

## MEET THE 93-YEAR-OLD ITBA SMALL BREEDER OF THE YEAR JOHN CONNAUGHTON



John Connaughton | Brian Sheerin

By Brian Sheerin

More And More is an old ditty that the late singer Joe Dolan, one of County Westmeath's finest exports, made famous back in the 1980s. Well, the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association could not have found a more suitable backing track to the small breeder award presentation at The Heritage Hotel, which was won by fellow Westmeath man John Connaughton.

For starters, Connaughton has enjoyed a lifetime of successes in business which have been replicated through his bloodstock endeavors. And even at the age of 93, the accolades keep on coming for Connaughton, who now resides at Barretstown House farm on the outskirts of Mullingar.

Last year was a special one for Connaughton. Bay City Roller (Ire) (New Bay {GB}), who he sold for €320,000 at the Goffs Orby Sale in 2023, went unbeaten in three starts for trainer George Scott, culminating with G2 success in the Champagne Stakes at Doncaster.

Such a win paved the way for Connaughton, who consigns most of his horses through Tom Whelan's Church View Stables, netting a cool €850,000 for a Blue Point (Ire) half-sister to Bay City Roller back at the Orby Sale--this time to Agrolexica International Trading BV. [Cont. p3](#)

## MAKING WAVES: ATERRADORA GRADUATES IN NEW ORLEANS

by Heather Anderson

In this series, the TDN takes a look at notable successes of European-based sires in North America. This week's column is highlighted by the victory of Aterradora at the Fair Grounds.

### Starspangledbanner Filly Strikes Gold At Fair Grounds

Pura Vida Investments' **Aterradora (Ire)** (Starspangledbanner {Aus}), second in her first two starts at Fair Grounds in November and January, got off the mark on the first day of February at that track ([video](#)). Bred by The Last Partnership, the filly was purchased for 150,000gns out of Book 2 of the Tattersalls October Yearling Sale by Deuce Greathouse and is trained by Michael Maker. [Cont. p5](#)

## IN TDN AMERICA TODAY

### JOHN HANCOCK SETS NEW STAKES RECORD IN SAM F. DAVIS STAKES

Constitution's **John Hancock** set a new stakes record in the Sam F. Davis Stakes at Tampa Bay Downs on Saturday.

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# From Cheltenham to Royal Ascot, **GOLDEN HORN** gets horses for all courses...

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Sunday, February 9, 2025



*Motu Proprio (Ire), a daughter of Earthlight (Ire), graduated at second asking at Deauville on Saturday. The chestnut was a €37,000 Tattersalls Ireland yearling turned €170,000 breezer at Arqana last May when picked up by Hubert Guy Bloodstock.*

*Scoop Dyga*

**6 | GROUP-WINNING WILDCARD ADDED TO ARQANA FEBRUARY**  
*The Fuisse (Fr) mare, a Group 3 winner over hurdlers, will sell next week.*

**6 | INVINCIBLE SPIRIT COLT REMAINS PERFECT AT WOLVERHAMPTON**  
*The Watcher (Ire) claimed the novice by five lengths on Saturday.*

**7 | DEBUT WINNER FOR SAXON WARRIOR**  
*Nordic Norm (GB) won the Newcastle maiden by a head in his racecourse unveiling.*

**John Connaughton Cont. from p1**

You could say such memorable results on and off the racetrack in 2024 were a culmination of Connaughton's lifetime indulgence in the turf. Despite never letting his broodmare band extend beyond eight or 10, he has enjoyed a huge amount of success with his homebreds.

Dunboyne Express (Ire) (Shamardal) was one of the first. A dual Group 3 winner for trainer Kevin Prendergast, he went on to become a high-class performer in Hong Kong--where he raced as Dan Excel--and retired with career earnings in excess of €4 million.

Bay City Roller is a similar story of patience, foresight and bravery being rewarded given the top-notch three-year-old prospect represents over two decades of Connaughton's breeding after he sourced the grand dam Ramona (GB) along with his great friend Ed Naughton for 58,000gns at the Tattersalls December Mares Sale in 2002.

Ramona went on to produce Bloomfield (Ire) (Teofilo {Ire}), which is a nod to the property developer's Bloomfield House Hotel in Mullingar, who became another famous homebred to carry Connaughton's green, purple and white silks to victory at Listed level when in training with Willie McCreery. But far more consequential is her role as a broodmare on the farm given she is the dam of Bay City Roller and a large part of why Connaughton was acknowledged by his peers at the memorable awards ceremony some two weeks ago.

