

THOSE GOLDEN MOMENTS

By any standards, Fruits of Love has to rank among the best horses Mark Johnston has trained in his long and distinguished career. This month, we take a look back in time to the Hansel colt's first major win in a race in which Johnston Racing has enjoyed much success over the years.

THE Princess of Wales's Stakes, named in honour of Princess Alexandra of Denmark who became Princess of Wales in 1863, was established in 1894. Originally contested over a mile, the distance of the race was extended to a mile and a half in 1902. Over the years, the race has enjoyed a reputation for being one of the top midsummer races open to three-year-olds and up over that distance. It was elevated to Group 2 status in 1978 and is run on Newmarket's July course.

At the start of July 1998, Mick Doyle's Fruits of Love, then a three-year-old colt, was seeking to recover from an unfortunate and disappointing run at Royal Ascot. In Royal Anthem's King Edward VII Stakes, Fruits of Love was badly hampered over two furlongs from home and had dropped away tamely to finish last of the 10 runners.

Problems

Dropped in grade and trip, the Hansel colt was sent to contest Kempton's Gala Stakes, a Listed race over a mile and a quarter, on July 1. Fruits of Love encountered traffic problems once more, but came with a strong late run to finish second to Godolphin's Happy Valentine.

Six days later, Fruits of Love was one of a field of seven assembled for the Princess of Wales's Stakes. Heading the market was Geoff Wragg's five-year-old Germano; the Generous entire had won the Gordon Richards Stakes at Sandown that April, before running third in the Brigadier Gerard Stakes over course and distance. He came to Newmarket having run a half-length second to Posidonas in the Group 2 Hardwicke Stakes at the Royal Meeting, with Swain back in third.

The unbeaten three-year-old Nureyev colt, Eaton Square, trained by the late Sir Henry Cecil was well supported, as was John Gosden's Sabadilla, fresh from running second in the Bessborough

Stakes at Royal Ascot. Sir Michael Stoute's Multicoloured, third in the Fred Archer Stakes over course and distance, was another to take his chance.

Eaton Square was quickly into stride, but Multicoloured took over after a furlong or so and sought to make all the running under the late Walter Swinburn. By contrast, Michael Hills held Fruits of Love up, well off the pace. Creeping closer to the lead gradually, he switched the colt left in the penultimate furlong and delivered a decisive run which saw Fruits of Love sweep past Multicoloured to score by a length and a quarter, with Germano half a length back in third.

Be in no doubt about the merit of this win. Next time out, the second horse, Multicoloured, won the Group 2 Geoffrey Freer Stakes at Newbury, defeating the previous year's Leger winner, Silver Patriarch, by three-quarters of a length. The fourth horse, Garuda, finished second in the Group 1 Europa Preis at Cologne two months later.

This was also a deserved success for a game horse who had fractured his pelvis

after narrowly losing out to Impressionist in the Futurity Stakes at the Curragh at the end of his two-year-old career. In subsequent seasons, he would go on to land the Dubai Turf Classic, a Group 1 race in all but name, and after the trauma of having to be rescued from an overturned horsebox as he returned from Dubai, he recorded the first of two wins in the Group 2 Hardwicke Stakes at Royal Ascot.

FRUITS OF LOVE was also placed three times at Group 1 level. Third to Daylami in the 1999 running of the King George at Ascot, he was second in the Canadian International at Woodbine that autumn and third in the Grosser Preis von Baden the following year.

The Hansel colt's win in the Princess of Wales's Stakes was Mark Johnston's first success in the event. Since then, he has won the race on four more occasions thanks to the efforts of Bandari (2004), Soapy Danger (2006), Universal (2013) and Communique (2019). ■



Mick Doyle's Fruits Of Love