



SPALATO STREETS RIVALS IN MERLION TROPHY



Spalato showed he was back to his brilliant best with a comfortable victory

Spalato (NZ) (Elusive City) turned in a display of sheer class when he coasted away to a commanding win in the \$350,000 Group 2 Merlion Trophy (1200m) on Sunday.

The John O'Hara-trained star was never in doubt at any stage of the race, taking a tow behind Kiwi Karma (NZ) (Fast 'N' Famous), three wide for most of the way but jogging along seemingly without spending a penny. The writings of a rout were clearly on the wall when jockey Corey Brown was seen still sitting pretty as they swung for the run to the judge, just raring to rip up the last 300m stretch of Polytrack at any

second.

The outcome was a sight to behold. Once Brown decided it was time to push the button, the champion galloper obeyed almost at will, careering away with a blistering burst of speed that left his eight rivals reeling in his wake.

El Padrino (NZ) (Mr Nancho) came with his customary late surge inside the last furlong, but he was up against a different kettle of fish this time, but was still gallant in defeat. Bowing to this superlative power, the title holder of the two previous Merlion Trophies would not add his name for a record third

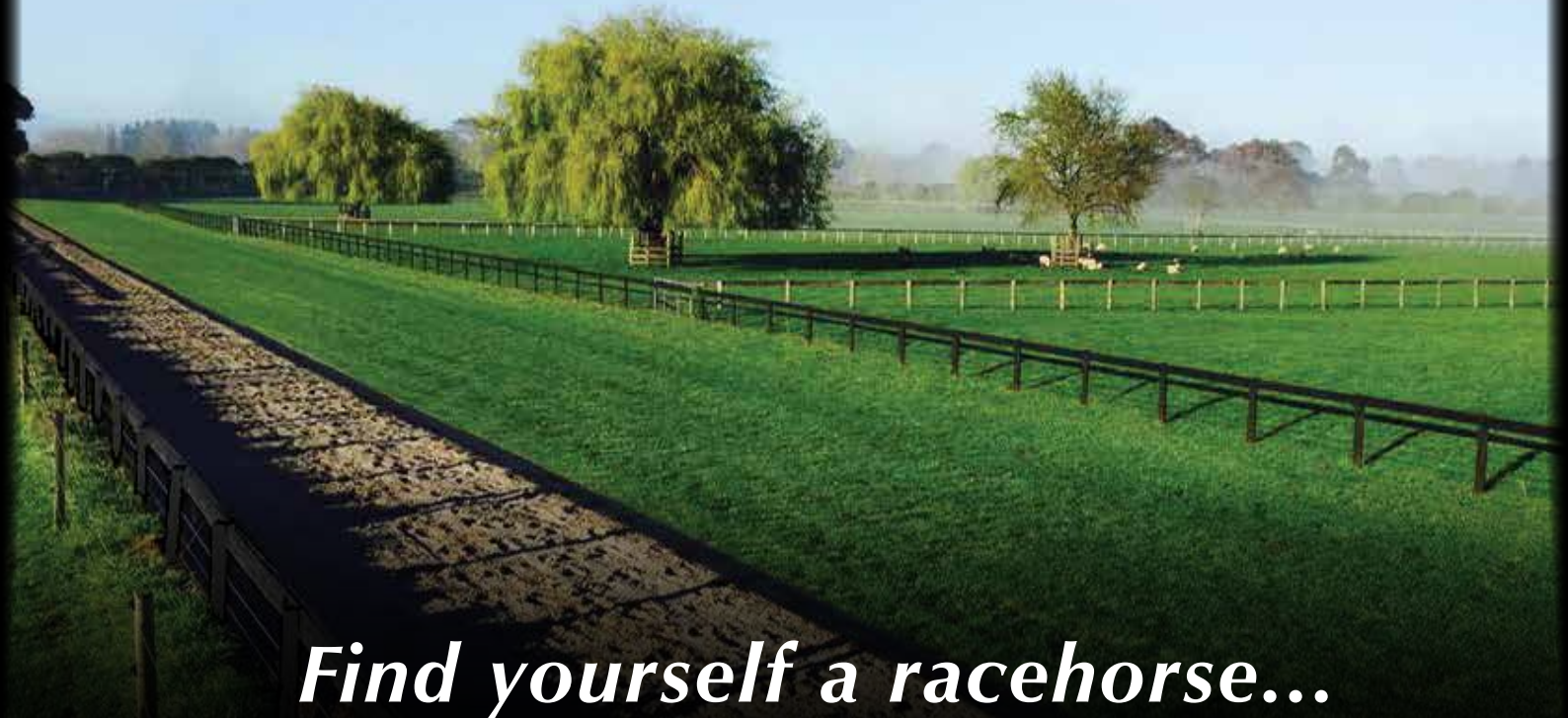
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time, settling for second place just under four lengths off Spalato. Try as she might, Kiwi Karma could only run third, another gap of 5 ¼ lengths away.

