

EVEREST DIARIES

2022



FEATURING

- ROD LYONS
- PETER SNOWDEN
- ROSS BONE
- FIVE EVEREST CONTENDERS CONFIRMED: WHO'S NEXT?



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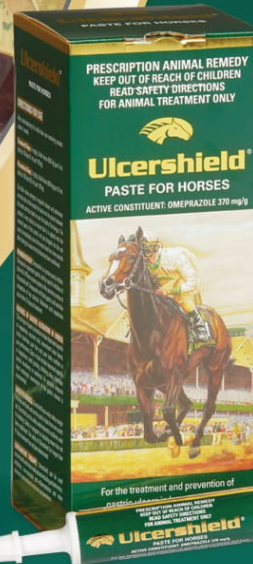
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EDITOR'S NOTE 6

NEWS 7

MAKE NO MISTAKE: ROD 8
LYONS UNDERSTANDS THE
LESSONS SERVED BY 15
SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

ED 1 2022
CONTENTS



PETER SNOWDEN AND 15
REDZEL: A PARTNERSHIP OF
SUCCESS

DIRECTOR'S CUT: PARSONS 22
CREEK'S ROSS BONE AND
GREAT HORSES LIKE MAZU
ARE INSEPARABLE

FIVE EVEREST CONTENDERS 32
CONFIRMED: WHO'S NEXT?



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Editor's Note

EVEREST DIARIES MAGAZINE

It's so good to be back. All of us at Everest Diaries hope you've stayed safe and healthy during our publishing pause. With the five best players being confirmed as contenders, we delve into the 'Who Next' question in this issue. We also feature a run-down memory lane in the first part of our interview with Peter Snowden about his two-time Everest-winning Redzel. We also feature Nature Strip's co-owner Rod Lyons talking about his star sprinter. Finally, we speak to Parsons Creek Farm's Ross Bone about the breeding of Mazu and delve into the magic that is his sire Maurice.

While the Missile Stakes was an unusual eye opener with the unexpected Hard Empire causing an upset, the future for the next seven contenders will be a strong wait-and-watch game as we slowly approach the main lead-up to the A\$15 million spectacle in October.

*Pallavi
Shevade*



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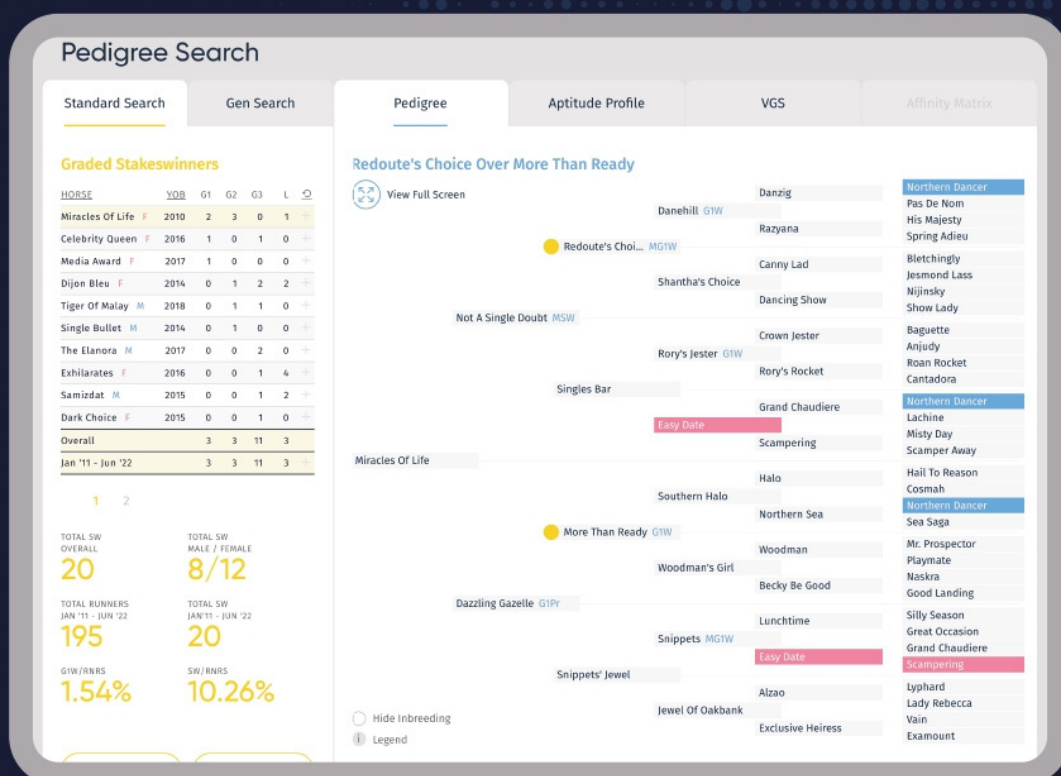
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TOP NEWS



REGAL ROLLER SUCCESS AN EVEREST POINTER

Saturday will see the running of the \$175,000 Listed Regal Roller Stakes (1200m) at Caulfield with past winners including Vega Magic (Lope De Vega) and Osborne Bulls (Street Cry), who just two starts after their wins, went on to finish in the money of their running's of The Everest.

[READ MORE](#)

EDMONDS LANDS MISSILE STAKES AFTER HARD EMPIRE CAUSES UPSET

Trent Edmonds never lost faith in he and his father Toby's ability to train horses but Saturday's shock Gr.2 Missile Stakes victory by Hard Empire helped remind the wider racing public that the Gold Coast-based pair know what they are

doing when they have the right stock. Soon after the 9YO gelding upset the likes of Group One-winning mare Forbidden Love.

[READ MORE](#)



ARTORIUS' EUROPEAN TOUR COMES TO A CLOSE WITH MAURICE DE GHEEST SIXTH

The Anthony and Sam Freedman-trained Artorius (Flying Artie) ended his time in Europe with a sixth-placed finish in yesterday's Prix Maurice de Gheest (Gr.1, 1300m) at Deauville for owners Newgate Farm and China Horse Club, in a stop-start race that saw the 4YO overrace in the early stages.

