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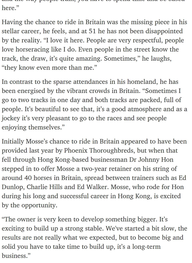
IN DEPTH GERALD MOSSE

International star rider feels right at home in Britain

Nick Pulford talks to the French jockey who has embraced his latest opportunity



Gerald Mosse: "I love it here. People are very respectful, people love horse racing like I do"
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Key data

Gerald Mosse
Sir Dancealot
Raven's Lady
Dr Johnny Hon

Gerald Mosse is unmistakably French and yet in racing terms he is a citizen of the world. He was in the vanguard of the new breed of international rider and now, after more than three decades of winning top races around the globe, he has landed in Britain for an extended stay. Ask him where he calls home and the answer is unhesitating: Newmarket. Wherever he lays his saddle, that's his home.

"It's one of the best places on the planet to see top-class horses, the best horsemanship, and I always had in mind that I wanted to come here," he says. "Of course it's good fun coming to ride the big races, but to feel the real atmosphere and the industry and the way people train, you have to spend time and be based here."

Having the chance to ride in Britain was the missing piece in his stellar career; he feels, and at 51 he has not been disappointed by the reality. "I love it here. People are very respectful, people love horseracing like I do. Even people in the street know the track, the draw, it's quite amazing. Sometimes," he laughs, "they know even more than me."

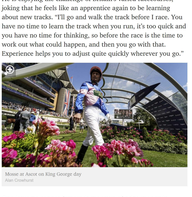
In contrast to the sparse attendances in his homeland, he has been energised by the vibrant crowds in Britain. "Sometimes I go to two tracks in one day and both tracks are packed, full of people. It's beautiful to see that, it's a good atmosphere and as a jockey it's very pleasant to go to the races and see people enjoying themselves."

Initially Mosse's chance to ride in Britain appeared to have been provided last year by Phoenix Thoroughbreds, but when that fell through Hong Kong-based businessman Dr Johnny Hon stepped in to offer Mosse a two-year retainer on his string of around 40 horses in Britain, spread between trainers such as Ed Dunlop, Charlie Hills and Ed Walker. Mosse, who rode for Hon during his long and successful career in Hong Kong, is excited by the opportunity.

"The owner is very keen to develop something bigger. It's exciting to build up a strong stable. We've started a bit slow, the results are not really what we expected, but to become big and solid you have to take time to build up, it's a long-term business."

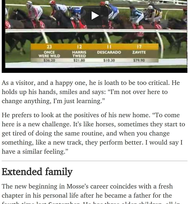
Hon has had only a handful of winners this year, but Mosse remains confident. "I don't hope it's going to be good soon, I know it will be. It's a bit difficult because the three-year-olds are not good enough and the two-year-olds are not ready yet, so it's a long transition. With the level of trainer and the quality of horses we have, I'm sure it will come. It's a question of time."

Mosse's retainer allows him to accept outside rides and some shrewd trainers have taken the chance to secure the services of a world-class jockey with a CV that features the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, the Melbourne Cup, four Royal Ascot wins, all four of the Hong Kong international races and 14 French Classics.



He has won seven Group races this year, most notably on the David Elsworth-trained Sir Dancealot and the redoubtable Raven's Lady for Marco Botti.

Sir Dancealot notched a quick Group 2 double in the Lennox and Hungerford Stakes and Mosse rates him highly. "He's a top-class horse, he's a real one, I really like him a lot. He's a solid, massive horse, he's got a big engine, but at the same time he's easy to do anything with. He's the best horse I've ridden this year."



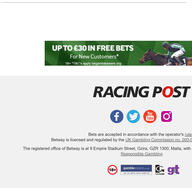
Mosse drives Sir Dancealot to victory in the Group 2 Hungerford Stakes at Newbury
Alan Crowhurst

Raven's Lady, owned by the enthusiastic Heart of the South syndicate, has become a real favourite after her short-head wins in the Group 3 Summer Stakes at York and the Group 2 Goldene Peitsche at Baden-Baden. "She's lovely, she really tries hard, she's got a big heart and I've ridden her twice and won twice. It was very exciting at Baden-Baden, it was a dream day for everyone and she will go higher."

Mosse says it is not all about the big days and he would like more rides, whatever the level. "It's not Group 1 every day. In Group 1 races there is the impact, the quality, the money, but I never feel those things. I always ride to win, no matter what.

"If it's a big race, it's better but I'm happy to win a small one as well. I'm not really riding as much as I'd want but I'm not greedy. It's difficult to come and push to make your own place, but I'm getting there. It started slowly but I've had a few Group winners."

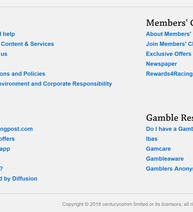
He is enjoying the challenge of Britain's varied racecourses, joking that he feels like an apprentice again to be learning about new tracks. "I'll go and walk the track before I race. You have no time to learn the track when you run, it's too quick and you have no time for thinking, so before the race is the time to work out what could happen, and then you go with that. Experience helps you to adjust quite quickly wherever you go."



Mosse at Ascot on King George day
Alan Crowhurst

One issue he cannot fathom is the level of prize-money in Britain. "It has the best-quality horses but I believe it's one of the lowest prize-money levels worldwide, the gap is too big. It's very difficult to understand, but I think there is probably too much racing here. People spend so much money, investment, maintenance, everything, and we travel all over the country for . . ." He searches for the right word. "Coconuts."

He adds: "I know the prize-money is in the big races and everybody wants to get a good horse, but the average owner should be able to get a bit more."



As a visitor, and a happy one, he is loath to be too critical. He holds up his hands, smiles and says: "I'm not over here to change anything, I'm just learning."

He prefers to look at the positives of his new home. "To come here is a new challenge. It's like horses, sometimes they start to get tired of doing the same routine, and when you change something, like a new track, they perform better. I would say I have a similar feeling."

Extended family

The new beginning in Mosse's career coincides with a fresh chapter in his personal life after he became a father for the fourth time last September. He has three older children, all in their 20s, and now a second son, Armand, with his new wife Jongca.

To cap it all, his eldest daughter Kimberley has a son, Hayden, who was born last summer. "I don't really feel like a grandpa," says Mosse.

Armand is named after Mosse's late father, who was a trainer in Marseille. That is a possible career path for Mosse, who has seen so many of the world's best at work.

"I would love to train, but there is so much pressure on the trainer and I get such a spoiled life as a pilot that I think 'Do I want to go there?' But I like it and I probably will do it."

Retirement from the saddle is a long way off, however. "I keep riding because this is what I was born for, this is what I enjoy," he says. "As long as my body is physically healthy and mentally I'm strong enough to compete, I will carry on because there is nothing better."

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