

The David Allan Column

Daydreaming about the future (Part 1)



Let's just imagine... not to tempt fate... but by some constructive daydreaming... that the EU restrictions on South African horse exports are lifted in favour of conventional quarantining, and/or that several new bilateral agreements have been forged on the strength of brand new science and enlightened negotiation of South Africa's position.

While daydreaming however, you are interrupted by a trainer who says *"Selling our top end yearlings overseas (principally to East and South East Asia) will cream off the best of our crop and leave us with lesser horses to train"*.

This might be correct but only if top prices always mean top horses. I can think of two fairly recent 3 and 4 million rand yearlings bought by overseas people to race in SA that have run like very ordinary horses, one struggling to win a small race and the other beaten a couple of times.

Remember SNAAFI DANCER, the first yearling to make US\$10 million who was too slow to get out of his own way. He never ran other than in secret. He added insult to injury by being almost completely infertile at stud. The price was surpassed much later by THE GREEN MONKEY who made US\$16 million as a breezer. He ran three times unsuccessfully.

Bloodstock purists bemoan "Breeders trying to breed yearlings, not racehorses". We all understand commerciality, but the moral is that good winners can come from anywhere, especially from good matings. In a very sire-centric market, the best yearling is probably not the obvious one.

Setting aside that perennial conundrum, SA trainers should not be overly frantic about people from overseas buying "obvious" horses that may or may not be a loss to our racecourses. Let the breeders count the money and reinvest. Thus will a stagnating gene pool be refreshed from at home and abroad and the diversity of SA yearlings will be enhanced.



Bloodstock shipping: Photo per illustration.

For every buyer who says "never heard of him" when looking at a sire or broodmare sire unfamiliar to South Africa, there will be more than one other studious buyer excited by the enhanced array of goodies in the shop window.

The CTS initiatives and those of other mare and filly importers (some represented by ourselves) are bringing more overseas pedigrees into the system. As well as new blood in yearling catalogues, a side effect is that UK and other principals racing or breeding in South Africa will have greater instant recognition of opportunities.

Of more concern is the fear that SA's top proven horses will move overseas in greater numbers. That happens around the world – nowhere more than in the UK which relies enormously on second hand value. However, the very best do not always get sold or if they do, do not always get exported or even moved. They get campaigned. If SA is not a big enough pool in which such a glorious fish may swim, send him or her to swim overseas—immediately and easily - but with the same trainer. DIY. (to page 2)

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DAVID ALLAN

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At the opposite end of the scale, certain countries could – and would if we have anything to do with it – become buyers of lesser horses albeit at low prices to add to transport – but buyers.

We ourselves – still daydreaming but planning at the same time - will be targeting robust staying colts and geldings in SA to go hurdling in UK and Ireland. Age is then less critical in terms of hemispheres. Recognising the pedigree is less important than the form and constitution of the horse. This should be a boon to a racing society that sadly has few ordinary opportunities at 2000-2400 metres, the distances of most great races around the world. Cheltenham here we come!

Australians might come to buy the same colts here? They compete ferociously for them in the UK to run in their cups for which they breed few suitable competitors. It would make a nice change to see Aussies spending money in SA instead of the other way around.



In The Fast Lane.

If SA champion filly IN THE FAST LANE had succeeded in her three runs in UK, not the opposite, we would have been back in IRRIDESCENCE and NATIONAL COLOUR territory – two that were brilliant in UK.

As it was, IN THE FAST LANE found herself in a sale in the UK with not even her consignment company understanding her pedigree.

They asked me to value her. I said 25,000 guineas tops in UK but 100,000 guineas in SA i.e. if South Africans come for her. I was wrong. She made 150,000 because three SA buyers battled for her, maybe four. So, R3 million-ish at the time.



National Colour: A winner in Dubai, second in the Gr1 Nunthorpe Stakes in the UK and a success at stud in Australia with a stakes winner from her first three foals.

You could argue that it was an elaborate way to buy another SA filly rather than buy something fresh or that it was a brilliant way to buy an SA champion filly. Why? Because she could go straight to Australia to be covered there with minimal quarantine interruption, then have all options open.

The sheer psychological impact of “opening up” is not to be underestimated. How many pedigree students don't bother with SA pedigrees “because they can't be exported”? Most. How quickly would that change? Pretty quickly.

Conversely, those SA agents and journalists who know international pedigrees as well as any would come even more to the fore. As I wrote last week: *Everyone needs help. -tt.*

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