

A Marketplace for Stallions of Note

by **DEBRA GINSBURG**

The Del Mar Yearling Sale has not only yielded outstanding graduates who perform well on the track, but many good stallions have also come out of this market. Officer, the top performer from the 2000 sale, has followed fellow Del Mar graduates T. V. Lark and Richter Scale to the Kentucky bluegrass. Hopefully, he'll have a stud career that's just as successful.

Bred by Martin and Pam Wygod and foaled at their River Edge Farm in Buellton, the Bertrando colt was purchased by Sequel Bloodstock of Ocala, Fla., for \$175,000. Pinhooked back into the Barretts March Two-Year-Old Sale, he was bought by Prince Ahmed bin Salman's The Thoroughbred Corp. for \$700,000, a record for a California-bred and conceived 2-year-old sold at public auction.

Officer was the overwhelming favorite for championship honors in 2001 after he won his first five races, including the grade I Champagne Stakes at Belmont Park. He went off as the 3-5 favorite in the Breeders' Cup Juve-

nile, but finished a disappointing fifth. The Eclipse Award went to unbeaten Breeders' Cup victor Johannesburg after Officer closed out his juvenile season with consecutive losses in the California Cup Juvenile and Hollywood Futurity.

He made just one more start, winning the Zany Tactics Stakes at Santa Anita at three, before going to the sidelines with a tendon injury. Attempts were made to bring Officer back at Del Mar, but Prince Salman died unexpectedly last summer and the colt never returned to competition. He was sold to Dennis Narlinger, who retired Officer to stud at Gainesway Farm with six wins from nine starts and \$804,090 in earnings.

Standing for an introductory fee of \$12,500, Officer bred a book of 115 mares in 2003. They included: Secretariat's daughter Fume, the dam of two graded stakes winners; multiple stakes winner Future Bright, who is herself the dam of several stakes horses; graded stakes winners Nervous Baba and Forest Fealty; as well as two California-bred stakes-winning mares, Above the Table and Frans Lass.

Officer has some mighty big shoes to fill in Bluegrass country, that being T. V. Lark, one of the greatest Del Mar sale bargains of all time. A \$10,000 yearling in 1958, he went on to earn \$902,194, win the 1961 grass championship with a victory over Kelso in the Washington, D. C., International, as well as become North America's top sire of 1974. Until Foolish Pleasure came along in the mid-1970s, T. V. Lark held the distinction of being the richest horse sold at public auction.

A son of Indian Hemp, T. V. Lark was already thus named when he went through the sale ring. The bay colt was bred by Dr. Walter Lucas, who named him for his wife, T. V., the "lark" added as it was to most of the horses in Dr. Lucas' Land O' Lark Stable. He was bought by construction executive Chase McCoy, who was willing to bid as high as \$30,000 for the colt.

T. V. Lark won important races like the Arlington Futurity, American Derby and Washington Park Handicap, then defeated such top older horses as Sword Dancer and First Landing in the United Nations Handicap in his first start on grass. He was purchased privately by Kentuckian Preston Madden early in his 4-year-old campaign and he earned his national championship under that horseman's silks.

Following a disappointing campaign at five, Madden retired T. V. Lark to his Hamburg Place in Lexington with 19 wins from 72 outings. The stallion passed along his traits well, siring 53 stakes winners, including Quack, Buffalo Lark, Golden Don and American record holder Pink Pigeon. He was the nation's second leading sire in 1972 and 1973, and in the latter year his progeny earned just \$1,397 less than Bold Ruler, who sent out Secretariat to win the Triple Crown. In 1974, the leading sire title was T. V. Lark's after his offspring earned \$1,242,003.

The Cal-bred died at age 18 and Madden buried him at Hamburg Place.



Officer, a \$175,000 graduate of the 2000 Del Mar Yearling Sale, now stands at stud at Gainesway Farm in Kentucky

One remarkable statistic was that all 383 of his foals started and 80 percent of them were winners for progeny earnings of \$13,602,804. T. V. Lark's name still shows up in many contemporary pedigrees. Filly Triple Crown winner Chris Evert is one of his grandchildren, and her family is also responsible for both 1988 Kentucky Derby heroine Winning Colors and champion juvenile Chief's Crown. Pink Pigeon is the second dam of Arlington Million and Japan Cup winner Golden Pheasant.

Another bargain yearling that combined success on the racetrack and in the breeding shed was Don B. Bred by Mr. and Mrs. Tex Taylor, he was a good-sized, attractive son of Fleet Nasrullah with a golf ball-sized knot on one knee. For just \$15,000, trainer Lester Holt bought him for Stockton cannery owner Donald B. Wood.

