressed from every run he’s had, that being the third of his life. Today was a test and he saw it out well. I like the way he does everything.” He was given a break after that win and reappeared in October in the Group 3 Zetland Stakes at Newmarket, again over 1m2f, in which he hosed up by five and a half lengths from the Aidan O’Brien-trained Gasper De Lemos. Charlie Appleby mapped out a plan for his colt after the race: “This horse has won a Listed race and won a Group Three and I will put him away now for the year. One of our two previous Derby winners was a decent two-year-old, winning the Solario Stakes in Masar, and this fellow has a slightly different profile. He has a pedigree that suggests stepping up to the mile and a half as a three-year-old will suit him. He is an exciting horse, there is no doubt about it.” He is 12-1 in the ante-post lists for the Derby at the time of writing and that looks a tempting price, given those words. We are likely to see him in one of the recognised Derby trials in the spring, possibly the Dante. CHARLIE APPLEBY

## **ARMY ETHOS**

*3 b c Shalaa - Dream Dana (Dream Ahead)*

A 120,000gns yearling and a half-brother to speedy 2yo winners Operatic and Dynamic Force, Army Ethos was well found in the betting when making his debut in a six-runner maiden over 6f at Ayr in May and he duly scored in emphatic fashion, with next-time-out winner Jehangeer beaten over 3l into second. It was decided to pitch him into much deeper waters for his next



assignment as he contested the Group 2 Coventry Stakes at Royal Ascot in June but he didn't disappoint as he finished second behind River Tiber, beaten just a neck. Bucanero Fuerte, who would win a Group 2 and a Group 1 on his next two starts, was over a length away in third and, as you would expect from the Coventry, plenty of other winners have emerged from the race. Races like the Prix Morny, the Prix Robert Papin and the July Stakes were all being pencilled in for him at that stage but sadly, he was sidelined shortly afterwards and he will return again this season, with a tilt at the Commonwealth Cup back at Royal Ascot reportedly his early-season target. He's certainly one to keep in mind, assuming all is well again after his layoff. ARCHIE WATSON

## **ARREST (IRE)**

*4 b c Frankel - Nisriyana (Intikhab)*

When it comes to assessing the prospects of Arrest for the forthcoming season, the Goddens will no doubt be keen on a prolonged wet spell. The imposing son of Frankel, who has a markedly round action, turned in his worst efforts last year when the ground was quick, notably in the Derby (tenth of fourteen, also didn't seem to handle the track) and in the King Edward VII Stakes at Royal Ascot (fifth of six, although the race could have come a bit too soon) in June. Take those below-par runs out of the equation and his record reads an easy win in the Chester Vase (1m4f, soft) in May on reappearance, a comfortable win in the Geoffrey Freer Stakes (1m5f, good to soft, better than the bare form) in August and a fine second behind Continuous in the St Leger at Doncaster when upped to 1m6f on his final start in September. Frankie Dettori, who rode him in the final Classic said: "The race went exactly like I thought, I was in a good spot, I got him in a good rhythm. Between the three and the two when I passed Gregory I thought 'I could win this' then with

my second glance I saw Ryan and I thought ‘No, I’m not going to win this!’ Arrest was a bit gassy and he’ll be a force to be reckoned with next year over a mile and a half - but then it will not be my problem!” Given his physique and his connections, it’ll be a surprise should the form he’s shown so far prove to be the ceiling of his ability and he’s just the type to win at the highest level granted some cut in the ground. Given that older horses have a decent record in the King George VI And Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes, he would have leading claims if the ground comes up soft at Ascot in July. JOHN & THADY GOSDEN

