

HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

ELIZA PARK
INTERNATIONAL
... 12 MONTHS ON



Fiorente

A little more than a year ago, Eliza Park International was launched at a glittering ceremony at Crown. The owner, Hong Kong-based Sun International Group, promised many exciting developments for the racing and breeding operation, and so far it has quietly delivered across a broad range of activities.

While the launch of the brand was something of an extravaganza under the glow of a laser light show, behind the scenes the development of Eliza Park International, under a new infrastructure, has been performed seamlessly – without fanfare.

Apart from the additions of two new stallions – the exciting Melbourne Cup winner Fiorente (by Monsun) and the brilliant juvenile Fighting Sun (by Northern Meteor) – Eliza Park International is putting into place a system that will see the business firmly establish itself as Victoria's leading thoroughbred breeding and racing outfit: and one that will compete at the highest level in Australia.

Sun International's Mr Ting Kong Cheng has developed a team that is a mixture of the old and the new to spearhead the redevelopment of the vast racing and breeding operation, headed by CEO Alvin Lui, operations manager David Somers, internationally renowned bloodstock adviser David O'Callaghan and Racing Division general manager, Sue Ellis.

Eliza Park, which was established in 1998 with the purchase of the main farm at Kerrie, subsequently grew into six farms in three states, with a first-class breaking and pre-training division and more than a dozen stallions.

However, in the past 12 months, Eliza Park International has consolidated the operation to four farms – the main property at Kerrie, the adjoining Nardoo spelling complex, the weaning and yearling preparation farm, Smithfield, at Nagambie, and the impressive Queensland breeding farm at Innisplain.

Visitors to the Kerrie farm, which houses the Victorian stallions, including 6-time Champion Victorian sire Bel Esprit, will notice ▶

IT'S MORE THAN MONEY



Standing a champion sire is a lot like winning Lotto, but studmasters all agree they're worth a lot more than simply money in the bank.

Widden Stud's Antony Thompson said as much when Northern Meteor died a day before being crowned Australia's first-season champion in July 2013.

"We're shattered," Thompson lamented. "Northern Meteor was a noble horse and made a lasting impression on all who knew him.

"Instead of celebrating, we are mourning his death and wondering what might have been."

However, the ill-fated Encosta de Lago stallion could well create a legacy of his own with the retirement to stud, this year, of both lightning quick 2YO, Fighting Sun, and the Group One winning sprinter, Zoustar.

Although his oldest are only rising 4YOs, Northern Meteor's legacy is monumental with 10 stakeswinners including other Group One winners such as Cosmic Endeavour and Romantic Touch.

KARL PATTERSON takes a look at some other stallions that stepped off the stage all too early.

Widden lost another champion stallion in 2009 when brilliant influence, General Nediym, succumbed to colic. He had won the Magic Millions 2YO Classic before training on to Group One success in the Newmarket and Lighting at Flemington.

Transferred to the historic Hunter Valley nursery after earlier stints in Queensland and Victoria, General Nediym "was a 'life changing' horse for all those who came in contact with him," Thompson recalled. "His oldest Widden bred progeny were three year-olds and we were confident they would take him to another level."



Dubai Millenium

They did that and more with another 30 stakes winners including Group One stars Mrs Onassis (Oakleigh Plate) and Warhorse (NZ Diamond Stakes).

Golden Slipper winners have always been considered breeding barn gold and the 1980s were no different with Marscay, Rory's Jester and Marauding all having extended careers in the breeding barn.

Star Watch (Bletchingly) won the 1988 Golden Slipper and would likely have been just as successful as that trio, but unfortunately died after just two seasons at Woodlands Stud. Incredibly, those two books generated the winners of a whopping 28 stakes races.

Topping that list was Hurricane Sky, Group One winner of the 1994 Blue Diamond Stakes and 1995 All-Aged Stakes.

Hurricane Sky retired to Arrowfield Stud and sired numerous stakes winners with outstanding mare Divine Madonna grabbing Group One gongs in Melbourne (Emirates Stakes, Toorak Handicap and Myer Classic) and Sydney (Queen of the Turf Stakes).

