

One each way

- Premier Yearling Sales fillies from 2004

By BEE PEARS

“Done, all done!” Ten years ago, the auctioneer’s hammer came down on over a hundred fillies at the 2004 Christchurch yearling sales, with just 16 of them achieving over \$30,000 in the bidding.

Traditionally fillies are harder to sell as yearling unless they are from exceptionally good families. However one upside of buying fillies is that they have potential as broodmares, regardless of what happens on the track. That is a key reason why fillies from good producing families or with outstanding close up relations usually sell better. It gives the buyer “one each way” on the purchase.

Of course picking the good ones out as yearlings is an art and a gamble. But when it pays off, a good filly can really earn her keep, and an outstanding broodmare can earn more for her owner than an average racehorse on the track.

Now and then there is a happy outcome in both regards – a good racehorse and a top broodmare – and that is something to really celebrate.

In this article I go back 10 years to the 2004 Christchurch Premier Sale to see what happened to the top selling yearling fillies of that year as racehorses and as broodmares.

Monkey King’s yearling sale

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. If you had gone to the 2004 Premier sale with \$20,000 in your pocket and uncanny foresight you might have bid on a yearling colt called Monkey King that day, as Stephen Reid did. Monkey King won almost three million dollars and two New Zealand Cups.

Or even cheaper, you could have got Gretamaro for just \$4500 (she won over \$200,000), or Sneakyn Down Under for \$12,000 (he won over \$450,000 in Australia), or put a bid in to prevent a yearling called Power Of Tara from being bought back for just \$7000 (he won over \$747,000).

But if you were after a quality filly from a good family, you needed go over \$30,000. Those are the sixteen lots at the Premier Yearling Sale that I’ve tracked in terms of their racing and breeding performance to date.

How many raced?

The performance on the racetrack of a filly is more due to the mental and physical makeup of the individual, as well as the patience and empathy of owner and trainer for turning young fillies into performing racehorses. It’s also a reflection of the aim of the purchase of that filly in the first place – many fillies from good families have remained untried or very lightly tried as racehorses to keep their value as broodmares.

Nevertheless, it's a shock to find that out of those 16 yearling fillies, 6 never raced and 5 others had less than 10 starts.

That leaves only 5 fillies who raced consistently: Diamond Bright (28 starts, 4 wins, 6 places, \$32,531 and 1.56TT); Laurel Franco (15 starts, 5 wins, 2 places, \$36,023); Ohyouprettydoll who was renamed Cee Ash (28 starts, 2 wins, 5 places, \$15,319); Affairs Of State (20 starts, 1 win, 8 places, \$50,111) and Tiz A Cullen (40 starts, 2 wins, 5 places, \$25,080).

The other fillies who made over \$30,000 purchase price at that sale were Lindenny's Pocket (renamed Star Of Liberty), In The Stars, Harmony Franco, Annika Sorenstam, Jodi's Dream, Let's Go Tango, Galleons Reward, Beale Street Babe, Saloon Girl, Coringa Miss Mee and Arma The One.

Of course many of these 16 fillies may well have changed hands or even changed countries for racing or breeding purposes, so comparing what they won with their original sale price does not cover the full story in terms of return on investment.

However that stark fact is that only one of them earned more on the track than their purchase price at the yearling sale – Laurel Franco who cost \$35,000 and won \$36,023.

Sales Series results

That crop of yearlings at the 2004 Premier sale was eligible for the 2yo and 3yo Fillies Sales Series run in 2005 and 2006. Did any of them make the final fields?

From our top priced 16 lots (listed at the end of this article) none made it to the final of the 2yo Fillies Sales Series race. However the 2006 the 3yo equivalent race included Affairs Of State (who ran 2nd), Diamond Bright (5th), Tiz A Cullen (9th) and Cee Ash (13th).

Who did perform well in those finals? The 2yo fillies final was won by Okete Star, who was an \$8,500 purchase at the 2004 Australasian Yearling Sales at Karaka. Gretamaro (\$4,500 at the Premier) was second. Miss Operative (another Australasian sale purchase at \$22,000), was third. Annabelle Mee (\$28,000 at the Premier) was fourth.

In the 3yo Fillies Sales Series Final Gretamaro stepped up to the winner's plate. Affairs Of State (\$90,000 at the Premier) was second. Bachelorette was third (\$8,000 at the Australasian) and Okete Star was fourth.

You certainly can't use purchase price as any prediction of success on the track!

Breeding on

In terms of success as a broodmare, Affairs Of State is probably the best performer of those 16 top selling 2004 yearling fillies. She has produced the 4-win High Society Girl and the 3-win Chachingchaching to date, and Breckon Farms is already breeding the next generation from two of her filly foals.

The other standout broodmare from that group to date is Diamond Bright, who sold in 2004 for \$34,000 and achieved 4 wins herself, earning just under her purchase price. Her first foal is the very good Pembroke's Delight (39 starts, 9 wins, 10 places and \$137,477) who is now starting her own breeding career. After two foals by other sires, Diamond Bright has returned to Bettor's Delight for

the 2yo colt Pembroke Harry (in training with Cran Dalgety) and a yearling filly called Pembroke Express.

Laurel Franco had her first foal in 2007 but nothing more until a McArdle colt in 2010. Keep an eye out for her Bettor's Delight filly Tiny Dancer, and subsequent foals by Bettor's Delight, Rock N Roll Hanover and Changeover. Cee Ash has a nice type called All Cash with trainer Ken Barron (20 starts for 4 wins) and then three fillies all by Mach Three coming along after that. Star Of Liberty (sold as Lindenny's Pocket) raced herself just four times for one win, but she now has five foals of racing age for four starters and two winners, including the 4yo Washington VC mare Liberty Styx who is doing a nice job (8 starts, 1 win, 4 places) with Tony Herlihy. Harmony Franco sold for \$30,000 in 2004 and never raced, but her first foal was Compton Street by Bettor's Delight who won \$94,648 in Australia.

Arma The One was bought by Australian interests for \$36,000 and achieved 2 wins and 2 places from just 7 starts before starting breeding, and one of her foals is a Life Sign gelding Armalife with 7 wins from 29 starts to date. Another mare showing potential in breeding is Tiz A Cullen who took 40 starts to chalk up her 2 wins and 5 places, but she is leaving some nice types including Dancemeoutside (now in Australia), plus Real Intentions and Look And Listen, who both seem to have ability, and there is 2yo American Ideal colt called Smoking Sandals who will be worth watching out for. Beale Street Babe was one of the highest priced fillies at \$80,000 and has had a few foals, the best being (Da) Gangster who won plenty of races in Australia but not at an elite level.

Looking ahead

For yearling fillies the road to longer term real success may be a long and winding one, based on much more complex range of factors than for a yearling colt that is usually bought (at least in New Zealand) simply as a racehorse prospect.

These mares are all 12 year olds now, with plenty of breeding ahead for the ones who have followed that path.

Next time you are at the yearling sales, take a good look at the fillies – you may be watching the next Gretamaro or the next Affairs Of State. The filly in front of you might be worth that each way bet as a future racehorse and a broodmare.

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