



**WHAT
BUYER
WANT**



DIANA and **RAY KENNEDY'S** Jubilee Park breeding farm name their progeny after a character from the movie *What Women Want* and given their success, they've obviously discovered what yearling buyers want. By Ivan Behrns • Photos by Trish Dunell

Six Group One winners and counting... that is the wonderful record Cambridge breeders Diana and Ray Kennedy have achieved since they established their plush Jubilee Park breeding farm, using the name Maguire for each of their horses, near Cambridge in 2004.

Few breeding enterprises in Australasia have achieved such a strike rate in so short a time frame. And no, it wasn't a family connection or links to Ireland that seeded the idea to use the name Maguire for all their horses but instead it came from one of Ray's favourite movies, *What Women Want*, starring Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt.

"Darcy Maguire was Mel Gibson's girlfriend in the movie and it was a name that we thought would sound good to use for all our horses," Ray said.

What a record the Maguire name is achieving. Not only are numerous standout Maguire pacers winning around the globe but they are also featured as sales toppers on a regular basis at PGG Wrightson's annual Australasian Classic Yearling Sales at Karaka in South Auckland.

One such sales star at the recent 2011 sale, with a price tag of \$170,000, was Tori Maguire, a standout Christian Cullen - Unrehearsed filly, a full sister to former champion juvenile filly Lizzie Maguire, with 10 wins and \$477,366.

Adding another healthy profit to the Jubilee Park balance sheet was the \$85,000 received for Curtis Maguire, a Bettors Delight - Miss Jubilee colt. Both yearlings are going to the stable of South Auckland trainer Gareth Dixon.

"I was somewhat surprised at the great price the Christian Cullen filly fetched. I was hoping for six figures but was unsure considering all the talk of gloom preceding the sales, though I thought the Bettors Delight colt would sell well. He was a magnificent individual and his spectacular looks had a constant flow of people coming to inspect him well before his sale," Ray said.



A Mach Three colt from one of Jubilee Park's foundation mares and former Southland Oaks winner Mystic Gold named Robbie Maguire also made good money, selling for \$65,000.

"You have to have good sized and well conformed yearlings combined with good breeding to consistently sell well at the sales but it takes good sales like these to ensure you make a profit every year."

In past years Jubilee Park has sold a number of top priced yearlings including Davy Maguire (Christian Cullen - Sokys Sunday) \$160,000, Baccha Maguire (Christian Cullen - Bhutan) \$150,000, Danny Maguire (Art Major - Seeled All Over) \$105,000, Gracie Maguire (Christian Cullen - Bhutan) \$90,000, Katie Maguire (Bettors Delight - Mystic Gold) \$90,000, Carey Maguire (Christian Cullen - Unrehearsed) \$85,000, Matt Maguire (Christian Cullen - Unrehearsed) \$80,000 and Harrison Maguire (Christian Cullen - Sokys Sunday) \$70,000.

What is the secret to such consistent success? For Ray it has been a combination of important factors and a strong discipline to stick to a formula that works.

"You need to breed from quality mares that had ability on the track and

The farm that is now Jubilee Park was formerly a Thoroughbred facility called Allegra Park Stud. "I just happened to be at the right place at the right time to purchase it. Nothing was spared in setting it all up and to do something like this now would be prohibitive," noted Ray Kennedy.

are from good performing families. You must then send them to proven commercial stallions and stick with any that consistently give you rewards, such as Christian Cullen," Ray said.

There is also the important factor of making sure the mares and yearlings receive the best of care. "I am also very lucky to have a wife who comes from an equestrian background and is an excellent hand with the young horses. She has also trained gallopers."

But not all mares make it. As Ray pointed out, by the time you take into account the service fee, costs of raising

and preparing the yearling and the sale commission, you need to take a hard nosed business approach if your mare isn't paying her way.