Hurricane Sky is rising 23 and in retirement after transferring to Scenic Lodge in Western Australia. He stood there for six years before low fertility saw him revert to the stud's teaser!



Northern Meteor

Perhaps Adraan (Zeddaan) will go down in history as our greatest one-hit wonder. He retired to Narrung Stud in South Australia but died before finishing his first book in 1982.

Subsequently, there were only 22 starters from that sole crop and 20 of them won. Remarkably, nine of those winners earned black-type with the best of them being Group One winner Magic Flute who was raced by Mike Willessee and won the AJC Doncaster Handicap as a 3YO.

On the international stage, there have been two famous cases of champions serving just one book at stud ... Shergar and Dubai Millennium.

Shergar (Great Nephew) was retired to Ballymany Stud in County Kildare after a record-breaking 10 length victory in the 1981 English Derby and served 35 mares first-up. However, within a week of commencing his second book, he was kidnapped and held for ransom.

The theft was the inspiration for several books, documentaries and a film but his fate has never been conclusively established.

Among the foals from his single season was Authaal who won the Group One Irish St Leger prior to an Australian campaign which saw him take out the Group One AJC Queen Elizabeth and VATC Underwood Stakes.

Authaal was Sheikh Mohammed's first starter in the Melbourne Cup but he finished down the track behind Empire Rose in the 1987 chapter.

Among the thousands of horses he has bred and raced, Dubai Millennium remains Sheikh Mohammed's all-time favourite. Initially registered as Yaazer, he was renamed before winning on debut at Yarmouth in October 1998.

Dubai Millennium trained on to win the Group One Prix Jacques le Marois and Queen Elizabeth II Stakes at three and followed up in the Dubai World Cup and Prince of Wales's Stakes as a four year-old before retiring to Dalham Hall Stud at Newmarket.

Dubai Millennium (Seeking The Gold) covered 82 blueblood mares in his first book and among them was the dam of Dubawi, who would develop into a Group One winner of the Irish National Stakes, Irish 2000 Guineas and Prix Jacques Le Marois and is now rated the leading commercial sire in Europe.

Sheikh Mohammed flew in from the Gulf when Dubai Millennium came down with grass sickness in April 2001. The Dubai ruler was reported to be devastated when Dubai Millennium was put down on humane grounds after three operations.

Another case of a horse being worth more than money – even for a man with assets of \$18 billion. ▲

FIGHTING SUN

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN?

Eliza Park International's Sales & Nominations Manager, Mark Lindsay, is confident that Fighting Sun will enjoy a similar 'meteoric' rise to that of his sire.

"The hype around this horse was tremendous even before he had his first start in January and, after he had won the Canonbury, we thought the sky was the limit.

"Gai (Waterhouse) was adamant Fighting Sun would have won the Slipper, based on what he'd shown at his only two starts, and (jockey) Tommy Berry was equally enthusiastic. Gai and Tommy had combined to win the Slipper with Overreach the year before and you don't normally get a multiple Group One winning jockey raising his whip with such relish after a Listed event.

"Unfortunately Fighting Sun got hurt and had to be retired - reluctantly - so it's always going to be a case of what might have been.

"Broodmare owners didn't blink though - especially watching the race replays - and the response has been incredible. I've been doing this a few years now, but Fighting Sun is probably the easiest 'sell' ever."

Northern Meteor will live on at Widden Stud through his champion colt Zoustar. He won the G1 Coolmore Stud Stakes at Flemington earlier this season and will join its roster this year.

Eliza Park International has also tapped into the sireline with Fighting Sun. He was rated ahead of Zoustar as a two year-old after winning the LR Canonbury Stakes at Rosehill by three lengths.

"This is a serious horse," trainer Gai Waterhouse said following the victory over Darley's Group 2 winner Ghibellines. "His acceleration is electrifying!"

Fighting Sun suffered a suspensory ligament injury after the Canonbury Stakes which denied him a start in the G1 Golden Slipper Stakes. He will stand for an introductory fee of \$13,750 (inc gst).

"Gai (Waterhouse) was adamant Fighting Sun would have won the Slipper, based on what he'd shown at his only two starts."

