



SA-connected colt, *Pluck*, overcame an adventuresome trip to win the 2010 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf by a length under jockey Garrett Gomez. (breederscup.com)

Breeders' Cup winner and his SA connections

PLUCK'S PEDIGREE GOES ALL THE WAY BACK TO PERSIAN WONDER

TEAM Valor International's owner Barry Irwin threw up his hands in despair and exclaimed to his wife, "What else can happen?"

He was watching the Breeders Cup Juvenile Turf at Churchill Downs and his homebred colt *Pluck* had first pecked at the start and then had to veer left to avoid a horse which had slipped and fallen, writes DAVID THISELTON.

The colt went on to record a quite astonishing win and his background, which is very South African, is also full of unlikely success stories.

Irwin had not been at all confident of *Pluck* winning his Breeder's Cup assignment.

The More Than Ready colt had won his preparation race in Canada well, but the time had been slower than the two-year-old fillies race on the same day.

Then a week before the Breeder's Cup he had been outworked by a two-year-old filly called More Than Real.

"I was depressed until More Than Real won the Breeders Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf!" said Irwin. "I still didn't think our colt would finish in the top three. He was in gate 12 and in the last five years no horse had won from there at Churchill Downs!"

Irwin's pessimism proved to be unfounded.

He recalled, "Halfway through the race my main concern was whether my colt was injured because he was so far back and the rider had collected him and was not moving. As he started his move, I watched at ground level on the dirt track and had a hard time believing what I was seeing.

"When *Pluck* reached his top-end speed, it was like a runaway locomotive--he was powering into the lead with an amazing degree of force. I was so stunned, I never said a word, never cheered--I just watched in pure amazement." (to p2)

PLUCK'S SA CONNECTION (fm p1)

The Pluck story starts in 1964 when Cape Turf Club chairman and founder of Highlands Stud, Jack Stubbs, imports a horse to South Africa called Persian Wonder.

Racing historian Jay August reported recently Persian Wonder won nine races in the UK including the Dee Stakes. However, in SA he was unplaced in every one of his nine starts.

Persian Wonder then, upon being retired to stud, attracted zero interest from breeders. Stubbs had to go it alone and the expensive import covered just seven mares in his first season and seventeen in his second.

Well known racing industryman Robin Bruss elaborated, "He had a long back, a hind leg so straight that he barely had a hock, and he had long slack pasterns. It was also true he was a horse of great quality and what seemed to make such odd conformation work was that the straight hind leg provided great leverage and contributed to a flawless action."

Sentiment turned 180 degrees after Persian Wonder had produced the top class Shah Abbas in his second crop.

Persian Wonder went on to become a six-times champion sire and four times champion broodmare sire.

The next chapter in the story was when top trainer David Payne bought two maternal grandsons of Persian Wonder at the National Yearling Sales on behalf of leading owner Laurie Jaffee.

The pair was called Bush Telegraph and Real Tennis and were by the respective champion sires Jungle Cove and Royal Prerogative.

Bruss recalled how Jaffee had to approach Payne at the Sale with an embarrassing admission. He had promised to buy a yearling for Bert Abercrombie in the latter's first year as a trainer but had completely forgotten to do so.

Abercrombie had now reminded him and Jaffee said to Payne, "David I am going to have to give him one of the two horses you bought for me, I'm very sorry, you pick the one you want and we'll give the other one to Bert."

Without hesitation Payne replied, "No problem I will take Real Tennis."

Payne had trained Real Tennis's stakes-winning

dam Little Mo, a nine-time winner who had possessed tremendous speed, and Real Tennis had been one of his picks of the Sale.

Bruss remembered Bush Telegraph to be as plain looking as his father Jungle Cove, who had in turn been a surprising success at stud as his most important win in North America had been over thirteen furlongs.

However, Bush Telegraph famously won his first nine races including the Daily News 2000 and Durban July. He was a fine sire too and was a big loss when passing away after siring just five crops.

One of his good daughters, the Mike Azzie-trained Secret Pact, a three-times Listed-winning full sister to Horse Of The Year London News, became a matriarch.

Irwin bought Secret Pact's Listed-winning daughter Secret Heart in-training from Laurie Jaffee and also tried to buy her half-sister Promisefrommyheart. However, the latter's owners Varsfontein Stud would not consider selling. Irwin said this was despite him offering them almost double what he had paid for his Dubai Duty Free winner Ipi Tombe.

