PEDIGREE DYNAMICS

GOLDEN OLDIES

by Jane Henning

"Taa-daaaah! Announcing the shuttle stallion line-up for this season!! Roll up roll up, there's something for everybody! Some you saw and loved last year, some are brand new shiny ones! Get in while they're hot!"

This is the sentiment which has prevailed for the past few seasons and one to which we, the breeders, have rapidly become accustomed. It's good fun reading the latest announcements from the big studs, looking at the new videos, getting involved in all the hype. Human nature is a great one for novelty.

And while the benefits of having the world's best horses and bloodlines at our fingertips are well documented, some things which have been largely left behind are also valuable. Gone forever are the days when we knew that possibly 80% of the line-up from last season would again be awaiting our mares. They all had to weather those first tough seasons until they had runners, when their stud fees either dropped or rose, depending on their success rate.

This novelty factor has eroded the books of many a proven stallion, and the worst affected are of course, the oldies. The common argument is that an old stallion somehow starts manufacturing 'slow' genes instead of speedy ones. Probably more of an issue is that as these perennials age, they are getting less commercial (and smaller) books, which of course affects their statistics. One recent and glowing example of this *not* being an issue is Fusaichi Pegasus, an outstanding racehorse whose sire, Mr. Prospector, was 26 years old when he was conceived.

Those of us who breed to race and like a bargain can take advantage of this old-age apathy and look to breed to some of Australia's successful senior cits.

The stallions I have selected to discuss are all old enough to vote. All have produced some outstanding racehorses and are still at stud, now at comparatively low stud fees. Roll-up, roll-up!

BELLOTTO

One of the first sons of Mr. Prospector to stand in Australia, Bellotto is now an 18-year-old with 34 stakes winners and 28 stakes placed horses to his name.

With the plethora of Northern Dancer line mares about these days, Bellotto is a great way to achieve the famous Mr. Prospector / Northern Dancer nick. Not that Bellotto is a one-trick pony; he has worked with a variety of lines. Fortuitously, he has nicked particularly well with the Star Kingdom line, producing such stakes winners as Clang, Fraud, Seto Flowerian, Count Cambridge (SAF), Miss Unimac, Zip Zip Aray, Berezny, Bislotto, Accuse and Chiming Lass on this cross.
Once an Arrowfield stallion, Bellotto is now based at South Australia's Lakewood Stud for a stud fee $6,600. As a 'big fish in a small pond', Bellotto's books are consequently still strong. He served 69 mares in both 2000 and 2001.
The 2001/2002 season had revealed a smart two year old filly in Queensland by Bellotto called La Peche. Having run second to Calaway Gal late last year, she ran fourth to Yell in the Golden Stakes (Listed) a second to Saddler's Silk, and a fourth and a sixth behind Tequila Knowledge and Chickens respectively in Listed races.
His three year olds include the Group One winner Zip Zip Aray as well as stakes winners Berezny and Sky Bullet.

COVETOUS

One of my favourite 'bargain' stallions, Covetous can throw early types that are sound and genuine enough to run until they're long in the tooth. Obviously, the geldings are more likely to continue racing while the successful colts (such as St. Covet) and mares (such as With Me and Chaleyer) are transferred to the breeding barn.
One example is the marvellous Star Covet, whose first win was a 1200 metre two year old race and whose last win was the 3200 metre Brisbane Cup (Group One) at the age of seven years.
And then there's Committal – 52 starts for 10 wins including two Listed events. And how about Dynamic Blaze? 79 starts for 13 wins from age three to seven years.
I Like Beer's career spanned eight years and 88 starts for 13 wins, one a Listed race.
Mazz and Me raced until he was ten years old, clocking up 105 starts and 14 wins. It's not surprising to discover that he had to change racing directions after his first 40 starts, transferring from Sydney to Perth.
Covetous' 2001/2002 two year old crop includes the smart Sir Covet, who from four starts to-date has won three races, including a Randwick Saturday race.
Like stakes performers Dynamic Blaze, I Like Beer, Patou and Admiring Glances, Sir Covet carries Grey Sovereign through the dam. Covetous also carries Grey Sovereign and seems to enjoy reinforcement of this speed influence.
Covetous is a long term resident at Macquarie Stud, N.S.W. Rising 23 years old, he stands for a stud fee of only $3,000 and deservedly, still gets good books.

