

2010 ALABAR NSW BREEDERS CHALLENGE 2YO SERIES

Monday 21st June saw the commencement of the 2010 Alabar NSW Breeders Challenge series at TABcorp Park Menangle. The 1400m track played host to seven 2yo events, 3 heats for the fillies and 4 for the colts and geldings. Considering the disruption that EI caused back in the 2007/2008 foaling year, it was great to see so many classy youngsters grace the big track in what will be the sole NSW futurity based event in the future.

The fillies were first to show their talents with the Victorian trained filly Madame Lily saluting in the first pacing the mile in 1.58.8. The daughter of John Street North has caught the eye of many a keen harness follower with two slashing wins at HP during her Sires Stakes campaign, including a very sharp effort in the \$50k final where she seemed to come from an impossible position to score. Her trait is to drop out at barrier rise like she did in this heat then come with one run and the long straight at Menangle makes her a live chance ahead of Sundays big final. The Colin McDowell driven Zenyatta(Bettors Delight) ran an encouraging 2nd after racing parked for most of the journey, only going down by 2.4m while the Neil Day trained Delightfullybettor(Bettors Delight) qualified for the final with a neat 3rd.

The second fillies heat saw the fast and tough Sheezallatitude spear straight to the lead and dictate terms in front, running a blistering 27.2 last quarter to hold her rivals in a 1.57.3 mile rate - the fastest of the 3 heats. The daughter of Art Major has promised a lot this season but often the rogue within her has come to the fore on smaller circuits, and she has thrown away her chances by racing erratically. Back to her favourite track she made it 4 from 4 with an effortless win and looks the one to beat in the final. Beach Fantasy (Jennas Beach Boy) and fellow qualifier Ima Gucci Girl (Art Major) both impressed with handy efforts, and the run of Ima Gucci Girl in particular makes her a knockout chance in Sundays final. Peter Trevor-Jones is having a wonderful run with his babies having taken a group 1 with his handy colt Beetson, and who knows maybe this filly might help him take home another.

The 3rd and final heat winner was the pint sized Western Terror filly Vertigal. David Thorn utilised the inside barrier well to fire through and hold the lead in a 28.3 quarter, before getting a 31.5 breather to the 1200. The little filly with a big motor started to purr from the 800 clicking up to 29.6 and Thorn sat up in confidence down most of the straight before releasing the shackles and she sprinted away for a nice 7m victory establishing a new lifetime mark of 1.57.7 - the same mark as her exciting granddam Athenas Art ran back in the early 90's. Vertigal will engage in her third tussle of the season with Sheezallatitude where she holds a 2-1 advantage, and she will be looking to extend that to 3-1 on Sundays big group 1 final from an ideal draw.

During the 3yo racing on Tuesday, the NSWHRC conducted the draw for the fillies event and the marbles seemed to fall the way of Vertigal who drew the coveted pole position. She utilised her speed out of the gate to dictate terms in her heat and holds the cards in the final. Sheezallatitude drew 11 and Madame Lily 10 respectively, although both will come into 9 and 10 with the scratchings. One would think Jimmy Brown will be off and rolling early on looking for a forward position, while Beach Fantasy in 4 and Zenyatta in 5 are drawn to be prominent. It has all the hallmarks of a classic 2yo race and may the best filly win!

As for the colts and geldings the first heat was taken out by the Presidential Ball gelding, Veracity Red. A consistent performer in several group 1 races this season, the youngster was trapped wide

for a good portion of the journey before coming 4 and 5 wide into the straight. He then unleashed a powerful sprint to finish the race off impressively, recording a 28.0 last quarter. The overall Mile rate was 1.58.4 with Tulhurst Major (Art Major) grabbing the all important 2nd spot just in front of Brick Top (Art Major) who will make up the final field as the emergency.

Art Major's influence on youngsters in NSW was highlighted by the fact he sired the next two heat winners in Just Grange and Sushi Sushi. Just Grange was first up since his 2nd in a controversial APG final behind Royal Verdict, and he booked himself a seat on Sunday with an all the way win for trainer/driver Mark Rolfe. Rolfe was able to get away with a pedestrian 33.7 2nd quarter and also a slow 30.4 3rd split before zooming home in a slick 27.5. He had 4m to spare over the Perrot trained and driven Beach Inspector (Jennas Beach Boy) who sneaks into the final field.