[READ MORE](#)

TOP NEWS



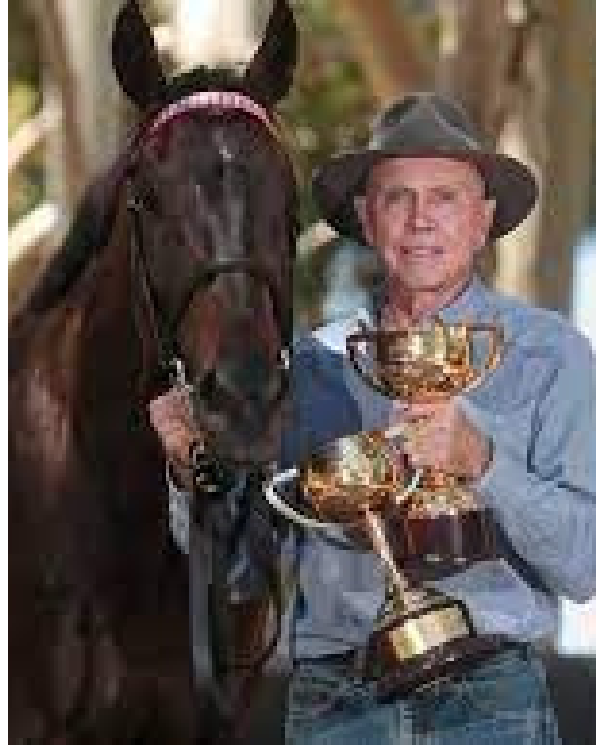
FREEDMAN HOPES TO SECURE EVEREST SLOT FOR FORBIDDEN LOVE

Top Australian trainer Michael Freedman hopes to give star mare Forbidden Love a wide berth and a slot in The Everest this year as his multiple Gr.1 winner prepares for a potential early spring return next week.

[READ MORE](#)

BOB PETERS LEADS WA THOROUGHBRED OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

Goliath owner-breeder Bob Peters was yesterday named as Western Australia's Breeder of the Year at the WA Thoroughbred of the Year award ceremony. Peters crowned a dominant season in his home state with victories in his cerise and white-crossed silks for Regal Power (Pierro) in the Kingston Town Stakes (Gr 1, 1800m), Western



Empire (Iffraaj) in the Railway Stakes (Gr 1, 1600m) and Graceful Girl (Nicconi) in the Gr.1 Winterbottom Stakes.





MAKE NO MISTAKE: ROD LYONS UNDERSTANDS THE LESSONS SERVED BY SUCCESS AND FAILURE

But, oh, that immeasurable value of good fortune!

Lyons, part of the 15-member ownership syndicate of defending Everest champion Nature Strip, convinced his partners to take a roll on a yearling whose ownership ran into financial difficulties.

“We’re very, very lucky that we had a strong relationship with the trainer,” Lyons said. “He’d had this horse in work for nearly 12 months. He rang me because we had other horses with him.

“He said, ‘Look, get your syndicate together. I can guarantee you’ll get your money back, this horse has got a stack of ability. I suggest you guys get involved with it.’”

“So we knew from a bit of inside information that the horse had ability and showed the trainer a fair bit of ability. Because of our strong relationship with the trainer, well he egged us and gave us the advice to take a share in this horse.”

The venture has jetted into accomplishments of epic Group 1 proportions for the 7-year-old gelded turf sprinter and his connections.

Following his three-peat victory in the April 1 TJ Smith Stakes at Randwick Racecourse, then following it up with a shockingly easy five-length romp in the June 14 King’s Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot, Nature Strip vaulted past Redzel and into second place all-time among Australian and New Zealander career prize money earners with \$18.4 million in the strongbox.

He now trails only the incomparable Winx (A\$26,451,174).

Or course, being headed is something Nature Strip detests. This isn’t lost on his management team, nor with Hall of Fame trainer Chris Waller or jockey James McDonald.

Flying from the barrier, Nature Strip continually places the bull’s eye on his nose. Pace makes the race, and he’s more than happy to carve the splits.

“It’s so exciting,” Lyons said. “He is a beautiful, beautiful thoroughbred. As I say,

all the owners are as excited as I am. To have seen him mature is fantastic.

“He’s got a magnificent temperament. He’s kind in the eye. He has that big girth and magnificent action. He is a beautiful, beautiful-looking racehorse.

“I think when people see him in the flesh, they’ll agree with what I’m saying,” Lyons said.

But never underestimate the defending Everest champ: Lyons says Nature Strip has an inner switch, be it during training sessions, trials or race days.

“He is the strong, silent type,” Lyons said. “He walks around the stable in the morning, like he wouldn’t hurt an ant. As soon as he gets to the barrier, it just switches on. It’s just another level — he gets a white-line fever. He just wants to get out there and race.”

When Nature Strip is on his toes — his 20 wins and 7 placings in 37 lifetime starts flatter his pedal-to-the metal form— those foes whose mounts hang close in the early sections often retire once they reach the closing stages of races.

“Nature Strip has a magnificent high cruising speed,” Lyons notes. “He tends to put them to the sword, say from the 800 (meters) to the 200. He can really run spectacular sectionals and that’s what James loves of him — he puts the race beyond doubt in that period.”

What about those who consider pouncing in the final 100 meters?

“If you aren’t close, you can’t pick him up,” Lyons responded.





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As part of the ups and downs in racing, Lyons knows full-well Nature Strip's speed is vulnerable to collapsing on any racing surface.

But Lyons adds his speed is beneficial.

"Look, he's beatable," Lyons said. "All horses are beatable. All athletes are beatable. But, you've got to be on your game to beat him, for sure."

In capturing the TJ Smith for the third consecutive time — easily disposing of longtime rival Eduardo — Nature Strip punched his ticket for Royal Ascot's race meeting.

And he didn't disappoint, bolting from the gate and handily defeating a King's Stand field which included American standout Golden Pal.

Actually, Nature Strip had already passed an Ascot litmus test in his previous TJ victories, but the logistics amid a worldwide pandemic didn't fit the schedule for a trip to Royal Ascot. The connections have also considered an invitation to race in Dubai.

While a trip to England was on the front burner for Nature Strip — Lyons and his group booked the trip to take in the victory — returning home and being ready for the Oct. 15 Everest title defense now carries just as much weight. At stake would be a repeat as Australian Horse of the Year.

