

AUSTRALIA'S NEW SIRES 2017



EXPERTS ANSWER THE KEY QUESTIONS

Stuart Boman

Bloodstock agent



Peter O'Brien

General manager Segenhoe Stud



Dean Hawthorne

Bloodstock agent



James Ferguson

Bloodstock agent



Which first-season sire has caught your eye?

In a particularly large intake of first season sire's Capitalist stands out. He was the dominant juvenile of his generation and to win the Breeders' Plate, Magic Millions Two-Year-Old Classic and Golden Slipper Stakes was an unprecedented achievement. Precocity is the most desirable attribute in Australia and taking into account his race record, pedigree and sale record you would imagine that he will be a commercial success.

Capitalist is the obvious standout from a local perspective. It not only takes a brilliant animal but also a tough one to win the Magic Millions in January and then to back up and win the Golden Slipper three months later. He's a magnificent type, as you would expect from a James Harron purchase, and his female line boasts a Slipper winner in Merlene, so he ticks every box for what the market wants here.

I like to inspect stallions before deciding on matings, but one horse that's impressed me with his athleticism is Extreme Choice. His movement and great shoulder certainly impressed me, and I came away from the inspection with a very positive opinion of what he could achieve with the right type of mare. He had brilliant speed and also beat the older horses. His sire, Not A single Doubt, and his damsire, Hussonet, are stamping themselves as much sought-after bloodlines.

I really like Extreme Choice - he was bred and sold by my family and I'm really excited about him. You could say that I'm a bit biased, however, he was an exceptional juvenile and I thought his run in the Golden Slipper was enormous. He came out at three and showed that he was the real deal. He ticks all my boxes, being able to perform at two and three, his physique and turn of foot. I think he'll get pre-Christmas two-year-olds.

Which performance from any of the first-season sires were you most impressed by?

It would be impossible to go past American Pharoah's Belmont Stakes victory to become the 12th Triple Crown winner, and the first in 37 years. To be able to run three peak performances in a little over a month and sustain his speed over a mile was exceptional. The task of winning the Triple Crown seemed unattainable by the modern thoroughbred.

You could pick any of Maurice's Group 1 wins and use them to answer this question, but for me his win in the Hong Kong Mile was truly breathtaking. He's a horse that travels so well in his races and then can destroy a field in a matter of a few strides. Just read Joe Moreira and Ryan Moore's comments on the horse and that should be enough!

Maurice was a fantastic racehorse who not only performed in Japan but was also very successful on the Hong Kong circuit. He smashed quality opposition and possessed an amazing turn of foot. From his photos he looks a powerful, quality horse. Astern's win in the Golden Rose was impressive, he gave many of them windburn with his acceleration that day. He possesses solid speed through his damline through Exceed and Excel and Rory's Jester with the all-important Star Kingdom further back.

Extreme Choice as mentioned before. He performed as a two-year-old and then came back at three and dominated against the older horses in Group 1 Moir Stakes.

How do you rate this year's intake compared to previous years?

This year's intake is of a particularly high standard with no fewer than 26 Group 1 winners retiring to stud. Much has been written about the number of first-season sires retiring, but there are some seriously well-credentialed stallions entering the market. Setting aside a strong group of shuttlers; when you have individual winners of the Golden Slipper, Blue Diamond, Ascot Vale, Caulfield Guineas, Golden Rose and Australian Guineas all in the one intake then it has to be a good group.

There are an extraordinary number of first-season sires this year, with the majority precocious speed horses, which for me is a disturbing trend. Encouragingly we're now getting some outcross pedigrees, which is essential to maintaining a broader gene pool. However, even though the numbers are there this year, are there stallions that meet Hancock's Law of pedigree, performance and physique? For me you could count those on one hand this season.

It's a large intake this year and the yearling sales in 2020 are going to be hard work selecting from a large contingent of unproven sires. This year many of the colts outperformed each other at some stage, making no one three-year-old totally dominant. Being from different sire lines I think it will be pot luck picking which of this crop is going to leave the much sought-after spring and summer two-year-olds.

Scary and ridiculous, to be brutally honest. It seems to be a year where any colt that has won a stakes race and still has his testicles intact seems to have found a place at stud! We, as a nation, are starting to veer away from breeding and all of a sudden it has become about trade, trade, trade. It's all about the first season, whether it be breeding, selling, purchasing or syndicating.

Which of the shuttle stallions do you think has the best chance of succeeding?

The stallion that is able to attract the largest and best quality books of mares for the first four seasons at stud will prove to be the most successful in the long run. Early commercial success is important in a young stallion's career as it creates a fan base of breeders who are more likely to return. A horse like Astern is attractively priced, good-looking and will have the support of the Godolphin broodmare band as well.

Maurice is not only a great-looking stallion but he was also as good a racehorse as you could wish to see. He has a pedigree that will be new to Australian breeders, but it is imperative to remember that he will be supported by Arrowfield and the Yoshida family with their quality mares. That will be an extraordinary help to him in his formative years.

Maurice has a great chance if he can throw physical types like himself that will cope with the type of racing in Australia. His progeny will need to possess the turn of foot like his for our racing pattern. Japanese horses are known as being very tough and durable, so with the quality mares he is likely to get he has a chance to leave good, tough horses. He should mate nicely with the Australian speed pedigrees.

I like the look of Shalaa. He was a dominant European two-year-old and is by Invincible Spirit, who we all know is a sire of sires and seems to be working down here.

Would you consider sending a mare to dirt-raced stallions American Pharoah and Frosted?

I would send a mare to a dirt stallion, especially considering the success of Street Cry, Medaglia D'Oro and More Than Ready in recent years. American horses can be a better fit physically in the Australian market and can produce a desirable sales horse. I believe it's important to breed a fast mare to a dirt horse as the pace profile of dirt racing is generally consistent as opposed to the sit and sprint pace profile in Australia.

I know history tells us that American speed horses have worked in Australia and two-turn horses don't. However, American Pharoah was simply a champion. We know he has the looks and the pedigree, but he also had such brilliant speed at two, which sometimes we forget about. To win a Grade 1 over seven furlongs in one minute 21 seconds and change on his second start was remarkable. He's a very special animal and deserves the very best mares.

American Pharoah was a fantastic racehorse who not only won the Triple Crown but also a Breeders' Cup Classic. While cautious on dirt stallions, More Than Ready, Street Cry and Medaglia D'Oro have established themselves through our pedigrees. I think the quality US dirt horses have as much chance as any. With a horse like American Pharoah I would definitely consider sending mares. He looks a big, imposing type and the opportunity to breed to his calibre doesn't come along that often.

Personally, I wouldn't from a commercial point of view. Although they were champion racehorses, from the get go you're behind as you have to educate Australians about foreign horses, and that's who we're dealing with when it comes to selling and syndicating. Camelot was a champion racehorse in Europe, but gained little support in the ring from the syndicators. However, we need an outcross in Australia, which is why I believe we need shuttle stallions coming down under.