

South America, Australia's Untapped Resource by Jane Henning

In the ever shrinking world of Thoroughbred racing and breeding, sources of bloodstock suitable for our climate and turf racing conditions are limited. Add the 'value for money' proviso and your choices plummet.

Located in our hemisphere and on a similar latitude to our main racing centres sit the racing countries of South America.

Not unlike Australia and New Zealand in the past, South America has been regarded as a destination for second rate stallions from the USA and Europe. Expensive stallions command high stud fees and these fees are only viable if the produce can recoup their purchase price on the track. Without the big prize money in South America, its breeders have had to content themselves on some concessions, either pedigree or performance-wise with its imported stallions.

Half brothers or even full brothers to top class Northern Hemisphere performers call Brazil, Chile and Argentina home. One such stallion was Hussonet, a beautifully bred son of Mr. Prospector, whose race record was not considered good enough for a commercial career in the USA. A half brother to Group One winner Ekraar, the Arab-owned Hussonet was only Listed placed. Purchased to stand in Chile, he went on to become Champion Sire seven times and true to form, his start at stud in Australia is most exciting. Hussonet has sired several group winners in the USA on both dirt and turf including Host, winner of the Gr. 1 Keeneland Turf Mile. Several of his top racehorses (including Wild Spirit and Wild Storm) were bought by astute American trainers such as Bobby Frankel and Todd Pletcher. From her few starts in America, Wild Spirit has won the Gr. 1 Ruffian Hcp and the Gr. 2 Shuvee Hcp, immediately putting a bounty on the stock of Hussonet and lending credibility to Chilean form in general.

Another USA 'reject', Candy Stripes (Blushing Groom – Bubble Company (Lyphard) was purchased by an Argentine stud early in his career. A two-time leading sire in that country, Candy Stripes is the sire of the amazing Invasor. Out of Quendom (Arg), Invasor was purchased by Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al Maktoum of Dubai after being crowned 2005 Horse of the Year in Uruguay. Invasor won 11 races from 12 career starts and \$7.8

million during his career, including the \$5 million Breeders' Cup Classic last year at Churchill Downs and the \$6 million Dubai World Cup in March.

Recently injured, he retires to Shadwell Farm, Kentucky for a yet-to-be-announced fee.

Understandably, Dubai has now also become a strong market for SA bred racehorses.

Candy Stripes is also the sire of 2005 Champion Grass Horse Leroidesanimeaux (Brz) and the broodmare sire of Candy Ride (Arg), Argentina's Champion Miler of 2003, setting a track-record for his performance in the Pacific Classic Stakes (G1) at Del Mar. Both Leroidesanimaux and Candy Ride are now at stud in the USA. Candy Stripes sired ten champions in America, Argentina, Canada, and South Africa. He stood at Haras La Quebrada in Argentina from 1988 to 1996. After spending four years in America, he returned to South America following the 2000 breeding season and died from colic this year at age 25.

Southern Halo (USA) is another example. Not wanted in the USA, he was an instant success in South America. He was brought back to America in 1996 and stood at Ashford Stud for six years, where his progeny included Group One winner and Australian Champion First Crop Sire, More Than Ready. Southern Halo was re-purchased by his original Argentine home, Haras La Quebrada where he still serves restricted books of mares.

Similarly, South American broodmares have found international success. Most recent is Sacrementada, a Chilean Dirt Champion who won a Gr.2 in the USA, is the dam of recent two-time US Gr.1 winner Histericalady.

Astute Australian buyers are also starting to regard South America as a viable, reasonably priced source of top class turf racing stock. The advantage Down Under is that we don't have to compete with the USA for suitable bloodstock, as the US buyers are principally after dirt horses and have been paying increasingly higher prices to pluck the best South American dirt runners from that continent.

A person keen to train a South American racehorse is leading Sydney trainer, Tim Martin. Tim's visit to Chile and Argentina in November 2005 left him with lasting positive impressions.

“The horses are sound and tough and there were a few there offered to me that I would have loved to bring home. Unfortunately my owners weren’t quite ready to take the plunge, but I see that a couple of the few I was offered then have been sold to other countries and have done extremely well.” They include Forty Licks, who was subsequently named 2006 Argentinian Horse of the Year and then purchased by Arab interests. After winning four straight for his new owners, Forty Licks took his place in the seven horse line-up in the US\$6m Dubai World Cup with Invasor, finishing fifth on the dirt surface.

Pedigree Dynamics first imported a Chilean racehorse for clients in December 2005. Cefalu, a dual Group One winner on turf, strained a tendon in his first preparation with Lee Freedman and in his second (current) prep, won first up at Moonee Valley. The owners, headed by OTI Management’s Terry Henderson and Simon O’Donnell, share Lee’s optimism for a successful 2007 Spring campaign.

OTI have also recently imported a half sister to a Chilean triple Group One winner, putting her in foal in the USA to Southern Hemisphere time, on the way over.

“South America is an emerging buyer’s market for Australia, especially with prices being so high for quality European stock,” said Terry Henderson. “Up to now, Australia has largely by-passed this market either through ignorance or lack of exposure. There are some exciting opportunities to secure top class turf horses but obviously, you have to know what you’re doing. I’m sure that a few people have gone in feet first in the past and ended up making mistakes. Good contacts are essential.”

In the past year, two Group winning stallions by Southern Halo; a triple Group One winning racehorse and potential sire; and several broodmares both in foal and empty, have been imported from South America by Pedigree Dynamics clients. Two of the mares, one a Champion 3 YO on Turf and the other the dam of two stakes performers by Hussonet and from the family of War Chant and Ivan Denisovich, are in foal to Southern Halo. The latest mare to land was the 2004 Champion 3 YO (Turf) of Brazil.

With pedigrees which have been overlaid by strong US and European bloodlines over the past couple of generations, South American racing and breeding stock should no longer carry hidden mysteries for the Australian marketplace. Climate + turf form + affordability

+ recognisable pedigrees are adding up to equal a highly desirable option for Australian racing and breeding enthusiasts. ENDS