The onus falls on how Nature Strip handles the shipping, in addition to how Waller conditions him leading up to the race.

"We've already secured a spot in the Everest," Lyons said. "We've got Chris Waller's racing slot again. So he'll be doing his darnedest to make sure he can bring Nature Strip back from Royal

Ascot and have him 100% for this year's Everest."

For Lyons, the more contests, the better.

"Australians and New Zealanders are very competitive," he said. "I played a lot of sports, Australian Rules Football, cricket, tennis, swimming, bike riding. I think you're always competitive; you always want to do your best, perform well, and win. Then I got involved with racehorses, at a very early age through my father and my uncle. They owned a share in a horse, and one thing led to another and it's been in my blood ever since."

During his years as general manager of a carpet manufacturing company, Lyons unknowingly began shaping the platform of the current racing syndicate.

The parallels are uncanny.

"You've got to manage people, you've got to lead a team," Lyons said. "You've got to set an example, you've got to plan for the future. All those things ... they help you with putting a syndicate together."



“As a matter of fact, two or three of the members of the syndicate are my former clients. So we have a lot in common from there, but leading the team, setting your objectives, understanding the highs and the lows. They’re very similar.”

Adding a conditioner such as Waller to the fold only fortifies Lyons’ core beliefs.

“Chris is an absolute gentleman,” Lyons said. “It’s ‘what you see is what you get.’ He’s very even-tempered and a great planner.

“I think he’s got that God-given gift that not many people have. We’ve had some great trainers in Australia, America, and England, Ireland — all around the world. The ones that stand out are the ones that have got that God-given gift that just some people just haven’t got. His eye for a horse, his calmness, the way he plans, the strategies, and staff he has around him.

“In horse racing, you’re going to have your ups and downs; you’re going to have many successes and failures. People who can take that on board and have a long-term strategy and a plan and lead people with them — It’s just a great advantage and a great plus to have. Chris has that in spades.”

Having captured last year’s Everest has Lyons and his group excited for the opportunity to repeat. The \$15 million purse — unmatched worldwide by any other turf sprint — coupled with the intrigue of a dozen slot-holders negotiating potentially \$600,000 entry fees from outside interests make the Everest unique.

Note: All photos supplied by Mr. Rod Lyons and Mr. Peter Kean



“It's terrific,” Lyons said. “It adds to the drama, to the intrigue. There are 12 slots. If you've got a horse good enough, you can potentially get in. The negotiations are fun. As I say, it adds to the intrigue, the drive.

“It is a unique Australian type scenario. We love being competitive in whatever we do, and we try and be innovative. We're a long way from the rest of the world. The whole concept of the Everest and the slots and negotiating is terrific.

“It adds to the drama of the race. And from the moment the race is over, people start talking about the next year — about who's going to be in and who's not going to be,” Lyons noted.

Lyons said the co-owners within the syndicate manage race-day drama in their own fashion.

“I'm normally pretty good (before a race), especially if I've got some friends around because the guys from New Zealand, they like to get there early and they like to have a couple of nerve settlers — a little bit of alcohol to calm the nerves.

“I'm normally pretty good. Especially if you've got your friends around, you tend to digress like we have a bet here and there. I much prefer that to being on my own. I do tend to become a nervous wreck,” he added.

For Lyons and fellow Australians, the Everest Carnival generates a great sense of pride.

“The whole Carnival is fantastic,” Lyons said. “Unfortunately, this year was marred by very, very unusual wet weather. We've had like three or four months of torrential rain nearly every week.

“But normally it's a beautiful time of the year; the weather's in the mid-20s. The standard Group 1 racing is phenomenal. The best jockeys in Australia get there and quite often they come from overseas.

“It's a fantastic Carnival really exciting Carnival. Of course, it's topped off by the Everest, which is a fantastic day,” he added.

During Nature Strip's 3-year-old campaign, Lyons and his group were offered A\$2 million by interests in Hong Kong.

The deal never reached the beach.

“We did have quite a substantial offer from Hong Kong,” Lyons said. “But the guys in the group are in the horse business for fun, for a good time. Most of the guys in it are doing OK financially, so there was no real reason to sell.

“It turned out to be a pretty wise decision.”



A PARTNERSHIP OF SUCCESS

Success is often fleeting in thoroughbred racing. In many corners, it is never realized. On a few occasions, time takes its course.

In the case of trainer Peter Snowden, achievements have been rapid, off-times quick than perhaps he expected.

From his roots as the son of a highly successful jockey to making the switch from riding to training himself, Snowden and co-training son Paul have joined forces to create one of the top operations in Australia.



Since Redzel’s successful and profitable run, the Snowden’s continue to impress with tremendous savvy. For Peter Snowden, it’s about the third generation of stable life coming full circle ... as in the winner’s circle.

“I think it's eight years that we've been here, but Paul has not just a son — he's been a very good friend,” Peter explained. “He’s been a great help to me, we have a special relationship.”

For the record, Peter and his wife Lyn tied the knot “quite early”, with Paul being born when the couple was still in their 20s.

“Nowadays, that's quite early to have children, but in our day, it was fairly normal. Nowadays, people aren’t getting married until they’re 40. So, unfortunately, when their kids are 20 they’re 60 ... so, it makes a big age gap. But with Paul, we grew up together really as mates and that’s continued on.”



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Snowden not only owns the distinction as the winning trainer of the inaugural Everest in 2017 with Redzel, but that combination made it a two-bagger repeat in 2018.

Along the line, Snowden has accrued more than a thousand winners, since 2014 with his partnership with Paul including 19 Group One victories and 214 stakes race triumphs. His most successful year was 2011 when he swept all five Group One juvenile races: the Blue Diamond, Golden Slipper, ATC Sires' Produce Stakes, Champagne Stakes and T.J. Smith.

Another great memory in 2009 he came second in the world behind Steve Asmussen (USA). When training for Darley he also had similar stats.

Perhaps Snowden's ability to develop younger horses was derived from a most difficult childhood.

He was but three years old when his mother died. Even at a young age, Snowden had a fire in his belly.

