



2016 Cheveley Park & Middle Park Stakes Sectional Timing review

Timefigure buffs will point to the fact that there was little between the overall winning times of the juvenile Group 1s – the Connolly's Red Mills Cheveley Park Stakes and the Juddmonte Middle Park Stakes – on the Saturday of Newmarket's Cambridgeshire Meeting. But there could hardly have been a greater contrast in how those times came about, and for the full realisation of that fact we have TurfTrax's sectional timing to thank.

Brave Anna ran a final time of 1m 11.92s in coming from off an overly-strong pace set by Lady Aurelia, while The Last Lion ran 1m 12.13s – about a length and a half slower overall – but did so by making all in a race run at a far softer early gallop.

The stark contrast between the two is perhaps best illustrated by the time it took the respective leaders to get to halfway of the six-furlong contests. Lady Aurelia scorched out of her stall and was still pulling when getting to halfway in 35.71s, while The Last Lion managed the same in a far more leisurely 38.07s.

That difference – identified by TurfTrax's sectionals and apparent from their display on-screen as the race unfolded – is equivalent to at least 15 lengths: a huge amount in a sprint race.

Lady Aurelia's first half fractions were extremely sharp at 14.19s, then 10.92s, and then an eye-watering 10.60s (42.5 mph) – despite windy conditions – whereas The Last Lion's equivalents were 14.89s, 11.71s and 11.47s.

As it transpired, Brave Anna was near-perfectly-positioned at halfway in the Cheveley Park, several lengths back from what was an unsustainable pace, and she ran the second half of her race a bit quicker than the first half to prevail from her better-fancied stable-companion Roly Poly.

Lady Aurelia lasted in front until late on but was treading water in the sixth furlong – much like she had been when hanging on grimly in France the time before – which she completed in 13.43s (33.5 mph).

The majority of the Middle Park field ran the fourth furlong quicker than did any of the fillies in the Cheveley Park, and every one of them ran the last-two furlongs quicker than did even that earlier winner Brave Anna.

The Last Lion made the most of what was clearly a tactical advantage in being in front. The heavily-backed favourite Blue Point was 0.19s (about a length and a half) behind at halfway, closed the leader down with a 10.64s penultimate furlong, but then could make no further impression.

The Last Lion's final furlong of 12.19s was the fastest by any horse in the Middle Park and was 0.64s faster than Brave Anna's for the same sectional in the Cheveley Park.

While the Mark Johnston-trained colt would not be sure to beat runner-up Blue Point another day, he was faster at most stages than his other rivals and was still running on strongly at the death.

Those aforementioned timefigure buffs are unlikely to make either winning performance out of the top drawer, especially that of The Last Lion's, who would have had to go significantly faster earlier to record a Group-1-level time. But it is those TurfTrax sectionals which tell the true story.

Lady Aurelia went too fast, while Brave Anna got it about right; The Last Lion had his energy conserved, and was in the best possible position for the dash for home, but he deserves plenty of credit for his victory all the same.

Every horse's every sectional for both races – and many others – can be found under TurfTrax's Tracking Data menu.

Simon Rowlands

Rowlands Racing & Research Limited

Click here to see sectional timing data:

<http://www.turftrax.co.uk/tracking.asp?t=newcamb2016>