

Record-setting Sprinter Silent Witness Makes **A BIG NOISE**



Becky Young

The Thoroughbred stallion Eclipse, incomparable great-great-grandson of both the Godolphin Arabian and the Darley Arabian, was never defeated throughout his racing career in the mid-1700s. In his first race at Epsom at age five, Eclipse handily defeated the competition, prompting the remark, "Eclipse first, the rest nowhere."

Now, 250 years and more than twenty generations later, the Australian-bred gelding Silent Witness has set a record by going undefeated in his first seventeen race starts.

The name of Silent Witness's direct, though distant, ancestor? Eclipse, of course.

The feed on which Silent Witness trains and races? E-Clipse, a special feed formulated specifically for racehorses by Kentucky Equine Research.

Foaled in 2000 at Edinburgh Park Stud near Taree in New South Wales, Silent Witness is by El Moxie out of Jade Tiara. Trained by Tony Cruz and ridden by jockey Felix Coetzee, the horse made his debut as a two-year-old in a 1000-meter sprint at the Sha Tin turf course in Hong Kong. Accelerating through the stretch to win by a margin of almost four lengths, he claimed his first victory in a lightning-quick time of 57.8 seconds. Trainer Cruz moved him up to a 1200-meter race for his second start in January 2004 and the horse again outran a large field, winning by two and a half lengths to begin his three-year-old season.

Moved back to the 1000-meter distance for a February start, Silent Witness came close to breaking the track record in his next effort, winning in 55.5 seconds. The month of March saw

Silent Witness again contesting 1200 meters, and the speedy gelding flew over the turf to claim a fourth win in as many races. He made it five for five in June by defeating Grand Delight, a six-year-old acknowledged champion sprinter, in the Sha Tin Vase Group 2, another 1000-meter test on an off track.

Silent Witness was given a training break after this race, but his performance record was good enough to win him the titles of Most Improved Horse and Champion Griffin (inexperienced racehorse) in the Hong Kong Jockey Club awards ceremony in June of 2003. Using the inaugural Sha Tin Sprint Trophy (Grade 3) in October as a prep race and notching another win, the gelding sharpened his performance by easily taking the International Sprint Trial (Grade 2) in late November, leading all the way.

His owner, Arthur Antonio da Silva, expressed pride in his horse, commenting that a win in his next race, the \$10 million Hong Kong Sprint, would put Silent Witness within striking distance to break the twenty-year-old Hong Kong record of ten successive wins. This goal proved easy, with the gelding winning the Hong Kong Sprint by a length, beating a strong field even after losing a shoe at the start.

His ninth outing, and first race as a four-year-old, was the Bauhinia Sprint Trophy (Grade 1) in February of 2004. As in previous races, Silent Witness used his speed, described by his jockey as "some kind of double overdrive," to finish in front. In his next race, the Centenary Sprint Cup (Grade 1), the champion sprinter equaled the mark of ten straight wins, and then went on to break the long-standing record with an eleventh win on April 25 in the Chairman's Sprint Prize (Grade 1).

Silent Witness was named Horse of the Year, Champion Sprinter, and Most Popular Horse at the Hong Kong Jockey Club's midsummer awards ceremony. Taking a few months off, perhaps to savor his recognitions, the horse appeared again in November when he won the International Sprint Trial in 55.9 seconds. Closing out the 2004 season, he picked up a thirteenth win in December in the Hong Kong Sprint (Grade 1), defending his 2003 victory in the same contest. In this international race, Silent Witness defeated top horses from Europe, Japan,


Australia, and the United States, and Tony Cruz expressed his dream that the sprinter might equal the world record of sixteen consecutive wins.

Beginning 2005 with a bang, Silent Witness blazed around the track in 55.3 seconds to win the Bauhinia Sprint Trophy (Group 1), stretching his unbroken string to fourteen. The next two races in the Champion Sprint Series, the Centenary Sprint Cup in February and the Chairman's Sprint Prize in April, counted as victories number fifteen and sixteen as the bay gelding continued to train and run with seemingly effortless performances. In the April race, Silent Witness equaled the track record for 1200 meters and also set a new total for Hong Kong stakes race earnings.

Winning sixteen straight races had been accomplished only three times in the history of modern Thoroughbred racing. Ribot, great-grand sire of Silent Witness, was the only other horse to achieve the goal with no losses, while Citation (Triple Crown winner in 1948 and the first horse to win a million dollars), and Cigar (1996 Horse of the Year) each had lost a race before winning sixteen consecutive starts. Silent Witness broke this record in his seventeenth race, the Queen's Silver Jubilee Cup in late April, where he covered a distance of 1400 meters for the first time. As in previous races, the victory looked easy.

Moving up to 1600 meters three weeks later, Silent Witness finished second in the Champions Mile when stablemate Bullish Luck won by a head. Tony Cruz, trainer for both horses, entered Silent Witness in another 1600-meter race in June 2005 and the bay gelding finished in third place. Even with two losses, his record of 17-1-1 in 19 starts was impressive enough to secure the title of Champion Sprinter in the list of Hong Kong Jockey Club awards for 2004-2005. Indications are that the horse will have a break before returning to shorter distances in his next season.

Racehorses, especially sprinters, need a ready supply of energy to fuel their winning performance. Kentucky Equine Research designed E-Clipse, the feed of choice for Silent Witness, to provide that energy from a medley of ingredients chosen specifically for their nutritional contributions. Steam-flaked oats and barley provide highly digestible starch, while vegetable oil and beet pulp boost the energy content with fat and fermentable fiber. In addition, E-Clipse contains a state-of-the-art fermentation blend that combines three different yeast cultures specifically selected for enhancing digestibility of various nutrients. E-Clipse also contains natural vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant to ensure proper muscle function and aid in tissue recovery after exercise. Combined with high-quality forage, E-Clipse is an excellent choice for racehorses in heavy training.

The record of Silent Witness speaks loudly to owners, breeders, and trainers looking for their next champions. 



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