



Mondays with David Allan



The Extraordinary at February Sales and the possible scope of other purchases



Introduced by Tattersalls Chairman as "Something a bit Special", Willie John sold for 1.9 million guineas. His Dubawi yearling half brother had made 2.6 million.

TO kick off here by saying how reasonably one can buy at Tattersalls February Sale might seem silly after an all-time European record for a horse in training was set this time round (1.9 million guineas), along with the last member of the Ballymacoll Dispersal (550,000 guineas) and a bunch of breeding ladies who had something in common with the record breaking horse in training. That "something" was Mayfair Speculators.

The extraordinary appearance of broodmares and foals at foot in stables immediately under a highway in Cape Town was something different. So was the inclusion of WILLIE JOHN in the February Sale at Tattersalls "something different".

"Big name" horses are far easier to deal with in terms of the number of variables. Subject to vetting and detailed updating, there is really only one: price which is a function of depth of pocket rather than intrinsic value.

As widely reported, Roger Varian bidding for Sheikh Mohammed Obaida bought WILLIE JOHN. He had won his only start at 2 at Yarmouth impressively, beating competitors owned by The Queen, Shadwell, Juddmonte, Cheveley Park, Messrs Al Homaizi and Al Sagar and so on – such being the quality of horse often sent to little Yarmouth's excellent straight track for late season initiation.

The vendors, via The Castlebridge Consignment, were MJ Jooste and China Horse Club. **(to page 2)**



Willie John McBride calls "99"!



Brief respite from the wind and rain.



Coming soon, a visit to Kazakhstan.

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DAVID ALLAN (cont..)

Willie John (McBride) a legendary five times British and Irish (Irish in his case) Lion captained "The Invincibles" on their rugby tour of South Africa in 1974, three years after the Lions' historic victory in New Zealand. He originated the "Call of 99" which – particularly in Port Elizabeth – signalled mass physical retaliation to give referees an impossible task, instead of having one obvious person to send off. If the equine WILLIE JOHN, touted reasonably enough as a Guineas and Derby prospect, makes it as a stallion, the naming possibilities are endless.

If buying to win a Derby – somewhere - staying a mile and a half will be a requirement.

(Well...not for everyone's "Derby". Of course at Epsom and The Curragh also Japan, Australia and New Zealand, and South Africa at Turffontein (with even a bonus 50 metres there). But not in Kentucky and not in the Cape. And let's not go into prominent racing jurisdictions that have a Derby over a shorter distance and for 4 year olds).

In February, with northern quality racing having finished for the winter three months beforehand, 2400 metres capability is very unlikely to have been shown by just-turned 3 year olds at any level therefore it becomes a matter of assessment based on whatever form there is.

At the October Horses in Training Sale and February's far smaller version, we are heavily focussed on buying to win Derby and Oaks equivalents in Central Asia. We have done it often enough, and although starting from a rudimentary base, enhanced by expert horsemanship, the standards in Kazakhstan and emerging Kyrgystan are rising.

Six figures in dollars is not an uncommon price for an imported just-turned-3 year old colt that should stay 2400 metres on a kind of earthen surface. That being said, our clients won the Derby last year with our 9,000 guineas purchase by Street Cry from John Gosden's yard. And "we" won the local Oaks equivalent with a 14,000 guineas filly by Holy Roman Emperor who now retires in splendour to a northern Kazakhstan stud farm. Our 30,000 guineas Poet's Voice colt had a mishap (colic) but will come back at 4.

This time around – February 2018- straight back from the Cape - we inspected in 2 degree temperatures as horses arrived on site. Not quite cold enough for the rain to be snow, it was heavenly when the winter sun

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Proving that your correspondent can still do squats - to inspect the potential stallion equipment of the right horse TO ARMS, by War Front.

broke through and lifted the temperature to 5. The wind still cuts like a knife dropping the "feel" to a long way minus, and many grins – with words not even possible through frozen lips – were exchanged with others just back from South Africa.

What intrigues me is this question: the colt we bought for Central Asia (and the others, but let's concentrate on one colt) – could he be good enough to run in South Africa? The first answer is "I hope so" because if he is that good, he should win big races in Central Asia and if he goes in the sand, could compete in Moscow for big money. The intrigue however comes from *"How long is a piece of string?"* i.e. *"How much can this horse at this price develop?"*.

After whittling down to a short list of 3 colts that should cost 20-30,000 guineas, we settled on a Coolmore product that had raced a couple of times at 2 also trained by John Gosden. He ran placed but was obviously not going to set the world on fire Coolmore style, so he wasn't stressed.

Outpaced at a mile at 2 (just right!) under Ryan Moore he has a stallion's pedigree being by WAR FRONT out of a **Gr3** placed MR PROSPECTOR dam of a **Gr3** winning GIANT'S CAUSEWAY filly who was

double **Gr1** also **Gr2** placed at Ascot and The Curragh and of another **Gr3** and **Listed** winner. His 2nd dam is a winning full sister to VISION, MERCE CUNNINGHAM and CAERLEON, champions or nearly by NIJINSKY. No wonder there was tough competition in the ring from consultants whose clients wanted to try to turn him into a sire. Each of the last two standing, one being yours truly, bid at least twice each on the hammer. We prevailed at 23,000 guineas. On the hammer. Something over R400,000.

Only rated 70+ in that placed run at 2, he can win what we need him to win by strengthening up from a position of current immaturity to reach mid 80s maybe less. If more, he can go to Moscow as well and what is to say he can't make it into the 90s and compete at higher level?

The moral of the tale is that buying obvious horses is easy. Maybe this fellow – well named TO ARMS, by War Front – wouldn't be up to South Africa but it would be fun trying with him or something like him. Soon, we'll talk you through TO ARMS's trip, with plenty of company, from UK to Poland to Belarus through Russia to Kazakhstan, the last leg (!) being around 5,000 kilometres.

See you in the Ural Mountains! - **tt.**