



Mondays with David Allan



NORTHERN Dancer: You don't have to be big!

South Africa, a haven for disappearing sire lines—and a future source

IF not quite the Daddy of Them All, Northern Dancer is the antecedent of most of them: the stallions of today, that is.

We can – and should – hunger for more Native Dancer in the form of Sharpen Up horses, and we do see a healthy dose of Raise A Native not least through Dubawi, Kingmambo, Elusive Quality and the now £40,000 Iffraaj. I am a moth to a flame for anything "Never Bend" e.g. Darshaan, Mark of Esteem and now Sir Percy mares.

Royal Charger/Roberto has dwindled but – hang on, mourners of the world – salute Captain Al hitherto "marooned" in isolated South Africa but a Roberto grandson who would surely have been a good sire standing anywhere. He has left us with a sudden plethora of young stallion sons. Throw a few Al Mufti mares into the mix and we enterprising breeders might just repopulate the world with Roberto when the protocols are sorted out.

A bit like the return of beavers to the British countryside after centuries of absence or wolf packs to France and Germany.

"NORTHERN DANCER" can be broken up into a few "Branches", the most prolific being DANZIG and his endless list of stallion sons and grandsons. Next, from a shaky start, is SADLER'S WELLS whose dynasty is dominated by Galileo and sons, Montjeu and sons plus, deserving a mention, Kitten's Joy via El Prado. **(continued on page 2)**



NIJINSKY, with Lester Piggott and trainer Vincent O'Brien.

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SILVANO, great grandson of Nijinsky.



GITANO Hernando, a great grandson of Nijinsky.



PRIX du Jockey Club Winner (Fort Wood ran in the race) Hernando by Niniski out of the Niarchos top mare Whakilyric by Miswaki.

DAVID ALLAN (cont...)

NUREYEV is quieter these days but Pivotal has sons and grandsons, then STORM BIRD/CAT is ever exciting with Scat Daddy, now Caravaggio, Giant's Causeway, Shamardal and Lope De Vega and – in South Africa – Where's That Tiger on the rise with Raise A Native and Danzig in there as well.

I have written so much about Royal Applause/ Acclamation/Dark Angel etc that I shall say only that this of course is the TRY MY BEST Branch of NORTHERN DANCER.

What's missing in this NORTHERN DANCER compilation? The NIJINSKY Branch. It is missing because it is, well, missing. But not in South Africa.

Probably the most versatile of the great horses of the 20th Century, Nijinsky won his Triple Crown in 1970 - a national headline event in the UK (and Ireland where he was trained by Vincent O'Brien). Lester Piggott rode the super-champion (rated 138 or 140 depending which scale) who was one of only three foals of his Canadian bred dam. The others were Fleur, dam of The Minstrel, and Champion Irish 2 year old Minsky. Mum and Dad were both Canadian bred so Nijinsky was a real Canuck, but sold for \$84,000 at E.P. Taylor's "Windfields Farm Sale" (or so it might have been called) to Charles Engelhard whose wife named him for the great dancer.

Different to all other Northern Dancer types, the Nijinsky sired Group 1 winners were plentiful – Caerleon, Golden Fleece, Green Dancer, Lammtarra, Royal Academy, Shadeed and Shahrastani to name some – plus the sprinter Dancing Spree – but few of them hit the stallion heights. In fact, the one to take forward the sire line was Niniski, winner of the Irish St Leger and the Prix Royal Oak. He also won the Geoffrey Freer, the John Porter and the Ormonde Stakes making him a top class stayer trained by Major Dick Hern for Lady Beaverbrook.

A top class stayer as Leading First Season Sire in 1984 reads like an oxymoron, but so he was with champion 2 year old Kala Dancer and Petoski who went on to greater things.

Niniski was the first stallion to stand for Miss Kirsten Rausing at Lanwades Stud where he is buried, guarded by his bronze.

In those days, a typical book for a syndicated stallion

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SA +27(0)21 828 9288 | SA mobile +27(0)72 740 9061
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davidallan@allanbloodlines.com | www.allanbloodlines.com





WILLIAM Longsword, new bearer of the Roberto line.

might be 50 or 55 made up of 40 or 45 for shareholders and the rest sold to pay the bills. Niniski was in fact restricted to 51 mares per season by Lady Beaverbrook's edict, she maintaining a majority share but Lanwades having 25% plus a few other shareholders. So we can certainly say "Didn't he do well!"

Among his other stars were the two most relevant to this little piece: Lomitas and Hernando, both sires, the former in Germany and at Dalham Hall (Darley) with an average winning distance of progeny of 11.3 furlongs (2260m) and the latter at Lanwades (12.5 furlongs – 2500m).

So....Niniski begat Lomitas and Lomitas begat Silvano – and we all know why he is in South Africa and what a very good thing that is for South Africa, staying lineage and all.

And...Niniski begat Hernando and Hernando begat Gitano Hernando – and none of us are quite sure why that has not (yet) turned out to be such a great thing for South Africa.

Whilst Silvano would not necessarily have been imported to be a sire in our speed-conscious community, and he did take considerable time to "catch on", Silvano is a Jacobs-bred, if I may so abbreviate, and was of course supported at Maine Chance once that became his home. With championship results left right and centre.

Gitano Hernando shares several Silvano characteristics. He too is "Jacobs-bred". He, too, won a Grade 1 in USA – in his case flown the maximum distance from Newmarket to Santa Anita to do so as a 3 year old. He, too, later won (the same) Group 1 in Singapore.

Gitano had changed hands for a large sum then later on was enterprisingly sent to retire to stud in South Africa to try to be the second coming of Silvano. Standing at – Maine Chance!

That did not last, with a kerfuffle over the owners' mares being dispersed, and we shan't go into all that here. Suffice to say that he sires some nice winners and carries the Nijinsky traits that could produce excellent middle distance runners from decent mares, but not precocious sprinters.

So here we are in South Africa with the continuing legacy of Roberto and Nijinsky in our hands. One step would be to cross mares of internationally recognisable pedigree with sons of Captain Al and Silvano. Another would be to reverse shuttle... Come on The Task Team! **-tt**

