

FROM THE BREEDER WHO GAVE YOU...



AUCKLAND REACTOR

p,1:53.5 (\$1,407,893)

NZ HARNES HORSE OF THE YEAR



DEVIL DODGER

p,3,1:56.6m 2240m (\$335,239)

AUSTRALASIAN BREEDERS CROWN WINNER

**AN EXCEPTIONAL CONSIGNMENT TO THE AUSTRALASIAN CLASSIC YEARLING SALE,
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19 AT KARAKA.**

#8 **GOLD BUCKTAIL** b.c.
Mach Three – Twilight Beauty – Badlands Hanover

First foal from TWILIGHT BEAUTY, a half-sister to the mighty AUCKLAND REACTOR. Need we say more?

#158 **GIVE THE WINK** b.c.
Bettors Delight – Remmers – Smooth Fella

A Bettors Delight half-brother to HUMMER p,1:50 (\$241,000), AMBER GLOW p,1:54.8h (\$94,000).

#49 **GO BOOF** b.f.
Bettors Delight – Cloud Cuckooland – Island Fantasy

Full sister to DANS GAMBLE 2, 2.2.3. Third foal (second a two-year-old). From a full sister to HUNKA HICKING 1:54.2h (\$190,000).

#86 **DREAMY DIAMOND** b.f.
Badlands Hanover – Dreamy Amber – Dream Away
Third foal from a half-sister to HUMMER p,1:50 (\$241,000).

#62 **SUMMER WIND** b.c.
Mach Three – Dreaming Spires – Dream Away
First foal from DREAMING SPIRES p,3,2.2.2. Family of PRINCE SHARVID p,1:55.2f (\$313,000).

#119 **ROYAL SQUEEZE** b.f.
Monarchy – Madam Heidi – Sundon
Second foal, first is the filly DOLI 3,2.9. From MADAM HEIDI 3,2:10.8, a half-sister to EMMA HAMILTON 3,2.1.2 (\$42,176). Family of Inter Dominion champion LILLY THE PINK T1:57.9 (\$75,385).

A/c Mr. A.J. and Mrs. P.R.A. Parker, Bombay
Preparation – Davina Addenbrooke, Mangatawhiri

09-232 7794 027-244-9176
Tony Parker Ph 09-236-0582

THE PARKER PRINCIPLES

TONY PARKER has accomplished a great deal during his career as a veterinarian, horse owner and breeder but will likely be best remembered as the breeder of Auckland Reactor. By Barry Lichter • Photos by Trish Dunell

At 67, Tony Parker says he's in cruise mode.

But here in the Bombay Hills, south of Auckland, Parker and his wife Anne are no longer sailing under the radar. The ship they launched 40 years ago has turned into an ocean liner and now everyone wants a ticket on the next boat out.

Parker, quietly spoken and introspective, has never been one to push his own barrow.

When he was looking to find a home a few years ago for an unfashionably bred

pacer he advertised in a few farming journals and race books and did not receive one reply.

The horse no one wanted turned out to be Auckland Reactor, who in the last few seasons has stirred the emotions of young and old alike in a way never before seen on Australasian racetracks.

Suddenly, the home made product he'd been quietly developing for the last 40 years was commercial.

When Parker took three yearling colts to the sales for the first time in 2008, after





years of struggling to find owners for his horses, he had no trouble selling them for \$62,000, \$35,000 and \$25,000.

Punters now know them as big-winning three-year-olds Devil Dodger (10 wins), Russley Rascal (nine wins) and late maturer Happy Chappy (two wins).

And, breeding from 15 mares who roam the hills on his nearby 110 acre Mangatawhiri farm, Parker has plenty more in the pipeline with nine or 10 foals born every year.

After years of economizing on service fees, the quality of the stock is on the rise too as Parker widens his net to include the top stallions.

But Parker is not about to abandon the formula which he credits for his success, one which he and his wife hit on when they started breeding 40 years ago and doing it all themselves.

"Our horses are pretty tough," says Parker. "But they race a bit better than their breeding would suggest.

"We've produced top horses from a number of breeds but it's more than the

Tony Parker's most celebrated homebred is the star pacer Auckland Reactor, a winner of 25 races and well over a million dollars. The son of Mach Three is on the verge of returning to racing in his home country after an unsuccessful North American foray last year. The horse traces back to the first horse Parker bought four decades ago.

breeding."