"I sort of grew up pretty quickly," he said. "Your mom is everything when you're a child. To not have her there was difficult. But (like) the old saying goes, 'What doesn't break you makes you stronger?' That was the case for me."

Snowden was driven to do well, and his intestinal fortitude prevailed.

"I wanted to make my mom proud," he explained, "and my dad, and he passed away about 12 years ago, but I've been very lucky. I've achieved what I wanted to achieve. I'm always trying to be better."

At 11, Snowden helped his father in the barn. A year later, he was cantering horses. Not long thereafter, he took up the itch as a jockey. His father was a winner of 600-plus races in the reins before obtaining his trainers' license.

"I had no weight issues until I was about 18," Snowden recalled. "It began taking a toll on my bones. I found it difficult to stay at lighter weights."

Peter Snowden took the same career transition as his father — from the irons to the stables — which he claims has been beneficial.

"Yeah, I think it's a plus to ride," Snowden said. "You have a better understanding of racing and riding and how your jockey's ride. I think it's been a big advantage for me going forward in my training career."

Snowden joined the John Hawkes stable as an assistant trainer. After much success there, In 2007 he was appointed head trainer for the Ingham Bloodstock empire until they sold a majority of their racing and breeding interests to Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum.

In the ebb and flow of business, Snowden was offered the prestigious duties as head trainer in Australia for Darley (Godolphin).

Indeed — things were moving quickly for a trainer who's well-timed each move through the industry.

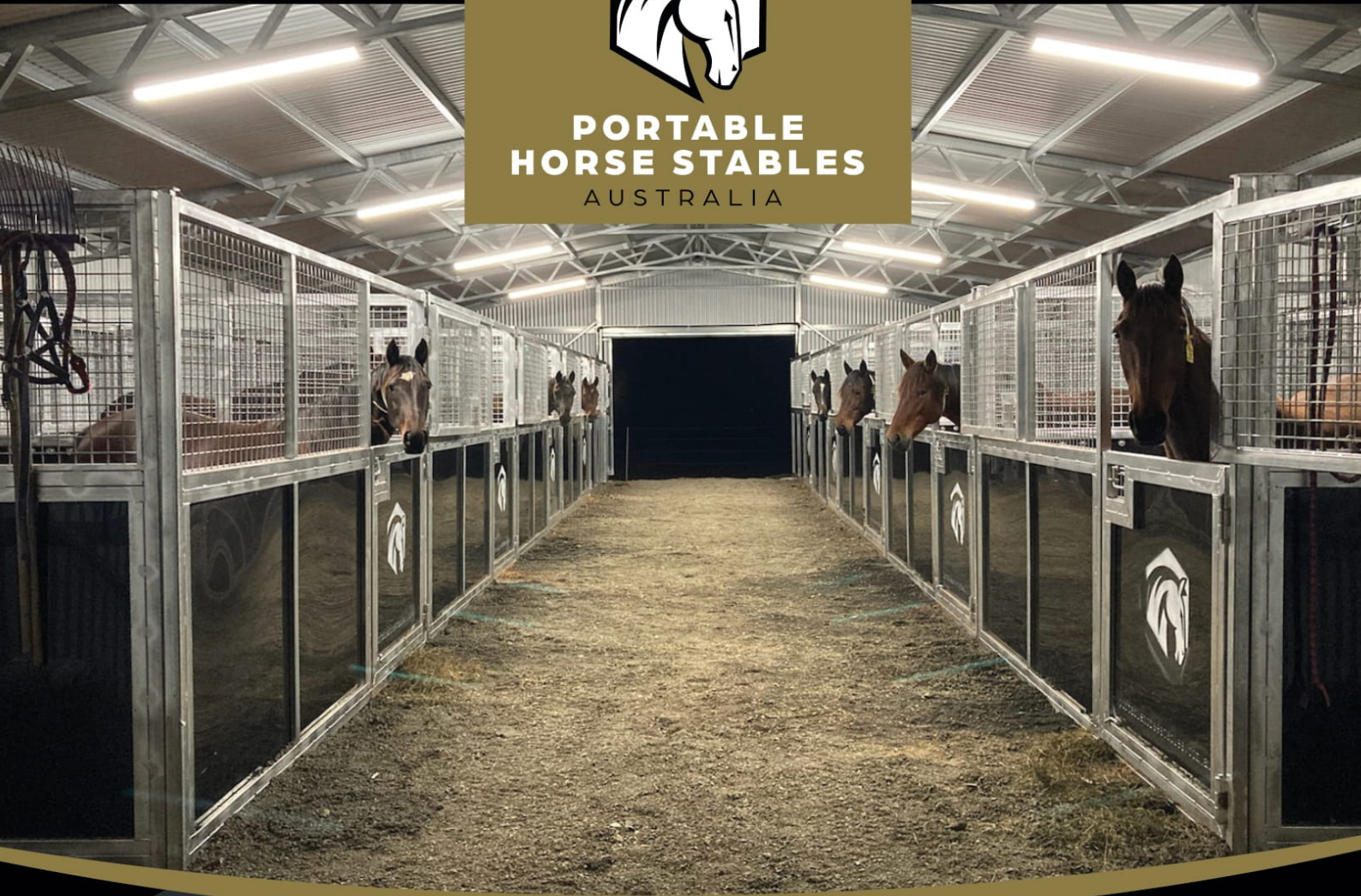
At that time, his son, Paul, was appointed as his assistant trainer in the Melbourne stable in Flemington.

"I'd be down there every couple of weeks," Snowden said of his son, "but it was he who was in charge that stable."





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DIRECTOR'S CUT: PARSONS CREEK'S ROSS BONE AND GREAT HORSES LIKE MAZU ARE INSEPERABLE

One of Australia's most experienced stud managers, Ross Bone chats candidly about the 'making' of the great sprinter and Everest 2022 contender 'Mazu', the ins and outs of the breeding industry, and Everest has got it right by fuelling the passions of owners and breeders fuelling the sales industry.

Q: Where were you born and where did you grow up?

A: I was born in a little town on the far north coast of New South Wales. And I'm one of 11 children. I have five younger sisters and an older sister and four older brothers.



