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SOUTH AFRICAN DERBY WINNER RUSSIAN SAGE BOUGHT BY TEAM VALOR, J. SNAITH TRAINS FOR DURBAN JULY, DAILY NEWS 2000 PRIOR TO EXPORT, INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN THAT INCLUDES DUBAI AND EUROPE BECKONS

Team Valor International has put together an eclectic assemblage of racing partners from different countries to campaign Grade 1 Cape of Good Hope Derby winner Russian Sage, stable principal Barry Irwin announced today.

Irwin negotiated purchase of the South African star directly with the Estate of John Newsome, who raced with his wife Karen as the fabulously successful Fieldspring Racing. Among the famous horses to sport their maroon and white colors was Dynasty, the Horse of the Year at 3 the season he won the Durban July.

Although purchased for export to Europe and an ambitious international campaign, the 3-year-old will make two final starts in his homeland, with his developer Justin Snaith training him for runs in the weekend's Grade 1 Daily News 2000, which will be his second race off a layoff and serve as his final prep for the July 5 renewal of the Durban July.



Russian Sage's posed photo for the Durban July advertising portfolio.

No trainer has been as yet selected for the colt's career outside of South Africa.

"We wanted to buy half of Jay Peg and Sun Classique last year to race in Dubai with their owners," said Irwin. "But for one reason or another we were unable to come to a meeting of the minds. So this year we bought 100 percent of the colt that we reckon is the most likely South African-based runner with a chance to make a similar impression in Dubai."

Irwin, whose Captain's Lover won the Grade 1 Cape Fillies Guineas this season with Snaith at the helm, said he has had his eye on Russian Sage for quite some time. "I am glad the transaction to land him for Team Valor has come to fruition," Irwin noted. "We think he will improve with age. Since bucking his shins in the Matchem Stakes, he has been first 4 times and second twice in his 6 starts. He is consistent and courageous."

Among those in the partnership that will campaign the colt are National Horse Racing Authority Chairman Larry Nestadt, in whose royal blue colors the colt will contest the Durban July, and Gary Barber, the South African-born, Los Angeles-based movie producer of "Seabiscuit" fame.

Russian Sage is by leading sire Jallad. His dam has produced a winner of the Grade 1 Derby in Cape Town and is a half-sister to a Grade 1 winner of the SA Derby in Johannesburg. The next dam had a pair of Champions, including a Grade 1 winner of the Fillies Guineas in Gauteng.