

BHA Handicapping Ombudsman – result of appeal – Fair Angellica (GB)

Decision

That Fair Angellica's Flat mark should remain at 94

Background

Fair Angellica made a successful debut in a 6f maiden at Kempton in September 2023. She then followed up later that month in a 7f novice at Chelmsford. As a result of those two victories, she was allotted an initial BHA mark of 76. She won off that mark in a class 3 nursery at Newmarket in October (7f, soft). As a result her mark was raised to 82.

Fair Angellica was then off the track until May 2024. She reappeared in a class 3 3yo handicap over 7f at Goodwood (soft) in which she finished one length second of five to Mission To Moon. As a result her mark was raised to 84.

Fair Angellica made her most recent start in a 7f class 4 fillies handicap at Kempton at the end of May. She won by 2¼ lengths from Shin Jidai. After that her mark was raised to 94.

Following that decision, and after following steps 1 and 2 in the handicapping appeals process, Fair Angellica's trainer Richard Hughes submitted an appeal to the Handicapping Ombudsman, on the grounds that the handicap mark given was too high.

Evidence

The BHA Handicapper who assessed Fair Angellica's Kempton performance was of the view that the filly had bossed the race from start to finish, just kept up to her task. The finishing split times for the race suggested that she wasn't flattered by making the running.

The BHA Handicapper used a scale of 6.4 lengths per second to judge the winning margin rather than use the scale of 6 lengths per second used by the BHA Judge in determining the result. Using a scale of 2.6 lbs per length, they assessed the margin at a 7-lb beating, adding 1 lb for ease of victory. As Shin Jidai had already been due to go up 1 lb and her performance was assessed as requiring a further 1 lb rise. Fair Angellica was raised another 2 lb to maintain the relationship with Shin Jidai.

Richard Hughes was of the view that the BHA Handicapper had failed to take into account the advantage that Fair Angellica had in relation to the positions Shin Jidai and the third Lou Lou's Gift were in when the winner kicked for home around two furlongs out. He also pointed out that the runner-up didn't have a clear run at a crucial stage. He felt the extra value added to Fair Angellica's winning margin was harsh.

Findings

Fair Angellica produced a dominant performance in winning at Kempton. She kicked around 5 lengths clear from two furlongs out and although that margin was reduced in the final furlong, she wasn't threatened at any point. The riders of the second and third had to react to the move that the winner made and their mounts were perhaps further back than ideal, but time analysis doesn't support the view that Fair Angellica was flattered. She had an uncontested lead, rather than a soft one. The interference suffered by the second was minor, though it came at a crucial point.

Fair Angellica, as stated, had won three of her four previous starts, her only defeat coming after a

winter break, though even so she ran well in taking second. Shin Jidai, on just her second outing in a handicap, had had three next-time-out winners behind her when scoring at Yarmouth on her most recent start, the form of that race generally strong. Lou Lou's Gift, making her handicap debut, had won a novice at Newcastle in November on her most recent start where the form had generally worked out well.

In short, these were three progressive, unexposed fillies with strong form to their name and they finished clear of the remainder.

While it might be argued that the 1 lb extra added for ease of victory was unnecessary, the BHA Handicapper could have taken a higher view of the overall form than they did, so they have been given the benefit of the doubt.

It was suggested that Fair Angellica could have split marks for Turf and all-weather, but there is no evidence that would justify that at this stage of her career.

Further Comments

Although the BHA Handicappers are right to use a more accurate scale for lengths per second than that used on the day by the BHA Judges, it would be useful if official results reflected this, most obviously by publishing the timed margins alongside traditional if rather antiquated distances recorded as lengths.

[ENDS]