"I am culling Falcon Road, a race winning Falcon Seelster mare whose Mach Three colt only brought \$10,000 at Karaka and this despite her having left the very good West Australian Derby and Lord Mayor's Cup winner Mr Yankee. I recently advertised her for sale, willing to take just an offer, but to my surprise didn't get one response."

Ray is justifiably proud of the magnificent set-up he and his wife have at

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Jubilee Park. It was a major change of direction for the couple. Ray had previously worked for a law firm in Gisborne and then together they ran a farm with 6,500 stock units on it. Not to mention the eight children and 12 grandchildren between them needing quality time.

As Ray said, "If I was to carry on like that, I was going to die! I needed to try something else."

Jubilee Park was previously a Thoroughbred stud known as Allegra Park Stud, which was a public company. Unfortunately it had to be sold due to the market crash in the late 80s.

"I just happened to be at the right place at the right time to purchase it. Nothing was spared in setting it all up and to do something like this now would be prohibitive," he said. "It is as good as anything in New Zealand."

Jubilee Park, in the heart of top horse country in the Waikato, covers 35 acres and has a state of the art Tudor style stabling complex which can house 20 yearlings indoors, plus day paddocks, vet facilities, self-contained flats, a half mile track and a massive horse walker that can exercise eight horses at a time.

Ray says he is lucky to be in an area

"I guess I have been lucky having come from a background of farming and caring for thousands of animals over the years. It all comes down to good animal husbandry, pasture management, common sense and sticking to strict guidelines," said Ray Kennedy of the success of Jubilee Park.

where grass grows 12 months of the year meaning he has to feed little, if any, hay out in winter.

"I buy some meadow hay if I have to but try to get my broodmares off the property for a short time during winter to give the pastures a spell."

He said he doesn't have any secret formula when it comes to feeding his broodmares, weanlings and yearlings but swears by an Australian feed product called Prydes Easi Feed and also Fiber Pro, a form of chaffage processed from pure alfalfa and laced with molasses.

"They really thrive on it." He is also

an advocate for regular drenching and he and Diana are sticklers for making sure close attention is given to each horse's feet from birth right through to yearling stage.

"It sometimes only takes a little rasp on a foal, weanling or yearling's feet on a regular basis to help correct any problems with the way they stand. You will get the rewards come sales time.

"You have to be really careful as you can find that a particular sire leaves his stock toed-out so you have to get in early to sort out any potential problems. It is most important to have them correct."

He also starts feeding the mares supplementary feed on a more consistent basis closer to foaling and later leading into weaning if needed. "It teaches the foals how to eat and sets them up after weaning so they don't have any major setbacks," he said.

Diana's job is to get the yearlings ready for the sales and they are first fed twice a day and, when getting nearer to the sales, up to three times a day for those that need it but importantly only in small portions.

"I keep a close eye on their development as I hate seeing fat yearlings being paraded at sales."

The success of the feeding regime at Jubilee Park can be seen in the consistent quality of each year's yearling draft and the top prices many fetch. Ray and Diana often receive compliments from buyers, trainers and auctioneers alike when they inspect their yearlings.

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Ray Kennedy's interest in horses first began in the southern city of Dunedin where he was born.

"I used to be a regular follower of the trots at Forbury Park as a youngster and would often take the drive through to see the races at Addington and Ashburton."

His first involvement as a racehorse owner came with Thoroughbreds during the late 1980s and early 1990s when he raced the top class gallopers Steely Dan, the winner of 12 races including the Group one 2000 Guineas at Riccarton and the Group One Thorndon Mile at Trentham, and Mr Yankee, a one-time top New Zealand Cup prospect which unfortunately broke down.

He later became a committee member of the Poverty Bay Turf Club but when his gallopers' careers ended the lure of Standardbreds saw him join the first of the Auckland Trotting Club's racing syndicates, racing the very successful Matai McKenzie and Parisian Falcon. Ray has also been a committee member at the Cambridge Harness Club and has sponsored races there. That is where Ray

and his wife decided to enter the serious and sometimes risky business of breeding and selling Standardbreds.