It is always a joy to see talented progeny of former top line racemares grace the racetrack. Who could ever forget the exploits of Sabilize here in NSW during the 90's. Everybody would have anticipated the \$355k earner (31 wins) to be a stand out broodmare however as we all know things don't always pan out as you would expect. A reward for perseverance for Weona Standardbreds' Trevor Swan, as it seems Sabilize has hit the mark with Art Major, leaving the Group 1 Seymour winner in Sushi Sushi and whom appears to be one of the best 2yo colts this season in Australia. He showed his potential by winning the 3rd heat. Sushi Sushi found the top and clocking a sizzling 26.6 final sectional, after going through the first 3 quarters in 28.9, 31.5 and 30.0. Driver Ricky Thurlow was sitting confidently on the colt as he went to the line with 2m to spare over a very gallant and talented Excel Stride (Aces N Sevens), the clock stopped dead on 1.57 for the mile. The name gives it away and it was hard to wipe the smile off the affable Emilio Rosati's face after such a strong run by one he bred himself. He had some kick in his 'stride'! Torida El (Elsu) snuck into the final with a handy 3rd for Tom Frost and Glenn McElhinney.

The final heat went to the Bettors Delight colt and Linden Huntley Little Memorial Winner Dee Devito. Wotattitude found the top giving Dee Devito a trail but as is customary, Wotattitude rolled along in a very good clip and this told over the concluding stages where Dee Devito popped off his back, and ran him down for a half neck victory in 1.56.6 - the fastest of all heats on the day. The Peter Tonkin colt has performed really well this season amassing nearly \$74k from 10 starts and looks to add to that tally in the 2yo Colts and geldings final on Sunday.

The barrier draw has been very kind to Dee Devito as it has grabbed the pole while its main dangers have drawn north of barrier 8 (actually barrier 6 with the scratchings). Just Grange drew 8, Excel Stride drew 9, Sushi Sushi drew 10 and Veractiy Red drew 11. However Wotattitude has drawn 5 and will endeavour to roll forward so an even clip is expected up front giving those drawn wide the opportunity to get right into the race during the latter stages.

The two 2yo races promise to be first class and there will be no better place to be than track side for Alabar NSW Breeders Challenge and Industry Day this coming Sunday at TABcorp Park Menangle.

2010 ALABAR NSW BREEDERS CHALLENGE 3YO SERIES

Menangle played host to the 3yo version of the Breeders Challenge as some familiar faces lined up for the chance to have a crack for Group 1 glory this coming Sunday. There were two heats for the fillies and three for the colts and geldings. The fillies fields were brim full of talent and the first fillies heat saw an interesting square-off between reigning Sires Stakes champion, and last seasons 2yo Challenge winner Lady Euthenia. It is fair to say that Lady Euthenia hasn't dominated like she did at two and she has been aggressively driven in recent starts fizzing her up and leading to her downfall. You sense that maybe all is not right with Peter Lewis's star daughter of Art Major. On the other hand the new top girl is another Art Major in Starryart who was keen to stamp her authority and take the mantle from Lady Euthenia as NSW top 3yo filly, after her stylish win in the Sires Final at HP.

Both the big guns were content to sit at the rear of the field as Art Princess cut out the early pace. The Rixon trained Sassy Street worked to the chair to keep the leader honest but all focus was on the back of the pack and the cat and mouse game that ensued. Approaching the turn the Matthew Harris Aces N Sevens filly Reneging stole a bit of a march on the two big guns by getting close to the leaders, while Proctor and Reese were struggling to put their horses into the race. There ended up being a blanket go across the line with Reneging landing the prize by a half neck to Lady Euthenia, who was set a mighty task at the back of the field, and a further neck back to Starryart. Art Princess (Art Major) and Sassy Street (John Street North) were right there too and all qualified for the final in 2.00.5. The last half was an impressive 56.6 leader to winner so it is fair to say that the two at the back broke 56.0 for their half, remarkable efforts really and maybe we will see them fighting out the finish on Sunday. Take nothing away from Reneging, she has plenty of ability and is sure to land a big prize soon.