The first three home were among six horses picked to represent Singapore at the Dubai World Cup meeting on March 26, but who will now focus on the races at home following the non-invitation of Singapore horses amid concerns from the Dubai Racing Club about the recent Strangles cases at Kranji.

Winning trainer John O'Hara said there was not much point in wondering about "what ifs". The Elusive City six-year-old was back to his best if not better, and the "where" mattered little to him.

"You always worry in horse racing even if on paper it should be easier than his first-up win when he gave weight all round," said the Singaporean trainer.

"But he showed today he was back to his best. He was simply the best horse today and it doesn't matter whether he showed it here, Dubai or anywhere."

O'Hara is counting his blessings with the horse he

described as the best he has ever trained.

"I'll see how he pulls up but I don't think he will be running in the Kranji Sprint. It's a handicap race and he will get the topweight," said O'Hara.

"I'd rather take him straight to the Lion City Cup."

The Merlion Trophy which was upgraded to Group 2 this year, the Group 3 Kranji Sprint on April 3 and the Group 1 Lion City Cup on April 24 are the three Legs (all over 1200m) of the Singapore Sprint Series which carries a bonus of \$50,000 to the winner of two Legs and \$150,000 for a clean sweep.

Spalato has now brought his imposing record to 10 wins from 13 starts for stakes earnings in excess of \$1.63 million for Graham Mackie and Trish Dunell.

<i>Race</i>	Singapore TC Merlion Trophy Sgp-2 1200m.
<i>Winner</i>	Spalato (NZ) 2009
<i>Owners</i>	Graham Mackie
<i>Trainer</i>	J O'Hara (Kranji)
<i>Breeding</i>	by Elusive City (USA) out of Ellington by Express Duke (AUS)
<i>Breeder</i>	Mrs P A Dunell; Auckland; NZ

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BARGAIN BUY UPSETS THE FAVOURITES AT WINGATUI

Riccarton based trainer Peter Rudkin was fairly sure he had secured a bargain when he took home a two-year-old Darci Brahma filly from the annual New Zealand Bloodstock Mixed Bloodstock Sale back in May last year.

That theory was proved correct at Wingatui on Saturday when **Honor That (NZ)** scored her second and most important victory for Rudkin with a determined performance to take out the Listed New Zealand Bloodstock Airfreight Stakes (1400m).

Rudkin had missed out on his first choice at Karaka during the annual three day auction but liked the look of the tiny but well proportioned filly that had finished fourth in her three raceday starts before being offered through the auction ring.

Rudkin willingly outlaid his \$4,000 to purchase the filly and recouped most of his investment when she finished second to subsequent Group One placegetter Dezzies Dream a fortnight later in her first run from her new southern home. By then Rudkin had agreed to sell 50% of the filly to longtime stable client Terry Lines who had also taken a fancy to her when he was visiting Rudkin's home base one morning.

