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 a filly whose golden moment came at Newmarket in October 2013.

BY any standards, the Cesarewitch is a unique horse race. Run over a distance of two miles two furlongs at Newmarket, the race starts in Cambridgeshire, follows an 'L' shape course with one, single right-hand turn on to the Rowley Mile course, and finishes in Suffolk!

The race was inaugurated in 1839, and its name is thought to be an Anglicisation of 'tsesarevitch', a Russian word meaning 'heir to the throne', following the visit of Tsesarevitch Alexander to England. He was to become Tsar Alexander II, and the royal visitor is said to have made a gift of £300 to the Jockey Club.

Mark Johnston has a fantastic record in the race. His first winner was the three-year-old Spirit of Love, ridden by Olivier Peslier to success in 1998 at odds of 11/1, for owner A W Robinson.

Michael Watt's Contact Dancer was the yard's second winner of the race in 2004, with Royston Ffrench guiding the five-year-old son of Sadler's Wells home at 16/1.

Scatter Dice, the 2013 winner, was beautifully bred. Owned by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed and bred by Darley, she was by the triple Group 1 winner Manduro (Prix Jacques le Marois/Prince of Wales's Stakes/Prix d'Ispahan) out of the Soviet Star mare, Sensation. The dam, who raced in France for the late Maktoum al Maktoum, won her first four races for Criquette Head, culminating in a win at the July Meeting in the Falmouth Stakes, then a Group 2.

Systematic

In the paddocks, before producing Scatter Dice she had already produced good winners, the pick being Systematic, who won the Ormonde Stakes and Cumberland Lodge Stakes, both Group 3 races, for Maktoum al Maktoum and the yard in 2002/4.

Unraced at two, Scatter Dice made an early start to her three-year-old career, finishing second in a Lingfield maiden in January. By late July, she had won four handicaps, raising her handicap mark to 93. In two of those races, she was ridden by Silvestre de Sousa.

At four, she raced in good handicap company. In 15 starts prior to Newmarket, she was winless, though she had substantially run well up to her handicap mark and had finished second once, and third three times.

Scatter Dice was one of three Johnston-trained runners in the race. Markus Graff's Oriental Fox had been the stylish winner of the Cesarewitch Trial over course and distance three weeks earlier, and featured prominently in the betting. The Goodwood Stakes winner, Broxbourne, representing the Ready To Run Partnership, was seeking her eighth win of the calendar year. Scatter Dice carried 8st 8lb (rated 88) and was visored for the first time. Importantly, she was ridden by Silvestre de Sousa, who boasted a 100% strike rate on her, despite not partnering her in her last 23 runs!

The Kingsley Park contingent faced 30 rivals. They included the favourite, Tiger Cliff, last time out winner of the Ebor; Pallasator, who had finished third in the Old Borough Cup at Haydock on his previous start; Nicky Henderson's Lieutenant Miller, placed in both the Goodwood and Ascot Stakes; the French challenger Smoky Hill, fourth in the Prix Gladiateur at Longchamp; and Domination, who had prepared for the race by winning two decent hurdle events at Cork in August.

Scatter Dice seemed to have blown her chance at the start. Drawn in stall 18, she crawled out of the stalls. Silvestre immediately switched her to the inner rail, but she looked to have conceded the best part of 10 lengths as a start to rivals.

All three Johnston horses were towards the rear of the field in the early stages. Scatter Dice was kept to the inner and gradually made her way into the race. With half a mile to run, Oriental Fox looked to be the best placed of our horses, making progress on the outer under Johnny Murtagh to get into a position to challenge.

Determined

With three furlongs to race, and with a wall of horses in front of his mount, Silvestre made the decision to switch Scatter Dice to the outer. It proved to be an inspired move. Once in the clear, Scatter Dice responded to Silvestre's determined drive to sweep past Oriental Fox and struck the front when outpointing Lieutenant Miller inside the final furlong. She stayed on well in the closing stages to score by three lengths from Waterclock, who got the better of Lieutenant Miller in the closing stages, the third horse being beaten by a length. Oriental Fox did little wrong in defeat, just hanging right in the closing stages. He finished sixth, beaten five lengths by the winner.

The winning filly Scatter Dice with Mark, jockey Silvestre de Sousa and groom Shrawan Singh

"It's unbelievable," the winning jockey said after the race.

"She's such a trier. She had a visor on for the first time but she was just a bit sleepy in the stalls. She has done it really well."

Mark was equally delighted by the filly's success.

"She's had a long hard season, but has run well on so many occasions. She has run a couple of strange races recently, dropping herself out. I was a bit concerned in the first half of the race, but then I saw her hanging in with the pack. I saw her coming from quite a long way out."

This was a classic ride from Silvestre. If you watch a replay of the race, it's fascinating to watch his red cap as he bravely sticks to the inner rail, saving vital ground, before switching wide at just the right moment. It was a hugely valuable success, as the winner's purse for the race was £155,625, and quite a way for Scatter Dice to bow out. She was the winner of five of her 29 career starts, finishing in the frame on a further nine occasions. Her career earnings topped £236,000.

SCATTER DICE's win gave Mark his third success in the race. The leading trainers in the race are William Day and Mathew Dawson, each of whom had four wins in the second half of the 19th Century. Mark came close to emulating their record when Oriental Fox lost out by a short head to Grumeti in the 2015 renewal, and the three-year-old Summer Moon also made a bold effort, finishing third in last year's race, beaten less than a length. ■