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# THOSE GOLDEN MOMENTS

This month JOHN SCANLON looks back to June 2015 and Buratino's victory in the Group 2 Coventry Stakes at Royal Ascot

**W**HEN Buratino flashed past the post to take the Coventry Stakes at the Royal meeting, it was a first success in the historic race for trainer Mark Johnston, jockey William Buick and owners Godolphin.

Established in 1890, the Coventry Stakes commemorates George William Coventry, the 9th Earl of Coventry. A former Master of the Buckhounds, Coventry had a long association with horse racing as an owner and breeder. Remarkably, he won successive runnings of the Grand National with Emblem (1863) and Emblematic (1864), and on the Flat his Verdict won the Coronation Cup many years later.

On the introduction of the Pattern, the race was classified as a Group 3 event, but it was elevated to Group 2 level in 2004. Long established as one of the premier races in the juvenile calendar, the race has been won by some legendary names in British racing, including Rock Sand, The Tetrarch, Dante, Tudor Minstrel, Mill Reef and Royal Applause.

On the first day of the 2015 Flat season, Buratino turned out in a maiden race at Chelmsford. The son of Exceed and Excel overcame a tardy start to score in good style from Young John, an Acclamation colt who won next time out in a maiden at Chester's May meeting.

It was something of a red-letter day for Johnston Racing; having run three juveniles on the day, all three were winners, with Rah Rah taking a Kempton maiden and Ravenhoe winning the Brocklesby at Doncaster to make it an electric start to the Flat campaign.

Buratino scored again in a Newmarket novice event in mid-May, stepping up to six furlongs with aplomb and winning in the capable hands of Kieren Fallon.

Sent to Sandown to contest the National Stakes, back at five furlongs, Buratino ran into King of Rooks, another son of

Acclamation who produced a career-best performance to scorch home on the rail, while Buratino led the remainder of the field home.

Back over six furlongs in Epsom's Woodcote Stakes on Derby Day, Buratino was bumped at the start and was slow to

colt, Air Force Blue, an impressive winner of his sole previous run in a Curragh maiden.

The field split into two groups in the early stages, with Buratino held up by William Buick at the back of the group racing towards the stands' side of the track. Always travelling powerfully, Buratino was produced with more than a furlong to run, taking the lead just as Air Force Blue was making a forward move, and pulling clear of that rival in the closing stages to score by two lengths, with Eltezam the same distance back in third. Beaverbrook and Ode To Evening ran great races too, finishing fourth and fifth respectively.

The time figure for the race was an impressive 0.57 fast, and when added to the manner of the colt's success, this was clearly a top-class effort from the colt at the highest level.

After this fabulous performance, the Group 2 winner completed his juvenile campaign with two placed efforts in Group 1 company. Having finished third in the Phoenix Stakes at the Curragh, Buratino turned in perhaps his career-best performance in the Middle Park

Stakes. After a determined effort to catch the July Stakes and Prix Morny winner, Shalaa, the Exceed and Excel colt had to give best by half a length, but finished two lengths' clear of the remainder of the field.

**A**LAS, Buratino failed to fire as a three-year-old, but this should not detract from his juvenile brilliance, which earned him a Timeform rating of 118.

So, how, then, to sum up Buratino's achievements as a juvenile? Well, Darley's current banner advertising Buratino's talents online puts it nicely: 'G1 juvenile who won on the first day of the season. Won the G2 Coventry in a faster time than Calyx and the Woodcote faster than Pinatubo.' ■



Buratino and William Buick win the 2015 Coventry Stakes

get going. However, he recovered well, bursting into the lead under William Buick before storming clear in the final furlong. At the post, Buratino had won by six lengths from Nelspruit, a performance which sealed his place in the Coventry Stakes at the Royal meeting, just 10 days later.

Buratino was one of three stable runners in the field of 17 who went to post for the Coventry, the others being Beaverbrook and Ode To Evening, and one of 12 juveniles from Johnston Racing to run at the meeting as a whole. The market leader was Godolphin's Round Two, winner of the Listed Marble Hill Stakes at the Curragh, where he had defeated Washington DC by two lengths, while Aidan O'Brien relied on the War Front