The foundation of Jubilee Park's broodmare band, Unrehearsed and Lethal Mee, began at the 2001 New Zealand Yearling Sales when Ray purchased Unrehearsed for \$20,000 and Lethal Mee for \$15,000.

Unrehearsed, by Live Or Die from Tentative, p, 3, 1:58.3, won three races including a Nevele R fillies heat and a Pyne Gould Guinness NZ Yearling Sales Southern Graduate race at two.

Lethal Mee, by In The Pocket from Charsi Me, was a winner at three in her short race career for Ray, winning just

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\$4,018 in stakes but showing enough ability to be retired to breed.

Added to their broodmare band was the Butler BG - Vita Gold mare Mystic Gold p, 1:59.3 bought out of Australia. She was a talented pacer, winning the Southland Oaks plus a number of races in Australia and accumulating over \$60,000 in stake money.

Mystic Gold was from a family nurtured by Ray Anicich and was one Ray had always admired from his past days in Dunedin. Other notable mares were Changeover's half sister Bhutan (two wins) by Falcon Seelster, Pure Prestige (by New York Motoring from Windshield Star), Sokys Sunday (by Sokys Atom from Tabella Beth) and Diamond Fleet (by Falcon Seelster from Esprit Noir).

Ray and Diana sold their first commercial draft of 15 yearlings at the 2005 Australasian Classic Yearling Sales, averaging over \$9,000. Their best sales were

\$42,500 for a Dream Away - Diamond Fleet filly and \$34,000 for a Presidential Ball - Mystic Gold colt.

However they didn't have to wait long before success came by way of their 2006 sales' draft, really putting Jubilee Park on the breeding map. Heading the list was the top selling colt Davy Maguire, by the new boom sire Christian Cullen from Sokys Sunday, which sold for \$160,000. At these sales they also sold the fillies Lizzie Maguire (Christian Cullen - Unrehearsed), for \$60,000 and Susie Maguire (Presidential Ball - Lethal Mee) for \$21,000. What a revelation they turned out to be for Ray and Diana on the racetrack.

"My biggest thrill to date as a breed-

er was seeing Lizzie Maguire win the 2007 two-year-old fillies Diamond Harness Jewels final in Ashburton in 1:56 and Susie Maguire (Presidential Ball - Lethal Mee and a winner of \$279,963) finishing second," said Ray.

Lizzie Maguire later went on to win the 2008 Northern Oaks. To produce two outstanding fillies from just their second yearling draft set Jubilee Park up as one of New Zealand's most sought-after breeding establishments.

And currently starting to make a name for himself is Lizzie Maguire's younger brother, Matt Maguire, a 1:53.9 winner at Ashburton earlier in the season and later a place getter in the Victorian Derby. This talented young pacer who has \$83,000 on his card to date, is trained by Cran Dalgety who thinks he has great potential to become a future star of New Zealand racing.

The 2008 sales purchase Meredith

WHAT BUYERS WANT

Maguire, by Christian Cullen from Alvez, is yet another top young female pacer produced by Jubilee Park and finished third in the Harness Jewels three-year-old fillies final at Cambridge.

A winner of \$223,809 so far in her career she was a \$32,000 yearling purchase who won in 1:50.2 at Mohawk last August and remains racing on the WEG circuit. Unfortunately she was the last foal of Alvez bred by the Kennedys before she died.

