



### **THE DUBAI FILLIES' MILE Sectional Timing Analysis**

Any course which puts on a “Future Champions Festival” is in danger of setting itself up for a fall, unless champions of the present as well as the future very clearly seem to be on display.

Newmarket Racecourse, which is hosting just such an event (sponsored by Dubai), have good reason to think their mission may have been accomplished after just a handful of races on the first of the Festival’s two days.

Centrepiece of Friday’s action was the Group 1 Fillies’ Mile – won 12 months earlier by the brilliant Minding, who went onto victory in this year’s 1000 Guineas and Oaks – and it produced another Aidan O’Brien-trained star in Rhododendron, who beat her stable-companion Hydrangea by two and a quarter lengths, with the remainder well adrift.

Thankfully, racing enthusiasts had TurfTrax electronic sectionals to assist with post-race analysis. They tell the story of a race run at a strong pace, which may account in part for such wide margins, though Rhododendron would very likely have won whatever the early pace had been.

Early times on the card – including a juvenile course record – indicated that the ground was indeed “good to firm” as described, and under such conditions the fillies in this race would not usually be expected to reach halfway in under 50.0 seconds.

The leader with four furlongs to go, Spatial, got there in 49.48s, while Rhododendron was next-to-last, albeit closely in touch.

Little changed in terms of order for another furlong or so, but then Rhododendron swept right through to lead in the penultimate furlong, putting in successive furlongs of 11.60s and 11.66s, and started to go clear.

Most of Rhododendron’s rivals were running on empty by that stage, and her final, uphill, furlong of 12.94s compares to sectionals of over 14.0s (and in two cases over 15.0s) by all those outside the first three.

Those latter speeds are the kind you might see at the end of a jumps race, and the margins behind the first two fillies were like jumping ones, also.

That is in no way to belittle the achievement of the winner, who looks the “Champion” among staying juvenile fillies on this showing, nor of Hydrangea, who raced a bit closer up and kept coming back for more. But some of the also-rans are probably nothing like as bad as the bare result makes them look.

The toll exacted by that early pace can be seen by the fact that the second and third furlongs were the fastest and second-fastest in the race for every runner bar one. Fastest furlong of all was early-leader Spatial’s second furlong of 11.35s (39.6 mph).

Under the conditions, it was asking an awful lot for Spatial to sustain that. Interestingly, Rhododendron's own fastest furlong (the next one: 11.49s, 39.2 mph) was bettered by every other filly at some stage of the race.

Rhododendron's late surge was nonetheless impressive, and it marks her down as one who could follow in the hoof prints of Minding and win classics. She is clearly very good at a mile, though those TurfTrax sectionals suggest that she may need a similarly strong pace to be as effective at it come next spring.

For the full story, it is worth poring over those TurfTrax sectionals in detail, and not just for the Fillies' Mile.

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