PEDIGREE DYNAMICS

North Meets South - South Falls In Love

Australia has been the scene of some huge changes to the availability, success rate and consequent commerciality of various sire lines in recent times. The advent and success of the dual hemisphere shuttle stallion system is largely responsible for this shift.

Compared to only five years ago - a drop in the ocean in breeding terms - the sire line statistics in Australia have been through some significant changes.

The 1992/93 Australian General Earnings table was led by Marscay - one of three Star Kingdom line sires in the top 20, with no sign of Northern Dancer until the 11th posiiton, held by Bluebird.

That year the Star Kingdom line made up around 20% of advertised sires, compared to 24% representing the Northern Dancer line.

In contrast, the 1997/98 Australian General Earnings table (to 30/6) currently has Danehill in second position, leading the three Northern Dancer line sires in the top 20, with the first of three Star Kingdom descendants, Canny Lad (a son of Bletchingly), in 9th place.

In this year's Stallions Annual, the Star Kingdom line representation drops to around 15%, compared to a huge jump to 40% by the Northern Dancer line.

It is no secret that Star Kingdom, one of Australia's most influential sire influences, is working very well with his main rival.

Northern Dancer, who is tail male ancestor to 60% (39 of the 65 announced to-date - plus another 7 in non-tail male line) of the shuttle stallions this coming season, has had great success when crossed with Star Kingdom via his sons and grandsons, which include Biscay, Bletchingly, Kaoru Star and Luskin Star.

The success of the Northern Dancer line in Australia must be due in some significant part to the family background of Northern Dancer's sire Nearctic, who has much in common with that of Star Kingdom. Both have Hyperion, Tracery, Carbine, Cyllene and the brothers Swynford and Chaucer (Star Kingdom also tracing to a half sister to this pair) within the first five generations.

Another Australian pedigree influence, Vain and his sire Wilkes, are nicking with Danehill and should work well with other Danzig line shuttle horses, there being a significant link between Vain's grandsire Court Martial and Danzig's second damsire, Petition.

It is worth noting when this year, Danzig sons shuttling to Australia will include Anabaa, Langfuhr, Hamas, Danzig Connection, Danehill, Belong to Me and Ascot Knight. A third of the Northern Dancer line stallions this year have Danzig as their sire or grandsire.

But why are the other lines which were firing in Europe and North America five years ago - such as Riverman, Halo, Mr. Prospector, Blushing Groom and Roberto - yet to make remotely near the same impact as Northern Dancer in Australia?

Apart from an strong affinity with Star Kingdom, representatives of the Northern Dancer line may well have grabbed such as strong foothold due to sheer weight of numbers. His imported representatives five years ago outnumbered these other five lines *collectively* by 2 1/2 to 1 in Australia.

It can also be partly attributed to the fact that earlier imports were often second rank racehorses, stood at modest stud fees, and consequently attracted lesser bred mares.

Exceptions include At Talaq (Roberto), Don't Say Halo (Halo), Bellotto and the proven Canadian sire, Geiger Counter (both by Mr. Prospector).

There has never been a better time for Australian breeders to open their arms (and wallets) to not only the cream of the Northern Dancer line, but also the non-Northern Dancer line shuttle sires with far more confidence.

The recent and ongoing success in the northern hemisphere of Mr. Prospector, Halo, Rainbow Quest, Warning and Riverman over Northern Dancer line mares is well documented.

Northern Dancer's recent sire line dominance in Australia has had a profound effect on the pedigrees of today's colonial broodmares, with many young mares to stud not only having Vain, Century, Sir Tristram, Sovereign Edition and/or Star Kingdom in their pedigrees, but now bearing Northern Dancer through their sires.

There are definitely cases where some breeders are spending more on stud fees than their colonial mares' families are currently worth. They are often looking past what value they may derive from the auction ring for that mating to perceive it as a great opportunity to significantly upgrade the family pedigree within one generation.

Globally, Australia is currently in the unique position of not only having access to all the lines and many of the highest individuals available in the leading thoroughbred breeding countries, but it also boasts its own high quality sire line.

Although therre is much to be gained from the north - south shuttle system, judicious Australian breeders who preserve a few Star Kingdom line mares and stallions from being involved in these global get-togethers may one day get their turn on cashing in on a shortage of outcrosses in the northern hemisphere.