

Handicapping Review Panel

NENDRUM

12 January 2019

This is the outcome of the appeal by trainer Sandy Thomson against the revised handicap mark of 117 allotted to Nendrum following his fourth place in the Betway Heed Your Hunch Handicap Hurdle at Musselburgh on 1 January.

The panel examined in detail the submissions of Mr Thomson and the BHA handicapper Gordan Markham, and also viewed carefully the relevant video footage of the New Year's Day race and the handicap hurdle over the same course and distance on 3 December, where Nendrum raced from a mark of 111 and, as agreed by both parties, was around 11 lengths clear when he fell two out.

The panel agreed with Mr Thomson that the 3 December race was a very weak handicap, but we were nevertheless of the view that it was not unreasonable to raise Nendrum by 7lb, since he looked set to win by a wide margin and BHA handicapping protocols allow for such situations. Mr Markham, as he has explained, might in fact have gone as high as 121.

The 1 January race was a much stronger race, a 0-120 as opposed to 0-110, and so two bands higher, and much more competitive in its overall make up. Nendrum had competition for the lead in what was a much faster-run affair, but led for much of the way and was still on the heels of the leaders when handicap debutante Iconic Belle fell two out.

Although Nendrum beat just two finishers in fourth, he was beaten only six lengths by Chebsey Beau, who had slipped to a potentially lenient mark, and under five lengths by unexposed favourite Kajaki, who had won his first two races over hurdles. Third-placed Ballynanty has won since, and while that was over a longer trip we note he was a useful handicapper on the Flat who regularly raced from marks in the low 100s. The panel make these points to underline that the strength of the race was such that we feel Nendrum's fourth was an improvement on any of his previous completed efforts.

The question that the panel has concentrated upon is whether Mr Markham's reassessment of the 1 January form was reasonable. We all agreed that he has Nendrum broadly in the right bracket but we noted that while his own performance figure for that race was 116, he dropped him only a pound to 117

A mark of 116 is a figure with which the panel is more comfortable, and the appeal is therefore ALLOWED. That figure still reflects that Nendrum would have been an easy winner of a bad race from 111 on 3 December. It is also a mark from which he would have a more realistic chance of reversing placings if meeting the 1 January principals again, with a 5lb pull for six lengths with the winner, and 4lb for just under five lengths with the second. He would also be 2lb better for two and a half lengths with Ballynanty, although Ballynanty is now set to be reassessed for his subsequent win.

The members of the Panel were: Graham Dench, Simon Holt and Keith Melrose

