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The David Allan Column

Remembering our very own Derby winner—the story of Shahrastani

THIRTY years ago, SHAHRASTANI (Nijinsky-Shademah by Thatch) won the Epsom Derby beating one of the great racehorses DANCING BRAVE. Soon afterwards SHAHRASTANI went to The Curragh and won the Irish Derby by 8 lengths. A picture of both wins in a single frame hangs on the wall behind me as I type.

HH The Aga Khan was his breeder and owner in the glory days. Then, in the way of things in the 1980s he was whisked off to stud at Three Chimneys in Kentucky at 3, syndicated for US\$30 million. A hundred and something million today.

But later, and for 15 years, he was ours.

SHAHRASTANI was variously praised and smeared for his win over DANCING BRAVE. Greville Starkey was widely blamed for the latter's defeat but perhaps the recognition these days is that he did what he was told.

There was no guarantee that Guineas Winner DANCING BRAVE would stay on Epsom's mile and a half switchback so he was ridden accordingly. Walter Swinburn knew what would happen and timed his run for home perfectly.

The Irish Derby was a romp. Then the most telling assessment was that SHAHRASTANI lined up as favourite for the King George and Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes. DANCING BRAVE was in that field. Not favourite. SHAHRASTANI's blood was wrong – he probably would not have run today – and DANCING BRAVE won famously.

Then, after recovery and with no prep race, SHAHRASTANI took part in the best horse race I have ever seen. The 1986 Arc. Mike Heslop's painting of the finish looks down on our dining table.

Six other Group 1 winners were defeated by DANCING BRAVE's spectacular swoop down the middle of the track. French Derby winner BERING



Shahrastani, at 20, enjoying the local village.

– grandson of the incomparable Sea-Bird - finished 2nd.

SHAHRASTANI was just touched off for 3rd by the fabulous racemare TRIPTYCH, a 9 times Group 1 winner by Riverman. TRIPTYCH died tragically soon after retiring to stud in Kentucky. In foal to Mr Prospector, she ran into a farm vehicle in the dark. Somebody's head rolled.



Shahrastani (Walter Swinburn) beats Dancing Brave in the 1986 Epsom Derby.

Top Ville sired the 5th home at Longchamp: SHARDARI a 4 year old Newmarket stablemate and in the same ownership as SHAHRASTANI, giving the younger ones weight as he had done so valiantly in that year's "King George" where he fought into DANCING BRAVE's winning margin whilst conceding 13 lbs.

ACATENANGO , multiple Gr1 winner and German Horse of the Year who, the following year, finished 3rd to TRIPTYCH in the Coronation Cup at Epsom ran a good race. And while SAINT ESTEPHE may mean delicious Bordeaux to most readers, this Coronation Cup winner picked up an injury in the '86 Arc and retired to stud.

Kentucky was not the right place for Sharastani.

The biggest money was there then. Transatlantic traffic in mares to be covered was busy. But SHAHRASTANI serviced far too many unsuitable American "speed" mares.

After a spell back in Ireland with the Aga, he was sold to Japan in the days when he would have been a "Trophy Horse" for someone who had a lot of money.

In the later 90s, we attended the inaugural JBBA Foal Sale in Hokkaido not far from Sapporo. I shall never forget the sight of a very long line of mares with foals at foot, turning left simultaneously on a whistle to make their perfectly handled foals-at-foot available for inspection for prospective purchase. Bought foals were then kept free of charge until after weaning with a comprehensive bilingual contract covering the arrangements.

The ground underfoot was quite wet. Other overseas visitors of whom there were few were astonished when hundreds of pairs of plastic overshoes were given out to protect the guests' footwear. "This is Japan".

On that trip, we went hunting. We found our quarry. SHAHRASTANI was at a private stud not doing very much. He was owned by good people who had him looking magnificent.

A key to business in Japan – perhaps anywhere - is to make sure the other side does not lose face. If possible make "it" their idea. Nobody is fooling anyone, but in this way goals can be achieved that would otherwise be blocked by discomfort with too direct an approach.

SHAHRASTANI became ours in a lovely little give and take arrangement reliant on mutual trust. Much like DAYLAMI "came home" from SA to be a dual purpose sire, so did SHAHRASTANI stand with our friends in County Limerick, covering over 200 mares



Mike Heslop's painting showing Dancing Brave (pink cap), winning the 1986 Arc. Shahrastani (white face, green silks, finished fourth).

in his three seasons there at a small fee. Later we transferred him to Leicestershire in an area where UK jumping mares abound. His jack donkey came with him.

“Sean”, being a jack, was actually another stallion. Sean would stare down the hyperactive thoroughbred in his box and when being turned out. Otherwise SHAHRASTANI would run himself ragged.

In his later years, SHAHRASTANI was never happier than when racked up in his box with a hay net and a good view of all the comings and goings in the picturesque yard. People would come from far and wide simply “to see Shahrastani”. Our pride in ownership was deeply felt.

