

BLOODSTOCK WORLD

IN A life that spanned nine decades Marcel Boussac experienced extraordinary highs and equally remarkable lows, both in business and in bloodstock breeding.

Having taken over his father's ailing textile business at 18, by 24 he had so far reversed its fortunes that he became only the fourth Frenchman to own a Rolls-Royce; he was en route to becoming the richest man in Europe, along the way diversifying his interests to include newspaper proprietorship and, most famously, owning the House of Dior, whose principal he financed as the previously unknown dress designer revolutionised the fashion industry. Yet it all ended in disaster, the business and Boussac himself in bankruptcy.

It was a similar story with his racing and bloodstock interests. He was France's leading owner 19 times and leading breeder 17 times. He won the Prix du Jockey-Club on 12 occasions, the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe on six, and for nearly 30 years his was the dominant stud in Europe. But from the mid-1950s it all fell apart and at the end he was reduced to putting most of his mares to stallions of his own breeding who hardly merited a chance at stud.

Boussac's first involvement with thoroughbreds came in 1914 when he entered into a partnership with Comte Gaston de Castelbajac, who owned eight broodmares. In 1919, after World War I in which his business had prospered as a result of some lucrative government contracts, he increased his commitment to racing and breeding by buying all the yearlings bred by the late Herman Duryea and acquiring the Haras de Fresney-le-Buffard, the famous stud now owned by the Niarchos family.

Boussac was fortunate that among those Duryea yearlings of 1919 was Durban, successful in the Grand Critérium and Prix Vermeille, and Prix du Jockey-Club winner Ramus, who was bred by his old partner Castelbajac. But Boussac was himself a good judge of a young horse and Asterus, bought at auction as a yearling off his own bat, was to prove a significant acquisition for both racing and breeding.

He was campaigned in Britain at four, where he completed an unprecedented double in the Royal Hunt Cup and Champion Stakes.

The eighth in a monthly series celebrating the achievements of ten breeders who have enjoyed outstanding success and played crucial roles in the development of the thoroughbred in the course of the last 200 years. This month's subject is Marcel Boussac, who for 30 years from the 1920s reigned supreme as owner and breeder before it all fell apart

Extraordinary highs to equally remarkable lows

TONY MORRIS'S BREEDING GREATS



Boussac's first notable triumph as a breeder came with Tourbillon, a son of the aforementioned Durban, who won the 1931 Prix du Jockey-Club. He was not the best three-year-old around that year, suffering subsequent defeats in the Grand Prix de Paris, the Prix du Président de la République and the Arc, but he was to prove a mighty sire and a cornerstone of his breeder's stud.

A second homebred Jockey-Club winner came along in Thor in 1933 and a year later the first important daughter of Asterus, Adargatis, was the champion filly. He had sold her non-winning Teddy half-sister La Troienne to America, where she became one of the greatest broodmares in the history of the breed.

In the next crop came Corrida, the only filly ever to win the Arc twice, something she achieved as a four- and five-year-old having been third in the race at three. She and her younger half-brother Goya, a son of Tourbillon who excelled as an older horse, were out of Zariba, another yearling purchase made by Boussac.

In 1938 Cillas was the best three-year-old in France – although not on the day Nearco visited for the Grand Prix de Paris – and in 1939 the Boussac colours were carried by what was almost certainly the best horse he ever bred. That was Pharis, who ran

only three times but who acquired a huge reputation through his impressive victories in the Prix du Jockey-Club and Grand Prix de Paris.

The next star of real significance was Tourbillon's son Djebel, a champion at two and a 2,000 Guineas winner at three but at his peak at five, when he won all seven of his races, culminating in the Arc.

What followed, consolidating Boussac's dominance in France and ensuring his influence elsewhere in Europe, was a breeding plan largely based on employing Asterus, Tourbillon, Pharis and Djebel as main components. And as Djebel was a son of Tourbillon, that would have to mean a measure of inbreeding, a policy Boussac was inclined to favour anyway.

Many believe that the best filly he ever bred was Coronation, the Arc heroine of 1949 whose sire and dam were both by Tourbillon. (At stud Coronation was covered 14 years in a row and never conceived, although her full-sister Ormara was a productive and successful broodmare.)