"Terry had come around to watch a couple of his horses work and when he saw her he immediately asked me about her," he recounted.

"I told him I had bought her for four grand so he told me he would like to buy a share in her as he had raced one that was 17 hands high and wanted to race one that was about half that size. We had a good laugh but I did tell him that even though she was only a tick over 14 hands she had a pretty good motor under the hood."



Bargain buy Honor That scores handsomely at Wingatui

Rudkin's judgement was spot on with the filly finishing second twice before notching a maiden win at just her third southern start. Taken north for a shot at Listed company in the Ryder Stakes at Otaki, Honor That also proved to Rudkin that she was a real duffer on wet tracks when finishing well back on a Heavy 10 surface.

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<i>Race</i>	Otago RC New Zealand Bloodstock Airfreight Breeders S. L 1400m.
<i>Winner</i>	Honor That (NZ) 2012
<i>Owners</i>	T G Lines & P J Rudkin
<i>Trainer</i>	Peter Rudkin (Riccarton Park)
<i>Breeding</i>	by Darci Brahma out of Equals That by Traditionally (USA)
<i>Breeder</i>	D Karreman & R I Williams; Waikato; NZ
<i>Sales</i>	2015 National Weanling; Broodmare & Mixed Sale V: The Oaks Stud \$4000 P: PJ Rudkin



BARGAIN BUY UPSETS THE FAVOURITES AT WINGATUI

(Continued from page 4)

Spelled immediately after the Otaki run Honor That began her three-year-old campaign in October and although having not won in nine subsequent starts, Rudkin was confident of a good performance on the weekend.

"She had been going well without a whole lot of luck since we brought her back in this time," he said.

"She had been very unlucky at Cromwell one day when she flew home for second and had also gone well at her last two starts.

"We didn't think Saturday's field was overly strong

although, in saying that, we would have been happy to have run in the first five."

In a truly run race Honor That came with a sustained bid in the home straight to dash past Cantilena (NZ) (Per Incanto) in the closing stages to score impressively by more than a length with northern visitor Princess Davone (NZ) (Iffraaj) finishing third.

Rudkin will now give the filly another start over a mile before tackling the Listed New Zealand Bloodstock Warstep Stakes (2000m) at Riccarton on the 23rd of April.

– NZ Racing Desk

Rising Romance ready to step up in Australian Cup

Co-trainer Tom Dabernig is looking to a return to Flemington and a good barrier to bring about a change of fortune for **Rising Romance (NZ)** (Ekraar).

The 2014 ATC Australian Oaks winner and Caulfield Cup runner-up will be one of three runners for the Lindsay Park team in the Australian Cup on Saturday.

"She keeps drawing wide and we have to keep going back," Dabernig said.

"She's got a very good record at Flemington and with those two runs underneath her and the 2000 metres she should be ready to do something.

"If we happened to get a little bit of give in the ground it would be ideal.

"She goes on any surface but I reckon if there's a little bit of sting out of it, she'll fly."

Rising Romance is yet to win for Dabernig and David Hayes but her two best performances for the stable have been at Flemington when running second in the Makybe Diva Stakes and again in the Mackinnon Stakes last spring.

Damian Lane or Michael Walker, who returned to race riding after a hip operation with a third placing in the New Zealand Derby on Saturday, will have the mount.

AAP TURF

News in Brief

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RACING NEWS



EL PISTOLA CLINCHES CUP START WITH NATHANS MEMORIAL VICTORY

A plan that was formulated just on twelve months ago will come to fruition this Saturday as rugged stayer **El Pistola (NZ)** (El Hermano) takes her place in the Gr. 1 Barfoot & Thompson Auckland Cup (3200m) at Ellerslie.

The final piece of the jigsaw puzzle fell into place on the weekend when the five-year-old mare downed a number of Cup hopefuls in the Barneswood Farm sponsored Nathans Memorial, the traditional lead-up event to the Auckland Racing Club's two mile feature.

