

Gallant Hawk beaten a short-head on his return

Westmead Hawk was beaten on his eagerly-awaited comeback in the opening heat of the Greyhound Stud Book Trophy over 480m at Monmore Thursday night, but the result apart it was pretty much the perfect return by the dual Derby champion, write Peter Meldrum and Jonathan Kay.

Off for just under a year after breaking a hock in a Hall Green trial following his second Wimbledon success, the Nick Savva-trained dog (4-5 out to evens) was clearly keen to make up for lost time and trapped in front, but Funtime Chunky (2-1 from 9-4) predictably showed more pace to the bend and quickly raced clear.

Westmead Hawk, who turned four years old this month, did ease a little at the first bend, but soon was soon in full flow again although it was not until the third bend that he really began to close on the leader.

Motoring home from that point, he would probably have caught the Angela Wood-trained Funtime Chunky but for checking outside when challenging and, as it was, he failed by a short-head to peg back the 28.34sec winner.

Bookmaker reaction was generally to leave Westmead Hawk on the 25-1 mark for an unprecedented third Wimbledon success , although VCbet did knock him out to that mark from 16-1.

For Derby sponsors Blue Square, Kate Miller said: "I don't think anyone could have asked much more of him, he certainly didn't do anything to suggest why he shouldn't go to Wimbledon with a live chance again.

"We've kept him at 25-1, but you would think he would improve an awful lot for that and obviously all eyes will be on him in the final next week now."

The other heats went to Gilly Hepden's Gotabetem and Pat Rosney's Moyar Okee.

In a trial before racing, Westmead Joe clocked an impressive 28.12sec for the 480m distance. Fourth behind his elder half-brother Westmead Hawk in the Derby final last year, he is yet to make his racing return in 2007 having been kept to trials so far this year.

**Draw for next Thursday's £2,000 Stud Book Trophy final: 1 Gotabetem, 2 Fear Robben, 3 Moyar Okee, 4 Gee Vee (m), 5 Funtime Chunky (m), 6 Westmead Hawk (m).