Boussac remained at the head of the list of successful owners and breeders throughout World War II, although the Nazis plundered some of his stock, removing Pharis to Germany while Corrida, having produced a Prix du Jockey-Club in Coaraze as her only live foal, also went missing and may

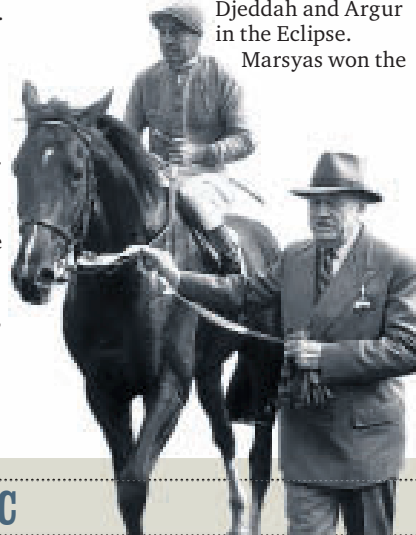
even have been eaten by those who purloined her. At least Pharis came back after hostilities ended and was able to resume his role as a key influence in the operation.

It seems unlikely that any one individual ever owned four such outstanding sires as Asterus (also an exceptional broodmare sire), Tourbillon, Pharis and Djebel at the same time.

Caracalla, who was never beaten, won a Gold Cup, as did Arbar, Elpenor and Macip. Ardan and Goyama won Coronation Cups, there was a Derby for Galcador and an Oaks for Asmena, St Legers for Scratch and Talma, wins in the Champion Stakes for Djeddah and Dynamiter (twice), and for

Djeddah and Argur in the Eclipse.

Marsyas won the



Cups at Doncaster and Goodwood and there were juvenile triumphs too in the Queen Mary, the Gimcrack and two apiece in the Cheveley Park and the Dewhurst. When was it going to end?

Actually, Boussac was probably more conscious than anybody that the end might be nigh. He recognised he was going to need an outcross so he made repeated purchases from Calumet Farm, the most successful stud in Kentucky. Triple Crown winner Whirlaway started at stud for Boussac in 1951, followed by Fervent, Coaltown and Iron Liege, but all turned out to be failures in France.

THE two Boussac horses of the 1950s who might have been considered his best bets to succeed at stud were his Prix du

Jockey-Club victors of 1952 and 1956, Auriban and Philius. Both were by Pharis out of mares by Tourbillon. He had 100 mares, many of them bred on the same pattern. Without an effective outcross, the all-conquering empire would conquer no more. By 1958 all four of his star sires were dead.

It came as no surprise that the last notable runners bred by Boussac were by outside stallions – Crepello's daughter Crepellana, Dan Cupid's son Dankaro and the Mill Reef colt Acamas, the owner's 12th and last winner of the Prix du Jockey-Club. By the time of Acamas, Boussac's business was failing, he could afford to use few high-class sires and most of his mares were being covered by homebred stallions of no distinction. The game was up.

The stud had now been in decline for more than 20 years and many believed the Aga Khan had gambled recklessly when he stepped in to acquire the remnants of the once great empire. Of course we know differently now. The mares could now be granted appropriate outcrosses and the families nurtured so successfully by Boussac were reinvigorated to tremendous effect.

Marcel Boussac leads in Talma after the colt's 1951 St Leger win

- ▶▶ b c **Tourbillon** (foaled 1928, Ksar – Durban, by Durbar) Winner of Prix du Jockey Club
- ▶▶ b c **Goyescas** (1928, Gainsborough – Zariba, by Sardanapale) Champion S., Prix d'Espahan
- ▶▶ b c **Thor** (1930, Ksar – Lasarte, by Alcantara) Prix du Jockey Club
- ▶▶ b f **Adargatis** (1931, Asterus – Helene De Troie, by Helicon) Champion 3yo filly; Prix de Diane
- ▶▶ ch f **Corrida** (1932, Coronach – Zariba, by Sardanapale) Champion older mare at 4; Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe [twice]
- ▶▶ b c **Goya** (1934, Tourbillon – Zariba, by Sardanapale) Champion older horse at 5 and 6; St James's Palace S., Braunes Band von Deutschland
- ▶▶ b c **Cillas** (1935, Tourbillon – Orlanda, by Craig An Eran) Champion at 2 and 3; Prix du Jockey Club
- ▶▶ b c **Pharis** (1936, Pharos –

NOTABLE HORSES BRED BY MARCEL BOUSSAC

- Carissima, by Clarissimus)
- Champion 3yo, unbeaten; Prix du Jockey Club, Grand Prix de Paris
- ▶▶ b f **Semiramide** (1936, Pharos – Sartella, by Sweeper) Champion 2yo
- ▶▶ b c **Djebel** (1937, Tourbillon – Loika, by Gay Crusader) Champion 2yo and champion older horse at 5. 2,000 Guineas, Grand Prix de Saint-Cloud, Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe
- ▶▶ b f **Esmeralda** (1939, Tourbillon – Sanaa, by Asterus) Champion 2yo filly; Poule d'Essai des Pouliches
- ▶▶ b f **Caravelle** (1940, Abjer – Albarelle, by Kantar) Champion filly at 2 and 3; Poule d'Essai des Pouliches, Prix de Diane
- ▶▶ ch c **Marsyas** (1940, Trimdon – Astronomie, by Asterus) Prix du Cadran [4 times]
- ▶▶ b c **Ardan** (1941, Pharis – Adargatis, by Asterus)