Into his late 20s and long since retired from covering but cherished at the Leicestershire farm, he enjoyed his hand-walked excursions past residential houses from which people would wave to him and he would skip and frisk. But at the age of 28, the time had come.

He has a small legacy in South Africa. We sent to this son of Nijinsky an elderly daughter of Habitat who had nearly a dozen international Gr1 performers on her page. Having those two greats up so close gave goose bumps.

We brought the result, a filly named Sunnydale, to South Africa where with Vaughan Marshall she won three times and was an injured 4th in her black type race. Her first two foals are winners, one with us having a cracking Captain Of All colt and being in foal to Elusive Fort. **-tt**

It's always in the blood, really!

“PENNEKAMP” is a relatively unknown sire of broodmares among South African racing fans, but if he pops up in your form guides, have another look at his running progeny. Saturday's Gr2 World Sports Betting Merchants was won by Search Party, a gelding by Captain Al from Princess Magdalena, by Pennekamp (USA), from Ascot Stud.

Initially considered a flop at stud, Pennekamp is finding redemption as a broodmare sire with the likes of Mubtaahij, Lily Of The Valley and siblings Jan Vermeer and Together representing him in that department. Pennekamp himself is a son of Bering (mentioned in David Allan column), a sire of 23 Group 1 winners. **- tt.**

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Happy young faces change attitudes, touch hearts

THE single question that came up among guests at Saturday's Tellytrack Christmas Tree for 200 under-privileged children held at Turffontein was, "How can parents abandon kids like these?" or, for that matter, "How can parents abandon their children, period?"

We know lives have circumstances, however, and unforeseen things happen – and perhaps the children at Turffontein knew it too, because all of them looked happy and glowing, not only because Santa was waiting with presents in a large marquee tent erected next to the parade ring for the day.

Julie Alexander and her team have staged and administered the Christmas Tree for ten years and as a result of their hard work children at homes like St Laurence's Haven, Abraham Kriel and BB Ministries have always enjoyed a little extra in the period – good mattresses to sleep on, television sets that work, good fridges that stock food, kettles to boil hot water for coffee, and more.

Julie tells: "We raised R500,000 this year, up from around R200,000 last year and it's a record for us, very pleasing and allowing us to do so much more for these children. We don't hand over the cash, we receive a wish list from each home, listing the things they need, which are mostly furniture, appliances and so on. We consult with them, allocate funds proportionally and then we negotiate with major retailers like Game to get discounts on bulk buys so that we can afford even more. With the left-over funds, I normally buy some toiletries in bulk and distribute them. This is also something always in need.

"Over the past three years the rest of the proceeds have been used to provide bursaries for some children to further their education. Phumelela is to start an internship programme for the recipients of these bursaries who have completed their studies in order to assist them with getting work experience."

Julie, MC Rod McCurdy and Tellytrack boss Rob Scott thanked everyone who attended the function. Kudos for their efforts. It may seem trivial, sentimental when you read this, but seeing the happy smiles on those innocent faces in real life changes attitudes and touches hearts. Get involved next year, giving hands are never empty! - **tt**.



The 200 underprivileged children hosted by Phumelela and Tellytrack on Saturday received their presents in groups.



Shared joy: A group of under-privileged children on the lawn at Turffontein. Their homes will receive their proportional shares of R500,000 after Saturday's Tellytrack Christmas Tree. (JC Photos).

Sprinting legend Rocket Man says farewell at Kranji



Patrick Shaw with a basket of carrots for Rocket Man.

ROCKET Man emerged for his well-deserved retirement parade straight after Race 6 at the Singapore Racecourse at Kranji on Sunday.

"He deserves it," said trainer Patrick Shaw, who, fittingly, won the Rocket Man Farewell Stakes with The General after the happy and yet emotional occasion, and will be taking a sabbatical of his own for the next six months.

"It's a sad day for Singapore to see him go out. But he'll be

here till the 15th or 16th (of Dec). If people want to look at him, my stables are open - if the turf club allows them in.

"But, as far as I'm concerned, you know, his name will always be in Singapore history."

Rocket Man, who earned a Singapore record \$6.7 million in stakes, will spend his remaining days gambolling in a beach farm in Cape Town.

Rocket Man won 20 of his 27 career starts, including the 2014 Dubai Golden Shaheen Stakes (Gr 1, 1200m) and the Singapore International Sprint (Gr 1, 1200m).

Doug's in the dwang

HONG Kong-based jockey Douglas Whyte has pleaded not guilty to a charge of failing to ride his mount out to the line on runner up Scales Of Justice in the Kingston Town Classic at Ascot on Saturday. The Lindsey Smith-trained Scales Of Justice was beaten a nose by the Darren Weir-trained Stratum Star, ridden by Damian Lane, in Saturday's \$1,000,000 race. Stewards questioned Whyte at an inquiry before charging him. -Azn Bloodstock News.

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