

Twist of fate led to stud ownership change

Former insurance CEO, Wes Hutchins, came to stud ownership by a rather unusual twist of fate. On a routine flight from Bangkok, he suffered a heart attack.

It was this emergency at 35,000 feet, not his lifelong passion for the industry, that convinced Wes to purchase the stud from its Thai owners.

"Everything happens for a purpose and I started thinking about all the things that I hadn't done in my life and that inspired me," he explained.

On May 1 this year, after a decade as the Australian director of the stud, Wes flew to Thailand to sign and collect the ownership papers. His dream had become a reality.

Formerly known as Vatana, Carringbush Farm is located just outside the small town of Wyreema, near Toowoomba, and spreads across 400 acres of prime grazing country on Queensland's Darling Downs.

Wes owns a number of mares on the property, although he admits that the actual number will probably be considered as 'far too many depending on which member of the family you speak to.'

Some of his favorites include the Robert Sangster import, Super Yankee by Superlative (IRE) (a Yellow God stallion); Decency (NZ) by Defensive Play (USA), closely related to Mapperley Heights; Windscape by Black Zephyr, already the dam of the Group 2 winner Baal Yabba; and Will If I Want by Baryshnikov, whose dam is closely related to the Group 1 winner Navy Seal.

The stud has bred a number of winners over the years, including two very popular Queenslanders performers – the hardy sprinter Maltese Edition (nine wins and \$156,405) and Irish Bunny (88 starts, 18 wins, 20 placings and prize money of \$148,930) whose gritty determination over a six-year period earned him an almost cult-like following among Sunshine Coast race-goers.

In recent years the stud played host to the internationally renowned Dare and Go, an impeccably performed and bred stallion (Alydar out of a Secretariat mare), which rose to prominence by producing the unthinkable. He put three and a half lengths on the field in the \$1-million Pacific Classic at Del Mar and ended the almost two-year and 16-straight winning streak of America's darling – Cigar.

Unfortunately, Dare and Go died suddenly in 2001, as did another of the stallions, Spicy Fact (the first Known Fact stallion to stand in Queensland).

The then-named Vatana hit a low point. Despite standing the well received Latarmis and Marechal, the stud was struggling with increased competition from the large number of stallions entering the market place and insufficient new blood that offered breeders the quintessential differentiator.

"A number of neighbouring studs were sold during that period and it did put the acid test on how we were all competing. Basically, unless you had a



Wes Hutchins, the new owner of Carringbush Farm, surveys his kingdom

damn good idea you were in trouble", Wes said.

2004 unveils a new stallion line-up that offers, in Wes' opinion, the qualities to support his theory that the Darling Downs is 'the breeding emerald of the State.'

It also prompts a rather reflective question: 'You know, given the background of these stallions, perhaps we shouldn't have called it Carringbush ... probably we should have just called it the United Nations?'

In addition to Forty Niner's sire son Inflate; AP Indy's son Storm of India and a trio of Danehill stallions – the ever popular Queensland sire Dantibes plus Markham and My Joy, the stud offers Moon Rocket, a winning son of Zabeel out of a stakes winning Danehill mare from the same family as current season sensations Dance Hero and Grand Armee.

While many large studs breed solely for the commercial yearling market, a number of smaller studs cater almost exclusively for mare owners who wish to breed and race their own horses.

The introduction of Inflate, Dantibes, and Moon Rocket to Carringbush's stallion roster has the potential to integrate a commercial element to the stud and, reassuringly for those who wish to take advantage of that fact,



One of the new arrivals at Carringbush Farm is the Zabeel stallion, Moon Rocket

Carringbush's client care program is certainly well thought of by those who have experienced it.

"We largely cater for a bunch of local people who are very loyal," Wes said. "The office is run by my wife and son and we keep every client well informed on what is happening with their mare."

"So many people say that the service they get here is the equal of other big studs they have dealt with in the past. All we have to try and do is keep the owners as happy as we keep the mares. If you do that you can't really go too far wrong." ■