

# THOSE GOLDEN MOMENTS

This month we look back to August 21, 2004, when Mister Monet travelled to France to seek a prestigious prize

**T**HE summer of 2004 was a hugely exciting time for the Johnston stable. Attraction had landed the unprecedented English Guineas/Irish Guineas/Coronation Stakes treble, while at the same time a juvenile named Shamardal was burning up the Middleham gallops.

But in midsummer, a Peintre Celebre colt within the string began to improve – rapidly! He was Mister Monet, and Mark Johnston identified what he thought would be a perfect target for him.

His eye was on the Prix Guillaume d’Ornano, a race established at Deauville in 1952. It was initially a race for three-year-olds over 3,000 metres, and was originally called the Prix de la Côte Normande. The distance was reduced to 2,000 metres (approximately a mile and a quarter) for the second running of the race, and has been fixed at that distance since 1960.

When the European Pattern was introduced in 1971, the race was awarded Group 3 status, and then elevated to Group 2 in 1983. It was renamed in 1987, to honour Guillaume d’Ornano, an industrialist and former owner of the Haras de Manneville, a stud farm at Banneville-la-Campagne, near Deauville.

## Upgrade

The race has long been a target for British-trained horses, with Guy Harwood and Paul Cole enjoying wins back in the 1980s. Mark hasn’t often targeted the race, but back in 2004 it provided the perfect step up in class for his exciting colt who was very much on the upgrade that summer.

Mister Monet, a colt by Peintre Celebre out of the Commanche Run mare, Breyani, and owned by Syndicate 2002, had had two runs as a juvenile in 2003. Third on his debut to Coolmore’s One Cool Cat in a valuable York maiden in June, he stepped up from six furlongs to seven at Sandown in July and turned a maiden race into something of a procession.

Allotted an opening mark of 92, Mister Monet kicked off his three-year-old

campaign in a handicap over a mile at Newmarket’s July meeting. Despite niggling injuries which had delayed his reappearance, it looked like being a successful resumption, with the colt going three lengths clear with a furlong to run. The stiff uphill finish on the July course caught him out, however, and he lost out by a short head to Kehaar.

From that point onwards, Mister Monet’s progression was stellar. In the space of a month he won three times. Off 92, he slammed Always First, representing the Stoute/Fallon axis, by four lengths in a Hamilton conditions event over nine furlongs. Nine days later, off 98, he justified favouritism in winning a decent Ascot handicap over 10 furlongs.

Finally, and just two weeks later, he made a successful first venture into pattern company, landing the Group 3 Rose of Lancaster Stakes at Haydock in

great style by one and a half lengths from the four-year-old Muqbil.

The next logical step for Mister Monet, now rated 106, was to target a Group 2 event. Exactly 14 days after Haydock, the Prix Guillaume d’Ornano fitted the bill nicely.

Nine went to post for the race, including two other British challengers from the Stoute and Channon yards. The main French challenger looked likely to be Delfos, a three-time winner that year who had been runner-up to the Prix du Jockey-Club third, Valixir, in Maisons-Laffitte’s Group 2 Prix Eugene Adam last time out.

The race went like clockwork. Jockey Joe Fanning sent the colt to the head of affairs from the outset and pushed his mount clear approaching the final furlong. Running on strongly, Mister Monet scored by four lengths from Delfos, with Islero Noir one and a half lengths back in third.

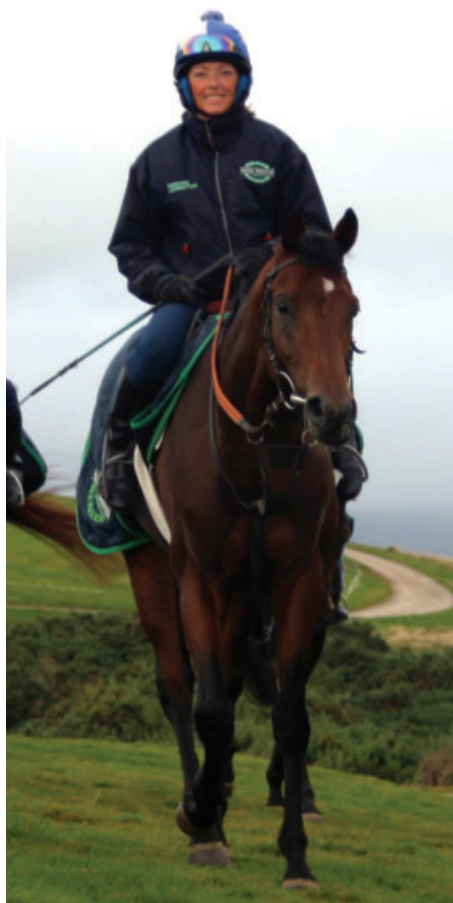
To demonstrate the worth of the form, in his next two starts, Delfos won two races over a mile and a quarter at Longchamp; first the Group 3 Prix du Prince d’Orange, and then the Prix d’Harcourt (Group 2).

Given a break, Mister Monet was entered for the Group 1 Champion Stakes at Newmarket in October. It says it all about the improvement he had demonstrated that he was sent off at odds of 5/1 in a stellar field which included horses of the calibre of Doyen, Azamour, Haafhd, Refuse To Bend and Chorist. Also in the field was his stable companion, Lucky Story.

Tragically, Mister Monet’s ‘story’ was to be anything but lucky. After half a mile or so, the colt broke down; he had fractured his near-hind and had to be euthanised.

**I**T was a tragic end to a dramatic rise to prominence. Mister Monet earned a Timeform rating of 123 that year; his official rating rose from 92 to 117 in just five runs.

But during those few weeks in the summer of 2004, culminating in that Deauville success, Mister Monet’s star shone brightly at Kingsley House. ■



Mister Monet and Deirdre Johnston on Middleham Low Moor in 2004