

by DEBRA GINSBURG

Last year's Barretts March 2-year-old sale was a buyer's market. Held the day after the bottom fell out of the stock market, the sale company was not seeing the dizzying prices that had electrified this venue in recent years. Instead of bidding wars that soared to \$2 million, buyers were tightening their purse strings and shopping for bargains.

Only one youngster managed to bring as much as \$700,000 before hip number 72 entered the ring. Sold to Becky Thomas' Sequel Bloodstock for \$175,000 at the 2000 Del Mar Yearling Sale, the Bertrando—St Helen's Shadow colt was the one that almost everyone had come to see. He had blossomed under the Florida sun and was being offered by the same outfit that had sold grade II winner Arabian Light for \$700,000 the year before. When this California-bred breezed the fastest quarter-mile (20.7) ever clocked at Barretts, he was being hailed as a potential sale topper.

Bidding opened at \$100,000 and climbed rapidly before it, too, stalled at \$700,000. The buyer was Prince Ahmed bin Salman's The Thoroughbred Corp. and the price matched what the Prince had paid for Arabian

Light. Until two later colts brought final bids of \$750,000, the Bertrando colt shored the sale's top price.

The nation's economy may have become even more volatile in the aftermath of September 11th, but this colt and several other outstanding graduates have become galloping advertisements for the continuing success of the Barretts March Sale. Registered as Officer, the Bertrando colt romped through his first five starts with the grace of a champion. Although he finished fifth in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile and concluded the year with two more losses, Officer



earned \$740,010 to make even his fancy price tag appear a rare bargain.

The Thoroughbred Corp.'s purchases last year also included a Tabasco Cat filly for \$450,000. She went through the ring as Sober Cat and sported some interesting California connections of her own with a Cal-bred Gummo mare as her second dam. She was renamed Habibt, and under that label captured the grade I Del Mar Debutante and Hollywood Starlet for earnings of \$393,000.

They are just the latest success stories to come out of this 12-year-old sale. Past March Sale graduates include Breeders' Cup Juvenile winners Brocco and Unbridled's Song and multiple grade I winner Sharp Cat. Then there's Squirtle Squirt, a \$25,000 bargain in 2000, who captured last year's Breeders' Cup Sprint and is favored to win the Eclipse Award for that division.

Queenie Belle was a \$130,000 purchase in 1999. The multiple grade II winner now has earnings of \$620,790 and a California Cup victory on her

resume. Jetin Excess was bought back for \$40,000 in 2000, nine months before she was voted California's champion 2-year-old filly. A \$125,000 purchase in 2000, Hall of Gold, a Petionville filly out of the Cal-bred Flying Paster mare Kildare, has now won three stakes.

The 2002 edition of the Barretts March Sale will be held March 5 at Fairplex Park in Pomona, starting at 2 p.m. This year's catalogue offers 169 lots, of which 49 are California-breds. Of the 29 Cal-bred juveniles that went through the ring last year, 17 of them sold for gross receipts of \$1,790,000 and an average of \$105,000.

The catalogue also features 37 juveniles by 14 California-based stallions. Of the sires who have at least two horses entered are Bertrando and Benchmark of River Edge Farm, Avenue of Flags and General Meeting (Golden Eagle Farm), Anziyan (Creston Farms), High Brite (Harris Farms), In Excess (Ire) (Vessels Stallion Farm), Memo (Chi) (Ridgeley Farm), and Swiss Yodeler (Pepper Oaks). The youngsters representing Anziyan, Benchmark and Swiss Yodeler are from their first crops.

There will be two training previews on Feb. 25 and March 3, starting at 10 a.m. Catalogues and additional information can be obtained by calling Barretts at (909) 629-3099.