"That was nice," Connaughton says of his small breeder award in typically understated style from the kitchen table of his impressive estate. "It meant a great lot to me. Any time we bred

a good one, it meant a lot to me, but it's not that easy to breed a good one."



**Bloomfield: the Listed winner is the dam of Bay City Roller**  
*Racingfotos.com*

He continued, "We've always thought long-term with the breeding and concentrated largely on horses that would stay a mile or more. We'd a reasonably good start to the breeding game with horses like Dunboyne Express for example. And it was that line with Ramona, a mare we bought nearly 25 years ago at Tattersalls, that Bay City Roller has been produced from. So we've been rewarded for our patience."

The small breeder award provided Connaughton with a timely lift. His blue hen mare Bloomfield died while foaling a foal by Blue Point a couple of years ago. [Cont. p4](#)

**“I think he’s a crazy price for the standard of stallion that he is... For me you’re getting serious bang for your buck.”**

**Damian Burns**, Lodge Park Stud. TDN Podcast 3.2.25



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**John Connaughton Cont.**

The latest progeny from the mare will chart a similar path back to the Orby Sale at Goffs this year while Connaughton still has Bloom Vega (Ire) (Lope De Vega {Ire}), who failed to win in eight attempts, to keep the line going.

"Bloomfield died after foaling a couple of years ago and her daughter died around the same time--so I needed a lift! It's not a simple game, breeding, and there are plenty of drawbacks. For example, mares running blank and not going in foal. We've had instances of mares running barren for no particular reason. And sometimes the best call to make is to cut your losses, rather than persevere with problem mares.

"We try to keep our broodmare band to around eight to 10 mares. All in all, we've held onto the mares that were breeding winners for us and cut ties with the ones who weren't--no matter how much we paid for them. We have Bloomfield's daughter, Bloom Vega, who wasn't a good racemare but is too

well-bred not to breed from. She almost certainly would have won a race if we persevered but we said we'd bring her home and put her in foal instead so she will be a good addition to the farm."

"I could have been brave and went out and spent a lot of money on mares but I never did. Just because you spend a lot of money on a mare, it doesn't mean that she will breed you a winner."

--John Connaughton

It's clear that the principals that have sustained Connaughton so well in business have been adopted to his successful breeding enterprise. Despite his considerable wealth, the broodmare band has been built up organically and over a long period of time.

And even his son Darragh, who is also involved in property development, shares tales of his father driving a hard bargain on whatever stallion was in vogue down through the years. Connaughton, a proud huntsman who was also at one time one of the biggest breeders of purebred Simmental cattle in Ireland, explained, "I could have been brave and went out and spent a lot of money on mares but I never did. Just because you spend a lot of money on a mare, it doesn't mean that she will breed you a winner." [Cont. p5](#)

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**John Connaughton Cont.**

He added, "I'd look upon spending a lot of money at the sales as very chancy. I was never afraid to do it the long way and to back the mares we believed in. And if you found a good one, [it was a] licence to print money!

"We were lucky to get into some very good stallions early, Shamardal for example, and because we were in from the start we were allowed to stay in. But we built up some very good relationships with Coolmore, Darley and lots of the other big studs."

He continued, "I have a brother, PJ, who is two years older than me. He's living in Dublin and is going alright so I need to keep going to keep up with him. I still work and have quite a bit of business going. We're just about to get planning permission to build 800 houses in Dunboyne. When you are in the game, you have to keep going when you can."

Connaughton may be 93, but there is a lot more to come in business and in breeding.

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# Making Waves

by Heather Anderson



**Cont. from p1**

Out of Last Gold (Fr) (Gold Away {Ire}), the bay is a half-sister to G2 Blandford Stakes and G3 Staffordstown Stud Stakes heroine Lumiere Rock (Ire) (Saxon Warrior {Jpn}), who was third



**Aterradora** | Hodges Photography



**Goncora** | SV Photography

in the G1 Prix de l'Opera. Last Gold's latest offspring are 2-year-old colt Papa Joe (Ire) (Kodiac {GB}) and a yearling full-sister to the winner. Both G3 Prix des Chenes hero Akihiro (Jpn) (Deep Impact {Jpn}) and G3 Prix Belle de Nuit heroine Bartaba (Fr) (Deep Impact {Jpn}) are half-siblings to Last Gold.

Coolmore's reverse shuttle stallion Starspangledbanner (Aus) has a 55% strike rate in the U.S., with 16 winners from 29 starters. Four of his seven stakes winners have won a graded race, led by Grade I winners Rhea Moon (Ire) and State Of Rest (Ire).