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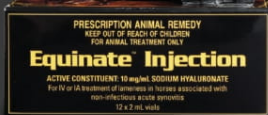


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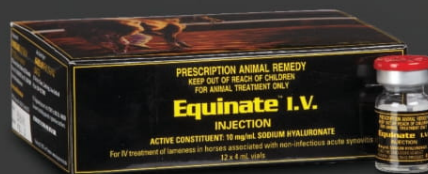


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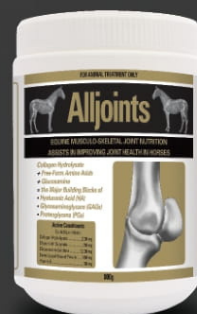


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Q: How did you develop an affinity and a love for the sport of kings?

A: My father was a blacksmith and horse breaker. He worked on barriers at the races and he was a good horseman himself and was always at the racetrack. I used to follow him along and always wanted to be a jockey. I went to pony club as a kid and as a lad rider was a good rider. My father knew a guy in Sydney and he wanted to send me down there. Jack Morgan came up and looked at me and he said, he'll grow too big. He got too big afoot. That was the end of a jockey career that stayed for a while. But I did go and work in stables and road work. And I did get too big to be an apprentice, but I rode amateur horses at race meetings and then I progressed to work on horses today.

Q: As a stud manager, there are not too many times that a horse like Mazu comes along. At what point did you know that this young foal was going to be something special?

A: When we foaled him, for about a week or so he was a little light framed. We kept him in a small yard with his mother. After about a week he started to strengthen up and develop. He was always a very individual and very athletic foal. He had the right balance and he looked good. His form started developing at the time and he was a very 'correct foal, physically. He was standoffish from the beginning and I always felt he was his own man.

All the horses that I've been involved with over the years have been top-quality, well-bred horses. They had some things in common. They were always individualistic and were always good from when they were young all the way through. And they obviously always had a little bit of attitude.

The good horses always show you something.





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JANUARY 2023 EVENTS GUIDE

4-9 WEDNESDAY-MONDAY MAGIC MILLIONS YEARLING INSPECTIONS	10-13 TUESDAY-FRIDAY MAGIC MILLIONS YEARLING SALE DAY 1 – DAY 4	14 SATURDAY THE STAR GOLD COAST MAGIC MILLIONS \$11.75M RACEDAY Gold Coast Turf Club \$2 MILLION THE STAR GOLD COAST MAGIC MILLIONS 2YO CLASSIC (RL) PLUS \$500,000 MAGIC MILLIONS RACING WOMEN'S BONUS \$2 MILLION GOLD COAST MAGIC MILLIONS 3YO GUINEAS (RL) PLUS \$250,000 MAGIC MILLIONS RACING WOMEN'S BONUS PACIFIC FAIR FASHIONS ON THE FIELD MAGIC MILLIONS YEARLING SALE – DAY 5	15 SUNDAY MAGIC MILLIONS YEARLING SALE DAY 6
7 SATURDAY AQUIS RACEDAY	10 TUESDAY THE STAR GOLD COAST MAGIC MILLIONS BARRIER DRAW Surfers Paradise Beach		16 MONDAY MAGIC MILLIONS YEARLING SALE DAY 7
8 SUNDAY PACIFIC FAIR MAGIC MILLIONS POLO & SHOWJUMPING			

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PACIFIC FAIR



Q: How much pride do you and the other connections to Mazu take in the fact that the horse has now been signed not to one but to 2022 and 2023 Everest challenges? What a tremendous journey and confidence that the stud holder had to sign the horse to two consecutive races.

A: Well, this is a family-owned farm. And it started off small. Chatelaine was the first of their top-quality broodmares. When we took him to the sales as a yearling, he generated a lot of interest as he was a good-looking horse. But I said to the owner, it doesn't matter who buys him, we will keep a quarter and even half if they couldn't sell him. It's been great for the owners and their daughter Jo O'Gorman.

At the moment Chatelaine is in foal Toronado that's due soon. She's 22, but she's still nice and active.

And on top of that, we went and bought her daughter at the Magic million sales last year, a mare called Whitula.

Q: Please tell us more about Mazu's Japanese sire, Maurice and your thoughts on the cross with Chatelaine.

A: When we watched the videos of Maurice, it was just an outstanding racehorse. I couldn't believe some of the things he did in his races. He had a fantastic turnout towards the end of his races. The cross with Chatelaine sat very nicely. She's by Golden Slipper winner Flying Spur. We put his speed and the ability of Maurice, hoping to get what we did.

Q: Can you give us any insight on some up-and-comers that you see in your stable that might be the next Mazu?

A: Well, interesting you should say that we had a Zoustar colt. I really liked the horse and I've liked him all the way through. We have syndicated him with some friends.

And he is just going into the pre-training and then he will go to Snowden as well. He is a very nice horse and I hope that he'll do well at the job.

Q: When we look back at last year's Nature Strip was fantastic. What were your thoughts on the 2021 edition?

A: I really like the horse. Another horse I liked last year was Lost and Running. He's much stronger this year. That's the only thing with Mazu, but hopefully, fingers crossed he will go on the job and blaze a trail.

Q: How much pride do you take as an Aussie in the tremendous growth and excitement around this unique race?

A: Well, to have to at least even have a runner in it is a fantastic thing for any farm. That is an enormous thing for the owners, trainers, the breeding industry and for selling horses down the line.

Q: As the race gains in popularity, do you think they should perhaps add a few more slots to increase the cost of the slots or keep it as it is?

A: I think if you have too many slots, sometimes you get into interference. Not every horse gets their opportunity. I think with this number of horses in it every horse seems to be able to get their opportunity.

Q: What are the traits or qualities of the equine you'd be looking for in a race of the magnitude of The Everest?

A: I like to see a horse come out and be athletic in his walk. He must have a good strong hind quarter and be able to step out. I like a horse with a good hip, and hip detail. And most important is going to have short cannons and a very good groove under his jaw.



Mazu / Racing and Sports



Mazu / Anz Bloodstock News

You need a fast horse and the right pedigree as well, from fast families. The horses must be able to finish with a good time and show a good turn of foot at the end of their races.

Q: Please tell us about the 300 acres of Parsons' Creek Farm.

