

THOSE GOLDEN MOMENTS

This year, the Klarion is taking a look back at some of the horses and races that made the 2010s so special for Johnston Racing. This month, we turn the spotlight on Hartnell, whose golden moment came at Royal Ascot in June 2014.

ROYAL ASCOT 2014 saw two Listed winners chalked up for the Johnston yard. The first came on June 18, when the three-year-old Dansili filly, Muteela, landed the Sandringham Handicap for her owner/breeder Sheikh Hamdan al Maktoum. It was a fourth win on the trot for this talented filly, who scored once more at Listed level when winning Redcar's Guisborough Stakes in October 2014.

The second win at the Royal meeting came two days later in the Queen's Vase, when Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed's Hartnell became the yard's seventh winner of the race.

Established in 1838, and to be run over a distance of two miles, the Queen's Vase has had an interesting history, especially comparatively recently. When the European Pattern was introduced in 1971, the race was

awarded Group 3 status. It was then downgraded to a Listed event in 1986, before being restored to Group 3 level in 1991.

Unluckily for Hartnell, the race was once more downgraded to Listed in time for the 2014 renewal, but, remarkably, as part of the plan to provide an enhanced racing programme for stayers, the event was allotted Group 2 status in 2017 while, incongruously, being reduced in trip to a mile and three quarters at the same time.

Mark Johnston boasts a fabulous record in the race. And Beyond (2001), Shanty Star (2003), Melrose Avenue (2005), Soapy Danger (2006), Holberg (2009) and Namibian (2011) had all won for the Middleham yard before Hartnell lined up for the race in 2014. Only the late Sir Henry Cecil has trained more winners of the event (eight).

Hartnell, a son of the Derby winner Authorized, ran seven times as a juvenile in 2013, winning three times. He followed up his maiden win at Ffos Las with an impressive success over a mile in a Doncaster nursery. Stepped up to a mile and a quarter in November, he won the Zetland Conditions Stakes at Newmarket by 10 lengths, before ending his season with a third in the Group 1 Criterium de Saint-Cloud behind Prince Gibraltar.

The colt made his seasonal debut as a three-year-old in Epsom's Derby Trial, over a mile and a quarter, for which he started favourite. Tracking the leaders until the closing stages, Hartnell was ridden to challenge with a furlong remaining; slightly impeded, he finished fifth of the nine runners.

Stepped up in trip for the Lingfield Derby Trial, Hartnell ran well, chasing home the winner Snow Sky when finishing second in a field of nine for

the Listed race.

At Ascot, Hartnell faced nine rivals for the Queen's Vase, racing over a distance of two miles. Joe Fanning was aboard the colt, who figured prominently in the betting behind only Marzocco, who had finished second in the Epsom Derby Trial and second in Goodwood's Listed Cockeyed Hat Stakes (11f) last time out.

From the outset, Silvestre de Sousa sent Gold Approach, the only filly in the race, into the lead, pursued by Tom Queally on Big Orange. Joe Fanning was able to settle Hartnell on the rail, racing in third, with Marzocco disputing fourth with Anglo Irish.

Challenge

Joe was able to stick to the rail throughout. Approaching the home turn, Marzocco made a forward move on the outer. Hartnell, momentarily short of room, found a gap on the inner and shot through to take the lead, pursued initially by Big Orange and Marzocco. Joseph O'Brien brought Century to challenge with a sustained run on the outside, and although Hartnell initially seemed well in control, he hung sharply to the left in the closing stages and seemed to bump Century close home. This was despite the fact that Joe had his stick in his left hand immediately prior to the horse hanging.

At the post, Hartnell had scored by a neck from Century, with Marzocco a length and three-quarters back in third. Big Orange, who was to go on to land the Ascot Gold Cup as a six-year-old, finished fourth, beaten a further length and a quarter. Inevitably there was a stewards' enquiry, but thankfully the placings remained unaltered.

In the immediate aftermath of the race, bookmakers offered quotes for



Hartnell as the St Leger winner, and an impressive success in the Group 3 Bahrain Trophy at Newmarket over 13 furlongs next time out seemed to add credibility to his claims for the oldest classic. However, having finished a disappointing sixth behind Postponed in the Great Voltigeur Stakes at York in August, his Leger run saw him finish seventh of 12 behind Kingston Hill in what was to be his last run for the yard.

GELDED after the St Leger, Hartnell was transferred to Godolphin Australia and went on to enjoy a fabulous career in the Southern Hemisphere, where he landed four Group 1 races, three Group 2s and a Group 3.

Even more remarkably, those Group 1 wins were recorded over four different

distances – seven furlongs, a mile, 10 furlongs and a mile and a half. His most valuable win was in the 2015 BMW (£485,000), though in finishing second to the wonder horse Winx in the Queen Elizabeth Stakes at Randwick in April 2017 he earned place prize-money of £445,000!

Retired in November 2019 after a close third to Magic Wand in the Mackinnon Stakes (Group 1) at Flemington, Hartnell is assured of a special place in the history of Godolphin Australia.

Vin Cox, Managing Director of Godolphin Australia, paid tribute to Hartnell when he said: "We are all so lucky to have had an association with this great horse and he is a true inspiration to everyone at Godolphin." Cox went on to announce that Hartnell was to become the flag-bearer for Godolphin's Lifetime Care programme.

Hartnell is fondly remembered by the staff at Johnston Racing, and it's remarkable to think that the first major win of a career that saw him amass earnings of more than £4m came on that June day at Ascot. ■



Deirdre Johnston exercised Hartnell on the track at Ascot on the morning of the race