- Champion at 3 and 4; Prix du Jockey Club, Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, Coronation Cup
- ▶▶ b f **Palencia** (1941, Pharis – Hestia, by Tourbillon) Champion 2yo filly; Poule d'Essai des Pouliches
- ▶▶ b c **Priam** (1941, Pharis – Djezima, by Asterus) Champion 2yo
- ▶▶ b c **Caracalla** (1942, Tourbillon – Astronomie, by Asterus) Champion at 3 and 4, unbeaten; Grand Prix de Paris, Gold Cup, Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe
- ▶▶ b c **Coaraze** (1942, Tourbillon – Corrida, by Coronach) Prix du Jockey Club
- ▶▶ ch c **Goyama** (1943, Goya – Devineress, by Finglas) Coronation Cup, Grand Prix de Saint-Cloud
- ▶▶ b c **Nirgal** (1943, Goya – Castillane, by Cameronian) Champion 2yo

- ▶▶ b c **Arbar** (1944, Djebel – Astronomie, by Asterus) Champion older horse at 4; Prix du Cadran, Gold Cup
- ▶▶ b c **Sandjar** (1944, Goya – Zulaikhaa, by Fairway) Prix du Jockey Club
- ▶▶ b f **Corteira** (1945, Goya – Semiramide, by Pharos) Champion filly at 2 and 3; Poule d'Essai des Pouliches, Prix de Diane
- ▶▶ b c **Djeddah** (1945, Djebel – Djezima, by Asterus) Eclipse S., Champion S.
- ▶▶ b c **Ambiorix** (1946, Tourbillon – Lavendula, by Pharos) Champion 2yo
- ▶▶ b f **Coronation** (1946, Djebel – Esmeralda, by Tourbillon) Champion 3yo; Poule d'Essai des Pouliches, Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe
- ▶▶ ch f **Asmena** (1947, Goya – Astronomie, by Asterus) Oaks
- ▶▶ b f **Corejada** (1947, Pharis –

- Tourzima, by Tourbillon) Poule d'Essai des Pouliches, Irish Oaks
- ▶▶ ch c **Galcador** (1947, Djebel – Pharyva, by Pharos) Derby
- ▶▶ ch c **Scratch** (1947, Pharis – Orlamonde, by Asterus) Prix du Jockey Club, St Leger
- ▶▶ b f **Djelfa** (1948, Djebel – Cynthia, by Thor) Champion 2yo filly; Poule d'Essai des Pouliches
- ▶▶ br c **Dynamiter** (1948, Pharis – Pretty Lady, by Umidwar) Champion S. [twice]
- ▶▶ ch c **Talma** (1948, Pharis – Thauouka, by Asterus) St Leger
- ▶▶ ch c **Argur** (1949, Djebel – Bouillabaisse, by Blenheim) Eclipse S.
- ▶▶ br c **Auriban** (1949, Pharis – Arriba, by Tourbillon) Champion at 2 and 3; Prix du Jockey Club
- ▶▶ ch f **Pharaos** (1949, Pharis – Palaos, by Goya) Champion 2yo

- ▶▶ br c **Elpenor** (1950, Owen Tudor – Liberation, by Bahram) Gold Cup
- ▶▶ b f **Cordova** (1951, Djebel – Caravelle, by Abjer) Champion filly at 2 and 3
- ▶▶ ch c **Macip** (1952, Marsyas – Corejada, by Pharis) Gold Cup
- ▶▶ b f **Apollonia** (1953, Djebel – Corejada, by Pharis) Champion filly at 2 and 3; Poule d'Essai des Pouliches, Prix de Diane
- ▶▶ b c **Philius** (1953, Pharis – Theano, by Tourbillon) Champion 2yo colt; Prix du Jockey Club
- ▶▶ br c **Abdos** (1959, Arbar – Pretty Lady, by Umidwar) Champion 2-y-o, unbeaten
- ▶▶ ch f **Crepellana** (1966, Crepello – Astana, by Arbar) Champion 3yo filly; Prix de Diane
- ▶▶ ch c **Dankaro** (1971, Dan Cupid – Takaroa, by Prince Bio) Champion 3yo colt
- ▶▶ b c **Acamas** (1975, Mill Reef – Licata, by Abdos) Champion 3yo; Prix du Jockey Club