Named for his owner, Don B. went on to win 10 of 24 starts—including six stakes—for \$225,900 in earnings. He won at distances from five furlongs to 1 1/16 miles and even contested the 1968 Kentucky Derby, where he finished a respectable seventh. At the end of his sophomore year Don B. earned a ranking of 116 pounds, tops among Cal-breds of his generation.

The horse entered stud at Mira Loma Thoroughbred Farm in 1969, then moved to Clear View Farms in 1981. He sired the brilliant filly B. Thoughtful among 35 stakes winners. Voted a California champion three years in succession, B. Thoughtful compiled earnings of \$424,755 to dethrone Honeymoon as the state's leading distaff money winner.

Other stakes winners included top sprinter To B. Or Not, state champions Capt. Don and Don's Music, and \$382,255-earner Prince Don B., the latter the sire of 1991 California Cup Juvenile Fillies winner Don B's Princess. Don B. died in 1994, leaving behind one final stakes winner—appropriately named Last Don B.—who was still winning races in Arizona at age seven.

Bred in Kentucky by the heirs of Seabiscuit's owner Charles Howard, Lucky Mel was the second-highest yearling sold at the 1955 sale when he

fetches \$27,000 from George Lewis. He became the first Del Mar graduate to earn more than \$100,000 and one of the swiftest members of a vintage crop that included Bold Ruler, Round Table and Gallant Man. Trained by William Molter, the strapping chestnut went on a six-race tear during the summer of 1956, that saw him tie two track records and set a world record for five furlongs that stood for 15 years.

Sent to Chicago in quest of national honors, Lucky Mel was injured at the start of the Prairie State Stakes and never raced again. His earlier efforts earned him a ranking of 118 pounds on the Experimental Free Handicap, ahead of future stars Iron Liege and Round Table. Lucky Mel also earned an opportunity at stud and was retired to Ellwood Johnston's Old English Rancho, where he resided until his death in 1987. He would ultimately sire 23 stakes winners from 355 foals and many of his offspring became important cornerstones in Johnston's breeding operation. His stakes-winning daughter Lucky Spell became the second dam of Unbridled's Song.

One of three yearlings to bring six figures at the 1981 sale, Barberstown was purchased by Tom and Ray Bell for \$100,000. Bred by then-CHRB (California Horse Racing Board) Commissioner Ben Felton's West Valley Thoroughbred Breeders Association, the handsome son of Gummo won his first two outings, then caught the same virus that killed champion filly Landaluce at Santa Anita Park during the fall of 1982. Barberstown himself was seriously ill for two months, but prevailed to race again. He captured the grade III Will Rogers Stakes on the turf at Hollywood Park, then finished third in the 1983 Belmont Stakes in just his fourth career start.

He returned to Del Mar that summer as part of the Bell Bloodstock dispersal. A training injury prevented Barberstown from becoming the first Cal-bred to fetch \$1 million at auction, but he still brought \$850,000 from Texas-based McDermott Ranch. He also proved that his racing days were not over. He placed once from two starts at four, then captured the Del Mar Invitational and On

Trust Handicaps at five for seasonal earnings of \$225,500 and a state championship as California's outstanding older horse of 1985.

Barberstown entered stud in 1986 with six wins and \$336,570 from 12 starts. The 1981 Del Mar graduate, who sadly died a couple of years ago, has sired two stakes winners, including grade II winner Bet Me Best, a winner of 11 races and \$407,952.

Two recent stars from the Del Mar sale are just now getting their stud careers underway. One of them, Richter Scale, will be represented with his first yearling at Del Mar this year. The other, Arabian Light, was sent to Saudi Arabia to jumpstart The Thoroughbred Corp.'s breeding operation over there. His first foals arrived this year.

Bred by CTBA Director Clydene Boots and sired by Habitony (GB), Richter Scale brought \$15,500 at the 1995 sale. Tony Everard resold Richter Scale to Richard and Nancy Kaster for \$90,000 early in his juvenile year. During five seasons of competition, the Habitony colt developed into one of the top sprinters in the country, banking earnings of \$1,139,958 and the California sprint title in 2000. Richter Scale entered stud at Wafare Farm in Kentucky in 2001 and is represented by 40 foals in his initial crop. His Del Mar yearling was also bred by Boots, out of her good broodmare Star Eighty Eight.

Bred in California by Kenneth Reinsch, Arabian Light was purchased at the 1999 sale by Sequel Bloodstock for \$60,000 and resold to The Thoroughbred Corp. for \$700,000 at the Barretts March 2-Year-Old Sale. Winner of three of five starts and \$431,944, Arabian Light unleashed his best career performance when he rallied from far back to win the grade II Lane's End Breeders' Futurity. He then ran fifth in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile in what turned out to be his last race, finishing just 2 1/2 lengths behind Macho Uno and stablemate Point Given who were just noses apart at the wire.

Breeders are encouraged to examine the horses on offer at Del Mar in August, for they clearly have the potential to become the next stallion of note.