





# Q&A

## STEVEN REID

When the 2010/2011 racing season began there were many who figured it would be a very difficult year for New Zealand trainer Steven Reid. While acknowledged as a skilled conditioner, he was in rebuilding mode having severed his relationship with Graeme Rogerson and parting ways with the well heeled owner Robert Famularo two years earlier.

The timing of the Rogerson split could not have been worse. The yearling sales were well over and he found himself with a string of hopefuls and others that were useful but hardly star performers. It appeared that he would be treading water at best this season.

But then along came Gold Ace, a three-year-old Bettors Delight colt who has emerged from the pack to be the best sophomore in New Zealand and quite possibly Australia as well. On New Zealand Cup Day, with the entire New Zealand racing industry watching, he won the \$180,000 New Zealand Sires Stake Final at Addington Raceway.

The colt followed that up with a stirring effort to take the \$50,000

Alabar Elsu Classic and then on New Year's Eve the \$253,000 New Zealand Yearling Sales Final at Alexandra Park. That earned him a ticket to Australia for the upcoming \$200,000 Victoria Derby at Melton's Tabcorp Park.

In short, Reid has catapulted himself right into the forefront of the racing scene this season with stable winnings of nearly \$400,000, a remarkable accomplishment given his status as recent as last October.

Over the years Reid has proven himself to be one of the more articulate horsemen in the racing game. He realizes the importance of communication and offers an active website, which may be viewed by [clicking here](#), to keep current and prospective clients up to speed on the stable's happenings.

Reid is well aware that in the racing game one is only as good as their last win. In a recent interview with Garrick Knight he talks about the series of events heading into this season, the emergence of Gold Ace and his aspirations for the future. (Trish Dunnell photo)





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*It's been a period of change for you over the past 20 months. How did you reset yourself with new ambitions and goals after finding yourself at the age of 47 effectively back to square one with only a handful of horses and your reputation to kick start you?*

Obviously, there are things I haven't achieved that I want to. As far as resetting myself, I was able to do that quite easily. I feel happy in myself knowing that I have come of age as a trainer and I feel I am a better trainer to what I was 10 years ago.

*Your new team is now rolling along led by Gold Ace. But is it the arsenal that will allow you to be a serious player at the premier meetings this season? How have you attempted to build up numbers without taking in someone else's castoffs?*

I have got the arsenal to be a player, maybe not the numbers like in past years but definitely in quality. When you consider it was only a matter of months ago that I had very few horses I would say things are firmly on target to get bigger and better.

To have horses like Gold Ace, Charge Forward and Snos Big Boy has been a massive injection very early. I would have been

Reid selected and developed the outstanding pacer Monkey King and calls watching him race for another trainer "the most difficult thing I've ever had to do. To lose the horse when I did was a bitter blow."

happy to have two horses in the Sires Stakes Final in three years after going back out on my own, but for it to happen in a matter of months gives me great pleasure.

*Gold Ace has emerged a star having won \$282,000 for you by the end of December. That was hardly expected.*

I own a small share in Gold Ace and before my partnership with Graeme Rogerson ended I asked Graeme to buy me out. If I remember I came down a little in price but he still insisted on a price that was too low in my mind. So I rang Derek Clarke the breeder and he was only too happy to buy the other share.

Then it turned out that Graeme's racing manager Murray Gregory and some friends of his owned a share and did not want to be in the horse if Rogey wasn't training it. So it turned out that we had to buy half the horse if we wanted him.

I said to my wife Wendy that we have to put our balls on the line and even though I thought the price was top dollar, I always liked the horse and we should take a chance and buy them out. You have to believe in yourself and your eye for a horse.

So I rang another client I had many years ago, Michael Ng, who I had seen from time to time and always thought

would come in on another horse if I asked. I told him I knew it was a lot of money but if this horse improved like I thought he would, he could be a major player as a three-year-old. It looks like we made the right decision.

**Was there consideration given to selling Gold Ace before Cup Day at Addington?**

I've had a couple horses in my life that were sold because I needed the money. Up until now I've always needed the money. I didn't want to sell Cruzin Foralivin (Live Or Die) in 2008 because I was huge on her but the money we got from America was so good. I said to Wendy one day 'why don't we take the punt and keep her?' as I thought she was a Cup class mare.

She'd come off (Two Year Old Filly of the Year) Lizzie Maguire's back and beaten her in 2:42 over 2,200 metres and had just beaten (current open class pacer) Pembroke Benny. She ran home in :56.8 and he couldn't get near her.

I said to Robert Famularo (co-owner) I reckon she's a Cup mare and had sort of made the decision to keep her. Robert is an astute businessman and basically said

I was stupid if I didn't sell her. So we let her go to Joe Muscara in the US and she went on to do a huge job racing in the open mares in the United States.

