

## YESTERDAY AT GLORIOUS GOODWOOD



### Alastair Down

#### AT GLORIOUS GOODWOOD

**H**E HAS knocked on the door more times than Joseph and Mary trying to get a bed at the inn in Bethlehem but at last justice was done when Lightning Spear annexed the Group 1 he has long merited in yesterday's Sussex Stakes.

He was the second seven-year-old in a row to win this great downland prize – next year they are thinking of running it as a veterans' race.

This was his 25th race and 16th stab at the highest level but Lightning Spear has finally impaled it. They say God loves a trier but the good Lord's affection is nothing compared with how much they value this horse at David Simcock's Trillium Place yard.

But it is not really David's yard. He is merely half of the driving force.

There are two husband-and-wife teams on the Flat whose bond, drive, capacity for graft and indivisible alliance mark them out from all others. William Haggas and better half Maureen are one but upsides them on the married gallop of training achievement are David and Jennie Simcock.

When they first set up training it wasn't with some large bequest from Great Aunt Wilhelmina or Uncle Wonga. They sat down, made a business plan and went to Cambridge to see a man with not the slightest interest in racing. Someone who would not know the difference between a racehorse and a roundabout.

He looked at the meticulously detailed scheme and said "count me in".

It probably had as much to do with the character of the two folk knocking on his door than anything. We can all spot a robber at 50 paces. Our investor knew he was in honest and safe hands. Good judge.

Truth be told Jennie trains Lightning Spear. She rides him out every day and the Simcock kids feed him apples. If Lightning Spear liked uncut diamonds he would get them for breakfast.

All David does is pat him every day and go up and receive the trophies.

The horse is adored in the yard probably because he is older than most of the staff.

But if ever a horse repeatedly banged his bonce on the crossbar it is Lightning Spear. Time and again he has got the heart pounding only to miss out by a fraction.

One of the most notable things about him is not merely that his enthusiasm is



David Simcock (centre) and David Redvers greet Lightning Spear and Oisin Murphy after their Sussex Stakes success

# Spear's top-grade breakthrough masks an emotional battle for the Simcocks

fabulously intact at the age of seven but that he is an entire in full possession of what might politely be called his nuts. Reproductive weaponry if you must. The Spear can still be founder of a dynasty of little daggers.

Most horses of his age who are so equipped have other things on the mind – Brexit, the water shortage in the north-west and the price of Scottish langoustines in Barcelona's fish market. But most of all they tend to be thinking of fillies and mares. Seven-year-old entires are assiduous readers of the Racing Post's bloodstock pages and dream of retirement.

But Lightning Spear has his mind on the job in hand rather than other distractions. He is a trouper and always gives you everything. You would not

mind him alongside you in the trenches as he is a war horse and that was the joy of his triumph here.

Oisin Murphy, a coming force if there ever was one, knows Lightning Spear better than a mum and dad know their children's hands. A pain in the neck when he first walked in the weighing room, the 22-year-old has grown between his ears and his talent in the saddle argues the smack of future greatness.

Few jockeys of his age give the job as much thought. He has a veteran's approach to preparation and could recite the form book to you. When he says he has "an idea how to ride every race" it is not waffle but the truth. You always need a man with a plan on your side.

Simcock never gave him any

orders yesterday. Why bother to tell someone something he already knows.

But sad to relate this victory for Lightning Spear was marbled through with melancholy.

**S**IMCOCK dealt with the endless TV interviews and press inquiries seemingly without a care in the world, lucid, smiley, clearly thrilled that his old ally had finally had his day reaching the sunlit uplands.

Yet some ten minutes after the race, with the presentations done and dusted, he turned away in tears and walked a couple of yards off to be with his own thoughts.

You could tell he was not overcome by this happy moment on the Downs but

EDWARD WHITAKER (RACINGPOST.COM/PHOTOS)

Lightning up with top male milers after return to his best

### RACING POST RATINGS

LIGHTNING SPEAR returned to his best to land a belated first Group 1 success in the Sussex Stakes, with a reproduction of his previous best Racing Post Rating of 122 enough to see off the three-year-old challenge in a below-standard renewal.

The relatively ordinary winning figure and lack of depth to the race – only disappointing favourite Without Parole had previously scored at Group 1 level – is indicative of the state of play among the leading milers in a division that, with the notable exception of Alpha Centauri (124), lacks a standout performer.

Lightning Spear's performance here, and his reappearance second in the Locking, ranks with this year's best by a male at a mile on 122, alongside Saxon Warrior's 2,000 Guineas form.

That is not an exacting standard for elite milers and, should she take on the boys, Alpha Centauri would rate the clear form pick in receipt of the sex allowance. In emerging best of the trio who contested a messy Queen Anne, Lightning Spear has at least confirmed himself the leading older miler, reversing that Royal Ascot form with Lord Glitters and confirming superiority over Beat The Bank.

Lightning Spear and Lord Glitters have run to form in finishing first and third, with runner-up Expert Eye the best of the three-year-olds but a couple of pounds below his impressive Jersey Stakes success with an RPR of 118 back up to a mile here.

Without Parole was clearly below form, but there's still potential for him to rate higher.

Paul Curtis

### SUSSEX STAKES WINNERS

Year	Winner	RPR
2018	Lightning Spear	122
2017	Here Comes When	118
2016	The Gurkha	124
2015	Solow	122
2014	Kingman	123
2013	Toronado	129
2012	Frankel	138
2011	Frankel	137
2010	Canford Cliffs	130
2009	Rip Van Winkle	131

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