**Iffraaj Colt Is Third-Time Lucky**

**Goncora (GB)** (Iffraaj {GB}), owned by Madaket Stables, Michael Dubb, William J. Rucker and William Strauss, graduated at Tampa in his third start last weekend for Chad Brown ([video](#)).

Bred by ORS Bloodstock, the 20,000gns Book 2 Tattersalls October yearling is a son of Sparkle (GB) (Oasis Dream {GB}). The colt was second in his debut at Dieppe in France for owner/trainer Mauricio Delcher-Sanchez last July, before being acquired by these connections. Since then, he filled the same spot in his Tampa Bay bow this January before Saturday's triumph. A half-brother to a pair of winners, as well as a 2-year-old filly by Time Test (GB), the bay counts listed winner and G3 Park Express Stakes second Gemstone (Ire) (Galileo {Ire}) as his granddam. She, in turn, is the dam of stakes winner and two-time Group 1-placed Nugget (GB) (Siyouni {Fr}) and listed winner UAE Jewel (GB) (Dubawi {Ire}). G1 Irish St. Leger hero Sonnyboyliston (Ire) (Power {GB}) is also in the family.

Renowned former Darley shuttle stallion Iffraaj (GB) has had limited representation in North America, with 15 winners from 30 runners (50%). His three stakes winners are G1 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf heroine Chriselliam (Ire), GIII Providencia Stakes victress Hostess (GB), and dual listed winner Sloane Garden (GB). [Cont. p6](#)

### Ribchester Filly Remains Undefeated

**Pretty Lavish (Ire)** (Ribchester {Ire}), a winner of a Gowan maiden race in October for Ben Dalton and trainer Natalia Lupini, made it two-for-two in her American debut, taking a Tampa Bay feature by a neck for new connections Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners, Bobby Flay and trainer Graham Motion ([video](#)). The filly was purchased privately after her debut win by Avenue Bloodstock's Mark McStay on behalf of her current owners.

Bred by Thomas Hassett, the €6,000 Goffs Orby yearling caught the eye of Dalton in September of 2023. She is a daughter of the placed Oasis Dream (GB) mare Tranquil Storm (Ire), who is related to the group-winning and Group 1-placed duo of Gagnoa (Ire) (Sadler's Wells) and Dawn Patrol (Ire) (Galileo {Ire}). The former is the dam of multiple group winner Ancient Rome (War Front), placed twice at the highest level and G3 Naas Juvenile Fillies Sprint Stakes heroine and stakes producer Etoile (War Front).

Former Darley stallion Ribchester is now permanently based at Haunui Farm in New Zealand, but his U.S. strike rate is a sparkling nine-for-11 (82%) with Pretty Lavish's victory. He has one stakes winner there, the 'TDN Rising Star' and Listed Limestone Stakes heroine Ruthin (GB).



Pretty Lavish | SV Photography

### Repeat Winner

**Anybody But You (Ire)** (Cotai Glory {GB}) is now two-for-two with a narrow victory at Gulfstream for Brendan Walsh on Jan. 26 ([video](#)). The Tally-Ho Stud-bred filly is owned by JDT Racing, and broke her maiden at that track in [December](#).

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## EUROPEAN NEWS

### BELLE PROMESSE NEW ARQANA FEBRUARY WILDCARD



Belle Promesse | Scoop Dyga

Group winner **Belle Promesse (Fr)** (Fuisse {Fr}) (lot 200) is a late addition to the Arqana February Mixed Sale, which takes place on Wednesday, Feb. 12.

A winner of the G3 Prix Christian de Tredern and the Listed Prix d'Arles over hurdles at Auteuil, the mare is out of Promets Moi (Fr) (Satri {Ire}), herself a winner at Auteuil and a half-sister to black-type horse Like A Player (Fr) (Lucky Dream {Fr}). This is the family of group winners Tarla (Fr) (Lavirco {Ger}), Bandito Conti (Fr) (Saint Des Saints {Fr}), and Overlord (Fr) (Saint Des Saints {Fr}).

For the full catalogue, please visit the [Arqana website](#).

