

LYNDHURST STUD, Queensland

Philip Elmer-DeWitt once said that "some people make headlines while others make history." Lyndhurst Stud in Warwick, Queensland, has the distinction of having achieved both. Courtesy of recent Group One success and a 6th Champion Queensland sire title, the stud is enjoying another record-breaking year. Yet if you take a moment to look beyond the headlines you can begin to appreciate the significant impact this family-run institution has had on the development of the Queensland thoroughbred industry.

Lyndhurst Stud covers 2,500 prime acres in the Darling Downs, approximately 160 kilometres south west of Brisbane. It was founded 13 years after Queensland's first organised (albeit unofficial) racing meeting held at Coorparoo in 1857. In 1886 CE McDougall purchased the farm and began breeding horses using a small band of well bred mares and the stud's foundation sire ARCHER, whose name is etched in history as the horse who, according to legend, walked the 560 miles (850km) from Nowra to Flemington to compete in – and win - the inaugural Melbourne Cup.

Over the next 70 years stallions such as Ladurland, Syce, Seremond and The Buzzard stood at Lyndhurst. You cannot fail but notice The Buzzard's granite memorial as you approach the modern-day stallion parade ring; the stallion produced 45 stakes winners including two Melbourne Cup winners (Old Rowley and Rainbird), two Caulfield Cup winners (Buzalong and Basha) and 1937 Auckland Cup winner, The Buzzer.

The Kruger brothers purchased the property from McDougall in 1956. They dismantled the sizeable stable block on their existing Ipswich farm and, together with pockets filled with nails to resurrect it, plus their stallion One Up, relocated to Lyndhurst (where the original stable block can be seen today).

At this stage the farm remained in the realm of "just a good Australian story" rather than "history-making". But whether as a result of luck or (as the pedigree purists would prefer) an astute purchasing decision, the brothers' acquisition of the imported Stardust sire Smokey Eyes would rapidly change all that.

Following his disappointing start at stud in Victoria, Smokey Eyes arrived at Lyndhurst with four of his weanling offspring. One of the weanlings was future VRC Derby winner, New Statesman. Smokey Eyes, meanwhile, would produce another 25 stakes winners

and kick start the stud's enviable statistics which show a Lyndhurst stallion at the head of the Australian sires list (in respect of wins) no less than 25 times in 38 years.

Smokey Eyes, Hail to Success, Grand Chaudiere (the first son of Northern Dancer to stand at stud in Australia), Head Over Heels and present day incumbent Celestial Dancer have provided Lyndhurst with Champion Queensland Sire titles on 5 occasions. At the close of the recent racing season, the stud's current boom sire – the Australian bred champion Sequalo (winner of 10 sprint races including six stakes races in Melbourne and holding a track record time for 1000 metres at Moonee Valley) –provided the stud with its 6th title.

Additional records have stacked up. In the 1997-1998 season Celestial Dancer (sire of 26 Stakes winners and progeny earnings in excess of \$17m) was one of only two stallions standing in Australia who sired over 100 individual winners. The other stallion was Danehill whose service fee that year was a reported \$200,000. Celestial Dancer's was a mere \$3,000! Adding to that success, in December 2000 Celestial Dancer became the first stallion in Australia to produce more than 500 individual winners (the previous record held by another Lyndhurst stallion, Smokey Eyes, with 475 winners). Not content with State and National records, the stud also broke a world record in 1995-6 when Celestial Dancer become the first stallion to produce 100 individual winners in a season.

The stud is managed by descendants of the founding Kruger family - son (Merrell) and two grandsons (Jeff and Griff). Their modern day stallions (Sequalo, Canadian Silver, Celestial Dancer, Hayil, Irish Royal and Carry the Flag), like those who came before them, continue to market themselves by producing results where it matters most – on the track. Three of the six stallions who have had progeny to race all ranked in the top 100 on the 2003/4 general sires list, Sequalo ranking 19th, with progeny earnings of \$2,687,097. Sequalo also produced his first Group One winner in 2004, the two year old filly Star Shiraz who, in winning the QTC Sires Produce Stakes (and running a short neck second to Outback Prince in the G1 TJ Smith Stakes 9 days later) ably demonstrated that you don't need a six figure service fee to produce an exceptional race horse. Remarkably, the stud's senior citizen – 25 year old Celestial Dancer – ranked a

competitive 37th on the 2 year old sire table despite serving a limited book in the year his two year olds were conceived.

As if it didn't have enough strings to its bow, Lyndhurst is also responsible for a number of innovations that the industry now accepts as standards. It was the first stud in Australia to monitor broodmares nearing and during foaling using closed circuit television with infrared. It was the first stud to blood type foals for parentage validation before it was made compulsory for the Australian Stud Book and the first to introduce freeze branding in 1983 and, given the integral role of the nursery at Lyndhurst the stud was also a leader in developing a band of surrogate mares – the stud currently has 18.

