## Introduction

This brief book follows on from *The American Trotter and Pacer,* outlining the evolution of the standardbred in Australia and New Zealand. While it is not necessary to read both books, the first does provide a deeper understanding of the American sire lines that are responsible for our contemporary pacers and trotters.

For those who wish to read this book alone, the following few pages serve as a brief summary.

In *The American Trotter and Pacer* I outlined the patchwork of horse breeds that contributed to the evolution of the American standardbred. In Australia and New Zealand this evolution followed a similar pattern.

In the Preface to the Sires Index (1860-1960), Ken Dyer noted that; the early stud books had completely ignored the contributions to our standardbred of a combination of imported thoroughbreds, together with a mixture of Norfolk, Lincoln, Welsh and Yorkshire horses combined with Cleveland Bays, Scottish trotters and pacers, Hackneys, Roadsters and Coaching horses. These created a diverse group of mares upon which the imported American stallions later forged their mark.

The difference between North America and Australasia is one of selection and magnitude. Although three hundred families account for almost all horses racing in America today, Australia and New Zealand still have over seven hundred active families. Of these, thirty account for nearly one third of Classic Race winners.

## Trotting versus pacing

Until the establishment of the standardbred term, harness horses had been referred to as trotters and this name has prevailed to current times. This of course fails to acknowledge the existence of the second form of standardbred, the pacer. The only difference is that of gait and despite two hundred years of selective breeding there are still constant examples of sires and dams throwing progeny of the alternative gait.

In Europe the trotter is dominant, while Australia and New Zealand lean strongly toward the pacer. Only in North America do both gaits approach equal recognition. In later chapters the development of each gait will be treated separately, although in most cases their stories intertwine.

## Measuring success

In 2013 there were more than four thousand standardbred foals registered in Australia and New Zealand. Of these only a small number will go on to win a major race, have substantial stake earnings or achieve a memorable speed record. The majority will fail to meet the dreams of their owners, or even pay their way.

Of the almost two hundred and fifty stallions on offer, few will succeed at stud or even produce better performers than themselves. Of more than six thousand broodmares, only a small number will achieve status as outstanding dams. So where do the handful of champions in each crop come from and, even more importantly, how can success in harness racing be measured, let alone predicted?

## Speed and earnings

Speed in the standardbred has been admired and sought after since the earliest days of the nineteenth century, demanding and receiving significant coverage from media and fans of the sport. By themselves however, speed records cannot measure lasting success. Today's two year old achieves speed not considered possible by the aged champions of less than a century ago. Records do serve a purpose however, in tracing the success of sire lines and maternal families over time.

Likewise, success may be measured in no small part through earnings, yet like speed it is not an accurate measure of comparative success over time. Past champions such as Miracle Mile winners Mount Eden and Halwes finished with speed records and life earnings that can be surpassed easily today with one two year old race win.

Given the vagaries of time, the evolution of speed and the increase in stake money, the champions of the sport can only be fairly compared to each other in one respect; their ability to win races against the best competitors of their era.

The very best of the champions are those that consistently beat their contemporaries as two and three year olds then continue to do so throughout their racing careers. These are the horses that refuse to be beaten. The champion standardbred sires and maternal families are those that consistently produce such horses. So how can race success as well as speed record and earnings be compared?

## Classic Families data base

To help answer this question we created a data base involving the winners of selected feature races commencing with such classic races as the 1904 New Zealand Cup and the Melbourne Thousand, first run in 1911.

To these were added those horses which achieved outstanding speed records, from the days of Spider in 1858 through Fritz in 1899 down to two year old Lettucerockthem in 2013. The pedigree of each successful horse was then traced back to the tap root mare that produced them. Each of these tap root mares was allocated a family name and number.

The result is *Classic Families*, the free web based program that accompanies this ebook. This program identifies all those maternal families that have produced successful progeny and the stallions that feature in their pedigrees. The data base currently includes over six thousand maternal families worldwide, with over one hundred and sixty thousand horses plus nearly four thousand races with more than one hundred thousand winners. There are a further three hundred lists involving the worldwide evolution of speed records and earnings. The data base continues to grow as it is updated and added to each day.

All you need do is click the hyperlinks in this book to enable a full pedigree to supplement the text and enhance your understanding.