The second fillies heat looked a little easier on paper but it was a spirited battle on the track. Art Majors everywhere, one daughter (Lilac Stride) led and another (Bonnie Mahoney) parked outside her for a great ding dong battle from the 1200m mark. After a slow lead of 53.5 and a soft 32.7 the gloves were off as they quickened through a 30.0 2nd split, quickening right up to 28.2 for the 3rd quarter and home in 28.6. Bonnie Mahoney managed to ground out the win over a gallant Lilac Stride who never gave in, and a dangerous Blissfulicious (Blissful Hall) lurking close behind beaten only 2m. Stephanie Major and Dance Teacher make up the 5 that will go through to Sunday's final.

The draw for the Alabar Breeders Challenge 3yo Fillies Final has ensured plenty of speed inside with Art Princess (1), Bonnie Mahoney (2), Lilac Stride (3) and Lady Euthenia (4) drawn to be very prominent early. The key to the race will be Lady Euthenia's ability to settle in the run but her job will be made easier with Starryart and Reneging drawing 11 and 12 respectively. Having said that Starryart unleashed a paralysing burst of speed in the recent Sires final and a repeat of that with genuine speed up front will bring her right into the race. Make sure you are there to see the finale this Sunday and which 3yo filly will reign supreme!

The colts and geldings brought some familiar names to the fore as two of last year's vintage crop of 2yo stepped out at Menangle to qualify for the final. Chariot King (Badlands Hanover) was up first and managed to secure top spot in the first heat and he never looked back. He rated 1.59.1 for the 2300m but didn't really get away from Mike Brennan (Aces N Sevens) and Master Joy (Art Major) who gave driver Michael Doltoff a torrid time, hanging badly around the sweeping bends. When he straightened up he really knuckled down to the task but he will need to be on his best behaviour in the final.

In the next heat the Susan Hunter trained Art Major colt Its My Pleasure led and won with some ease over Make Mine Cullen's half brother by Badlands Hanover, Billy Badlands with Jack Hall (Blissful Hall) for Mal Whiteford back in 3rd in 2.52.4 for a mile rate of 2.00.6. Probably the easiest of heats, Its My Pleasure rolled to the front and it was a procession from there, going 53.1, 32.0, 30.4, and home in 56.9 with splits 28.6 and 28.3. It seems Its My Pleasure might have the wood on stablemate Master Joy and will be a live hope in Sundays final.

The final heat brought back the 2yo of the year last season, Cuttheattitude. It has been well documented the life threatening condition that this horse had and it is a huge credit to trainers Felicity and Damien Gallagher who have worked wonders with this horse for owners Greg and Mandy Targett. To even see it on track is a minor miracle but to break track records and put in astonishing runs like the Vicbred final when attacked the whole way, it is testimony to the deep seated ability this horse has.

This race wasn't going to be a pushover for the Modern Art gelding but no one told that to the horse who blessed us with his magnificent action and fluency of gait to pace an astonishing 1.56.7 for the 2300m leading most of the way. Jimmy Brown didn't muck around early, running a bold 49.5 lead time but he never took his foot off the accelerator running two consecutive sub 30 quarters for the first half of 59.8. Jimmy might have almost incurred a speeding fine from the Stewards as the heat remained on through a 29.0 3rd split, with many back in the field begging for some sort of respite as they were out on their feet. It was a lovely sight of such a wonderful action as Cuttheattitude bowled up the long straight in a 28.4 well within himself and on this effort he has to be clearly the one to beat on Sunday. He had 18m to spare over Tsunami Sloy (Jennas Beach Boy) and Smackdown (Dream Away) but given the exceptional time, Gentlemans Crossing (Explorador) snuck into the final for Bill Trembath despite being beaten 23m. It was a stamp of authority that this horse is well and truly back on home turf and no doubt he will carry a lot of sentiment on Sunday given the dramas the horse has been through.

Barrier draws are funny things and what has really spiced up Sundays event is that Cuttheattitude drew 11 in the final, while Its My Pleasure and Chariot King drew 3 and 5 respectively. The 2300m will give Jimmy Brown plenty of time to put his charge into the race and it could be game on from the 800m as the colts and geldings fight for supremacy. On things for sure the wonderful long straight will create many good finishes, raising the excitement of the crowd as we crown the new Breeders Challenge champions as they chase group 1 glory.

Get trackside and see it first hand. The NSW industry has a very bright future with the pending sale of Harold Park and a good result with the Race Fields Legislation ensuring NSW will be a fertile ground for breeders, owners and followers of harness racing alike well into the future.