



Mondays with David Allan



Photo per illustration.

Shall we have S.O.N.A. for SA Thoroughbreds?

IF you believe that now or now-ish is a good time to be getting into breeding in South Africa, you should be able to offer justification.

That idea flies in the face of the mood of many breeders. Culling – cutting back – selling – giving away – retiring... whatever the description or euphemism... is understandable in a market in which two years ago's decent regional sale yearling colt made R150-200,000 and now makes R50-70,000.

Breeding at workmanlike levels isn't working. But when you are on the roller-coaster it is difficult to get off.

Good mares are good mares. If a mare has a poor pedigree, then the argument for stopping is clear and probably has been for some time. If young with a promising situation, ceasing to cover does not eliminate immediate costs if then waiting to take the current in utero foal, but it does cancel the next stallion fee and the cost of rearing what would have resulted.

The trouble with that is by not covering in 2017, a statement is being made that the breeder does not want to produce to sell in 2020. Or not covering in 2018 equals not producing for 2021. Surely markets will be back by then, but how to operate in the meantime?

Mares have had two year gaps in production before then reappeared – aside from being barren twice I mean. In 2001/2002, Kentucky suffered MRLS (Mare Reproductive Loss Syndrome) through a plague of caterpillars that induced abortion right across the Bluegrass. For a year or two thereafter, while trees in which those caterpillars lodged were cut down in massive numbers, breeders were loath to risk covering. Consequently, in the mid 2000s the Keeneland and Fasig pages of mares or of their later progeny had two year gaps in production for which they were not penalised commercially.

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Breeders had suffered in the meantime but either drew on resources or, if they had insufficient, refinanced or brought in new investment. Many farms and individuals fought hard to bring in funding.

So why would anyone new (a South African or otherwise) come into South African breeding now? The market is narrowly sire-centric and may remain like that until the big four or five's progeny have vanished. The economy has caused a fall (a plummet) in demand for racehorse ownership. The word association following "Sales" is "Bloodbath", with a couple of important exceptions but even then, no stellar medians.

Buy futures in South African bloodstock! Let's tell a lot of people! And let's back it up.

Well...those new people would (dare I say should) come in to support proven operations because economies do recover, particularly when a single major (Presidential) factor has altered after such a long time; because the bloated programme of self-defeating, fragmenting sales has already been streamlined and will probably look different again in 2019; because although currently a great many horses have been or are on the market due to the demise of Mayfair, the supply and demand factors at the streamlined sales will rebalance more quickly than pessimists might think; because "if or when" exports happen, the whole scene will look very different. SAEHP is aiming for December 2018/January 2019 for actual unfettered traffic to the EU and a year later directly to third party countries.

If this was about Florida Orange Juice (a headline quoted commodity in the U.S.) having been blocked from selling into other states but perhaps free to do so soon, the futures market in FOJ would be going crazy.

Therefore... Buy futures in South African bloodstock! Let's tell a lot of people! And let's back it up.

With what? Now we come to the title of this piece: *SONA for Bloodstock*.

Who would give the State of the (Bloodstock) Nation Address? The governing body of course. Nothing and nobody else would qualify. Nothing and nobody else would have the gravitas.

The TBA could make a meaningful address it is true, representing only the breeders. Racecourses? Trainers? Owners? Bookies?

No, it has to be the NHA giving the Bloodstock SONA or perhaps commissioning a global firm of management consultants – preferably one not involved recently with government – to review itself and related parts of the industry. Other countries' bloodstock industries have publicly examined themselves...

There is so much that is good in South African racing and breeding. We need an independent witness to all the good things and we need one urgently. To that end, there is an excellent recent precedent for independent scrutiny.

Ozvet was commissioned in connection with AHS to produce a Risk Analysis (of exporting AHS). That document played a very large part not only in supporting the South African case internationally but also in raising SA's credibility level globally through having entrusted a renowned independent body with such a study – and an Australian one at that! The AHS Task Team had the guts to do it...

Last week, this column approached the Stud Book situation obliquely via the absence of comprehensive data and statistics compared to other countries' information, then directly in relation to "catching up" on registrations. Even with such a gently suggestive piece, there has been some reaction. Not purely to the column, but based on what is being talked about "out there".

An expert has resigned from the NHA not all that long after people who had been there for decades had left. As you may have read here previously, I had something to do with assisting that employment taking place.

I believe that some, perhaps many breeders appreciated its consequences. Someone new is arriving. Of course give her every chance. She's probably very nice and looking forward to a career in South Africa. The lady is surely an expert administrator although from somewhere where they don't have a stud book (because they don't breed) and is announced to have other duties as well. She will surely need Stud Book help and support?

There is so much that is good in South African racing and breeding. We need an independent witness to all the good things and we need one urgently.

This column has repeatedly expressed concern about our Part 1 status in the Blue Book and the risk of losing it whether or not "exports happen" but catastrophically if they do. Meanwhile, SA breeders

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(and overseas investors participating) face high charges relative to general costs to the extent that a restatement of NHA budgets would be a contribution to transparency and understanding.

An authoritative statement from or on behalf of our governing body about the State, if not of the Bloodstock Nation, of the Stud Book and related logistics going forward should give the same sort of boost as the Ozvet report gave South Africa internationally.

Our own ideas for the Stud Book's future may be unnecessary or even out of order, but they are never aggressive, only motivated by the wish to go forward. - **tt.**



Bold Eagle (Anthony Delpuch) posted a commanding win in the Listed Storm Bird Stakes.

Bold Eagle spreads wings in Storm Bird Stakes

ASCOT Stud's July winning champion Bold Silvano looks to have a top class two-year-old on his hands in the form of Bold Eagle.

Bred by the Riyo Stud, Bold Eagle made it two wins from as many outings when he won the Listed Storm Bird Stakes over 1000m at Turffontein on Saturday.

Trained by Gavin van Zyl, Bold Eagle, a smart winner on debut, destroyed some promising juveniles with a 3.5 length romp to collect the first black type win of his career.

The Storm Bird Stakes has been won by a host of top class performers over the years, including Equus Champion and globetrotting star Soft Falling Rain and Bold Eagle could well be another such high class performer. Bold Eagle was one of three runners in the Storm Bird Stakes for 2010 Equus

Champion Middle Distance Horse Bold Silvano (the latter's daughter Mazari running fifth behind her paternal half-brother).

The 2018 Storm Bird Stakes winner was a R210 000 buy from the 2017 National Yearling Sale, and he races for owner Nic Kokkoris, who changed his original name from "Battle Buddy" to Bold Eagle. *(The new name sounds better somehow!)*

Bold Silvano has now been represented by high class performers in each of his first three crops to race, including Guineas winner Flasher On The Run, Sophomore Sprint/Kuda Sprint runner up Bold Respect and Bold Rex.

One of four July winning sons of champion Silvano, Bold Silvano has two lots on next month's CTS April Yearling Sale, and a further 10 yearlings on the 2018 Emperors Palace National Yearling Sale. -**tt.**