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## BRITAIN

### Saturday's Results:

**4th-Wolverhampton, £10,500, Novice, 2-8, 3yo, 7f 36y (AWT), 1:28.99, st.**

**THE WATCHER (IRE) (c, 3, Invincible Spirit {Ire})--Lunar Vega {Ire}, by Lope De Vega {Ire}**, carrying a seven-pound penalty for his debut win over six furlongs at Newcastle in December, tanked his way to the front from the break. Extending his advantage from the top of the home straight, the 1-5 favourite hit the line with five lengths to spare over Kamekist (GB) (Kameko). [Cont. p7](#)

**4th-Wolverhampton Cont.**

The unraced dam, who also has a yearling filly by Dark Angel (Ire), is a granddaughter of the G3 Musidora Stakes winner and G1 Prix de Diane third Time Away (Ire) (Darshaan {GB}). Descended from Time Charter (Ire), she is also connected to the G1 Moyglare Stud Stakes heroine Cursory Glance (Distorted Humor). Lifetime Record: 2-2-0-0, \$13,586. O/B-Sheikh Mohammed Obaid Al Maktoum (IRE); T-Karl Burke.

**5th-Newcastle, £10,500, Mdn, 2-8, 3yo/up, 8f 5y (AWT), 1:43.20, st/sl.**

**NORDIC NORM (GB) (c, 3, Saxon Warrior {Jpn})--Fracherette {Ire}, by Exceed And Excel {Aus}),** sent off the 10-11 favourite, tracked the leading pair early. Working his way to the front passing the furlong pole, the newcomer stayed on to prevail by a head from Warrant Holder (Ire) (Frankel {GB}). The winner is the first foal out of the unraced dam, a daughter of the G1 Prix Marcel Boussac-placed Fraloga (Ire) (Grand Lodge). From the Lagardere dynasty which includes the G1 Prix Jean Romanet heroine Alpine Rose (Fr) (Linamix {Fr}), her yearling colt is by Ghaiyyath (Ire). Lifetime Record: 1-1-0-0, \$7,032. O/B-David & Yvonne Blunt (GB); T-Karl Burke.

**FRANCE****Saturday's Results:**

**6th-Deauville, €27,000, Mdn, 2-8, 3yo, f, 6 1/2f (AWT), 1:18.23, st. MOTU PROPRIO (IRE) (f, 3, Earthlight {Ire})--Macrame {Ire}, by Montjeu {Ire}),** third on debut over this course and distance last month, chased the honest tempo in fourth early. Staying on past Oaxaca (Ire) (Mehmas {Ire}) with 100 metres remaining, the 2-1 favourite asserted to beat that rival by half a length. The unraced dam, whose yearling filly is by Sioux Nation, is a daughter of the important Moyglare broodmare Market Slide (Gulch) who was responsible for the multiple group 1-winning Classic hero and sire Refuse To Bend (Ire) and the GI Melbourne Cup winner Media Puzzle and the dam of the GI Santa Anita Sprint Championship winner Rich Tapestry (Ire) (Holy Roman Emperor {Ire}). Sales history: €37,000 Ylg '23 TIRSEP; €170,000 2yo '24 ARQMAY. Lifetime Record: 2-1-0-1, €17,550. O-Beaumelles Racing, Blu Racing, Ilse Smits, Hubert Guy & Cluny Conseil; B-Empire Bloodstock Ltd & J O'Dwyer (IRE); T-Pierre Groualle.

**A Hubert Guy ARQMAY Purchase****CONDITIONS RESULTS:**

**8th-Deauville, €35,000, 2-8, 3yo, 6 1/2f (AWT), 1:16.94, st. HELLO JEEBY (FR) (c, 3, Johnny Barnes {Ire})--Heeby Jeeby {GB},**

**by Lawman {Fr})** Lifetime Record: 9-3-2-1, €59,700. O-Anthony Lopez & D Guillemain; B-M Daguzan-Garros & Mme C De Salvador (FR); T-Didier Guillemain. \*€9,000 Ylg '23 OSASEP; €25,000 RNA HRA '24 ARQAUT.

**ADDITIONAL MAIDEN WINNERS:**

**Lawliet (Fr), c, 3, Profitable (Ire)**--Liberty Tree (Ire), by Lope De Vega (Ire). Deauville, 2-8, 6 1/2f (AWT), 1:17.54. B-T Storme & T Lohest (FR). \*€32,000 Ylg '23 ARQAug.

**IN AUSTRALIA:**

**Palm Angel (Aus), f, 2, Starspangledbanner (Aus)**--Noblest (GB), by Pivotal (GB). MRC, 2-8, G2 Blue Diamond Prelude (F), 1100mT, 1:04.61, gd. B-Rosemont Stud (Vic). \*1ST GROUP WIN. \*\*1/2 to Narbold (Aus) (Churchill {Ire}), SP-Aus.

