

Gentle's star on the rise

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By Russell Jackson

SYDNEY, March 12 AAP - It wasn't that long ago trainer Brian Gentle was struggling to pay the bills on the Gold Coast and was forced to come to Sydney to find work - how times have changed.

On Saturday his hopes of having a runner in next month's \$3.5 million Golden Slipper will go on the line when giant colt Umanugget runs in the Group Three Skyline Stakes (1200m) at Randwick.

Coincidentally, the two equal favourites in the Skyline, Tickets and Manhattan Rain, are trained by the two people who employed Gentle during his tough times.

Tickets is trained by John O'Shea and Manhattan Rain by Gai Waterhouse.

"I was battling to pay the bills on the Gold Coast when I started out and I had to come to Sydney where I worked as foreman for Gai for 12 months and then went on to be foreman for John for around the same period," Gentle said.

"They were both great to learn from and the experience helped me when I came back to the Gold Coast.

"I've been back for two years and we've got 16 horses in work and things are going along well."

Umanugget comes into the Skyline after a three-length romp over Captain Sonador in a 1200-metre two-year-old handicap at Doomben on February 21.

Prior to that the Mossman colt finished 2-1/4 lengths third to Streets Away on January 26 over 1200 metres.

"He would have to win this race to warrant going to the Slipper but we wouldn't have the horse in Sydney if we didn't think he could win this race," Gentle said.

"It would certainly put my stable in the spotlight if he could be competitive in a race like the Slipper.

"He travelled down well and had a good gallop on the Kensington track on Tuesday and he'll do the stable proud I'm sure."

Umanugget, who Gentle said is around 16 hands, has drawn barrier 11 and will be ridden by Blake Shinn.

"It's not going to matter with him, in his three starts he's shown us that he can race anywhere," Gentle said.

"I've got no doubts that he's going to be a better horse over more ground and if he can't win Saturday we'll look at the Sires and Champagne with him.

"But the preparation has been based around the Slipper, that's why we've spaced his runs.

"From the first time he galloped he looked a cut above and I told the owners to put him in the Slipper just in case and now we're almost there."

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Taken from: http://www.puntersparadise.com.au/news/Gentles-star-on-the-rise_4864/