

LO Funds

Golden Age

Newsletter

High Conviction • Equities

31 March 2022

PERFORMANCE

31.03.2022	INCEPTION	AUM	MONTH-TO-DATE	YEAR-TO-DATE	SINCE MANAGEMENT CHANGE [4]	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
LO Funds – Golden Age PA [1]	29 February 2012	USD 1,1 bn	-2.44%	-12.79%	151.07%	14.55%	20.36%	22.03%	-5.32%	26.12%	-7.61%
LO Funds – Golden Age NA [2]			-2.37%	-12.61%	17.41%	15.52%	21.39%	23.07%	-4.51%	27.20%	-6.79%
Benchmark [3]			2.74%	-5.15%	183.31%	21.82%	15.90%	27.67%	-8.71%	22.40%	7.51%

Past performance is not a guarantee of future results. Performance is presented net of fees.

[1] Dividend accumulated private client share class, net performance in USD.

[2] Dividend accumulated institutional client share class, net performance in USD.

[3] MSCI World; ND performance in USD (hedged between 31 May 2012 and 30 September 2015).

[4] Since management change, which took place on 1 March 2012.

MARKET REVIEW

In March, equity markets seemed disconnected from news headlines. One might have expected the combination of the Russia-Ukraine war, rapidly rising commodity prices, crashing bond markets across the world and more supply disruptions due to lockdowns in China to at least lead to a mild equity market correction. On the contrary, the MSCI World increased by almost 3% in March. Why? Aside from the argument that stocks are better investments than bonds if yields are rising, capital has never been as cheap as it is today. Real rates in the entire western world have never been this negative, with US bond yields at 2.5% and inflation close to 8%. Meaning that if companies can grow their revenue in line or slightly above inflation, capital markets are actually willing to pay them more than 5% to finance their growth. However surreal this may sound, it also shows us how far behind the curve central banks are by keeping interest rates and bond yields so low. It seems that the Fed has recognised the bubble blowing proportions of the problem and changed its language, raised the Fed funds rate and stopped further balance sheet expansion. The European Central Bank (ECB) is not there yet, but we believe that it's only a matter of time. This has refocused investors away from the question of whether current inflation is temporary or structural and towards the question: "can we avoid stagflation?". Slowing growth seems almost inevitable given all the problems on the global economy's plate, although optimists would

argue that this could all be resolved when peace is reached with Russia and China's zero-covid policy is relaxed so that commodities moderate and inflation shrinks to 4%. This would still give companies and governments very cheap capital, albeit not as cheap as it is today.

For our more conservative and quality-based LO Funds–Golden Age, March provided the perfect storm and we were unable to keep up with the bullish MSCI World index. Profit warnings based on worsening supply problems, large regional differences across equity markets and renewed Chinese lockdowns led to a negative performance of -2.3%. On top of that, the Fund had no exposure to the best sectors within the world index, Energy and Materials, while the worst performers, Consumer and Financial stocks, account for more than half the Fund. Our underlying trend – a rapidly ageing society – leads us to be optimistic about, and therefore invest in, luxury goods, leisure and life insurance, all of which were among the hardest hit, especially the ones outside the megacaps. In other words, our focus on cheaper, smaller companies that benefit from the growing number of retirees with a large bias to Europe and China was clearly the wrong one in March. Although we reduced our biases slightly during the month, we remain convinced that our exposure to high-quality companies with slightly better growth and at relatively attractive valuations will provide us with outperformance going forward.

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PERFORMANCE

All four underlying trends in our strategy lagged the index during March, with eHealth the best (+2.6%) and Baby Boomer Brands the worst (-8.3%). Healthy Ageing contributed 1.2% and Pension Providers showed a return of -3.5%, mostly due to our European life insurance and asset managers.

The three stocks that contributed most to the Fund's performance in March were US home health company LHC Group, Dexcom and AstraZeneca. LHC Group's management received a cash offer from United Health to join its Optum value-based care unit which they have accepted and will put forward to shareholders. The stocks rose 23% in March. Our newly bought eHealth company Dexcom has already returned 20% as it was approved by the European authorities to launch its new connected care device for diabetes patients. AstraZeneca, which we bought during the month, was also one of the outperformers, returning 17%. Investors like both the defensive nature of AstraZeneca's income stream and its growth profile, as it rolls out its existing drug portfolio to more cancer treatments.

The largest detractors during the month were GoodRx (-29%), NN Group (-17%) and Fineco (-18%). The prescription comparison site GoodRx lowered its growth outlook, announced an acquisition and started a share buyback programme during its Q4 2021 earnings report. It now expects to grow its top line by 23% this year, with a 31% margin, which is below its long-term goal of growing more than 20% at a 40% margin. Life insurance and pension company NN Group was still under pressure during the first weeks of March as bond yields declined and investors grew increasingly worried about the impact on the Polish pension business. Italian asset manager Fineco continued to suffer from the uncertainty around the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the impact it might have on their customers' investments. During the month, we decided to sell our positions in NN Group and Fineco and thus reduce our exposure to European pension providers.

THEMATIC INSIGHT

For the last 40 years, we have seen declining bond yields and interest rates spurred by low inflation. Both bond and equity markets flourished and GDP growth was firm in most western countries and in China. The growing working population and the wave of globalisation were both fundamental drivers of this high-growth, low-inflation environment. Unfortunately, our economic prosperity had two nasty side effects: the

gap between the haves and the have-nots has grown and eroded the middle class and, on top of that, we have polluted the environment with greenhouse gasses and microplastics, while decreasing biodiversity. We expect the coming decades to be fundamentally different from the previous four. Workforces are now shrinking and we need to care for an ageing instead of youthful population. Additionally, globalisation has peaked as China and Eastern Europe are also ageing rapidly. Politically, we have entered a new cold war, this time between China and the US, dividing the world into regions aiming to be self-sufficient. We expect the inequality gap to narrow in the coming decades through higher wages and more capital taxation, sponsoring the middle class. Through the energy transition to renewables, sped up by Russia's aggression, pollution will finally be priced and hopefully decreased. These mega shifts seem inevitable to us and all point to one fundamental difference versus the previous four decades: higher inflation.

PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY

During the month, we reduced some of our Pension Providers positions in Europe and reinvested the proceeds into the Healthy Ageing and eHealth trends with companies from the US and UK. We sold the remaining positions in Allfunds and Fineco Bank, after halving them in February, and also sold NN Group and St James Place. We bought new positions in the pharmaceutical companies AstraZeneca and Bristol-Myers and bought back a position in the eHealth company Dexcom that we owned in 2020 but sold for valuation reasons. With the mutations, we have narrowed the underweight in North America and reduced the overweight in Europe, while increasing the defensive nature of the Fund by reducing some of our Financials exposure in favour of more Healthcare.

OUTLOOK

In an uncertain world with high inflation and slowing growth, we expect that reliable 10% sales growth will become a scarcity again, especially growth sustained with a debt-free balance sheet and strong FCF generation. LO Funds—Golden Age seeks to invest in these types of quality companies that can continue to grow as they benefit from ageing populations in the world's leading economies, preferably at reasonable valuations. The Fund has a beta of below one, with large exposures to Healthcare, Financials and Consumer companies. It has no exposure to the large Technology platforms.

SINCERELY,

LO Funds—Golden Age investment team+B2

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

RISK AND REWARD PROFILE

SRRI score: 6 (1 : Lower risk - potentially lower rewards; 7 : Higher risk - potentially higher rewards)

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