When asked to sum up the main contribution Lyndhurst has made to the Queensland breeding industry Jeff (perhaps unsurprisingly) says it comes down to the number of winners the stud's stallions have produced.

"We have been a phenomenal source of winners to the Queensland industry. We've produced more than 8000 winners since 1956 and only Lindsay Park in South Australia can boast more than that. We've also always had a leading sire here which perhaps has an element of luck to it despite the amount of time and effort the family has put into stallion selection over the years."

The stud has enjoyed additional success outside the serving barn. Its silks have been carried by such notable horses as home-bred champion Eyeliner (voted 1967 Horse of the Year) who won eight consecutive races as a two year old (14 in total during her career), seven by margins between six and ten lengths. In 1965 Eyeliner was taken to Sydney to contest the Champagne Stakes which she won in the time of 1 minute 9.9 seconds, bettering the record of the champion Todman. Nine of her ten foals (all by Lyndhurst stallions) were also winners including the Group winners Pacific Ruler and Pacific Prince (the full brothers by Grand Chaudiere both becoming successful Queensland-based sires in later years).

Recipient of four Queensland Oaks in their first half century of ownership, the Krugers also raced Eyeshadow, the 15 hh Oaks winner filly "who was all heart" who, defying genetics, threw the 17 hh (and Group winning) Imashadow as well as the 16 hh Meanmi

Shadow who won the 1972 Queensland Oaks. Lyndhurst also raced Pacific Union who ran a close second to Show County in the G3 Stan Fox Stakes as well as the 2 year old Scomeld – her early sale no doubt later regretted considering that she went on to win the 1978 VRC Oaks.

In terms of broodmares, the stud is home to a number of good modern day producers including Cheer Girl, dam of the Bill Mitchell trained Holding (by Sequalo) who Jeff says "has stakes potential written all over her"; Good Thing (dam of Heavenly Cruise, stakes placed at 2 and winner of more than \$100,000); and Celestial Lass (by Celestial Dancer) – ½ to Grand Archway (winner of the AJC and VRC Oaks).

Hinting at the economic realities inherent in not being in a position to charge \$30,000 + service fees Jeff admits that a number of the stud's mares need upgrading but says that "with Sequalo's success there is now scope to do that".

Unlike many of its competitors Lyndhurst's owners do not have a separate business entity to bank roll the seemingly limitless expenses attached to breeding horses. Combined with this is the fact that many Queensland broodmare owners do not own mares with a pedigree page bristling with sufficient black type to justify a high-end service fee. This means the stud is forced to work on a ratio of low profit margins and a cost base requiring stringent control and management. Whilst this makes the Krugers' job all the more challenging it ironically shifts the power balance to the breeder. As Jeff candidly phrases it: "No foal - no income."

Economic realities do, however, have a silver lining. Whilst other studs may be able to boast more expansive manicured lawns, white fencing and teams of marketing professionals "attending races with glossy brochures tucked under their arms", the same studs would fall at the first hurdle when it came to matching Lyndhurst's track record in innovation, self-sufficiency and the numbers of winners bred.

Lyndhurst's self-sufficiency has rewarded it with protection from the drought affecting many other Australian properties. The farm has frontage to the Condamine River and utilizes its own bore and harvested water supplies. It also has an arrangement with Warwick Shire Council to receive the town's waste water thus allowing for extensive

irrigation. This allows the farm to crop their own lucerne, barley, wheat and maize; the 600 acres of irrigated lucerne meaning no external hay needs to be purchased.

"I just don't know how some of the other studs stay afloat with the cost of grain and fodder," Jeff says. He also acknowledges that his "nearly full dams and equipped bores are a luxury we have that others don't".

With a staff of only 12 Jeff admits that the hours are long. Lyndhurst foals in excess of 200 mares each season and has up to 500 mares on the property during the height of the breeding season. This is in addition to the weanlings and yearlings the stud prepares for the annual sales. "We get up at daybreak and don't get back til well after the sun is down. The phone's constantly ringing, we need to make sure the clients are happy and our main aim has to be that we get the results with the mares."

In terms of marketing, the stud hasn't had to adopt some of the more aggressive (and expensive) tactics that others have had to for the simple reason that the Lyndhurst stallions consistently perform. "I'm spoiled really," Jeff says. "From the time of my fore-fathers right through to today we have always had a stallion to do the marketing for us. We'd like to push Hayil a bit more as we believe he is our next bread and butter man but ultimately the stallions and their progeny are doing the talking for me".

They – and the historical stud that supports them - are speaking in volumes.

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