



CROSS-MATCHING AT GEISEL PARK

Geisel Park owner Eddie Rigg didn't have to delve too deeply into the pedigree of Melbourne Cup winner Cross Counter for a link to his imported Group 1 winner Vert De Grece (Ire).

His sire Verglas (Highest Honor) is a three-quarter brother to Champion French 3yo Sprinter Do The Honours (Highest Honor). She foaled five winners at stud including Waitress (Kingmambo), the dam of Cross Counter.

Like the Melbourne Cup winner, Verglas was a product of the Godolphin breeding program. He won the G2 Coventry Stakes at Royal Ascot before being lured to WA by bloodstock agent John Chalmers.

"Verglas shuttled here for the 2003 & 2004 seasons siring 13 stakes horses at a 60% winning strike-rate," Chalmers recalled. "But Vert De Grece was a superior racehorse to Verglas winning the G1 Criterium 2yo International at Saint-Cloud.

"He has more length and overall strength than his sire. And his turn of foot at the end of 1600m to win the Group 1 by four lengths was nothing short of amazing."

Vert De Grece was being set for the G1 French 2000 Guineas but injured a forearm and later bowed a tendon. Chalmers swooped for Geisel Park when he heard the grey colt was available as a stallion prospect.

Cross Counter carries three crosses of the brilliantly fast Mr Prospector (Raise A Native) and three lines of Northern Dancer (Nearctic) as well as being linebred to the influential mare Special (Forli) through three-quarter relatives Sadler's Wells and Nureyev.

Renowned pedigree consultant Les Young traced the family back to the 1960s when the Native Dancer sisters Native Street and Street Dancer were significant influences in North America. Its most prominent members in Australasia include Alquoz (Caerleon) and Stravinsky (Nureyev).

Cross Counter stretched the pedigree out to 3200m and Vert De Grece looks an all-purpose sire for the WA industry in the years ahead.

Vert De Grece is currently covering his second book at a \$5,500 (inc gst) service fee. For further information, contact Geisel Park stud manager Conor Dunlop (0447 434 735), John Chalmers (0418 948 604), Eddie Rigg (0418 942 304).



FIRST BLUSH AT FLEMINGTON

Don't Blush Baby should be winning races in Hong Kong instead of saluting the judge and a party-crowd at Flemington.

The Demerit gelding responded to a change of tactics by going all the way in the Off The Track Subzero Hcp (1400m) on VRC Oaks day. Relishing the lead for James McDonald in the race restricted to greys, he pulled off a long-range mission in front of a crowd of 60,000.

"This horse has done a terrific job and J-Mac controlled the lead," trainer Henry Dwyer said. "He was earmarked for Hong Kong but needed time after some soundness issues."

Don't Blush Baby (5g Demerit - Pretty Pia by Tribu) was bred and sold by Taunton Vale for \$34,000 at the 2015 Perth Magic Millions. He was purchased by David Price and Jenny Chapman who operate a very successful bloodstock agency for clients in Hong Kong.

Price is a long-time Western Bulldogs supporter and the grey is part-owned by North Melbourne's 2018 All-Australian Shaun Higgins who played for the Bulldogs until 2014.

Following first-prep wins at Traralgon and Cranbourne this time last year, he changed stables and is thriving on the beach down at Dwyer's St Leonards stables near Geelong. "We would have liked a win earlier in the year but that helped us get in on the minimum today. And we've been given all the time needed by David."

WA-bred horses have been firing in the season so far in Hong Kong. Shanghai Master (Mt Hallowell Stud), Saul's Special (Oakland Park) and Starlit Knight (Loloma Farm) won there in October as did Elusive State, a promising miler by All American (Geisel Park).

Don't Blush Baby has several Hong Kong connections in his pedigree through Australian-bred gallopers Solid Contact (Happy Valley Trophy) and Ming Hoi Treasure (Lions Club Cup). His dam Pretty Pia is a Taunton Vale homebred and she has a 2yo filly by Alfred Nobel and her final foal is a yearling colt by Demerit.

