



The Coolmore Nunthorpe Stakes Sectional Timing Analysis

There is nothing quite like a display of raw speed to set the pulse racing in a sporting arena. Usain Bolt and Elaine Thompson have been doing it over in Rio, and Mecca's Angel did it on day three of the Yorkshire Ebor Festival, to make it back-to-back wins in the Coolmore Nunthorpe Stakes.

Neither of the human sprint stars managed to break any timing records, and nor did the five-year-old mare. But it was close for the latter, and the course record she missed by 0.08s is one of the longest-standing and most historic, set by the brilliant Dayjur in this race in 1990.

In the process, Mecca's Angel dished out comprehensive beatings to a host of smart-or-better sprinters, including the July Cup winner Limato and the King's Stand winner Profitable. There have been few, if any, more decisive victories at this level of sprinting in recent years.

Mecca's Angel's time was exactly 1.00s faster than she had recorded in winning this Group One 12 months earlier, when she lowered the colours of the exceptionally fast two-year-old Acapulco. Given that that difference is precisely 0.20s per-furlong, it is interesting to make comparisons, using TurfTrax's sectional times from both occasions.

The 2015 version of Mecca's Angel ran her race (from start to finish) in: 13.12s; 23.62s; 34.38s; 45.42s; and 57.24s. Her fastest individual furlong was 10.50s (42.9 mph) for that second one.

The 2016 version ran: 12.99s; 23.23s; 33.79s; 44.72s; and 56.24s. That second furlong was again her fastest, this time at 10.24s (43.9 mph). Interestingly, however, it was only the eleventh-fastest furlong in the field at that stage (behind Pearl Secret's 10.10s, or 44.6 mph)!

Those are extremely similar pace profiles for Mecca's Angel once the overall time difference is allowed for. She was close up throughout, and went that fast early pace with comfort, while some of her rivals were busting a gut in trying to make up for slower opening furlongs.

Mecca's Angel was also fast in the middle, and fast again at the end. Her final furlong of 11.52s compares very well with recent winners' sectionals of: 11.97s for Sole Power (in 2014); 12.10s for Jwala (2013); and 11.69s for Ortensia (2012).

No wonder that Limato could make only brief inroads into Mecca's Angel's advantage and lost around a length to her in the final furlong.

Limato is a high-class sprinter in his own right, but one at least as good at 6f/7f as this minimum trip. His fastest TurfTrax furlongs when winning at Newmarket had been 10.42s followed by

10.78s: here he ran 10.21s followed by 10.58s, but was unable to raise his game even further at the business end.

Conditions played their part in such fast times, of course. Despite rain from shortly before the start of racing, the ground had not eased much by the time of the Nunthorpe (the official description of the ground was nonetheless changed from “good to firm” to “good”). It is a myth – hopefully now dispelled for good – that Mecca’s Angel needs give.

There was also a degree to which the draw probably affected the outcome. Those drawn 13 and higher got a bit behind, as the TurfTrax sectionals confirm, and never really looked like getting into it. Indeed, Take Cover possibly did well to dispute the running from stall 12 and come again for third.

The horse he disputed the early running with was Thesme, who went onto finish fifth, and her proximity is the only convincing reason to think that Mecca’s Angel repeated her previous best rather than took her form to a new level.

Anyone familiar with Thesme will not be too surprised that she mixed it with leading sprinters, however, for she has shown blistering speed as often as not in her races, admittedly at a lower level. The way she saw out her race this time was perhaps a bit more of a surprise.

But there was only one winner, and what a winner she was: Mecca’s Angel showed herself the fastest around on four hooves, and the TurfTrax sectionals underline just how fast that is.

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