CROWN JESTER

Standing at Raheen Stud in Queensland these days, Crown Jester was Co-Champion Australian Two Year Old in 1980. After throwing the Golden Slipper winner and subsequent Champion Sire, Rory's Jester in his first crop, Crown Jester was off and racing. The sire of thirteen stakes winners and another thirteen stakes placed performers, his books have gradually dwindled. At the age of 15, the year he threw Absurd and the Golden Slipper winner, Guineas, he served 54 mares. The following season, he served 39 mares and produced the stakes winners Manana, Medals and Pepinello. Last year, Crown Jester served just 10 mares, despite having a fertility rate of 88% the previous season.

One of his promising juveniles at the moment is Crown Regatta, who ran second in the $150,000 Two Year Old Championship Final for Colts and Geldings at Eagle Farm in March this year after being checked at the 200 metre mark.

Crown Jester stands this season for $4,400.

JUGAH

Like Bellotto, Jugah is a direct son of one of the world's key influences. By Northern Dancer, Jugah is a Victorian sire who just keeps pumping out the winners.

Sire of the super racehorses Juggler, Soho Square and Mookta amongst his 15 stakes winners, his stars include Libidinious, one of her most memorable recent starts being a close second to Zip Zip Aray (by Bellotto) in the Group One Goodwood Handicap.

The recently concluded two year old season has unearthed another possible star by Jugah. Named Secret Desire, this filly has had five starts for a win and two seconds. Out of a Blushing Groom mare, it is fair to say that Secret Desire can only improve when she matures, as she should be most effective over staying distances.

21 years old this season, Jugah continues to receive enthusiastic support at his stud fee of $6,000 at Eldon Park.

LAST TYCOON

A Coolmore owned stallion, Last Tycoon was eventually overshadowed at that star-filled stud and was moved to Blue Gum Farm, Victoria a few seasons back. Possibly a victim of the 'novelty factor', the 19 year-old has however been enthusiastically supported at Blue Gum and with an impeccable record, is great value at $19,250.

With the exception of this year, Last Tycoon has been a long term shuttle stallion, spending the Northern Hemisphere season in Japan since 1995 and for eight years before that in Ireland. With 67 stakes winners against his name to-date, Last Tycoon hasn't let up, producing two juvenile stakes winners in Japan this season and the stakes placed Obsession here Down Under. His three year olds this year include the talented Newquay.

OLD SPICE

A Western Australian stalwart, this rising 22 year old stands at Clairefontaine Stud at a 2002 fee of $8,800.

Although not heavily pushed commercially, he has been well supported by his owner, Mr. Bob Peters and for his faith he has been well rewarded. Mr. Peters bred and raced many of Old Spice's stakes winners including Old Comrade, Natasha, Spectrum, Old Nick, Old Money, Old Cobber, Papillion, News Review and Society Miss.

Best known nationally as the sire of the Melbourne Cup winner, Rogan Josh and the VRC Australian Cup winner Old Comrade, Old Spice has a knack of producing good middle distance runners and obviously, the odd great stayer.

While he is not famous for his two-year-olds, he has however produced a very smart three-year-old this season, Miss Precisely, winner of the WATC Champion Fillies Stakes (Group 3) over 1600m.

SEMIPALATINSK

Not too many stallions get to 24 years and are still going strong. Having served 28 mares in 2000, his fertility rate was 88.5% - pretty good for an old timer. Semipalatinsk stands for $5,500 this season.

A permanent fixture at Eureka Stud, Queensland, Semipalatinsk like Old Spice, can produce a damn good stayer as well as top class middle distance runners.

Palatious won a Perth Cup and a C.B. Cox Stakes (both Group 2), while Just Now took out the Group 1 AJC Oaks. Of his 21 stakes winners to-date, Skalato is the most recent, taking out the 2000 MVRC AAMI Vase (Group 2).

Unfortunately, this year's talented three year old Gay Adventure, who was a stakes placed winner of three races for Semipalatinsk, broke down in the Listed Silk Stocking in January.

It is an interesting point to note Semipalatinsk's affinity with the broodmare Delicious Blue. Not only did she produce Palatious by this sire, she also produced the stakes winners Memphis Blues and Evasion. Russian Trader and Bluetinsk are stakes placed products of this mating and Tennessee Blue won 9 races. Looking at the mating, it appears that Semipalatinsk has reacted very well to Delicious Blue's sire Rascolnik, a direct descendant of LAVENDULA. She also carries Lavendula's descendant My Babu. Semipalatinsk has fellow family member Turn-to on his third remove, creating strong linebreeding to this prepotent female.

So before you skim over the pages to find the latest and greatest, have a good look at what's endured. If you're up for a bargain, vintage stallions could be the way to go.