So the answer is no.

**For the benefit of those who have not been up close to Gold Ace, can you describe him?**

He's not an overly tall horse, about 15.2 hands I would say but quite long in the barrel. His conformation is good but he's not a horse that looks any more than a \$30,000 yearling purchase would.

**So what about Gold Ace now?**

He does everything you ask of him. He has all-round game. He steps well, has a beautiful gait, great stamina and, above all, he has great speed. He is a privilege to train. In the two weeks between his last two wins I hardly did anything with him except for a bit of swimming. He's brilliant because he improves naturally.

This colt wants to be a racehorse.

**And Charge Forward?**

Last season I took both he and Gold Ace down south and both were clearly a notch below the best. Both have been lifted this year with maturity. Charge Forward is owned by an Auckland Trotting Club managed syndicate and I selected him as a yearling.

He was due to race in the New Year's Eve race at Alexandra Park and came up lame. We discovered he had a hairline fracture in a pedal bone. Now the attending veterinarian says that on a scale of severity it is about as small a break as one could have and we're confident he will make it back at some point.

**Much has been made about the split between yourself and Robert Famularo after 10 years together. Was this inevitable with him having built Dancinonmoonlight Farm being in Canterbury on the South Island?**

Whatever I think about Robert and Cavalla Bloodstock is probably irrelevant to the point now. To me it was a learning curve. Both of us gained a lot of benefit from the relationship. He taught me a lot about certain things. However, it was

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inevitable and there were bad feelings.

Robert probably felt that I didn't give him a fair go towards the end of our time together and I felt like I wasn't being given a fair go anymore either. The farm was part of it. It was getting bigger and we had Benny Hill down there.

Robert said to me one day before the end to not rush horses up to me from down there that I did not think were ready to win at Auckland. I probably felt like I was losing a little bit of control. We were running quite well but I found as time went on that the pressure was on to do things in a certain way.

In the good old days we went with the flow but it started to just become a pressure situation. Not winning the New Zealand Cup, not winning the Auckland Cup (Monkey King was second in 2007 and 2009 respectively for Reid) led to the pressure mounting and the relationship got strained.

This was not something I noticed at the time though but when I had time to look back on it, it became clear to me.

One thing I will say about Robert is that when he's in a real positive frame of mind, he generates a lot of good luck. Take Washakie (Badlands Hanover) for

Gold Ace (number nine on the far left) has proven to be Steven Reid's star performer of late. The three-year-old Bettors Delight colt has chalked up numerous stakes victories in his young career and is poised for more.

example. We had that horse sold for \$45,000 as a three-year-old.

The guy pulled out of the deal at the last minute and he went on to win seven of his next 12 starts and \$80,000 for Robert. Then we sold him to Australians for three times the original sale price. Robert was really lucky like that.

**Is there any chance you would train for Robert again?**

I would say no. But then I know for a fact he would never give me a horse to train. Would I ever train one for him if he did ring me up? Probably, but we would never be involved as much as we once

were though.

He is possibly the luckiest person I've ever met and it's good to be part of that.

**How important is it for a New Zealand trainer to have one high profile owner like Robert Famularo backing you? It appears that your counterparts in Mark Purdon, Cran Dalgety, Tim Butt and others have that situation.**

I think it's very important. What it does is allow for a trainer to have that good flow of young stock always coming on and the capability of buying that good horse if it comes along.

It's probably not imperative but it

does help. In saying that, I have been really happy with the influx of owners since I've gone back training on my own.

*What are your feelings on having lost Monkey King just before the best season of his career? You did have a lot of success with him including a Derby and Harness Jewels, but was it not difficult to watch the horse you selected and developed go on to enjoy his greatest success with another trainer?*

Absolutely. It was the most difficult thing I've ever had to do. I did not even watch his first New Zealand Cup win on television. For the horse I thought it was great but to lose the horse when I did was a bitter blow.

*Baileys Dream (Dream Away) is another of your protégés who despite having won over \$1.2 million has never quite garnered the admiration that Monkey King has.*

The reason for that is that he's never been as good as Monkey. At the end of the day, Monkey is the better horse and always had the wood on Bailey.

The horse contributed to beating himself a lot as well. In saying that, he is a terrific horse in his own right.

*Benny Hill, your former assistant and you were long-time friends. In fact, you were his mentor for a number of years. Do you still get on as you once did?*

No, we don't. I won't say much apart from I think Benny was always aspiring to be the trainer he is now.

*After the parting with Famularo you changed from operating a boutique stable to training the largest team in the country with Graeme Rogerson in 2009. The blended stables of Graeme's and yours were over an hour apart and the colours worn were different. Did you ever achieve the cohesion you wanted out of the partnership?*

No, we didn't work as a partnership. It could have been very good. It was an invaluable experience and I don't have any regrets.

