

Veladero fronts up in Gloaming to earn tilt at Champion Stakes



Veladero (purple colours) ridden by Rory Hutchings wins the Gloaming Stakes (1800m) at Rosehill. Picture: Simon Bullard.

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- TONY ARROLL

As frontrunning speed was the effective trademark of Medaglia d'Oro's racing style, the unplanned but ultimately successful tactics of his son Veladero at Rosehill on Saturday seemed perfectly natural.

And on-the-pace speed is what again paid off for Medaglia d'Oro's running advertisement in the US, the unbeaten filly Songbird, who notched her seventh Group I success in 11 career starts on Saturday.

Veladero's young rider Rory Hutchings had been instructed to settle his mount in the second half of the 10-strong field for the Group II \$300,000 Gloaming Stakes (1800m), a set-weight event for three-year-olds and a natural stepping stone to the Group I Champion Stakes (2000m) at Randwick on Saturday week.

But Veladero was keen to run and, rather than fight his mount and sap his energy early, Hutchings chose to let the colt stride to take up a pace-making role foreign to his style to this point.

Bred by Gerry Harvey's Baramul Stud and sold to Star Thoroughbreds syndicate for \$160,000 at the Magic Millions yearling sale on the Gold Coast, Veladero was stepping up in grade after wins from off the pace at his previous two starts.

But the tactical change on Saturday underscored a new dimension as he resolutely stayed in front, reeling off a smart 34.32sec over the final 600m to complete the hat-trick and claim his place for the \$500,000 Champion Stakes.

Veladero's trainer Chris Waller brought off the Gloaming Stakes-Champion Stakes double last year with Vanbrugh, by Encosta de Lago. The record-breaking Waller will well remember his first Gloaming

Stakes success, with the Canny Lad colt All Black Gold 10 years ago — it was his first stakes race win as a trainer. All Black Gold went next to the Champion Stakes where he was beaten a long neck by Teranaba in what was to be his final start.

Waller viewed Saturday's Gloaming Stakes on a TV monitor at Caulfield racecourse and his thoughts on what young Hutchings was doing in front should have made interesting reading then, but with the appropriate amendments to follow the happy outcome.

Veladero is the newest of 93 stakes winners for Medaglia d'Oro, a former high-class frontrunner in the US and now a valuable dual hemisphere stallion for the Darley Stud operations in Kentucky, US, and in the NSW Hunter Valley. Darley Stud stallions claimed the Gloaming Stakes trifecta, with the Street Cry colt Honeywine and Retaliation, by Bernardini, filling the minor placings in a blanket finish.

Medaglia d'Oro ran 17 times over four seasons, two years to five years, starting in 2001 to record eight wins and seven seconds, and earning the bulk of his \$US5.754 million stakes winnings with characteristic sustained speed from the get-go. He contested 11 Group I races from 1600m to 2400m, and either won or ran second apart from when fourth in the Kentucky Derby in 2002 before a dull eighth in the Preakness Stakes.

The bold frontrunner ran his rivals into the ground in three Group Is, the Travers and Whitney Stakes and Donn Handicap, while his six second placings were in the multi-million features, the Wood Memorial, Belmont Stakes, Pacific Classic, Dubai World Cup and Breeders Cup Classic (twice).

Medaglia d'Oro's stud career was sealed with a champion in his second foal crop, the filly Rachel - Alexandra, who would take US horse of the year honours in 2006 when she outpolled Zenyatta, an outstanding Street Cry mare who is presently in foal to Medaglia d'Oro.

And while Medaglia d'Oro's profile in Australia was sent soaring by the 2015 Group I Golden Slipper winner Vancouver, he is today celebrated here by the exciting three-year-old colt Astern — recent winner of the Group I Golden Rose — and with the emergence on Saturday of the progressive Veladero as the first leg of a major dual hemisphere stakes double.

The double was completed at Parx Racing in Philadelphia, US, by the three-year-old filly Songbird winning the Group I \$US1m Cotillion Stakes (1700m) — stalking the pacemaker early, taking the lead at the top of the home straight before ambling clear by 5¾ lengths.

Songbird, who has harvested \$US3.37m in prizemoney, has a career record which matches that of the 11 most recent starts in Australia of the Street Cry mare Winx — all wins and with seven Group Is among them.

The popularity of Medaglia d'Oro in the US commercial market was underscored in the first four select sessions of the Keeneland September yearling sales in Kentucky last week when he had 26 lots sold to average \$US347,000.

[Read the full story here.](#)