A: All 300 acres are fully irrigated. We grow probably around about 60 acres of alfalfa which is a good supplement for ailing horses. We don't take on a lot of spells but the ones we do, we like to put them in big paddocks. They get in a 10-acre paddock to run and develop better and good pasture rather than being locked up and just basically standing around. We prefer to get them out exercising. They seem to do better when they go back.

Q: How long before a big race like Everest would a trainer want to have a horse go for a spell before the horse ramps up on his training for the actual race?

A: In Mazu's case, he raced in the Doomben 10,000 which was about six or eight weeks ago. He went to the paddock, he had about three to four weeks in the paddock and he's back in work now he's moving along so won't be long and be having a start in probably in the next month. Typically, you would have two prep races before a big race like The Everest and hopefully, he will be at his peak.

Q: How technology has impacted the sport and the industry how much stock do you put in seeing a horse via video and photographs versus inspecting the horse in person?

A: I personally like to look at horses individually. There are plenty of horses that have been terrible in videos and photos but have been amazing in person. And vice versa.

Q: What are the qualities you like in Sam Clipperton?

A: Sam Clipperton has very good hands. He sits quietly at the top of the horse and doesn't panic. He keeps the horse bouncing and balanced. He's not over forceful with the whip. He keeps Mazu in his stride. Overall, he's done a great job on Mazu.

Q: When hiring what are the most important things you look for and what advice would you give a young person looking to break into the industry?

A: Well, I've always preferred to get people with no experience. And then they learn what you need to be done on the farm. I know how to do it, and I know how to do it properly. And some people come from big farms, but they don't know.

I like to encourage people. I suggest that if a young person wants to work in the industry, he (or she) should find work on a farm and spend a year there, and then go to work with trainers.

Not everyone can do that. But if they want to work in the industry, they need to find the right people, the best people to learn from.



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Nature Strip / Daily Racing Form

FIVE EVEREST CONTENDERS CONFIRMED: WHO'S NEXT?

One of the wonderful things I like about the Everest is that it recognises some of the real heroes of the racing world, the stable staff. Yes, we need world class jockeys, trainers, and wealthy owners but we also need the lads and lasses who rise early each day to spoil these multimillion-dollar racehorses, often putting their equine friends before themselves. The trainers and owners always recognise the work that they put in but it is nice to see them rewarded financially by the sponsors, in fact the winning stable hand will take home A\$93,000, with prizes down to twelfth place, wow

With over 60 Group 1 races in 2022, Australian racing is in a healthy state partly due to them always looking for fresh new ideas, hence the introduction of this, the world's richest turf horse race in 2017.

A report commissioned in 2019 indicated that the thoroughbred breeding industry in Australia is worth over A\$1bn per annum to the economy and that it employs around 8000 people many in rural and regional areas. Continuing with their forward-thinking, Racing NSW has now introduced a new initiative on either side of and including Everest. Their innovative A\$6m Sydney Sprint Series requires those eligible to contest at least three of the nominated races, notably the Concorde Stakes, The Shorts, the Premiere Stakes, the Everest, and the Sydney Stakes, and the new Nature Strip Stakes. Points are awarded for the finishing position in each of those sprints with double points in the final Nature Strip Stakes and an A\$2.5m bonus for the horse with the most points. Whilst this series is a great idea and plenty of prizemoney is on offer, most of the Everest contenders would take in two of those races anyway, as their normal path to the race. Of the five previous Everest winners, the ten prep races taken en-route saw runs in three Concordes three Shorts, and two Premieres. Only Yes Yes Yes (the only three-year-old winner) went via a completely different route.

We should never knock new initiatives, especially one with as much prizemoney as this, but personally, I am not sure it was needed in this format. Will it detract from The Everest? Only time will tell, so this season will be very revealing.

So, what does it take to win an Everest? It is a race contested by twelve of the fastest horses in the world so there is little margin for error both in the planning and on the day. We can look at past stats to see if there is a pattern emerging but with only five runnings of the event so far, the sample size is small. All the winners had two prep races after a break and trainers clearly have a route mapped out to get their superstars there in peak condition for the day. As we have mentioned, the timing of those Group 2 and Group 3 races during September are perfect preparation for the sprinters and the trainers will continue to use them even without incentives.





Masked Crusader / SEN



Classique Legend / Just Horse Racing

We can assess a horse's chances in getting to the race in tip-top condition, which is the easy part, after that there is a little bit of luck involved. Ground conditions on the day are an unknown but most of these sprinters are adaptable. They might have their preferred ground, but they have the ability to perform in most conditions. What is less predictable is the barrier position and that is in the lap of the Gods. The five winning barriers were 10, 9, 6, 1 and 4 so that suggests no real advantage but being drawn high is never ideal. Nature Strip from ten last year got across early to lead and Yes Yes Yes won from barrier nine where the race opened up perfectly in front of him. I am sure connections would prefer to be from a low barrier, get straight onto the rail and be able to control the race from on the pace.

On to the intended runners and Nature Strip is the bookmaker's favourite and almost certain to be there on the day. The whole race would seem to revolve around him after his stunning Royal Ascot run, where he was very impressive over one thousand metres. Even though it was such a prestigious meeting and a Group 1, I am not convinced he beat a strong field from the UK and Ireland and the US challenger Golden Pal did not show his running after a tardy start. That does not detract from a superb performance and we do know that he is top class in Australia. One thing that the UK win did prove is his versatility with regards to the ground. The Good to Firm at Ascot was pretty quick on the day and his previous win in the TJ Smith at Randwick was on a Heavy track. His win from the front last year was in the main down to a superb ride and although Last Crusader, Eduardo and Classique Legend all finished, James McDonald got all the fractions right,

something they had not managed in the previous runnings. Nature Strip highlights how pace in the race is perhaps the most crucial factor along with ground conditions, we know before the race that all twelve of the horses will be up to the task so tactics will be crucial. Redzel ran similar races from the front for his two victories under the great Kerrin McEvoy and McDonald will surely try to execute the same again. This time though the other jocks will be more aware.

