

FRESH FROM THAILAND, WIDE RANGE BOOKED TO MEDAGLIA D'ORO BARRY IRWIN LANDS FOAL SHARE AGREEMENT WITH DARLEY STUD RESULTING FOAL WILL BE A THREE-QUARTER SIBLING TO STAR SONGBIRD

After traveling from the farthest reaches of the Thoroughbred world all the way back to the epicenter, Wide Range received another major boost today when Barry Irwin was able to nail down a nomination for her to be bred to Medaglia d'Oro, the sire of her star half sister Songbird.

The mare arrived last weekend in Kentucky, circling back to her birthplace all the way from Thailand, where Irwin tracked her down this winter with the hope that a spot in Medaglia d'Oro's book would become available. Irwin had already sold his own season to the red-hot sire, and no others were on the market—weeks earlier a season had sold at the TCA charity auction for \$235,000, a premium of \$85,000 from his advertised fee.



Wide Range a few days after arriving at Denali Stud in the bluegrass. She is due next month on a cover to three-time Belmont Park stakes winner English Colony.

Irwin asked Darley Stud's director of sales to let him know if something opened up. The good news came earlier today.

"I have just been informed by Darren Fox of Darley Stud in Lexington that a breeding nomination to Medaglia d'Oro has become available and they will enter into a foal-sharing arrangement with our mare Wide Range," Irwin reported to Wide Range's LLC members. "We will retain possession of the mare and keep her at Denali Stud. We will breed the mare to MDO and pay no stud fee. When the foal is a yearling it will be sold for the mutual benefit of Darley and the Wide Range LLC. I am thrilled to be able to announce the fruition of this agreement."

The word also came the same day that Timeform listed Songbird as far and away the leading 3-year-old in North America, with a rating of 125p, and second overall behind European champion colt Air Force Blue at 128. The top-rated U.S. colt is Nyquist at 119.

Jon White, the track handicapper at Santa Anita Park, wrote the following about Songbird recently for XpressBet.com:

Songbird Super Impressive

Now that the 2016 presidential is in full swing following Tuesday's New Hampshire primaries, I could not help but think of what would have happened if last Saturday's Las Virgenes Stakes had been an election instead of a Grade II horse race.

When Songbird's lead had grown to a whopping 10 lengths with a furlong to go in the one-mile event, I imagined seeing a check mark being put next to Songbird's name on a television network's election coverage. "They are at the eighth pole in the Las Virgenes and we now can make a call in this race," a television talking head would say. "ZNN can now project that Songbird will win the Las Virgenes Stakes."



The unbeaten Songbird is scheduled for the Grade 3 Santa Ysabel on March 5 and Grade 1 Santa Anita Oaks leading up to the Kentucky Oaks.

The Las Virgenes was the fifth race on the Santa Anita card. But to be perfectly frank, it is a misnomer to say the fifth was a "race" because it was not a race at all. It was a wipeout. Songbird dominated her five rivals to such an extent that she actually managed to make her 1-20 odds look generous.

Eric Sondheimer noted in the Los Angeles Times that Songbird's performance not only drew applause from the fans in attendance at the Great Race Place, the filly is sparking comparisons to biggies from the past.

"There are those rare moments in horse racing when even the losing bettors stand up and applaud when they are witnessing greatness," Sondheimer wrote. "That was the scene on a gorgeous Saturday afternoon at Santa Anita, where the unbeaten 3-year-old filly Songbird, sent off at 1-9 [on the tote board], is drawing comparisons to the likes of Ruffian and Rachel Alexandra."

Even though Songbird is undefeated and still untested in five career starts, she has not demonstrated to me that she is in the same league as Ruffian.

Heck, I am not 100% sure that Songbird even would beat another undefeated 3-year-old filly, Cathryn Sophia, who currently is racing on the East Coast. Yes, I think Songbird most likely would beat Cathryn Sophia, who has won her three races by 12 3/4, 16 1/4 and 5 1/2 lengths. But am I absolutely positive that Songbird would beat her? No, I am not.

If Songbird keeps on winning races in such dominant fashion, perhaps the day will come on down the line when it would be fine compare her to Ruffian, but not yet. Let me remind you that every single time Ruffian ran in a stakes race against fillies, she broke or tied a track or stakes record. That actually made Ruffian more comparable to Man o' War than Songbird is to Ruffian. Songbird has not yet come close to any stakes records, let alone any track records. Ruffian won at distances ranging from 5 1/2 furlongs to 1 1/2 miles.

Count me among those who believe Ruffian was the greatest female Thoroughbred in the history of American racing.

"No one since 1975 has compared another filly to Ruffian without ducking," Daily Racing Form's Hall of Fame writer Jay Hovdey observed. "You want to get hit by lightning, go ahead."