Trainer Nathan Hanley, who prepares the El Hermano mare with partner Kylie Whiting, admitted he had always fancied his charge would be a two mile contender from the moment she entered their stable.

"She is bred to be a stayer and from day one that is how she has performed," he explained.

"We knew she would take time to mature and we had to be patient with her. I can tell you that patience was severely tested when she virtually ran last at her first five starts!"

Hanley didn't despair and the mare delivered on the faith he had placed in her when scoring over 2000 metres at Matamata in March last year.

"When she won that day we sat down and tried to work out how we could get her to Cup day at Ellerslie," he said.

"I knew then another year on her would see her at her peak so everything we have done has been designed with this coming weekend in mind."

Hanley admitted he thought he made a mistake when choosing to forego a run in the Gr. 3 City Of Auckland Cup on New Year's Day in preference to the Dunstan Feeds Championship Final that day.

"I wasn't sure if she would get a run in the City Of Auckland Cup so we went for the Dunstan instead," he disclosed.

"The first three home in the City Of Auckland Cup automatically get an Auckland Cup start and I think we could have done that but we chose a certain run in the Dunstan to try and win that to qualify instead.

"Finishing third that day has meant we have had to tread a different path to get her rating up which has seen a couple of setbacks put us on the back foot a little.

"Saturday was our last shot but I was confident she had taken the necessary improvement from her run at Matamata and that was how it worked out."

Hanley will now follow the mare's familiar routine this week as he and Whiting prepare for their first runner in a Group One contest although he admitted the nerves would begin to jangle as raceday drew closer.

– NZ Racing Desk



<i>Race</i>	ARC Barneswood Farm Nathans Memorial H. 2200m.
<i>Winner</i>	El Pistola (NZ) 2010
<i>Owners</i>	Hoofit Bros Tokoroa Syndicate
<i>Trainer</i>	Nathan Hanley & Kylie Whiting (Tokoroa)
<i>Breeding</i>	by El Hermano out of Classic Shot by Zabeel
<i>Breeder</i>	Mrs F I & FT Drummond; Waikato; NZ

El Pistola will provide trainers Nathan Hanley & Kylie Whiting with their first Group One runner this weekend



HALE DELIVERS ON PROMISE WITH GO NICHOLAS

Cambridge trainer Shelley Hale was adamant she would return to Ellerslie during Auckland Cup Week with promising intermediate galloper **Go Nicholas (NZ)** (Danroad) after her charge had run out an impressive winner at the venue a fortnight ago.

Hale made good on that promise when the four-year-old Danroad gelding put in an even more eye-catching performance to down a quality field of rating 75 runners in the Barfoot & Thompson 1200 on Saturday, in the process lifting his career record to three wins from just five starts.

Results early in the day supported the theory that on-pace runners were favoured thus the chances of Go Nicholas looked a little forlorn when he settled three wide in the early running and was at least six to seven lengths off the leaders as they rounded the home bend.

Taken to the outside by rider Opie Bosson, Go Nicholas was still a good distance from the action at the 200 metre mark although he had begun to wind up strongly at that point. Several big bounds later and the result was a foregone conclusion as the gelding burst to the front to run away from his rivals in a smart 1.09.93 for the journey on a Dead 5 rated surface.

"I didn't know if he could do it today as he drew wide and it was a much tougher field than last time," noted Hale after the contest.

"If he could have run a nice placing I would have been thrilled to bits but man that was so good and it confirms we have a pretty exciting horse."

Hale was in two minds as to the path ahead with the gelding who doesn't distinguish himself on the training track between races.

"I'm not sure where to go with him now as he doesn't show you much at home," she said.

"He had shown us a little when he went to the trials but



Go Nicholas and Opie Bosson combine for a stunning victory at Ellerslie

now he's been racing he just switches off at home and just does what he has to. He's hard to get a gauge on but while he is winning I'm very happy.