Irwin bought Secret Heart due to "her racing class, her ample size and her terrific pedigree." He was also drawn to her speed.

Irwin chose More Than Ready for her first cover as he liked the cross of Turn-to over Northern Dancer.

Pluck was the result and Irwin said, "He was a looker from day one and I told our racing partners that we should retain him for racing."

Pluck was retired to Vinery Stud in Australia after two unplaced runs as a three-year-old. His progeny won in nine different countries but ultimately he could not compete with the high calibre of local and shuttle stallions in Australia.

Secret Pact's family has become one of the most sought after in the SA stud book, so the record price Varsfontein Stud had to pay to buy her at a broodmare sale has proved money well spent.

Her home-bred champion, the late Promisefrommyheart, is becoming a matriarch herself with Master Of My Fate among her progeny.

Another of Secret Pact's home-bred daughters Covenant also won a Grade 1 and currently has the exciting home-bred colt Erik The Red representing her. - **tt**.

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Forty Niner dies at 35

FOUR-time grade 1 winner, champion, and prominent international sire Forty Niner died from old age on Tuesday, according to Shigeaki Yusa, stallion affairs manager for Japan Bloodhorse Breeders Association.

Forty Niner entered stud at Claiborne in 1989 and became the leading North American freshman sire in 1992, with graded stakes winners Tactical Advantage and Dalhart in his first crop. For his stallion career overall, Forty Niner sired 56 (6%) black-type winners and another 50 that placed in black-type stakes. His top runners include 26 graded/group winners worldwide. In Japan, he sired Utopia, who won stakes in Japan, Dubai, and the United States and earned nearly \$5 million in purses.

His influence will live on in pedigrees through his prominent sire sons Distorted Humor and Roar and their sons. Forty Niner also is the sire of American graded stakes winner End Sweep (sire of our own Trippi), who stood in Japan as well and sired Japanese 2007 Horse of the Year Admire Moon and champion older mare Sweep Tosho. He also sired the deceased successful Wilgerbosdrift stallion, Rich Man's Gold. - *Bloodhorse*.



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RA co-opts two new board members

THE Racing Association has announced the appointment of two new members to its board, namely Garth Towell and Mapula Sambo. They were co-opted by the current directors and were introduced by current and previous directors on the basis that they could provide valuable assistance to the board at this time.

Garth Towell completed a B.Comm LLB at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1993, and joined FTSE 100 listed CPG company Kimberly-Clark, holding numerous senior management and executive positions in South Africa and the United Kingdom, with responsibilities across the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa (MEA) region, culminating in the Managing Director role for sub-Saharan Africa from 2008-2013.

He contested the 2014 South African national general election with a newly formed political party, Agang-SA, winning two seats in the National Assembly.

Garth subsequently joined the Ethos Private Equity Group in 2014, completing the acquisition of a number of CPG companies and successfully leading to the establishment, integration and operation of the Twinsaver Group. He has recently completed a 3-year contract as Group Chief Executive Officer.

He is a former Board member of the South African American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham), Vice-chair of the South African Paper Manufacturers Association (PAMSA) and current Board member of the South African Institute of Race Relations



(SAIRR).

Garth has been a member of the Racing Association for over a decade and has horses in training with the Sean Tarry yard.

GARTH TOWELL.

Mapula Sambo is a Masters' in Business Administration (MBA) graduate, a seasoned entrepreneur with a broad proficiency in business management and operations management.

Her other areas of experience are in estate agency management, education, financial management and internal auditing.

Mapula is a colour holder and has an interest in a syndicate in the Mike de Kock Racing Stable.

Besides serving on the RA Board, Mapula will also serve on Sales, Marketing and Racing Operations as well as the Finance, Audit and Risk Committees. She is described as a visionary and planner, and a Creative and innovative leader. **-RA Media Release.**



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Wedding bells for jock Teetan



MAURITIAN jockey and star of the recent FWD Champions Day at Sha-Tin, Karis Teetan got married to Xavier Cottereau in Hong Kong on Sunday. We wish them well.

Ambassadors we like to see



IN the absence of a live Ladies Day at Newbury Racecourse, UK, last Saturday, the organisers staged a 'Virtual Memories' race day and asked the virtual community to vote for some of the best-dressed ladies from years gone by. Capetonian racing fanatic Jill Warner featured prominently, remembered for her Wendy Pitter outfit last year, no surprise!

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