### **AT VIMEIRO (GER)**

*3 bb g Sea The Stars - Amorella (Nathaniel)*

Although he disappointed when favourite at Newmarket on his final start, Jane Chapple-Hyam looks to have a promising sort in the shape of At Vimeiro, who showed enough on his first two starts to suggest that he’ll be winning races this year. His debut fifth over a mile (soft) at Doncaster in September was an eye-catching effort, keeping on well in the last quarter mile, having run green, to finish less than four lengths behind God’s Window, who went on to finish an excellent third in the Group 1 Kameko Futurity over the same course and distance the following month. That debut form was also franked by the next-time-out wins of the fourth and the sixth. At Vimeiro was raised a fair way in grade on his next start in the Group 2 Royal Lodge Stakes on completely different ground at Newmarket and he showed improved form, despite only finishing seventh. He may not have been over the exertions of that event when disappointing back on soft ground at Newmarket when last seen but he’s since been gelded and is well worth another chance. His pedigree suggests that he’ll come into his own when he goes up to middle distances. JANE CHAPPLE-HYAM

## **AUGUSTE RODIN (IRE)**

*4 br c Deep Impact - Rhododendron (Galileo)*

About ten days after winning the Breeders' Cup Turf at Santa Anita, his fifth Group 1 victory in just over a year, Aidan O'Brien and the Coolmore team announced that they would be keeping this son of Deep Impact in training in 2024, which was something of a surprise as he had been widely expected to start a new career as a stallion. Aidan O'Brien said: "Anything from a mile and a quarter to a mile and a half is open to him, he seems to be very comfortable over those sort of trips and it's very exciting to have him back next year. He came back from Santa Anita in great shape and everyone is delighted with him. He'll have a rest now and we'll bring him back early next year. He looks like a horse who could be even more exciting next year so we're all looking forward to it." Given that he won the English and Irish Derbies, the Irish Champion Stakes and the Breeders' Cup Turf in the space of six races in 2023, hearing his trainer say that there may be even more to come should have us all licking our lips in anticipation and one can only hope that this bold move is rewarded with further victories at the top level. AIDAN O'BRIEN

## **AULIS**

*3 b g Ulysses - Redstart (Cockney Rebel)*

Although Aulis didn't manage to add to his yard's solid 20% strike-rate with juveniles in 2023, Aulis showed enough to suggest that he'll be one to keep an eye on in ordinary handicaps this time round. He wasn't seen on a racecourse until November but he shaped well over 7f on heavy ground after a slow start, making up ground in the last quarter mile to finish sixth behind a promising newcomer in The Reverend (also included in these pages). He stepped up to a mile on Polytrack at Kempton on his next outing and bettered that form when finishing third to a Richard Hughes-

trained improver. The son of Ulysses has since been gelded and, judging by his pedigree, he'll come into his own when upped to 1m2f this year. He's open to improvement and, although he needs one more run to get a mark, he's one to keep a close eye on.

RALPH BECKETT

### **AZAZAT (IRE)**

*4 b f Camelot - Azama (Sea The Stars)*

This Camelot half-sister to useful stable companion Azallya had a busy time of it at three, running seven times between April and October. Her third place behind the O'Brien pair Savethelastdance and Boogie Woogie over 1m2f at Leopardstown in April looked disappointing at first glance, but the form would be franked with the winner landing the Irish Oaks and the runner-up also taking Listed honours later in the year. Azazat duly won her maiden over 1m4f at the same course the following month and she was next pitched into a Group 3 over the same trip at Cork, where she was narrowly denied by Rosscarberry, with the pair pulling clear of the field. She may have been a shade unfortunate too as her rider was forced to wait for the gaps to open up in the closing stages and she was also slightly hampered near the finish. She next ran in the Irish Oaks and it was a strange race as she looked like she was going best of all as she made her effort early in the straight but she gradually weakened out of it from the 2f pole and perhaps the soft ground caused her not to quite get home. She ran three good races afterwards, finishing second in a pair of Listed races plus a decent fifth of eleven in the Group 3 Dubai Stakes at Newmarket, where she didn't look at home on the track. Currently rated 101, she can win Listed and minor Group races at four, with 1m4f on good to soft ground appearing to suit her ideally.

DERMOT WELD