

# TDNQA

Though still in its relative infancy, the China Horse Club has become an increasingly important entity on racetracks and in sales pavilions around the world. Earlier this year, the CHC purchased a stake in the Peter Moody-trained **Dissident (Aus)** (Sebring {Aus}) and the



**The China Horse Club's Michael Wallace (right) following their purchase of the second-highest priced yearling, a A\$1.05 million Fastnet Rock (Aus) filly at Magic Millions**

*Sharon Chapman/Fast Track Photography*

4-year-old validated his new part-owner's confidence as he went on to win his fourth Group 1 event in the C.F. Orr S. at Caulfield. Dissident is expected to race through the end of the 2015 racing season before retiring to stud at Newgate Farm. The CHC has also been represented in Australia by Group 1 winner **First Seal (Aus)** (Fastnet Rock {Aus}) and in Singapore by Longines Singapore Gold Cup hero **Tropaioi (GB)**

(Excellent Art {GB}). The Club, whose founder Teo Ah Khing raced and retains an interest in the stallion career of dual Derby hero **Australia (GB)** (Galileo {Ire}), acquired two of the top three lots at the Arqana Arc Sale for €2.12 million (two of those purchases, the French-bred **Auvray** and **Orbec** race this weekend in Singapore). They also made a serious commitment to establishing an American base at last year's November sales in Lexington, acquiring no fewer than 11 horses for better than \$7.2 million at the two auctions. The CHC is represented at the sales by Michael Wallace, a New Zealand native with worldwide experience, having worked at various times for Coolmore in Ireland, for Darley in Newmarket and for Vinery in Kentucky. Wallace jetted in to Singapore Wednesday ahead of this weekend's CECF Singapore and affiliated races and was gracious enough to field a series of questions from the TDN's Alan Carasso:

**TDN: What is your background/how did you get involved with/interested in horses?**

**Michael Wallace:** I have been surrounded by the industry my entire life, my grandfather was an equine veterinarian and developed our family farm, Ardsley Stud. My father has continued this on to this day. I was brought up on the farm and was completely immersed in all facets on the industry as we grew up.

I gained a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in Finance [from the University of Otago, New Zealand], but the passion for the industry won out and after working at various operations around the world, I developed by own bloodstock agency.

**TDN: How did you link up with the China Horse Club?**

**MW:** I had developed my own independent bloodstock agency and, as part of this, one of our main clients is leading Singapore trainer Michael Freedman. When the



**CHC Founder Teo Ah Khing and General Manager Eden Harrington**

CHC made a decision a couple of years ago to develop a presence in Singapore, Michael was their trainer of choice. Through this mutual relationships, I met with [China Horse Club founder] Mr. Teo [Ah Khing] and the CHC management team including Eden Harrington, whom I knew from earlier days in Australia and his time with Darley Flying Start. A relationship was forged through these meetings and, as the CHC portfolio grew, the role as their racing and bloodstock manager was developed for me in early 2014.

**TDN: What are the Club's objectives?**

**MW:** The China Horse Club is a lifestyle, business and Thoroughbred racing club and our priorities are in that order--lifestyle comes first. One of our objectives is to provide our members with unique experiences, and this weekend's CECF Singapore is part of that process. We are also driven to make a contribution to the industry in China, and we do that in several ways, including with scholarship programs to help talented young men and women. We are also motivated by charity and the promotion of art, artists and Chinese culture. A Chinese Equine Cultural Festival embodies all of these elements, and guests in Singapore will see that this weekend with the CECF Singapore. And while our home is China, we are without borders, it is our goal to have an international presence and to involve our members, and the Chinese at large, in the sport globally.

**TDN: What is your approach as it relates to sales? Is your focus on pedigree or the physical or a combination of both?**

**MW:** My approach to sales is to service and offer the best opportunities to our members, while building a balanced and strong long-term bloodstock portfolio. Like most, we are looking for the supreme athlete. We work hard at identifying these horses, while carefully analysing the statistics and external factors available to us to optimise this possibility.

We are striving to target fillies who can firstly perform on the track or have already shown a certain level of performance. These fillies have long-term residual breeding value and, once their racing days are done, they will join our breeding program.

The G1 Flight S. winner, First Seal (Aus) (Fastnet Rock {Aus}), is a prime example of this. We have formed great partnerships to also purchase portions of colts at yearling sales, with the hopes of developing stallions. We were fortunate to be able to partner with Coolmore on a Galileo colt, which turned out to be the acclaimed Australia (Ire). We have also targeted astute commercial prospects for our members and [recent G1 C. F. Orr S. victor] Dissident (Aus) (Sebring {Aus}) is a suitable example.

**TDN: Are you inclined to purchase either colts or fillies or is there no preference?**

**MW:** It's about keeping a balanced portfolio, not just of colts and fillies at yearling sales, but also racing stock with proven performance. We need to service the members' needs and desires within the industry. Members are always looking for opportunities to race a



**The CHC's Magic Millions top filly and second-highest priced yearling**

*Kelsey Riley photo*

leading yearling colt or filly, buy into a Melbourne Cup prospect, target a colt on the track for stallion potential or to acquire a leading mare to campaign around the world. We target opportunities based on the goals of our individual members. However, the overarching goal involves exposing mainland Chinese to the great carnivals and race days of the world. To be able to enjoy and participate in the global industry and to be pioneers in bringing the Chinese thoroughbred industry to a standard where it can contribute on the international marketplace.

