

## **GLENLOGAN PARK STUD**

I could just as well be standing 700 kilometres south. The surrounds are idyllic, the glossy corporate brochures distributed by uniformed staff adopted by many in the crowd as makeshift shields against the midday glare. The entrance and evaluation of the first stallion demands a shift in focus; as if defying the attention the horse rears against the lead that restrains him. Minutes later a mare whose name conjures memories of black type success and her 5 day old foal enter the parade ring. To complete the scene, further along the raked drive, crisp table cloths in stud colours flutter idly in the marquee luncheon area.

There are, however, a few variations between this stallion parade day and similar events being played out south of the border. For one, it's a balmy 24 degrees in the shade despite the fact that it's the middle of August. There is also this stud farm's strategic initiative that's been rapidly adopted by a number of its southern cousins (saliently demonstrated by the much publicized re-location of Mossman and General Nediym and the purchase of local stars Choisir, Reset, and Exceed & Excel). But in terms of "image", the distance between Glenlogan Park Stud and certain farms in the Hunter is far less than some may care to give it credit for.

Glenlogan Park is situated approximately 24 kilometres from Beaudesert and around 90 minutes from Brisbane. The stud cannot boast the history of others having only been established as a boutique breeding and spelling operation in the late 80s. It didn't move to its current address until 1994 and followed the mainstream players by supporting the shuttle concept until 2001 when it really came into its own as a supporter of colonial stallions. It's a large property yet but not as big as many. It's largely self sufficient; as are many others in the area. Where it starts to stand out is in its product, distinctive positioning, innovation, and client care.

I first came across Glenlogan more than 12 months ago when I was researching the marketing strategies of various industry players. On that occasion I wrote:

“A simple key to effective marketing is to offer a point of differentiation to your competition then stand by it - no matter what. Deciding against a game of Russian roulette using imported international champions (with service fees to match), Glenlogan has chosen instead to stand a strong line-up of proven local horses all of whom who have excelled in the upper echelons of Australian racing.”

In 2004 Glenlogan offer breeders the services of eight stallions:

- Australia’s champion sprinter Falvelon (Alannon/Devil’s Zephyr)
- The Group One winning King of Danes (Danehill/Impulsive Rhythm)
- Four time Group One winner (and four time Group One placed) Show a Heart (Brave Warrior/Miss Sandman)
- The Group One winner Shinko Forest (Green Desert/Park Express)
- One of the fastest horse over 1200 metres to go to stud in Australia - Our Maizcay (Maizcay/Maire Viita)
- One of St Covet’s most promising sons – the listed winner Kbenjar (St Covet/Arab Heritage)
- Champion Italian two year old Blu Tusmani (Afleet/Edelene); and
- The stakes winning American Odyssey (Kingmambo/Bittersweet Hour).

Chairman of Glenlogan Park is Jon Haseler, a man who has come a long way from earning a few dollars on the punt to pay for his university text books. He has experienced no less than eleven Group One wins as an owner. He is - by anyone’s standards – an industry ‘addict’. Indeed, his wife Dawn (who has the novel maiden name of ‘Punter’) rolls her eyes in mock exasperation when talk at the table turns to pedigree analysis, media reports, internet research and the sea of catalogues that always makes for “absorbing page-by-page late night reading”. But whilst certainly looking the part of the well-to-do business man whose career

straddles property development and thoroughbreds, he is someone who, whilst enjoying much success in the game, knows the down sides only too acutely.

Eight days after I visit the farm – and the second day of the 2004 breeding season - the shock news arrives on my desk: Shot of Thunder (the horse who gave John O’Shea his first Group One victory as a trainer and one of the young stallion hopes for the future) has been put down following a freak accident.

This is not the first loss for the farm. Its current stallion line-up includes sons of two of its former flag bearers in Alannon and St Covet (who died after just one and three seasons at stud respectively). Indeed, one of the Stud’s stars– Show a Heart – is the son of another of Queensland’s intensely bright but short lived lights (albeit not at Glenlogan) in Brave Warrior.

It’s an added weight for a farm whose progressive strategy has provided its share of negative comment. Dawn confesses: “People thought Jon was nuts to stand a Group One winner in Queensland. There’s a perception by many that Queensland is a backwater you know.” She pauses for a moment. “People seem to think that if you’re down then you have to stay down. It’s strange really”

Jon returns to the table from bidding farewell to a client (having missed – perhaps fortuitously - the conversation about certain beliefs others may hold on the Queensland breeding industry) and picks up on the Stud’s strategic initiatives. He says that Queensland has many similarities to Florida in that that State also has a history of making stallions then moving them to Kentucky. The result has been an increasing number of studs being forced to re-brand themselves as agistment properties.

Whilst the farm is strongly committed to Shinko Forest, and takes great pride in his early success at stud, he is the last to wear the ‘shuttle stallion’ tag. “We’re out of that market,” Jon says matter-of-factly “and it sums up one of our greatest attributes. We made a conscious decision that this wasn’t the way to go.”

Instead the stud stands some of Australia's best performed racehorses, sets its service fees at realistic levels, and caps its books at 120 mares. "Everyone then has a chance to breed at a cost effective price and you also get an opportunity to profit as you are not competing with unlimited numbers at the sales," Jon states. As if in support of his words, Show a Heart's first weanling sold at public auction earlier this year for \$97,500 (from a service fee of just \$13,750).

