

# THOSE GOLDEN MOMENTS

Our series on some of the horses that made the 2010s so special for Johnston Racing this month recalls Steeler, whose golden moment came on Newmarket's Rowley Mile course in September 2012.

SOME of us of a certain age will forever associate the Royal Lodge Stakes with Ascot. The race was established in 1946 and named after Royal Lodge, a royal residence located in Windsor Great Park and thus on Ascot's doorstep. Originally run over five furlongs, the distance of the race was extended to a mile in 1948, and the event was then restricted to colts and geldings in 1987.

The Royal Lodge Stakes was transferred to Newmarket in 2011 as part of the reorganisation of races arising from the institution of British Champions Day. Mark Johnston had already won the race twice by then. Memorably, Paul Venner's Mister Baileys took the race in 1993, ridden by Frankie Dettori, while Alan Spence's Jukebox Jury was the winner in 2008, partnered by Royston Ffrench.

Steeler, a Raven's Pass colt out of the Darshaan mare, Discreet Brief, and owned by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed, burst on to the juvenile scene in 2012 at Glorious Goodwood. After running green

on his debut at Haydock, the colt pounced late under Kieren Fallon to land a competitive maiden race over seven furlongs.

## Impeded

Stepped up to Group 3 company in York's Acomb Stakes in August, Steeler was impeded by the winner, Dundonnell, in the closing stages when finishing second, but returned to the winner's enclosure when landing the Peter Willett Stakes (Listed) at Goodwood at the beginning of September.

The colt's manner of running suggested he would be suited by stepping up to a mile at Newmarket. In the Royal Lodge, Steeler faced seven rivals. The market

leader, Fantastic Moon had won the Solario Stakes at Sandown, while Henry Cecil's Al Waab looked a progressive sort; having won two of his three races, both at Newmarket, he had gone down by just a head to the subsequent Tattersalls Stakes winner, Havana Gold, in Haydock's Ascendant Stakes. Godolphin's Artigiano, second in the Vintage Stakes at Goodwood, had strong claims, too. Kieren Fallon took the ride on Steeler, and

produced a virtuoso performance.

The early pace was strong. Frankie Dettori had Artigiano at the head of affairs on the far side, but he was soon joined by Martin Lane on Birdman closer to the stands side of the track. Kieren Fallon had Steeler racing between the leading pair, just off the pace.

## Tenacity

Steeler improved from the halfway mark and was in front with three furlongs to run. Artigiano was travelling strongly for Dettori, however, and passing the furlong marker the Godolphin silks seemed to be in a narrow lead. Displaying what commentator Richard Hoiles referred to as his 'trademark tenacity', Steeler responded generously to Fallon's urgent drive, and pulled away in the closing stages to score by a length from Artigiano, with Al Waab finishing third, beaten a further three and a half lengths.

The decent early pace, combined with Steeler's strong finishing burst, meant that the winning time for the race (1 min 35:67 secs) set a new juvenile course record. Equally importantly for his



Charlie Johnston with Steeler and groom, the late Hari Singh Bhati, after the race

owner, Steeler's win in this Group 2 race gave his sire, Raven's Pass, the Queen Elizabeth II Stakes winner, his first Group race winner.

The Group 1 Racing Post Trophy was nominated by

connections as Steeler's next target. The colt acquitted himself well at Doncaster, despite soft ground on which he was untried. On what proved to be his final start for the yard, Steeler took over from Trading Leather in the lead with three furlongs to run, but was run out of things by Kingsbarns in the closing stages, going down by a length and three-quarters. ■