Eduardo is another sprinting legend with previous history in the race and a fierce rivalry with Nature Strip. He went off far too quickly when he ran like a scalded cat in 2020, before dropping away to finish in the rear. He was much more controlled and ridden on the pace with a touch of restraint last year where he finished third beaten two necks and who can forget their scintillating race in The Shorts in 2021 with Eduardo just prevailing late on. They have raced against each other on ten occasions with Nature Strip leading by six to four. However, the four races over 1200 metres have all gone to Nature Strip. It seems that connections will need to concoct a different plan this time around.

Mazu has been my long-range fancy for this race, not original I know, but he is a fantastic horse, is still improving and, as a four-year-old, who knows where he will end up, Royal Ascot next year? You never know how far he can go if he continues his progress. His trainers, Peter and Paul Snowden certainly know how to produce an Everest winner, having trained Redzel to land the first two runnings of the race. He is lightly raced, having only had eleven starts and started his career in a maiden handicap at Canterbury Park.



Lost-And-Running / Just Horse Racing



Home Affairs / Racing and Sports

His win in a listed race at Randwick last October seems to have propelled him to a new level as he has since reeled off five straight wins, the last two being the Group 2 Arrowfield at Randwick followed by the Group 1 Doomben 10,000 run at Eagle Farm where he held off Paulele. Connections have been bullish about this horse and have got him back in the stable early with a view to getting him stronger than he has been before. He will most likely follow the Redzel route to the race.

Masked Crusader was unlucky last year when finishing all over Nature Strip and was in front just after the line. I have learnt, to my cost over the years, that sometimes you do not take past runs literally. Yes, he probably should have won but in re-opposing this year he is not guaranteed to get the race run in the same way and, even if he does beat Nature Strip, he might not beat the others.

He has not run so well so far this year but he has run in three Group 1's, and, with the Everest as his main target, his shrewd stable will have calculated how to get him exactly right on the day, almost certainly taking in the Premiere Stakes again.

Lost And Running is a Group 3 winner over course and distance and looks to be improving with each run. He went off favourite for the Newmarket Handicap back in February where he never got competitive with no obvious excuses. He has the most improvement to find to again get competitive with some of the big guns but he is in exceptionally capable hands with John O'Shea, and he was fourth at a big price last year. His trials will be most enlightening.

One of the big questions that we need to answer is who will Godolphin and Coolmore nominate in their slots. It is a bit of a guessing game at present and the next few weeks will tell us a lot more but, for Coolmore, their recent purchase of Best Of Bordeaux looks a likely type, even though another year might see him in a better light. The Snitzel colt is already a dual Group race winner and ran second in Gr.1 Golden Slipper behind Fireburn. He has an exciting future and we need to keep a close eye on his progress but Coolmore and jockey James McDonald seem excited by the way they believe he has trained although they may opt for a different route this spring and come back next year with a stronger more streetwise horse. With Home, Affairs retired to stud duties their other main option would appear to be the US-trained Golden Pal who has yet to race in Australia and who disappointed at Ascot. It would be an amazing training feat by Wesley Ward, not only to get him back on track but to get him to challenge the best sprinters in Australia. Unlike in 2018 when they ran the useful US Navy Flag in it, they do not have the depth in the UK and Ireland to bring one over but they always have the option to purchase a horse who shows up well in the coming weeks.

Godolphin's options appear a little stronger, Paulele the main focus of attention. He often flatters to deceive but runs at the highest level, including most recently finishing second in two consecutive Group 1's at Eagle Farm. In the first of those he ran Mazu close and he appears to have improved this season. He is certainly worth his place and he won the Group 2 Roman Consul Stakes over course and distance last October.



Classique Legend Wins The Everest / The Mercury

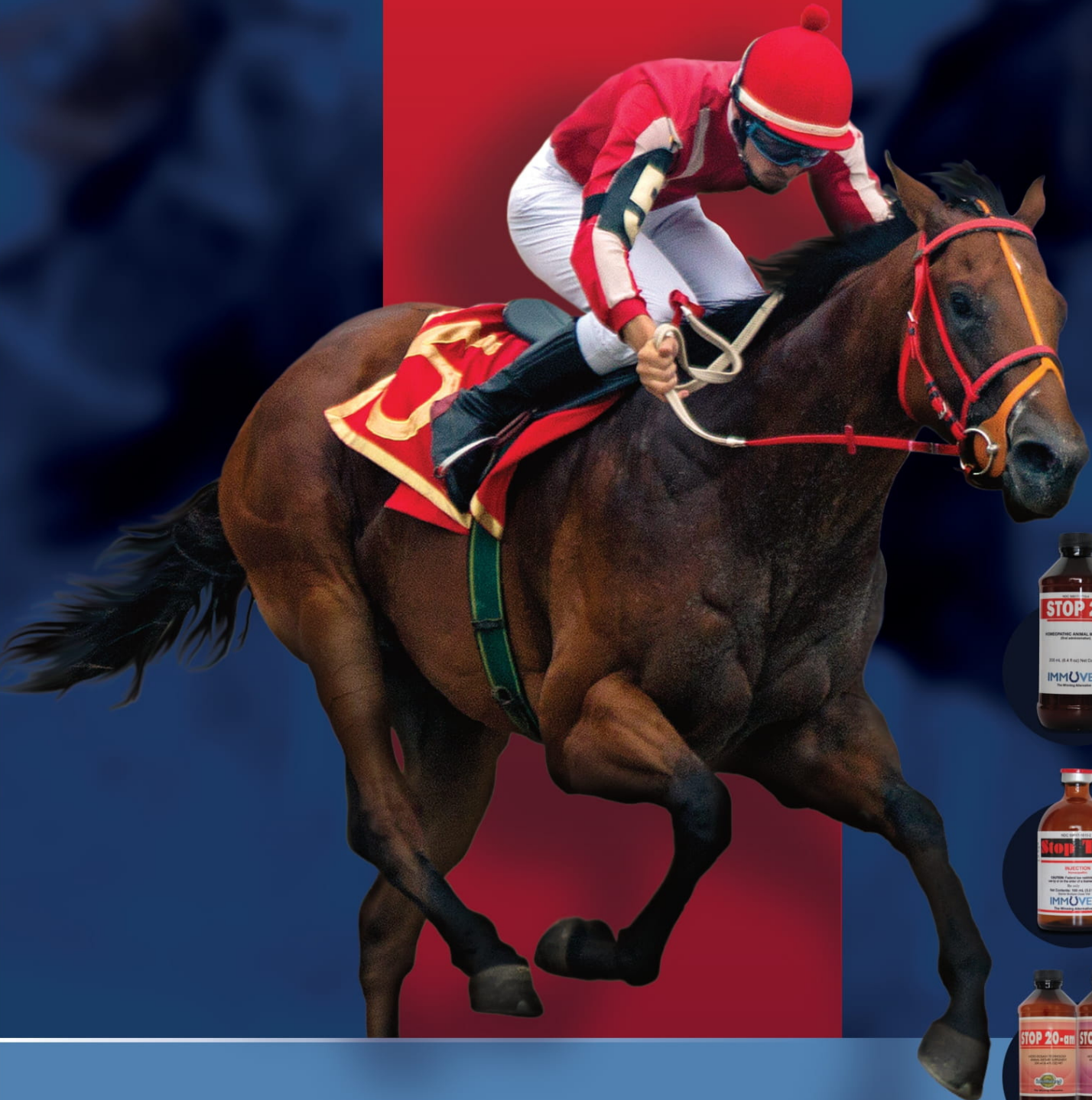
Should they encounter problems with his preparation, they have a likely sort in the UK, Naval Crown, who won the Group 1 over 1200 metres at Ascot and ran second in the Group 1 July Cup at Newmarket. It seems unlikely that connections would want to ship him out at this stage but it is not a bad option to have in reserve even though his best form has come on fast ground. Of their potential improvers, Andermatt should be kept in mind. He is also a son of Snitzel and has been contesting decent handicaps winning the Furphy handicap at Randwick in April easily. Should the ground turn soft, he may show further improvement.