Currently there are 13 mares being bred at Jubilee Park. They are: Artyana (Perfect Art - Berndon Star) with a Gotta Go Cullen filly at foot and in foal to Bettors Delight; Bhutan (Falcon Seelster - Chaangerr) with an Art Major colt at foot and in foal to Christian Cullen; Dame Nellie (In The Pocket - Miss Maples) no foal at foot but in foal to Art Major; Kim Maguire (In The Pocket - Bhutan) no foal at foot but in foal to Art Major; Lethal Mee (In The Pocket - Charsi Me) with an Elsu filly at foot and in foal to Bettors Delight; Miss Jubilee (In The Pocket - Mystic Gold) with a Bettors Delight colt at foot and back in foal to Bettors Delight; Moscardon (Holmes Hanover - New York) with an Art Major colt at foot and in foal to Christian Cullen; Mystic Gold, a Mach Three filly at foot and empty; Seeled All Over (Falcon Seelster - Karara Lass) with a Jeremes Jet filly at foot and in foal to Christian Cullen; Sokys Sunday (Sokys Atom - Tabella Beth) with an Art Major colt at foot and in foal to Christian Cullen; Tootsie (In The Pocket - Moscardon) with an Art Major colt at foot and back in foal to Christian Cullen; Unrehearsed (Live Or Die - Tentative) with a Christian Cullen filly at foot and in foal to Art Major and Zenola Starbuck (Christian Cullen - Zenola Star) a maiden mare in foal to Bettors Delight.

Ray and Diana enjoy racing some of their breed and have three with top South Island trainer Cran Dalgety, including a very nice Bettors Delight - Mystic Gold three-year-old gelding JB Maguire who they race in partnership with Cran's wife Chrissie. There is also the three-year-old filly Becky Maguire, by Christian Cullen - Falcon Road and a two-year-old Falcon Seelster from the family of Meredith Maguire.

"We also have two two-year-old fillies at home we are jogging, called Terrorist (Western Terror - Paula Vance) and Zoe Maguire (Falcon Seelster - Pure Prestige)."

Stallion matings for the 2012 season are still to be worked out. Ray spends a lot of time studying the stallion selections, their stud fees and assessing how his mares would match both with their bloodlines and physical compatibility.

"You don't want to send small mares to Bettors Delight or Mach Three."

His favourite stallion is Christian Cullen, ("The matings just work with him") and he also likes Bettors Delight, Mach Three and Art Major "although I am tempted to also look at Rocknroll

Zealand's best yearlings.

"In an ideal world we should have all our best yearlings sold at the magnificent Karaka complex. The complex in Christchurch is of third world standard despite the best efforts by PGG Wrightson. We need to showcase them in the best arena. The Thoroughbreds do. There could be three sales held there, a Premier, Select and a Festival sale."

Ray is aware there would be huge resistance from southern breeders over the costs of getting their yearlings up to Karaka for such a sale but sees some form of travel subsidy for southern breeders to transport them north would help. "There are South Island breeders

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Hanover next season, especially if his fresh semen is available down here. I was also impressed by the look of the Jeremes Jet yearlings and how popular they were with the buyers."

He finds many stallion service fees are generally too high when added to the additional charges that breeders often have to face and the returns they get. That is why he prefers to arrange his own stallion services at Jubilee Park, using the excellent facilities he has available and also so he can keep a close eye on both his budget and when his mares are ready for serving.

"I often achieve a 60 per cent success with the first serving. It ensures I have a good supply of early bred yearlings at the sales."

On the question of the present yearling sales format in New Zealand, Ray is a strong believer that the annual yearling sales should be centered on just one venue, making it the showcase for New

Zealand's best yearlings.

such as Bromac Lodge already sending yearlings to Karaka each year."

Another thing Ray is concerned about is the dominance in numbers by the four sires Christian Cullen, Bettors Delight, Art Major and Mach Three at the major sales and sees this as a threat to achieving high prices for a number of yearlings by these sires.

"There are getting to be too many to choose from, which can affect the prices." He is already looking forward to next year's sales, having yet another nice draft of yearlings.

One thing can be assured and that is the name Maguire and Jubilee Park, with its astute and skilful, hard-working owners, will be around for many years to come. You certainly can't argue that grossing over \$430,000 at an average of \$39,000 per yearling from their 11 yearlings at this year's sales is a good reason for Ray and Diana Kennedy to continue down the path they have chosen. 📷

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