**TDN: As we know, Mr. Teo raced Australia in partnership with the Coolmore team and retains an interest in his stallion career. Do you have that in the back of your mind when looking at adding fillies to the portfolio?**

**MW:** It's certainly part of the equation but we are not limited to Australia in the stallion pool. We have holding in the four time Group 1 winner, Dissident, who won the G1 C. F. Orr S. last weekend in Melbourne in great style. We also have a share in a Group 1 winning colt in America which is very exciting and will be announced shortly. It's hoped by the time these fillies are coming off the track and entering our breeding program that our stallion portfolio will have grown even further. We have supported Australia heavily in his first season at Coolmore Ireland and will continue this when he shuttles to Australia.

We will support all of our stallions strongly in the breeding shed and sale ring.

**TDN: The CHC made a giant splash at the mixed sales in America last November. What attracted you to the American-bred runners that you acquired at Fasig-Tipton and Keeneland?**

**MW:** We acquired a great group of high quality mares at these sales, five mares off the track which are all stakes winners. We will see three of these in the CECF Singapore Cup in **Parranda** (English Channel), **My Option** (Belong to Me) and **Bajan** (Speightstown). **Lotapa**



**Parranda**

*Adam Coglianese*

was an elite performer. She will form a cornerstone of our American breeding program with our other Grade I winner Last Full Measure. **Lotapa** is visiting War Front. Last Full Measure was brought in foal to War Front and visits Tapit

this year. These two mares provide a great foundation for us to make a contribution in the US breeding industry. We also picked up a nice cross-section of race-performed and strong-pedigreed broodmares to send to Ireland to be covered by Australia. It provides us an opportunity to send different genetically pooled and physical types to him so we can form an idea on what will be best suited in the long term.

**TDN: You began shopping the Australian yearling market a few years ago. What is it about the industry in Australia that motivates the CHC to be so active there?**

**MW:** Like any organisation, we need to do our homework and we look to participate in different markets for many reasons. However, one staple is that we participate in markets where our members like to go. We want to give them reasons to travel to countries or cities that they enjoy. Australia is one such region. In terms of market appeal, the Australian market is very buoyant, racing culture is engrained in society. It's something that is appealing. The prize money is great, there are world-class horses, jockeys, trainers and breeding farms. Its location to China is also advantageous. We feel Australia offers a level playing field where, as new participants, we are welcomed and encouraged to compete and participate in the industry as a whole.

**TDN: Having purchased a couple of horses at Tattersalls last October, are there any plans to delve into the American market, either yearlings or 2-year-olds?**

**MW:** We have some mares for racing and breeding in America already, a very nice select group including Grade I winners lotapa (Afleet Alex) and Last Full Measure (Empire Maker). We also see some of our USA team coming to compete in the CECF Singapore Cup. As far as yearlings and 2-year-olds go, we are always looking and analysing opportunities. I'm sure, in time, that these sales will provide these and we will become involved further.

**TDN: What led you to select Christophe Clement as your U.S.-based trainer?**

**MW:** Our ethos is that we are very much a team. We want all of our trainers to be part of that team, we want them to contribute in many ways, training and managing our portfolio of horses is the first step. Christophe is exceedingly professional, he is outgoing and he is a team player. His record is also imposing. He is a master trainer. We also have horses with his brother, Nicolas, in France. Nicolas is a team player as well and has been instrumental in singling out performers such as Tropaïos (GB) (Excellent Art {GB}), who won the Longines Gold Cup for us in Singapore; and Tabreed (GB) (Sakhee).

*Editor's Note: Tabreed broke her maiden in France for John Hammond before being acquired by Nicolas Clement for CHC and has placed twice at Grade III level in the U.S. for Christophe Clement, including a last-out second to stablemate Irish Mission (Giant's Causeway) in the GIII La Prevoyante H. at Gulfstream Park Dec. 27. Tabreed will be retired after a start in Saturday's GIII The Very One S. at Gulfstream.*

**TDN: Talk a little bit about the CECF Singapore and the excitement it is creating within the Club.**

**MW:** The CECF Singapore Cup is a landmark event, not just for CHC, but we hope for Singapore and the industry as a whole. This event is designed to increase participation from mainland Chinese owners, to have them involved in a major event and to ensure that one of them will be on the winners' podium at a major international racing centre. The importance of that in trying to grow interest in the sport in China cannot be underestimated. All markets have particular requirements, China is no different. China is at a formative stage at present and events like the CECF Singapore are an important platform to promote Chinese owners and Chinese owned horses. Racing is a wonderful sport, we want to introduce a new audience to this sport, an audience that has not paid too much attention to international racing to date. This weekend we have captains of every major thoroughbred industry flying into Singapore and that is very exciting. We want the international industry to play a role in this process. Welcoming China, the world's biggest market, the world's largest economy and the world's most populous nation, into this sport cannot be done by one club--it must be a group effort.

Hopefully this weekend will inspire different industries and different businesses to see how they can play an active role going forward. The first step is being here and witnessing this first hand and that step is being taken.

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