**Rivellino (Aus), c, 2, Too Darn Hot (GB)**--Intrinsic (Aus), by So You Think (NZ). ATC, 2-8, Listed Inglis 2yo Millennium (R), 1100mT, 1:03.90, gd. B-Mr SJ Murray (NSW). \*A\$180,000 Ylg '24 INGFEb. \*\*1ST BLACK-TYPE WIN.

**Angel Capital (Aus), c, 3, Harry Angel (Ire)**--Bahamas (Aus) (G1SP-Aus), by Teofilo (Ire). MRC, 2-8, G2 Autumn Stakes, 1400mT, 1:24.66, gd. B-Mr D Peacock (SA). \*A\$400,000 Ylg '23 INGMAR. \*\*1/2 to Senor Toba (Aus) (Toronado {Ire}), GSW & G1SP-Aus, MGSW & G1SP-HK, \$1,701,664; and Berkeley Square (Aus) (Territories {Ire}), GSW-Aus, \$1,112,680.

**Arabian Summer (Aus), f, 3, Too Darn Hot (GB)**--Maraam (Aus), by Street Cry (Ire). MRC, 2-8, G3 Peter Le Grand Stakes, 1100mT, 1:03.78, gd. B-Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum (Vic). \*A\$220,000 Ylg '23 MMLJAN. \*1ST BLACK-TYPE WIN. 1ST GROUP WIN.

**IN AUSTRALIA:**

**Duke De Sessa (Ire), g, 6, Lope De Vega (Ire)**--Dark Crusader (Ire) (GSP-Ire, SP-Eng, \$141,387), by Cape Cross (Ire). MRC, 2-8, G3 JRA Plate, 1600mT, 1:37.58, gd. B-Newtown Anner Stud (Ire). \*£60,000 RNA Ylg '20 GOFSEP. \*\*Hwt. 3yo-Ire at 14f+. \*\*\*G1SW-Aus, MGSW-Ire.

**IN SAUDI ARABIA:**

**Transferred (Ire)**, g, 4, **Dark Angel (Ire)**--Samaah (Ire), by Cape Cross (Ire). King Abdulaziz, 2-8, Novice (1-3 wins), 1200m. B-Yeomanstown Stud. \*1/2 to Huraiz (Ire) (Sepoy {Aus}), GSP-Eng. \*\*280,000gns Ylg '22 TATOCT; 25,000gns HRA '24 TATJUL. **VIDEO**

**Swing the Ring (Ire)**, g, 4, **Not This Time**--Morediamondsplease, by More Than Ready. King Abdulaziz, 2-8, Hcp., 2000m. B-BHMFR LLC. \*€150,00 Ylg '22 GOFORB; €197,531 RNA 2yo '23 GOFDUB; €90,000 RNA 2yo '23 ARQJUL; 50,000gns HRA '24 TATFEB. **VIDEO**

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## AUSTRALASIA

**STAKES RESULTS:**

**Another Wil (Aus)**, g, 5, **Street Boss**--Arohanui (Aus), by Bianconi. MRC, 2-8, G1 CF Orr Stakes, 1400mT, 1:23.13, gd. B-Mrs J Thomson (Vic). \***1ST GROUP 1 WIN**. \*\*1/2 to Wahine Toa (Aus) (Dalakhani {Ire}), SP-Aus, \$213,674.

**El Vencedor (NZ)**, g, 6, **Shocking (Aus)**--Strictly Maternal (NZ), by O'Reilly (NZ). Waikato TR, 2-8, G1 Herby Dyke Stakes, 2000mT, 2:03.05, gd. B-M W Freeman & D G Price, Central (NZ). \*Full to Chocante (NZ) (Shocking {Aus}), GSW-NZ, GSW & G1SP-Aus, \$315,590; and a half to Sky Darci (NZ) (Darci Brahma {NZ}), Ch. 4yo-HK, GSW-HK, \$3,079,079; and Golden Darci (NZ) (Darci Brahma {NZ}), SP-NZ.

**Here To Shock (NZ)**, g, 7, **Shocking (Aus)**--Frescoes (Aus), by Lonhro (Aus). Waikato TR, 2-8, G1 Waikato Sprint, 1400mT, 1:21.84, gd. B-The Sunlight Trust, Bay of Plenty (NZ). \*NZ\$70,000 Ylg '19 NZBJAN. \*\***1ST GROUP 1 WIN**. \*\*\*MGSW-Aus. \*\*\*\*1/2 to Turn The Ace (NZ) (Turn Me Loose {NZ}), SW-NZ, \$159,655.

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