

= La Fleche (horse) =

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La Fleche (1889 ? 1916) was a British Thoroughbred racehorse and broodmare . After being sold for a world record price as a yearling in 1890 , she was undefeated as a two @-@ year @-@ old in 1891 , winning races against her own sex and defeating some of the year 's leading colts . She went on to become the dominant British three @-@ year @-@ old of 1892 , claiming the Fillies ? Triple Crown by winning the 1000 Guineas at Newmarket , the Oaks at Epsom and the St Leger at Doncaster . Her only defeat of the year came when she was beaten when starting favourite for the Epsom Derby .

La Fleche remained in training for a further two seasons , winning important races such as the 1893 Liverpool Autumn Cup , the 1894 Ascot Gold Cup , and the Champion Stakes on her final appearance . In all , she won sixteen times in twenty @-@ four racecourse appearances . After her retirement from racing she became a successful and influential broodmare .

= = Background = =

La Fleche (French for The Arrow) , a brown mare standing just under 16 hands high was bred by the Royal Studs at Hampton Court and was foaled on 10 March 1889 . She was an exceptionally well @-@ bred and " beautiful " filly and attracted much attention when she was sent to be auctioned as a yearling on 28 June 1890 at the Bushey Paddocks . She was bought by Lord Marcus Beresford on behalf of the financier Baron Maurice de Hirsch for a sum of 5 @,@ 500 guineas , outbidding the Duke of Portland and John Porter and breaking the record for a yearling sold at auction , which had stood since 1876 .

Her sire , St. Simon was an unbeaten racehorse who was beginning to prove himself as an outstanding sire . By the time La Fleche was sold in 1890 he was on the way to the first of his nine sires ? championships , having sired the first two of his ten Classic winners . Her dam , Quiver produced La Fleche ? s full @-@ sister Memoir , who won the Epsom Oaks and the St Leger as well as the influential broodmares Maid Marian and Satchel .

La Fleche was trained for her first two seasons by John Porter at Kingsclere . At the end of her three @-@ year @-@ old season she was moved to the Egerton House stable of Richard Marsh at Newmarket , Suffolk .

Attempts by anglophone writers to spell her name resulted in variations including La Flèche , Lafleche , La Flèche (the " correct " version) , and La Flêche .

= = Racing career = =

= = = 1891 : two @-@ year @-@ old season = = =

La Fleche won all four of her races as a two @-@ year @-@ old . She made her first appearance on July 16 at Newmarket in the Chesterfield Stakes , for which she started 6 / 4 favourite . Although she had not grown as much as might have been expected from her yearling days , she was reported to be deceptively powerful , being described by one observer as " all wire and whipcord . " Ridden by George Barrett , she led from the start and shook off he rivals " without an effort " to win by two lengths , in an impressive time of 1 : 04 @.@ 2 . The third placed finisher , a colt called Bonavista (or Bona Vista) , went on to win the following year 's 2000 Guineas . On 29 July , La Fleche was sent to Goodwood for the five furlong Lavant Stakes in which she met Priestess , another filly whose sale price (£ 4 @,@ 000) had attracted comment . La Fleche tracked Priestess , who set a strong pace , before moving ahead in the final furlong to win " very cleverly " by a length . Two days later , she reappeared at the same course for the Molecomb Stakes and recorded another easy win , beating Adoration by one and a half lengths . At Doncaster in September she won the Champagne Stakes to take her earnings for the year to £ 3 @,@ 415 .

La Fleche 's stable companion , Orme , was regarded as the best of the year 's two @-@ year @-@ old colts , and there was speculation as to which of the two was the better . It was also generally believed that La Fleche would have the Derby as her principal target for the following year .

== = 1892 : three @-@ year @-@ old season == =

== = = Spring == = =

1892 began with a scare for La Fleche 's owners as the filly slipped and injured her knees at her stable . Initial fears that her career could be over however , proved to be unfounded as the damage was superficial . Confidence in the filly grew steadily over the winter and early spring , and by late April she had supplanted Orme as Derby favourite . Her position at the head of the market was strengthened when Orme was poisoned ? unsubstantiated rumours blamed the filly 's supporters ? and ruled out for the first half of the season .

