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Richard Kent of Mickley Stud, breeder of Queen Anne Stakes winner Docklands and home to his sire Massa

MICKLEY STUD

A much-deserved first Group 1 for Docklands in the Queen Anne Stakes provided several reasons for Richard Kent, the winner of June’s TBA Breeder of the Month award, to celebrate.

The Mickley Stud founder had not only produced a Royal Ascot hero out of a mare bought for just 9,000gns but had also been a landmark moment for Massa, a resident stallion he has always championed.

And celebrate it he certainly did. “I don’t remember the end of the day, which was very good,” the popular and charismatic Kent says with a laugh. “It went on for weeks and hopefully there’ll be more again.”

Kent and his partner Clare Lloyd have run Mickley near Market Drayton in Shropshire for 20 years and they have been staunch friends to the smaller breeder, standing a range of reliable but usually lower-cost sires.

Massa, the Dewhurst and 2,000 Guineas runner-up, has been there for seven seasons since retirement and is priced at just £3,500.

“I was very proud,” Kent says. “Docklands has been a special horse right through his career and he’s been very well managed.”

“It was nice to see the stallion get the recognition on the racecourse when he didn’t always get it in the sales ring, too. He ended up having I think ten winners in June and a treble the week after. You’ll always have your usual doubters but your proper people would say that he’s capable of getting a Group 1 winner at Royal Ascot.”

Mickley has produced top-class horses in the past, most notably Flying Five Stakes winner and powerhouse stallion Havana Grey, but this was a personal moment for Cork-born Kent.

His bargain-buy broodmare Icky Woo has produced three stakes winners headed by the Harry Eustace-trained Docklands, who was second in last year’s race and won the 2023 Britannia Stakes before his battling nose defeat of hot favourite Rosallion.

“He does love Ascot but you’re realistically thinking he can’t beat last year’s Guineas winners,” Kent recalls.

“We always try to go if we have a runner and we thought he

was the one horse we really wanted to go and support. But it was a lovely surprise and I was glad we were there.”

Elaborating on just what it was that prompted him to select the unraced Icky Woo at Tattersalls in 2007, Kent continues: “Bryan McMahon trained her mother, Bunty Boo, who was one of those tough sprinting mares that I love and when you have those tough horses in the pedigree they generally come out.

“Icky Woo was also by Mark Of Esteem, he’s finished up one of the best broodmare sires of the last 30 years, so I just thought we’d take a chance on her. She wasn’t very pretty but she’s never given us a minute’s grief and she’s just a really kind mare, to other horses as well.”

Icky Woo, who is now 21, has been retired to live out a happy retirement at Mickley and Kent has another of her daughters to breed from.

He explains that Terry Henderson, the chief of the Australian-based OTI Racing syndicate which bought Docklands as a yearling, is also developing the family.

“Terry had Docklands’ half-brother Harbour Views with Luca Cumani,” he says. “They thought an awful lot of him and had mentioned the Derby but Luca was very careful as he was a big backward horse. Luca retired and they took him to Australia where he did really well.

“That’s why Terry got Docklands bought as a yearling, he also bought his sister Ickymasho and has been breeding from her.

“It’s all done great good for European breeding. Terry rang me recently and told me he reckons the horses are much better value, there’s a much tougher horse up in Europe than Australia and he’s finding it easier to syndicate them.”

One of the parties Kent was determined not to miss was that of Eustace’s to mark an extraordinary Royal Ascot Group 1 double followed up by Time For Sandals in the Commonwealth Cup.

“Harry has been very good to the breeders and kept us informed all the way along the line,” Kent says. “We get regular updates on how Docklands has been bucking and kicking and feeling.

“I’ve known Harry since he was a young kid, I’ve known his parents, and to see a young man, a good guy, go on and train two Group 1 winners at Royal Ascot is just lovely.”