

Eye for talent

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Barry ‘B Eye’ Irwin finds talent in the unlikeliest of places...

American Barry Irwin is known among his clients as “B Eye,” using his initials to refer to his uncanny ability that has gained him ‘legendary’ status in ferreting out talent from some of the most unlikely venues of the racing world.

In South Africa he discovered an internationally untapped source of top quality stock and has since forged a huge reputation in this country as a straight shooting man of vision. A glimpse of his genius was on display at Turffontein on Saturday with **Aussie Austin** winning the second and **Heaps Of Fun** the Gr2 Wilgerbosdrift Gauteng Fillies Guineas.



BARRY IRWIN

The Sean Tarry-trained Heaps Of Fun was the second South African stakes winner in the first local crop of Irwin’s Summerhill-based sire **Visionaire**. The first being Gr3 Strelitzia Stakes winner Royal Pleasure.

A Group 1 winning son of Grand Slam, himself a son of super sire Gone West, was imported into this country as Irwin thought he would make an ideal match for locally bred mares.

Visionaire had only 25 named foals in his first U.S. crop and stood at one of the smaller farms in Kentucky where he was not promoted very well. Irwin wanted to stand a horse in South Africa that he thought would produce straight-legged foals that he could breed to his own mares.

“I don’t like overpaying for classy but sometimes unreliable stallions that produce foals with front legs that are not consistently correct enough. The reason I chose Visionaire is that he is tall, his front limbs are perfect, he has a lot of bone, he was fast enough to sprint with the best and yet he easily got a middle distance around turns in America,” he once commented.

In Heaps Of Fun, Visionaire appears to have produced a potential star. S’Manga Khumalo had no hesitation in taking the filly to the front ahead of hot favourite Negroamaro. The two fought a ding-dong battle up the long Turffontein straight with Heaps Of Fun finding more with every stride. This was the first leg of the Wilgerbosdrift Triple Tiara and the evidence of Saturday’s showing the 1800m of the Fillies Classic will be well within her compass.

Bred by Summerhill out of the one-time winning Northern Guest mare, Dream Starling she was a R200 000 purchase at the 2014 CTS Johannesburg Ready To Run sale.

Michael Azzie and his stalwart owners Adriaan and Rika van Vuuren had a red letter day on Saturday with Abashiri winning the Gr 2 Betting World Gauteng Guineas and their Australian import Aussie Austin winning the second. Aussie Austin is by another of Irwin's stallions, Breeders Cup Juvenile winner **Pluck** who stands at The Vinery Stud in Australia.

A son of prolific sire More Than Ready, Pluck is out of the superbly bred but ill-fated mare **Secret Heart**. A daughter of Fort Wood, Secret Heart has a super South African pedigree and is closely related to London News.

By Andrew Harrison