## The Classic Races

The obvious start to creating a list of Classic Races in Australia and New Zealand must be

the Derbys and Oaks and other Group One feature races. These are supplemented by Group Two and Three and races that carry lower stake money or are restricted to progeny by state or sire, and finally Listed races that belong to regional centers or tracks.

The final category are those prestigious races that have been discontinued. Most contain the names of former champions of their day amongst their honor rolls. These include the NSW Thousand won by Walla Walla (1922) and the New Zealand Handicap won by Ribbonwood (1898). These were discontinued prior to group racing and are designated with the letter F for feature race.

## Speed and earnings lists

The speed evolution lists indicate how the speed records have evolved internationally from the earliest beginnings to present times. These lists show the first hundred horses to achieve the 2:10, 2:05, 2:00 and 1:55 benchmarks. By navigating through these lists, the reader can trace the impact and demise of sire lines and most importantly the strength of maternal families in producing this speed.

## Terminology

The terminology used in both this book and the related web based program follows standard conventions. These are restated here to avoid misunderstanding and assure a complete appreciation of the analysis presented. In addition there are some additional new terms used in Classic Families that are explained below.

## Performance and earnings records

The Classic Families data base closely follows the time conventions of the countries in which they were set. Australian and New Zealand performances are recorded in tenths while those in North American are in fifths followed by the suffix US. Trotting performances will have the prefix T and any performance achieved in a time trial will have the suffix TT. Performances of either gait in qualifying races will be preceded by the letter q. The New Zealand convention of allocating placed times **has not been followed**. Any time shown for a New Zealand performance represents a winning time, as is the convention elsewhere in the world. In Europe, performances are registered as kilometre rates followed by the letters EU.

Performers that set world records, whether they be for age, gender or track size follow the American convention of being termed World Champions.

In a similar way, Australian and New Zealand earnings are recorded in the dollars of their respective countries and treated as equivalent where a horse has earnings in both countries. North American earnings are preceded by the letters US and are in accordance with the official USTA website. European stake earnings are shown in Euros, although those earned prior to the adoption of this currency are shown in the currency of the nation in which they were earned.

Given the dramatic changes in speed records, earnings and statistical records, the task of ranking the champion performers in Australia

and New Zealand has been divided into two chapters.

An arbitrary cut off date has been set at 1970. This date more accurately reflects the dramatic changes brought about through mobile racing and the influx of the Adios and Meadow Skipper sire lines.

## Classic Winners, Classic Progeny and Classic Descendants

It is important to the analysis that follows, that there is a clear understanding of these terms.

Any horse that wins one of the Classic Races or appears on a Speed Evolution or Speed Performance list, is highlighted in the *Classic Families* program in **bold** type and referred to as a **Classic Winner**.

These Classic Winners plus all those horses that make up their pedigree are referred to as **Classic Progeny**. Any progeny that is not a Classic Progeny is not entered into the data base. Thus, a sire or dam may have many progeny but only those offspring that become Classic Progeny appear in the data base. The immediate foals of a sire or dam entered into the program are referred to as Classic Offspring.

This strategy enables better analysis of success by identifying; winning progeny (**Classic Winners**), progeny that contribute to the pedigree of winners (**Classic Progeny**) and horses that did not contribute at all to the advancement of the breed. In many instances sires and dams that produced large numbers of foals are only represented by one of their progeny. **Classic Descendants** are those that appear in later generations of maternal families or sire lines.

These new terms are of vital significance in measuring success. The contribution of sires and dams is compared in the following pages by constantly referring to the number of **Classic Winners** they produced and to the **Classic Progeny** that have contributed to genetic inheritance.

## Comparing sires statistics

In following chapters the impact of sires will be measured. This will involve tables based upon the number of **Classic Progeny**. This recognises the enduring impact of a sire over his lifetime rather than a single season, because it includes all foals that contributed in some way to later successful horses.

I suggest that, in order to follow more closely the reasoning set out in the following chapters, it is advisable to use this book in conjunction with the **Classic Families** program.

## Incidentals and acknowledgements

The possessive apostrophe has been dropped from most harness racing data bases since the use of computers became widespread. To reduce the possibility of confusion, the same convention has been followed throughout this book. Hence champions such as Star's Pride will be spelt as Stars Pride in the following text and tables, to match what is recorded in the Classic Families data base.

Pedigrees differ among the various websites so we have adopted the Wallace Yearbooks as our major reference source, followed by the Australian and New Zealand stud books.