With so much speculation about who will be involved in September we need to scrutinise the trials as they will be informative. By then we will know a lot more about these thoroughbreds and we should have an idea who are the twelve to go to post. The Missile Stakes failed to throw up a serious challenger and the reputations of Forbidden Love and Count De Rupee were done no favours with the win for the 100/1 roughie Hard Empire. Only connections of those two will know how much they have left to work on; Forbidden Love was well placed but did not quicken and Count de Rupee came from a long way back, finishing well. We await the other trial races with interest and wish the best of luck to all challengers.

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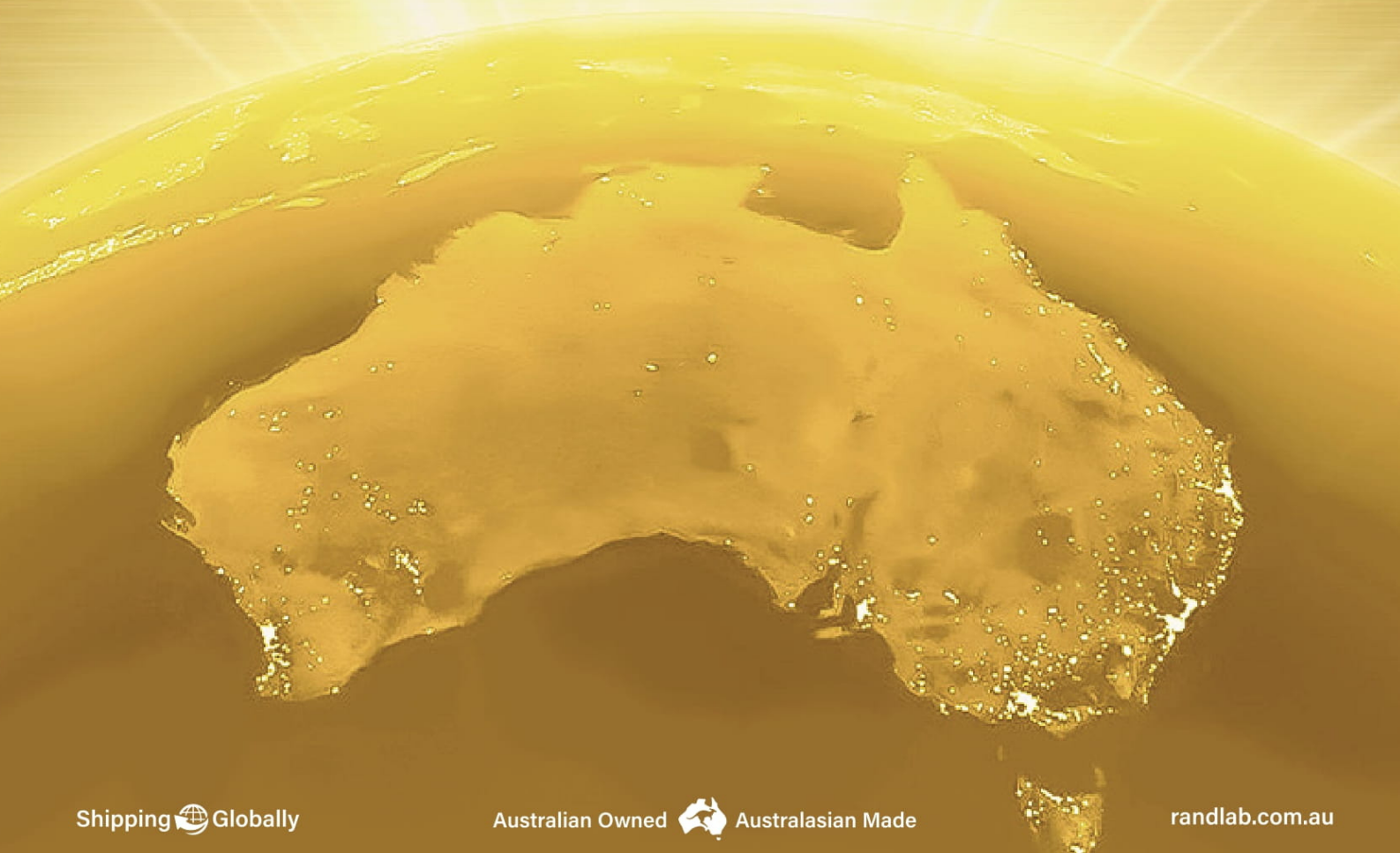
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