Financially, it was good for me and it was a good transition from training for Robert. It's just a shame it didn't last a bit longer.

*"I would do it (go to North America) again in a heartbeat. And I would say that there is a chance that it will happen. I stayed in New Jersey at Gaitway Farm with Mark Harder. I had a little bit to do with Mark when he worked for Robert Mitchell here in New Zealand."*

*Some argued that you and Rogerson were polar opposites with completely different ideas on how to succeed. Would you agree with that?*

Now I'd say yes. It's the truth.

I don't think though that it was destined to fail from the start. In fact, I thought it was destined to succeed which it did for a while. We trained 168 winners in 19 months.

The travel got to me and training 60 horses or more did me in as well. Even in my big days when I won the training premiership in New Zealand, I was training no more than 30 horses. So to go to doing 60 did take a toll on me.

What got me through was that I was just riding the wave of the huge amount of success we had. Towards the end of last season when the winners started to dry up I started to come unstuck.

*Tom Cowan is an experienced horseman who worked with you during the success of the Famularo horses. He followed you to work for Rogerson, a position he still holds. Is a right hand person like Tom a key element for a stable to be a top one versus a good one and is there any chance you and Tom will work together again?*

Absolutely it's a key element. My door is always open for Tom. He's on a very good wicket where he is and I could never match that so for the immediate future it's hard to see us training together.

*In 2005 you packed up and went to North America for several months taking three*

*horses. Tell us about that experience.*

I would do it again in a heartbeat. And I would say that there is a chance that it will happen. I stayed in New Jersey at Gaitway Farm with Mark Harder. I had a little bit to do with Mark when he worked for Robert Mitchell here in New Zealand.

You're right I took three horses up there, Fake Denario, Ross The Boss and a two-year-old called Bartolomeo who went to Canada to win a division of the Nassagaweya Stake at Mohawk Racetrack before being sold to American owner Jeff Snyder (Cams Card Shark, Rocknroll Hanover, etc.).

Surprisingly, I didn't pick up any new ideas other than the importance of warming up horses. I am talking two or three races beforehand. I know it is only mile racing up there and it does suit the sprinters better than the stayers but it is effective.

*With the South Island racing in trouble from a stakes perspective, we are seeing their two biggest players, Mark Purdon and Cran Dalgety committing up to 45 horses to the North Island this summer. Does this not contribute to the difficulty you will have in re-establishing your presence?*

It probably does but it is good for North Island racing in general for two reasons. Firstly, our field sizes can be a bit small and also the racing, to be honest, can be quite average and boring. I've got enough confidence in myself to still be competitive.



## Q&A: STEVEN REID

*Are you attempting to match fire with fire and try to import fresh, new horses from the deep south as you've done in the past?*

Absolutely. What I normally do is spend a few hours a week on the computer flicking through and watching some of the horses that are racing there. I used to make a point on a regular basis of doing this but have been a bit slack lately as I have been so busy.

*You did manage to get six yearlings at last year's yearling sales. This year's auctions are almost here. How do you feel about your position going into the sales this time around?*

The six I got last time was through me putting groups of people together into these horses. Of those six, Wendy and I have ended up owning half of one group and a quarter of another group so we are committed.

But basically, there were no new people so I can say that having bought Monkey King, Washakie, Fake Denario

and Baileys Dream really did not help me.

I think this year's sales will be similar to those in North America. Horses with flaws in conformation or pedigree will be discounted. But because of the strength of the Australian dollar I expect the horses that people want will still sell for good money.

*When you reach 50 in a few years where do you want to be? Is the Pukekohe training centre your forever base or do you want to own a property?*

I've thought about this over the years. I am not a farmer and if you have your own property you have to be like a farmer. There's always plenty to do.

I battle enough with the stables I have at the Pukekohe track. The only reason I wouldn't see myself in Pukekohe was if I was doing something in North America.

*So how do you see the future?*

I feel very happy about what we have achieved coming into the new

calendar year. It was wonderful to have Gold Ace come along the way he has.

There's been a lot of very positive feedback from people who said it was good that I broke away to go on my own again although there are still some who feel otherwise.

I do admit that having an ownership position in Gold Ace is creating a fair bit of anxiety for me. I'm getting on in age and have waited a long time to get one like this.

Yes, I've had Monkey King, Baileys Dream and Washakie but I had no ownership stake in them. I suppose it is good to be anxious.

Even if Gold Ace was not mine I would rate him the best three-year-old in New Zealand based on those two big wins. He went three wide in the Sires Stakes Final to win and has the quick gate speed that he can make his own luck.

I'm hopeful to have a good trip to Australia and that he'll come back to New Zealand and carry right on. 🐎

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