From the time they bring their expectant mares up to Bombay to foal, the animals are intensively monitored and kept as close as possible to the house where Parker, a retired vet, can keep an eye on them.

"There was a little colt the other day, just a few days old, who I noticed looked a little abnormal when he was rolling around.

"I found he had a scrotal hernia

developing. If I hadn't picked that up it could have strangulated and turned into a major surgical job.

"Sometimes they can get a little tear in their bladders at foaling time and they don't urinate. You have to pick that up quickly too."

Parker reckons it's the feeding he provides that starts the foals out on the correct path.

"That's the key to the job in getting them reared properly. We virtually feed

them from when the dry weather starts. You only get good grass for two or three months and then you have to feed them every day to keep them growing good and strong.

"I'm sure it counts, makes them a little bit tougher, and comes through on the racing side."

But it could be at the next stage that Parker gets even more of an edge. Rather than molly-coddling the youngsters, he sends them back to Mangatawhiri to run on the hills.

"I like to give them hill time, running in groups. When you get three or four colts chasing and racing each other around you get the odd injury but you accept that. It's all part of developing a racehorse.

"They might not look as pretty but I think it helps them on the racetrack."

Auckland Reactor was a graduate from the Mangatawhiri school of hard knocks and Parker says nothing about the wishy-washy light bay hinted at his future stardom.

If you'd asked Parker to predict which one of the six foals he weaned that year would turn out the best, Auckland Reactor wouldn't have even been in the frame.

He was pretty rough looking, still losing his winter coat, even when he lined up for his first start at Timaru on September 16, 2007.

But while he was like "a pet sheep" off the track, Parker and trainer Mark Purdon pretty much knew they had a racetrack tiger even before he beat talented stablemate Texas Hold Em without leaving second gear.

The telephone had been ringing long before that auspicious debut, with Parker turning down \$75,000 after the horse qualified four months earlier.

"Mark thought that was a fair price and it was probably a good idea to sell him. But I wanted the chance to at least see how good he was by giving him a start."

Parker didn't get too carried away with the hype, however, and after the horse only scraped home on a wet night at Forbury in a Sires Stakes heat, he even wondered whether they should bother going down for the Cup day final at

"It's a great game, a bit like golf. You have one good round and think you can beat the world, then things go wrong next time and you take 10 more shots to get around."

Addington when Reactor drew the outside of the front line.

"Our trip was already planned but I remember saying that it would be a waste of a day," he remembers.

It was only when the horse beat Fiery Falcon, after coming round to sit parked, that Parker knew he had a world-beater. And while every win Reactor racked up was exciting, Parker remembers more the stress of the ongoing offers.

"You never knew when the next phone call was going to come and there was quite a lot of money involved. It did not make it quite as pleasant."

With it also came the pressure of owning the red hot favourite every time as the horse remained unbeaten. Like the day one TAB punter plunked \$100,000 on Reactor, at \$1.10, in the Southern Supremacy Final at Invercargill.

"That turned out to be his last start for us but it was one of his best runs. He had to go round a horse breaking in front of him, and Mark let him really roll home for the first time, clocking 54 for his last half."

Parker said he didn't need the \$4 million being offered for the horse but, being a vet and knowing what can go wrong with racehorses, he simply had to accept the offer, on behalf of a mainly North American syndicate.

It was appropriate that the horse, which climaxed 40 years of breeding by Parker, traced back to the one that started it all.

Parker was a working vet, treating

more small animals and dairy herds than horses when a friend, Jack Hughes, recommended he buy Auckland Reactor's granddam Tudores in the early '70s.

On a limited budget, with three daughters to bring up and school, the \$1,500 price tag came close to his \$2,000-a-year salary.

Tudores "did a few things wrong" and did not start racing until she was four, but was still good enough to win seven races, mostly with Roy and Barry Purdon.

It was one of her daughters, Atomic Lass, who produced Auckland Reactor, but you wouldn't have predicted it.

"She had her limitations," Parker recalls. "She won two of her 13 starts but wasn't a very strong mare and found it hard to compete in the days of (bicarbonate) milkshakes so I thought breeding was her best future."