"I've been taking it one race at a time as he's still not furnished yet so you can only hope he can be an even better horse next season."

The winning time posted by Go Nicholas compared favourably with the other two 1200 metre contests run later on an improving track with No More Tears (NZ) (Darci Brahma) clocking 1.10.10 in the Gr. 3 Mr Tiz Trophy while Sacred Star (Flying Spur) scored in 1.09.56 in the Gr. 3 Darley Plate.

– NZ Racing Desk

Race	ARC Barfoot & Thompson H. 1200m.
Winner	Go Nicholas (NZ) 2011
Owners	D Lawson, V Tangaroa, V Moffat, M Alexander, K Gore, D, J & S Andersen, R & K Dowling, R & T Marsh, J, S, & C Hale
Trainer	Shelley Hale (Cambridge)
Breeding	by Danroad (AUS) out of Witches Britches by Exploding Prospect (USA)
Breeder	Mrs J A & Miss S A Hale; Waikato; NZ



MANAWATU CLASSIC A POSSIBILITY FOR PROMISING THREE-YEAR-OLD

The benefit of raceday experience and a peach of a ride from Danielle Johnson combined to land **Chancery (NZ)** (Makfi) a narrow but impressive winner at Ellerslie on Saturday.

The handsome Makfi gelding hails from the family of outstanding racemare Rationale (Sound Reason) and had looked a promising galloper despite failing to salute the judge in five previous starts prior to Saturday's victory.

Trainer Moira Murdoch was confident that a win would come once her charge had grasped the concept of settling during the running which was proven to be the case on the weekend.

Race	ARC Ghiotti Maiden S. 1600m.
Winner	Chancery (NZ) 2012
Owners	Hauui Bloodstock Ltd
Trainer	Shelley Hale (Cambridge)
Breeding	by Makfi (GB) out of Fashionable Lass (AUS) by Carnegie (IRE)
Breeder	Hauui Bloodstock Ltd; Auckland; NZ

"I've always thought he would be a handy galloper but we made the mistake of asking him to jump and run in his first two starts prior to Christmas," she explained.

"He got caught wide in those races which got him fired up so we had to go back to the drawing board to try and get him to settle properly. His last three starts had been very good as he had finished off nicely so I thought the step up to the mile would suit him as long as he remembered to relax early on."

Murdoch was delighted to see Johnson position the gelding beautifully in midfield behind a solid early speed before angling into the clear early in the run home. Johnson asked Chancery for his effort at the 200 metre mark and he responded well to score narrowly in a driving finish from race favourite Sabotage (NZ) (Savabeel) with Society Princess (NZ) (Sufficient) close up in third.

"It was a beautiful ride by Danielle who is really at the top of her game at present," noted Murdoch.

"Her timing is just so good and she had him in a lovely spot throughout the race. It was a narrow margin in the end

but he is only going to get better as he matures as I think his future will definitely see him at his best over a middle distance."

Murdoch is keen to test her charge in better company with a tilt at the Gr. 3 Higgins Manawatu Classic (2000m) on Manawatu Sires' Produce Stakes Day in early April a possibility as long as the tracks stay dry over the next few weeks.

– NZ Racing Desk



Chancery (middle) breaks his maiden status in style at Ellerslie



NZ STALLION AWARDS

THE CENTAINE AWARD

STALLIONS	EARNINGS
SAVABEEL	\$7,140,749
PENTIRE	\$6,802,829
O'REILLY	\$5,309,497
DARCI BRAHMA	\$4,573,032
PINS	\$4,507,107
IFFRAAJ	\$4,145,057
TAVISTOCK	\$4,018,945
ELUSIVE CITY	\$3,110,324
ZABEEL	\$2,727,033
KEEPER	\$2,574,382

Criteria: Sire whose NZ-conceived progeny have accumulated the highest stakes earnings worldwide

