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Corstens Has The Eye For A Derby Horse

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Troy Corstens sure has the eye for a Derby horse. Two years ago, Helenus, a horse Corstens "liked the look of" and paid \$80,000 for at the Sydney Easter sales, proved a bargain when he scored a courageous last-stride win in the AAMI Victoria Derby at Flemington.

Corstens will head to Flemington this Saturday hoping history will repeat itself with Mr Martini in the \$1.51 AAMI Victoria Derby.

If Helenus was a bargain for \$80,000, then Mr Martini was virtually given away when Corstens parted with \$32,000 at the Inglis Classic Sale.

Mr Martini, who like Helenus is trained by Corstens's father, Leon, will head into the Derby with a similar formline to Helenus.

"Helenus's form looks better on paper, but when you go through Mr Martini's last three runs he could so easily have the same winning streak as Helenus did," Corstens said.

Helenus first highlighted his potential with an emphatic win in the Bill Stutt Stakes (1600m) at Moonee Valley. He then followed with wins in the Caulfield Guineas (1600m) and AAMI Vase (2040m) before a nose win over Hydrometer in the AAMI Victoria Derby.

The Bill Stutt Stakes was also the race that heralded Mr Martini's emergence as a serious AAMI Victoria Derby contender. His two runs since have been a luckless seventh in the Caulfield Guineas and Saturday's head-bobbing defeat by Western Australian raider Plastered in the AAMI Vase.

"He should have finished much closer in the Guineas.

"He came down the middle of the track, which wasn't the place to be on the day, and Stephen (Baster, jockey) said the ground was a bit shifty and the horse was never really comfortable," Corstens said.

"Then his run behind Plastered on Saturday was a ripper. I thought both horses were fantastic Derby trials and they beat the rest by a long way."

While the AAMI Victoria Derby spotlight focused on Cox Plate winner Savabeel and Plastered, Corstens was adamant he would not swap Mr Martini for any other horse in this week's classic.

"He is right on track for the Derby and we will be going to Flemington with a good deal of confidence," he said. "Stephen (Baster) said he had no doubt the horse would get the 2500m in the Derby because he settled so well in the AAMI Vase and finished the race off strongly."

Mr Martini has continued Corstens's fairytale start to his career as racing manager for his father, Leon, as well as a freelance bloodstock agent.

"Mate, I'm 30 years old and I've already bought two Stutt Stakes winners," he grinned.

"And, with a bit of luck in a few days time, I might be able to say I've bought two Victoria Derby winners."