



The Darley Yorkshire Oaks Sectional Timing Analysis

Stamina seems to be an undervalued attribute in a sport in which even a hint of a horse staying beyond a mile and a half may count as a black mark. But the virtue of possessing stamina was something which came to the fore in today's Darley-sponsored Yorkshire Oaks.

There were only about three lengths between eight of the 12 runners as they passed the three-furlong marker, with Seventh Heaven driven along behind the leaders. But by the line Seventh Heaven had bounded clear of Found and the fading Queen's Trust, with margins back to the rest reminiscent of jumps racing on soft going not Flat racing on approaching firm.

Whether it was a case of Seventh Heaven staying extremely well, or many of the others failing to stay at all – or a bit of both – is something which sectional timing can help with. TurfTrax's tracking system has been recording the individual furlongs of every horse in every race at York this week, and they tell a story.

Seventh Heaven certainly stayed, and some, and she was helped by a solid pace. But it was not a breakneck one, of the type that sometimes produces freak results. For the record, Seventh Heaven had done something similar when winning the same sponsor's Irish Oaks at the Curragh the time before, when some had doubted her but sectionals showed she was as good as she looked.

Once again, a comparison with a past edition of the Yorkshire Oaks is possible, due to TurfTrax's by-now-extensive archive at the track. The best race for this purpose is the well-run 2014 contest won by another Aidan O'Brien-trained filly, Tapestry, in a time that was just 0.09s slower than this year's 2m 48.50s.

Tapestry went through quarter miles in: 29.26s; 52.37s; 77.71s; 101.14s; and 124.50s. Seventh Heaven, who was waited with towards the rear in the early stages, personally recorded: 29.26s (the precise same time as Tapestry had recorded two years earlier); 53.48s; 78.74s; 101.89s; and 124.69s.

Seventh Heaven did not lead until around 300 yards out but was soon on top and going clear. The Breeders' Cup Turf winner Found made her move at about the same time, having travelled better than the winner for a long way, but finished to nothing like the same effect. There were two and three quarter lengths between the stable-companions at the line.

A final quarter of 23.81s for Seventh Heaven – with individual furlongs of 11.80s followed by 12.01s – is good running in any language, but at the same time some of her rivals seemed to hit a wall.

The Royal Ascot winner Even Song and the South American Grade 1 winner Furia Cruzada were still in contention approaching the 2f marker but completed from there in 27.18s and 27.12s respectively. The Oaks and Irish Oaks third Harlequeen backpedalled even more quickly with 29.96s. That is exceptionally slow for this grade and these conditions.

The ground might have been a factor with all of those fillies. An indication of its speed had been given earlier on the card when Queen Kindly won the Lowther Stakes in the third-fastest time this century.

The long and short of it is that Seventh Heaven is a genuine Group 1 filly – as those TurfTrax sectionals show – though top-of-the-ground and a solid gallop might have seen her to better effect than it did her rivals.

In particular, third-placed Queen's Trust looks up to winning a good race at this trip or a bit shorter, having received a poor ride at Royal Ascot and then run into the exceptional Minding when second at Goodwood. Her final furlong of 12.52s seemed to confirm that she had come to the end of her tether late on.

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