THE DEWAR STALLION TROPHY

STALLIONS	EARNINGS
PENTIRE	\$5,933,748
SAVABEEL	\$4,181,018
DARCI BRAHMA	\$2,844,780
IFFRAAJ	\$2,837,359
TAVISTOCK	\$2,382,696
PINS	\$2,365,624
ZABEEL	\$2,332,883
O'REILLY	\$2,118,313
THORN PARK	\$1,483,287
MASTERCRAFTSMAN	\$1,442,582

Criteria: Sire whose progeny have accumulated the highest combined stakes earnings in Australia & New Zealand

THE GROSVENOR AWARD

STALLIONS	EARNINGS	BEST PERFORMERS	EARNINGS
SAVABEEL	\$1,951,435	KAWI	\$498,000
DARCI BRAHMA	\$1,672,865	JULINSKY PRINCE	\$287,500
IFFRAAJ	\$1,321,125	XIONG FENG	\$579,685
PINS	\$1,041,234	DECORAH	\$138,400
MASTERCRAFTSMAN	\$917,725	VALLEY GIRL	\$254,625
PENTIRE	\$882,426	XTRAVAGANT	\$417,500
TAVISTOCK	\$864,125	VOLKSTOK'N'BARRELL	\$118,750
ALAMOSA	\$779,816	STOLEN DANCE	\$258,725
THORN PARK	\$741,058	RYAN MARK	\$217,400
SHOWCASING	\$721,748	RAGHU	\$243,050

Criteria: Leading Sires by Earnings in New Zealand

NZ BRED WINNERS IN HONG KONG MARCH 2

HORSE & BREEDING	BREEDER	RACE	SALES DETAILS
ONE OF A KIND (NZ) 2008 by Keeper (AUS) out of Ruby Keeler by Rhythm (USA)	Miss C J Holmes & B J McCallum; Waikato; NZ	HKJC Fa Hui H. 1800m.	2010 National Yearling Sale - Premier Session; V: Cambridge Stud, P: New Zealand BStk Ltd; \$100,000

NZ BRED WINNERS IN HONG KONG MARCH 6

HORSE & BREEDING	BREEDER	RACE	SALES DETAILS
MOMENTUM LUCKY (NZ) 2012 by Commands (AUS) out of Tampiko (AUS) by Lonhro (AUS)	D G & R B McLaren Ltd; Auckland; NZ	HKJC Macau-Taipa Bridge H. 1200m.	2014 National Yearling Sale - Premier Sale ;V: Haunui Farm, P: John Foote B/stock; \$140,000
Raise the Bar – LUCKY EVER (H.K.) (NZ) 2011 by Keeper (AUS) out of Mumtaz by Cape Cross (IRE)	M P Kuklinski; Waikato; NZ	HKJC Journalists Challenge Cup 1200m.	
Lord Turbo – LITTLE DRAGON (H.K.) (NZ) 2010 by Perfectly Ready (AUS) out of Sitting on a Hill by City on a Hill (USA)	Miss C A Bambry & Mangatiti Trust; Central; NZ	HKJC Taipa H. 1800m.	
JOLLY JOLLY (NZ) 2011 by Stratum (AUS) out of Paolino by Housebuster (USA)	P J & P M Vela Ltd; Waikato; NZ	HKJC Coloane H. 1400m.	2013 National Yearling Sale - Premier Sale; V: Pencarrow Stud, P: New Zealand BStk-ag; \$150,000

Stakes double at Canberra for kiwi bred runners

New Zealand bred runners enjoyed a stakes double at Canberra on Sunday with wins to the Gai Waterhouse trained **Hippopus (NZ)** (High Chaparral) and the former Graeme & Debbie Rogerson trained **Cosmic Cube (NZ)** (Dehere).

Hippopus reversed a string of outs when he led all the way in the hands of Tim Clark to score by two and a half lengths in the Listed Canberra Cup (2000m). It was his first victory since success in the VRC St. Leger back in 2013.