None of the 10 foals Atomic Lass produced before Auckland Reactor made many headlines with Taihape Ticker (18 wins) the best, carving out a respectable record in Melbourne and Perth.

By this time Parker had bought a few more broodmares and was infinitely more experienced, the horse side of his vet practice with the respected Charlie Roberts mushrooming.

And for five years in the late '80s and early '90s horses dominated his life when he took a full time position as National Bloodstock's vet, where he was in charge of a big operation handling stallions serving up to 500 mares a year.

It was a time of burgeoning growth



for the local industry as Natblood brought in new stallions from America like Sokys Atom, Butler BG, New York Motoring and Chiola Hanover.

It was also a time when Parker's ideas on breeding evolved and he learned about the benefits of breeding to outcrosses, bringing in the successful Direct Scooter line.

Parker found a great source of advice too in Canadian bloodstock agent David James, a stallion consultant to Natblood, whose father at one time owned the great Albatross.

However, in 1994 Parker's energies were being funneled elsewhere when he bought a North Otago cropping farm at Papakaia in the Waitaki.

"We poured all our finances into turning it into a diary farm," he explains.

Parker didn't tell his bank manager he was racing a couple of horses at the

Tony Parker believes that the feeding program he has established for his young horses, combined with time spent playing and running on the hills at his Mangatawhiri farm, in addition to his background as a veterinarian, all contribute to producing good racehorses.

time, "that's the last thing you want to do when you've got your hand out."

But in the next couple of years one of the horses, by the name of Sharp And Telford, pretty much paid all the bills anyway.

During a blazing 12 months in 1996, which Parker remembers as his best time

in racing, Sharp And Telford won 11 races, including the Victoria and Australian Derbies and the Auckland Cup.

Parker recalls the day he told trainer Mark Purdon he had sold a half share in the then unraced two-year-old for \$10,000 to his cousin Noel Gillanders.

"Mark wasn't too impressed by the horse at first as he clipped a knee a bit."

By the end of Sharp And Telford's albeit abbreviated career, Parker learned what a great judge the young Purdon was.

"He fell on the home turn at Auckland one night and fired Tony Herlihy over the rail, breaking a couple of his ribs.

"The horse was okay, he only took some skin off, but when Mark got him up again he said he wanted to take him over (to Australia) for the Victoria Derby.

"Roy (Purdon) thought he was a bit silly, the previous Kiwi horse to win the derby was Tactile in 1963 and no horse had been over for 30 years.

"But Mark was quite positive and said it would take a pretty good horse to beat him." He was right.

Parker won't forget the heart-break when Purdon called three days after Sharp And Telford's Auckland Cup win to say one of his tendons had blown up.

"He was almost the top horse in the country at the time but was virtually finished after that (even though he won two more races in two interrupted preparations)."

The horse's success, and his share of the \$500,000 in winnings, gave Parker the confidence to invest even more in broodmares, and he regularly bred five or six foals a year.

From the Tudress line he's produced horses like Auckland Reactor and Devil Dodger, from his old mare Russley Heather have come stars like Russley Rascal, from Slinky Fox came useful pacer Stevies, from Remmars the talented Hummer and more lately McAmber.

Parker was also unlucky not to win the 2000 NZ Derby with Sharp And Telford's relation Hunka Hickling (10 wins) who copped late interference from winner Star And Stripes and was just nipped in a photo finish.

Parker's aim now is to breed a top trotter from his 13-race winner Miss Whiplash or her daughters like Emma Hamilton or Playmate Of The Year.

For it's in the breeding, more than the racing that Parker gets his biggest kicks.

He even tried his hand at standing sires but found Tay Bridge (Lordship - Black Watch) disappointing and Master Dean "a bit of a handful."

He can't tell you how many races he's won, but it's more than 100 wins from more than 25 individual horses.

"It's always enjoyable to see young horses develop. It doesn't worry us whether we race them ourselves or someone else does, we still get a lot of fun."

Even old Sharp And Telford, at the age of 18, is still giving Parker enjoyment.

Adept at looking after the young ones around the place he is also a reminder to Parker that you never know what's around the next corner.

"It's a great game, a bit like golf. You have one good round and think you can beat the world, then things go wrong next time and you take 10 more shots to get around." 🏏



www.focusmotel.com