On 6 May 1892 La Fleche started 1 / 2 favourite in a field of seven for the 1000 Guineas . Her price might have been even shorter but for fears that she too could have been " got at " . Ridden by George Barrett she raced in second place as Adoration set the pace before moving easily into the lead a furlong out . She won by a length from The Smew and Adoration in a time of 1 : 52 @.@ 4 , which was 1 @.@ 6 seconds faster than the time recorded by Bona Vista in winning the 2000 Guineas over the same course .

== = = Summer == = =

At Epsom on 1 June La Fleche started 11 / 10 favourite for the Derby on a " gloriously fine " day . She was saddled and paraded separately from the colts for reasons that correspondents chose not to particularise . The French @-@ trained colt Bucentaur led the field into the straight where he was overtaken by the 40 / 1 outsider Sir Hugo . La Fleche then produced her challenge but after a " splendid finish " in which she was cheered on by the crowd , she failed to overhaul the colt and finished second , beaten three quarters of a length . There were later claims that La Fleche ? s defeat had been a fluke and Barrett was criticised for giving her a " most erratic ride " . This version of events is not supported by contemporary accounts , which state that the filly was in a " capital position " throughout the race .

Two days after her defeat in the Derby , La Fleche ran against fillies in the Oaks . Although some regarded her as a certainty , her odds drifted from 2 / 5 to 8 / 11 before the start . In the race she tracked the leader Broad Corrie before taking the lead in the straight apparently poised for an easy victory . In the final furlong however , she was closely pressed by The Smew , a filly she had dealt with easily in the 1000 Guineas , and Barrett had to ride a vigorous finish to win the race by a short head . On 29 July at Goodwood , La Fleche won the Nassau Stakes in which , despite looking less than fully fit , she quickened impressively to beat Broad Corrie by a length and a half .

== = = Autumn == = =

On 7 September La Fleche ran in the St Leger on a wet day at Doncaster . Orme , who had returned from his problems to win the Eclipse Stakes started favourite , with La Fleche , ridden on this occasion by John Watts , strongly supported at 7 / 2 . Watts settled the filly in the early stages as Orme set off in front . Just after the turn into the straight , La Fleche , travelling strongly , moved alongside her stable companion and then pulled clear . She won easily by two lengths from the fast @-@ finishing Sir Hugo , with Orme fading into fifth . On 24 September , La Fleche ran against older and younger horses in the £ 10 @,@ 000 Lancashire Plate over one mile at Manchester Racecourse . Ridden by Barrett , she tracked the leaders until the straight , where she accelerated impressively to win by three lengths from Orvieto , with Sir Hugo unplaced .

At Newmarket five days later she faced only one opponent , a colt called Dunure , in the Grand Duke Michael Stakes . She started at odds of 1 / 40 and won the £ 1 @, @ 000 prize in a predictable canter . In the Newmarket Oaks on October 11 she ran lazily but won very easily by a length from Golconda , to whom she was conceding nineteen pounds .

She was then sent for the Cambridgeshire Handicap 26 October , for which she was assigned a weight of 122 pounds . La Fleche started 7 / 2 favourite in a field of thirty runners and was ridden by Barrett . The closing stages of the nine furlong race developed into a contest between La Fleche and Pensioner , a colt who was carrying only 88 pounds . The filly showed " fire and resolution " at the finish to pull away from the colt and win by one and a half lengths . The win took her earnings for the season to £ 23 @, @ 848 , all of which was donated to charity by Hirsch .