Clark was also the beneficiary when he picked up the ride on Cosmic Cube after ex-pat kiwi Jason Collett relinquished his engagements for the day.

Clark rode Cosmic Cube in positive fashion, sitting just

outside the leader before holding out his fast finishing rivals to score nicely in the Listed National Sprint (1400m).

"It probably worked out great being drawn out wide," Clark said.

"He could just roll across under his own steam. We rolled at a nice even tempo throughout.

"The leader didn't take me as far as I would have liked. We got left out there in front a fair way from home. He was good and strong late."

Holding a feature race nomination for the Group 1 Doncaster Mile next month, trainer David Vandyke will look to book a start in the feature for Cosmic Cube through the Group 3 Doncaster Mile Prelude (1500m) at Rosehill on March 26.

NZ BRED WINNERS IN SINGAPORE MARCH 4

HORSE & BREEDING	BREEDER	RACE	SALES DETAILS
CHIPS(NZ) 2011 by Strategic Image (AUS) out of Snip Ya Belt by Pins (AUS)	K & Mrs K A Gray; Central; NZ	Singapore TC Maiden S. 1400m.	
ARION (NZ) 2012 by Bachelor Duke (USA) out of Eyno by Defensive Play (USA)	R I Williams; Waikato; NZ	Singapore TC Restricted Maiden S. 1200m.	
MASTERMIND (NZ) 2009 by Rusty Spur (USA) out of Mrs Bond by Last Tycoon (IRE)	J L Donaldson & Mrs N J Oberholster; Auckland; NZ	Singapore TC Kranji S. 1000m.	2011 National Yearling Sale - Festival Session; V: Totara Park Stud, P: Mr SG Crutchley; \$3,250
D'BUFFALO MAN (NZ) 2012 by Buffalo Man (CAN) out of Silk Purse by Defensive Play (USA)	J L Donaldson; Auckland; NZ	Singapore TC Initiation P. 1400m.	2014 National Yearling Sale - Festival Sale; V: Totara Park Stud, P: PJ Rudkin; \$9,000
THE JEUNEYMAN (NZ) 2011 by Mettre en Jeu out of Tad Irish by Omnicorp	Letham Stud Ltd; Central; NZ	Singapore TC Maiden S. 1400m.	2013 National Yearling Sale - Festival Sale; V: Letham Thoroughbreds, P: SG Crutchley; \$2,000
ROSEGOLD (NZ) 2011 by Elusive City (USA) out of Hermitage by Generous (IRE)	W J Stewart; Central; NZ	Singapore TC Kranji S. 1600m.	2013 National Yearling Sale - Select Session; V: Martindale Stud, P: NZB as agent; \$13,000 2013 Ready to Run Sale; V: Lime Country Thoroughbreds Ltd, P: Hiwi Lodge; \$100,000
NOVA WARRIOR (NZ) 2011 by Bachelor Duke (USA) out of Muppy (AUS) by Snaadee (USA)	Mrs B L & Dr P V Ratray; Waikato; NZ	Singapore TC Benchmark 67 H. 1200m.	2013 National Yearling Sale - Festival Sale; V: Esker Lodge, P: Makaraka Horse Company; \$11,000

NZ BRED WINNERS IN SINGAPORE MARCH 6

HORSE & BREEDING	BREEDER	RACE	SALES DETAILS
MISS BLANCHETT (NZ) 2012 by Battle Paint (USA) out of Show Royal by Traditionally (USA)	Chequers N.Z. Ltd; Waikato; NZ	Singapore TC El Padrino S. 1200m.	2013 National Weanling; Broodmare & Mixed Sale; V: Chequers Stud, P: TA Keegan; \$1,600
SPALATO (NZ) 2009 by Elusive City (USA) out of Ellington by Express Duke (AUS)	Mrs P A Dunell; Auckland; NZ	Singapore TC Merlion Trophy Sgp-2 1200m.	