

The influence of Danzig on the Australian bloodstock market

Before I get to the subject of this item I should say a little about myself lest it be thought I have some hidden agenda because of some undisclosed interests I have that might be said to colour my views.

First up I should say that myself and my wife have been involved in No Regrets Racing('NRR') from early on.

My father was a veterinary surgeon with a large equine practice, my parents also ran a horse stud breeding Connemara and Australian ponies. I rode from an early age and progressed to riding three day events(dressage, cross country and show jumping). My sister was a first class showjumping and flat rider.

From my early teens I had my head stuck in thoroughbred catalogues. After the sudden death of my father when I was 21 I persuaded my mother to get into thoroughbreds. Her first purchase was a weanling filly by the then first season sire Bold Flip out of a good producing mare called Background. The weanling filly was Bold Bridget who won 5 city races and became the ancestress of some good horses including the colts Duporth, Tickets, Excites, and Delago Deluxe . All of these were group winners and all of them are at stud in Australia with varying degrees of success, suffice to say none of them could be said to have been highly successful.

We subsequently bought Background and bred some more winners from her, strangely one of her son, who had won at Flemington and then ended up racing in South Australia, ended up winning an Olympic gold medal for Australia as a three day eventer !

I also became involved with a group of my mother's friends in importing a number of thoroughbred mares from Ireland together with some of their foals which had been bred to southern time. I went to Ireland and in conjunction with an Irish agent sourced the mares. They were covered by Sovereign Path, Home Guard, Solinus, and Rheingold . That group also bought two yearling fillies in Ireland and raced them there, they both were winners. One was sold in Ireland and one came to Australia in foal. Of the 5 mares we bought one was subsequently sold for a good price to Canada and the others came to Australia . That group of mares were blighted with breeding difficulties and with the exception of one mare they produced only 3 foals between them.

The investors involved in the mares resolved to wind up the partnership and the remaining stock was disposed of. That experience taught me a lot about 3 things, (i) partnerships, particularly between people who have different backgrounds and limited experience in the vicissitudes of breeding and racing horses, can be fraught, and (ii) importing the very best bloodlines from other countries does not necessarily work as well as one might hope. The third thing that experience left me with was an understanding that anyone interested in bloodstock needed to keep themselves up to date with what was happening overseas. From that came my daily reading habits of the(free) online publications Thoroughbred Daily News and, Bloodhorse(both American but with a lot of international content) and ANZ Bloodstock News. I also get the now bimonthly hard copy magazine Bluebloods which includes in its subscription an annual volume Stallions which has large colour photos of nearly all the commercially significant stallions together with their pedigrees and a lot of statistical information. I have also collected a number of books on the theory and practice of bloodstock breeding.

That brings me back to the subject of this item.

Of the top 20 stallions on the Australian earnings list for the season to date only 4 were bred outside Australia. One was Lope De Vega a one time shuttle stallion by Shamardal(by Giant's Causeway) who has been highly successful in both hemispheres and still covers some mares to southern time. The second is Declaration of War(by War Front who is by Danzig), who only shuttled for a short time and now stands in Japan and would, you think, be a likely candidate to shuttle south again given the success of Vow and Declare and some other promising stayers. The other 2 stallions were both New Zealand based and New Zealand bred being the mighty Savabeel(by Zabeel) and Ocean Park(by Ocean Park). It is worth noting that in both instances the sires of these 2 stallions were also bred in New Zealand.

What of the remaining 16 stallions? 7 were sons, grandsons or great grand sons of Danehill, 2 were male line descendants of Encosta De Lago(by Fairy King a half brother to Sadlers Wells), another 2 were sons of High Chapparral(by Sadlers Wells), one was (like Savabee) a male line descendant of Zabeel, one was by Invincible Spirit (like Danehill a male line descendant of Danzig), one was by Bianconi (another male line descendant of Danzig), one was by More than Ready (a male line descendant of Halo) and the remaining stallion was a male line descendant of Last Tycoon.

The big take away from this list is that half the leading stallions are male line descendants of Danzig, most of them via Danehill.

If one looks at the catalogue for the Inglis Easter yearling sale, which represents the prime of the Australian yearling crop, you find that of the 514 yearlings catalogued 230 were male line descendants of Danzig of which Danehill line sires were responsible for 166. 48 of the other Danzig line descendants were by I am Invincible.

If one looks at the stallion fees announced to date for the coming season the top 5 Australian stud fees are:

Snitzel (Redoute's Choice) \$165,000

I Am Invincible (Invincible Spirit) \$209,000

Fastnet Rock (Danehill) \$165,000

Pierro (Lonhro) \$137,500

Exceed And Excel (Danehill) \$132,000

4 of those 5 are Danzig line stallions.

In New Zealand Savabeel (Zabeel) stands at NZ\$100,000 .

The 20 first season stallions (with their sires shown in brackets) for Australia announced to date are:

Alabama Express (Redoute's Choice) \$27,500

Blue Point (Shamardal) \$44,000 – shuttle stallion

Brutal (O'Reilly) \$27,500

Calyx (Kingman) \$17,600 – shuttle stallion
 Castelvechio (Dundeel) \$33,000
 Cosmic Force (Deep Field) \$16,500
 Dubious (Not A Single Doubt) \$13,200
 Exceedance (Exceed And Excel) \$38,500
 I Am Immortal (I Am Invincible) \$13,750
 Magna Grecia (Invincible Spirit) \$22,000 – shuttle stallion
 McLaren (Exceed And Excel) \$6,600
 Microphone (Exceed And Excel) \$38,500
 Omaha Beach (War Front) \$22,000– shuttle stallion
 Pierata (Pierro) \$44,000
 Sun City (Zoustar) \$7,700
 Tassort (Brazen Beau) \$11,000
 Too Darn Hot (Dubawi) \$44,000 – shuttle stallion
 Vino Rosso (Curlin) \$13,750 – shuttle stallion
 World Of Trouble (Kantharos) \$22,000 – shuttle stallion
 Yes Yes Yes (Rubick) \$38,500

10 of those 20 are male line descendants of Danzig.

How does NRR compare in terms of the influence of Danzig in the stock it has raced?

The Travelling Man(by Mossman) has no Danzig in his pedigree, nor has Se Sauver(by Bel Esprit).

Mezeray Miss(by Artie Schiller) has as her maternal grand dam a mare by Danehill. Her daughter Malicorne(by Akeed Mofeed) has a second line of Danehill as her sire is out of a mare by him.

The dam of Excessabeel(she being by Savabeel) is by a son of Danehill.

Shockaholic is by Shocking who is out of a mare by Danehill.

Staviva(by Encosta De Lago) has no Danzig in his pedigree.

Rokeby Red(by Artie Schiller) has no Danzig in her pedigree.

Play School(by Delago Deluxe) has one distant line of Danehill as he is the grand sire of the dam of Delago Deluxe.

Danzig was the sire of the great great dam of the sire of the dam of Gatsby's Girl.

In short NRR has not drunk deeply from the well of Danzig, that said we have been very well served by the sires of the horses we have raced.

One moot question about Danehill is whether multiple crosses of that admittedly great stallion will produce superior racehorses. That may be the subject of another article.