

Pedigree Focus

by *Michael Ross*

Jumpers can become good sires

Last week at the Cheltenham Festival, three of the winners had sires who had themselves been high-class winners over hurdles. **Vautour**, so impressive when winning the Gr.1 Golden Miller Chase, is a son of **Robin Des Champs**, who won four of his five starts over hurdles, including the Listed Stanley Hurdle at Auteuil. The Gr.1 Arkle Chase went to **Un De Sceaux**, whose sire **Denham Red** won three hurdle races in France, while the Gr.3 Coral Cup was won by the grey **Aux Ptits Soins**, by the quadruple Graded hurdle star **Saint Des Saints**, who came so close to adding the Gr.1 Cheltenham Gold Cup with **Djakadam**. Aintree saw a similar phenomenon last April, when Gr.3 Grand National hero **Pineau De Re** was a son of **Maresca Sorrento**, winner of two hurdle races at Auteuil.

Admittedly all those four sires are French-breds and it was in France that **Wild Risk** was such a sensation over 50 years ago. That bay son of **Rialto** was equally good on the flat and over jumps, scoring twice on the flat and three times over hurdles as a three-year-old, then adding another two flat wins and six more over hurdles in his next two seasons, including the valuable Prix Edgard Gillois and two runnings of the Grande Course de Haies d'Auteuil, the French equivalent of the Champion Hurdle. Wild Risk was twice the Champion Flat Sire in France in 1961 and 1964, among his sons being the Prix du Jockey Club hero **Le Fabuleux**, as well as **Vimy** and **Worden**, all of them also successful sires.

At about the same time in 1947, the French-bred **Fortina** became the only entire horse ever to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup and when he retired to the Magniers' Grange Stud at Fermoy in Ireland, he became one of the greatest jump sires of all time. Fortina sired two winners of the Cheltenham Gold Cup with **Fort Leney** in 1968 and **Glencaraig Lady** in 1972, while **Fortria**, **Olympia** and **Splash** all won the Irish Grand National for him.

Slightly more recently there have been two winners of the Champion Hurdle who went on to be successful National Hunt sires, first **Monksfield**, who scored in 1978 and 1979, also winning the Aintree Hurdle three times. Monksfield sired many winners at auctioneer David Pim's Anngrove Stud in Co Laois before his death in 1989, which was the year when the 1995 Champion Hurdle star **Alderbrook** was born. Also a top-class flat horse, winning the Gr.2 Prix Dollar, Alderbrook was a son of champion stayer **Ardross** (the grandsire of last week's Gr.1 Gold Cup



Gr.3 Prix Jacques d'Indy winner and Gr.1 Prix Ferdinand Dufaure-second **Kapgarde (Garde Royale)**, who stands at Haras de la Hetraie and is the sire of the Gr.1 Prix la Haye Jousselein winner **Milord Thomas**.

hero **Coneygree**) and, like Monksfield, he spent most of his stud career at Anngrove Stud, siring such good jumpers as the Gr.1 Feltham Chase star **Ollie Magern** and **For Non Stop**, winner of the Gr.1 Scilly Isles Chase and the Gr.2 Old Roan Chase at Aintree.

In the last ten years there have been quite a number of other successful young sires in France who had earned their fame over the jumps. The grey **Dom Alco** won six hurdle races there and has sired **Silviniaco Conti**, **Al Ferof** and the Grand National star **Neptune Collonges**. **Kapgarde**, winner of the Gr.3 Jacques d'Indy Hurdle and second in the Gr.1 Prix Ferdinand Dufaure Steeplechase, has sired winners of almost 400 races at Haras de la Hetraie, among them Aintree stars **Edgardo Sol** and **Ubak**. **Great Pretender** and the Gr.1 Prix la Haye Jousselein winner **Milord Thomas**, a son of **King's Theatre**, scored in the Prix Achille Fould Hurdle at Auteuil and he is also well established at Hetraie, with Gr.1 heroes **Ptit Zig** and **Grand D'Auteuil** to his credit.

Other jumping winners in France beginning to climb up the National Hunt sires' tables include **Balko**, a son of **Pistolet Bleu** at the Haras du Lion who was a Gr.2 winner over hurdles and fences at Auteuil and is the sire of **Gitane Du Berlais**, a black-type winner at Fairyhouse and Aintree. **Nickname** is well known in Ireland, because half of his 18

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continued

victories over jumps were scored there, all steeplechases, including the Gr.2 Fortria Chase, following nine hurdles successes in France, two of them in Gr.1 events. Nickname's French-bred son **Gwencilly Berbas** recently ran away with the Gr.2 Juvenile Hurdle at Fairyhouse.

In recent years some astute Irish stud owners have spotted this trend and Vautour's sire Robin Des Champs nowadays covers at Glenview Stud in Co Cork. The brilliant mare **Quevega**, who won the Gr.1 Stayers Hurdle at Punchestown four times and scored six times at the Cheltenham Festival, is just one of his seven Gr.1 stars, which include three others in Ireland – **Sir Des Champs**, **Un Atout** and **Sous Les Cieux**, while **Oeil Du Maitre** won the Gr.1 Grande Course de Haies d'Auteuil. **Robin Des Pres**, a half-brother to Robin Des Champs, has also found his way to Ireland and is now at Anngrove Stud in Co Laois. He won four times over jumps in France and is the sire of such talented chasers as **Petit Robin** and **Marodima**.

In England, **Midnight Legend** has lived up to his name by siring 13 different black-type winners over jumps, notably the Gr.2 Rendlesham Hurdle star **Seeyouatmidnight**, **Wychwood Brook**, who won the Gr.2 Peter Marsh Chase at Haydock Park, and **Midnight Chase**, who scored in two Graded chases at Cheltenham. This son of **Night Shift** won the G.1 Champion Novices' Hurdle at Punchestown and stands at Pitchall Farm Stud in Warwickshire.



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Vauterhill Stud's **Arvico (Pistolet Bleu)**, sire of the multiple Gr.1 winner **Arvika Ligeonniere**

Down in Devonshire, Vauterhill Stud has climbed on the bandwagon by importing **Arvico**, who won all his three hurdles in France and is the sire of **Arvika Ligeonniere**, winner of four Gr.1 chases in Ireland, including the Punchestown Chase. Standing with him at Vauterhill is **Tiger Groom**, a son of **Arazi** whose eight wins over hurdles in France included two Graded hurdles at Auteuil. His first runners were in 2011, but already they include **Teejay Flying**, winner of the Gr.1 Prix Ferdinand Dufaure Chase.

What a pity it is that so many jumping trainers insist on their colts being gelded, when there can be such benefits from the colts that remain entire horses.

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