At the end of the season La Fleche , and all of Maurice de Hirsch ' s other horses were moved from the yard of John Porter to that of Richard Marsh . The move followed a disagreement between Hirsch 's racing manager , Marcus Beresford , and another of Porter 's important patrons , the Duke of Westminster

= = = 1893 : four @-@ year @-@ old season = = =

In early 1893 , La Fleche was reported to be wonderfully " fresh and well " although she showed no signs of having grown . She did not appear in public however , until 14 July , when she ran in the Eclipse Stakes at Sandown . She started evens favourite against five opponents , most notably Orme , who started on 2 / 1 . Barrett moved the filly up to challenge in the straight , but she soon came under pressure and although she ran on " gamely " she could finish only third behind Orme and Medicis . Two weeks later at Goodwood , Orme again proved superior , beating the filly by a neck in the Gordon Stakes , despite veering sharply left inside the last furlong .

In Autumn La Fleche attempted to win a second Manchester Plate , but finished third to the three @-@ year @-@ colts Raeburn , and Isinglass . The race had been expected to lie between La Fleche and Isinglass , and their respective jockeys focused their attentions on each other , allowing Raeburn to emerge almost unseen to take the race in the closing stages . For this race , La Fleche carried a weight of 154 pounds . On 25 October she found a weight of 133 pound too much when finishing unplaced in the Cambridgeshire . She won the Lowther Stakes at Newmarket in October . On 10 November she ran in the Liverpool Autumn Cup , carrying a weight of 132 pounds and won in impressive style by one and a quarter lengths from The Prisoner . Later in November , she was beaten under 137 pounds in the Manchester November Handicap .

= = = 1894 : five @-@ year @-@ old season = = =

Before the start of the 1894 season , La Fleche was covered by the Gold Cup winner Morion , and raced in foal (pregnant) for the rest of the year . At Royal Ascot on 15 June she started 2 / 5 favourite for the two and a half mile Ascot Gold Cup , in which her biggest danger appeared to be the French colt Callistrate . Watts held the mare up at the back of the field before moving her up to challenge Callistrate entering the straight . She soon went clear and won " in splendid style " by three lengths . One day later she ran in the Hardwicke Stakes and started the 1 / 5 favourite . In the straight however , she was never able to get on terms with the colt Ravensbury , and finished second , beaten half a length . The Prince of Wales reportedly lost heavily on the race .

On her final start of the year she met Ravensbury again in the Champion Stakes at Newmarket on 9 October . As the owners of Isinglass had turned down a challenge to run his horse against La Fleche , they were the only two runners and the mare , ridden by Watts started at odds of 1 / 3 . La Fleche opened up a clear lead in the early stages and was never in danger of defeat , winning " in a canter " by eight lengths . As the mare galloped up the hill with her ears pricked , she was given an enthusiastic reception from the Newmarket crowd who knew they were witnessing her final race .

= = Assessment = =

After her win in the St Leger , La Fleche was described as " one of the best fillies that ever raced in England . " Her earnings of £ 25 @, @ 635 were by far the highest for any horse in 1892 and by the end of her second season , she had already earned more in prize money than any other filly . On her retirement it was said that she had been " nothing short of an Idol " with the public .

= = Stud career = =

As noted above , La Fleche was already in foal when racing in 1894 and produced her first foal , a filly called La Veine in 1895 . In 1896 Maurice de Hirsch died and all his bloodstock , including La Fleche and La Veine were put up for auction . She was sold for £ 12 @, @ 600 to Marcus Beresford , acting on this occasion on behalf the Sykes family and was sent to their Sledmere Stud in Yorkshire . Sir Tatton Sykes , who was reportedly horrified by the price , initially refused to acknowledge the mare ? s arrival , and left her in a railway box for two weeks before he was persuaded to accept the deal . La Fleche ? s best runner was John O ? Gaunt , who finished second in the Derby and sired Swynford . Her daughter Baroness La Fleche produced the 1000 Guineas winner Cinna and the successful stallion Beau Pere . La Fleche was retired from breeding in 1911 , and she died at Sledmere in late April 1916 at the age of twenty @-@ seven .

= = Pedigree = =