



MEMORIES OF CAUTHEN AS MCDONALD WINS ON DUTCH CONNECTION

Dutch Connection, trained for Godolphin by Charlie Hills, won the feature race on day one of the Qatar Goodwood Festival 2016, the Group Two Qatar Lennox Stakes.

Runner-up last year, Dutch Connection led home a one-two for Godolphin, for Home Of The Brave, from Hugo Palmer's stable, took second, a length and three-quarters adrift of the winner, and the same distance ahead of his stablemate, Gifted Master, who made the early running. The winner, sent off the 9/4 favourite, was ridden by James McDonald, the New Zealander who rides primarily in Australia and is on an extended stay in Britain following a riding ban for Godolphin jockey William Buick.

McDonald is enjoying a purple patch, and drew a comparison with the great American jockey Steve Cauthen, who began his career in Britain with Hills' father, Barry, who retired from training last year. In turn, it was to ride for Charlie that McDonald first appeared in Britain three years ago.

Remembering their first meeting, Charlie said: "James came down and rode out on his first morning, and Dad said, 'Who's that jockey? I haven't seen a jockey like that on these gallops since Steve Cauthen,' so that's a high accolade.

"We seemed to hit it off pretty well. I think he is a world-class jockey and he's still very young, so I think we are going to see him here quite a bit. He's young, seems very laidback and has a good relationship with horses. He is very positive."

Of Dutch Connection, Hills said: "He won his maiden here well and ran a good race in the Lennox Stakes last year. He brought some good form into this race and I always felt that he had a favourite's chance.

"We will have to speak to John Ferguson and Sheikh Mohammed to see where we go next. There are options for him in Saratoga and maybe the Prix Maurice de Gheest in France as well.

"I wouldn't mind bringing him back to six and half furlongs, but I would have thought that a two-turn mile would be right up his street. Fast ground is really the key to him, he loves it quick, and he's a fine, big horse who should improve as he gets older.

This was Dutch Connection's first victory at Group Two level, and he could go higher on a quick surface, said Hills. He added: "He really deserved this - last year was tough. He was second in this race and was knocking on the door a good few times. We took him to America and it never stopped raining every time he ran - it's been the same this year.

"I cannot see any reason why he couldn't win a Group One on the right ground and there are plenty of options for him now, not just here but abroad as well. They went a good solid pace today and he has a high cruising speed so it played into his hands.

"Running him over a mile on stiff tracks like Ascot has just been finding him out, and when he got to the front I was a little concerned, but then he pulled away."

James McDonald, 24, registered his first success at the Qatar Goodwood Festival and his second ever winner at the Sussex venue courtesy of Qatar Lennox Stakes winner Dutch Connection (9/4 favourite).

Having travelled well in behind the Hugo Palmer duo of Gifted Master and Home Of The Brave, McDonald unleashed Dutch Connection inside the final furlong.

The Charlie Hills-trained colt cruised into the lead and quickly put the race to bed with a potent turn of foot to win by a length and three-quarters.

The Australian-based, New Zealand-born jockey said: "The race panned out well. The strong pace set it up well for my horse. He travelled very well and when I eased him out the race was over a fair way from home. Once he coasted up to the leader, it was all over.

"He is a very good horse who is very capable on his day. Hopefully he can win that elusive Group One in the future. He adapted to the conditions underfoot superbly and I wouldn't run him on any ground apart from that.

"He's an awesome horse and I can't believe that I have won a big race for Charlie Hills. He's an absolute brother of mine - he brought me over here and he and his team have shown so much faith. I can't thank them enough.

"It has been brilliant. I head home on Saturday, so I am making the most of my opportunities and hopefully I will get a couple more.

"I only come over here for short stints but I have got a lot of support and I am delighted with how it has gone."

McDonald had earlier finished a one and three-quarter length second aboard Thunder Snow in the Qatar Vintage Stakes and he said: "I was thrilled with him. He was a lovely colt who was very immature but he ran superbly well. He has a nice future."

3:10 G2 Qatar Lennox Stakes

1) DUTCH CONNECTION (Godolphin) Charlie Hills 4-9-03 James McDonald 9/4 Fav

2) Home Of The Brave (Godolphin) Hugo Palmer 4-9-03 James Doyle 5/2

3) Gifted Master (Dr Ali Ridha) Hugo Palmer 3-8-10 Jim Crowley 13/2

8 ran

Time: 1m 24.48s

Distances: 1¾, 1¾

Tote Win £3.20 Place £1.20,£1.30,£2.30 Exacta £8.10

Breeder: Susan Roy

Breeding: 4 ch c Dutch Art - Endless Love (IRE) (Dubai Destination (USA))

Charlie Hills - 7 Goodwood wins (4 at Qatar Goodwood Festival)

James McDonald - 3 Goodwood wins (1 at Qatar Goodwood Festival)