It's a strategy that whilst invigorating in its differentiators is not without risk. Three of the stud's glamour stallions (Falvelon, Show a Heart and King of Danes) are yet to have progeny of racing age. This means (amongst other things) a commitment to an annual marketing budget and PR machine that would severely challenge the more faint hearted promoters.

Aside from its stallion line-up, Glenlogan is also well known for its commitment to innovation. The property offers Queensland's only registered quarantine station and the farm's latest invention is a portable crush and weighing machine.

"The aim is to reduce as much as possible the risks that occur when moving mares and foals down laneways or the stress that can occur when a mare stands in a vet yard for long periods of time," stud and marketing manager, Steve Morley explains. "The crush is fitted with scales so every time a horse is vetted it is also weighed and graphed. Given the horses do not have to leave their paddocks there is also a higher standard of quality control and a distinct reduction in stress."

This is complemented by the stud's feed programme which farm manager, Rod, explains has been developed in close consultation with the Kentucky Equine Centre. Regular reports on what percentage of bodyweight a horse is under/over for his or her age determines what paddock a horse is moved to and what feed regime they are allocated.

“There will be roof wings as well - with hydraulics” Steve points out, returning my attention to the crush. “It’s the least important thing at the moment.” (He has the good grace to smile at someone standing nearby whose identity is about to become apparent) “But we can’t have the vet standing in the rain!” He grins broadly. “I’m wrapt in it! It will make a huge difference to the people who send mares here.”

Steve Morley’s enthusiasm seems a common trait amongst the Glenlogan staff. A knowledgeable and appreciatively straight-talking professional, he was first ‘discovered’ at a local gym. I confess at this point that I momentarily grapple with images of Lycra and how on earth these relate to thoroughbreds, but am informed - with no lack of amusement - that he managed the gym rather than simply pursued a fitness regime there. Persistence, commitment and an uncannily fast uptake of knowledge sees Steve, many years down the track, as a greatly respected and astute manager.

Brendan McKay manages the broodmares, and after looking almost embarrassed upon being asked to outline his impressive local and international CV, reveals in the following hours his innate understanding of the business and the horses he cares for. He also surprises with a flair for poetic comment which starts with his reflection on the season's new foals as “like waking up to Christmas every morning. We get to unwrap a different present every day.”

There are 394 mares on the property (500 during the height of the breeding season), paddocks deliberately supporting low stock numbers (and every second and third paddock left empty). Despite the drought encroaching at the edges of the horizon the irrigation and pasture improvements see everything within the Glenlogan boundary knee-deep in rich feed. I came across a number of well known names during the course of my visit: the multiple Group One winner (and bossy matriarch) Lovely Jubly (in foal to Encosta de Lago), stakes-placed It’s a

Giggle, stakes performed Paranomelody, Backpass (who has just foaled a Rock of Gibraltar colt), Fashion Scout (trained by Dermot Weld and a half sister to Rock of Gibraltar; currently in foal to Dansili), Black Velvet (in foal to Dansili), Little Nova (the family of Novajinsky). Jon also owns Spinning Hill's winning group placed half sister – Daninkling (by Danehill) and Out on the Town (a stakes producing daughter of Fanfreluche). He bred dual Group One winner Savannah Success (dam of the multiple Group One winner Savabeel), Starshine Express (dam of Star Shiraz) and Danestorm (winner of the Group One Brisbane Cup).

The (just turned) yearlings graze on undulating paddocks far removed from the hustle and bustle of the farm's centre. All paddocks have a nanny (including Arab Heritage, the 22 year old dam of Kbenjar) except for one paddock of colts that according to Brendan "have the bully" - none other than a tourist attraction in his own right - former Australian champion Super Impose (winner of eight Group One's and more than \$5.5M during his career). We wander into the paddock so we can later claim "it's true - we patted him!" nodding hello to Bob Logan who is also here visiting yearlings as we do so. Examining the colts, as 'Super' pins his ears back and noses them into line, Brendan murmurs "These are the ones that make your heart beat you know".

Glenlogan is candid and upfront – from their client care programmes to the way they handle the media. We sent an 'anonymous friend' to the property three weeks prior to our own visit. His report was identical to ours. All staff members are available for interview, all horses can be viewed and photographed, the property (apart, of course, from the quarantine area) is readily accessible, they respond to their emails, they return phone calls, and they just waved me away (looking somewhat surprised at the question) when I asked what procedures needed to be followed in terms of approval and sign off of the article. As a number of people have mentioned to me since "a lot of the other studs could take a leaf out of Glenlogan's book".

The shadows lengthen as our tour heads into its third hour and three of us stand in contemplative silence as a mare and foal are led past us back towards the foal nursery. Brendan provides further words of contemplative insight, relying on a saying he credits to Sheikh Mohammed: "To succeed you're always going forward. If you're idle you're going nowhere". The feeling you get at this point is that so much thought has gone into the development and management of this property – and it's a process that never ends.

There are some in the Industry who openly query this stud's strategic initiatives. The thin lipped silence of others suggests deep rooted concern at increasing competition and new business models that challenge traditional ways of breeding and selling horses in Queensland.

Having visited Glenlogan I wonder if deep down perhaps they merely seek what this Queensland high achiever has already put its name to.

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*(Please note that we have two mares visiting Glenlogan stallions in 2004. We pay normal commercial rates for the privilege and are not in receipt of any favorable deals or treatment as a result of this article being published).*