Demerit (Lonhro) stands for a \$5,500 service fee at Taunton Vale alongside King's Troop (Redoute's Choice) at \$2,750.



PM BACKS BREEDING INDUSTRY

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has backed the thoroughbred breeding industry, declaring horse racing a crucial part of Australian culture.

Mr Morrison was joined by MPs from all sides of politics at Parliament House in Canberra last month to rally behind the industry in an event organised by Thoroughbred Breeders Australia (TBA) and the Parliamentary Friends of Primary Producers.

"It is a fair dinkum, very serious business and industry," Mr Morrison said. "It is one that provides significant economic and employment opportunities especially for rural and regional Australia."

He said racing was synonymous with the identity of Australians, pledging to help ensure it remained a crucial part of the country's fabric with ongoing drought support. "This is a very big deal when it comes to the livelihoods and lifestyle of Australians."

TBA chief executive Tom Reilly was delighted at a huge turnout for the organisation's event. He is pictured to the right of Basil Nolan, Nola Marino, Scott Morrison and Joel Fitzgibbon.

"We come to parliament house to talk about breeding and share the industry's story, and we've had all sides of politics line up to pledge their support for what we do," Reilly said. "It is testament to the fact that breeding and racing are truly part of the fabric of Australian society that so many politicians are here tonight."

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, who has both Flemington and Moonee Valley within his electorate, said his side of politics heard the industry "loud and clear" on issues like drought relief and labour shortages.

"I understand that in this industry for a small number of people we need to bring in people from overseas," the Labor leader said. "We don't have the skills here, we don't have the people here that we need to have a visa system that brings people in."

He said racing was a great industry that couldn't be taken for granted, noting the importance of farming and racehorse ownership.

The Australian breeding industry is the second largest in the world, with an interim economic report showing breeding alone sustained almost 9,500 jobs across the nation.

The broader racing industry contributes over \$8.5 billion to the national economy, according to the same research, and is responsible for some 69,000 full time jobs in Australia.

Deputy Prime Minister and keen racing fan Michael McCormack attended, along with Deputy Nationals Leader Bridget McKenzie, Agriculture Minister David Littleproud and Special Drought Envoy Barnaby Joyce, Labor senator Anthony Chisholm and Liberal MPs Tony Pasin, Warren Entsch and Nicole Flint also were at the event.

Chief Government Whip Nola Marino and co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Primary Producers said the bipartisan event united politicians. "This industry is really, really, important, it employs 69,000 people," the WA Liberal MP said. "All of the stud breeders around this room, you know what you mean to rural and regional Australia."

Hunter MP, and Shadow Agriculture Minister and co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Primary

Producers, Joel Fitzgibbon said the event had continued its history of reminding us the racing industry begins on a farm.

"Next time you're at the races, think about where it all begins," Fitzgibbon said. "An industry worth itself much more than \$1 billion to our economy and a thoroughbred breeding industry that sustains about 10,000 people across the country - that's what we want you to be thinking about."

He was more than happy to claim the association with Winx, who was bred at Coolmore Stud in his Hunter Valley electorate. Winx's co-owners Debbie Kepitis and Peter Tighe were the star attractions, alongside the champion mare's Cox Plates which were on display.

Mrs Kepitis's famous Ingham family raced champion and leading sire Lonhro before the Australian-bred Winx took the world by storm. "Lonhro was bred here. But nothing makes me more proud than it's an Australian product and also to think that I've got a better one than my dad and uncle - and my dad's jealous," she said.

Melbourne Cup winning jockey Michelle Payne, who is now forging a career as a trainer, reflected on her path to stardom aboard Prince of Penzance. "The love of the animal and growing up with them, learning to work with them and building that association is what I absolutely love about the industry," she said.