



MATTHEW BINNS

Madeline Auerbach (right) with David Abrams (brother of trainer Barry) and her son Harris watch one of their runners at Del Mar

Students begin Darley stud course

THE sixth year of the Darley Flying Start began on Monday when 12 new students arrived at Ireland's Kildangan Stud for the first leg of a course which will take them around the world to study the thoroughbred industry.

The group will learn about the thoroughbred industry, racing form and pedigrees, and complete a module in Equine Anatomy and Physiology at the Veterinary College, University College, Dublin. Each will also spend time with a bloodstock agent at the Goffs Million.

An annual trainee conference will be held in October. In November, the course transfers to Dalham Hall Stud in Newmarket.

Two students, Michael Buckley and Gary King, are both Irish, while Meagan Jamieson and Brian McGrath come from Australia. There are three students from America – Billy Ajello, PJ Anthony and Chance Timm – Bill Wong from Hong Kong, Jimmy Unwala from India, Sorrel Schoenberger from Canada, Melanie Sauer from Germany and Charlie Vaughan-Fowler from Britain.

►►Newsells Park Stud

IN yesterday's Racing Post it was written that Newsells Park Stud is owned by Andreas Jacobs. It is in fact owned by Klaus Jacobs, in association with Jacobs Holdings.

Johnson's Old English Rancho. Then they turned two, and they came out on to the track running.

The first winner, Frankie Eyelashes, named after a punting friend of Jim Auerbach, won first time out. Two days later, Greenman sent out Calisto Star to win her first start. Eventually, the first crop of 15 foals from mares that nobody wanted resulted in 12 runners, 11 winners, two stakes winners and \$2.02 million in prize-money, for average earnings per runner of \$168,409.

The next year, the crop maintained its good form, highlighted by multiple wins from Thermal Ablation and Lennyfromalibu, who set a course record at Santa Anita. The following crop included the filly Tucked Away, a Grade 2 winner who is still her sire's leading earner with \$582,956 in prize-money.

This year looks like the best yet, with Grade 1 heroine Golden Doc A, who was also fourth in the Kentucky Oaks in May, and Grade 2 winner Lethal Heat leading the pack. Both are trained, as are most of Unusual Heat's high-class runners, by Abrams. The trainer has developed what could be called a 'waiting style' with the stallion's progeny – he prefers to wait until they are three before they run, and he teaches them to relax early in a race and make one late run.

Abrams insists the horses do not have to run this way, but he believe it allows them to progress better and to last longer; the horses from Unusual Heat's first crop have raced for an average of 3.3 years.

Although the stallion's book has improved and includes some durable racemares, the most expensive mare Abrams and Auer-

bach ever sent to him was Lethal Leta, a daughter of Synastry whom they bought for \$30,000, in foal to Jade Hunter.

"What he's done to the mares is unbelievable," says Abrams. "Every foal that's made it to the races was better than the mother. Most of the time when you breed good mares you hope the foal is half as good as the mother. In this situation, every foal has been better than the mother."

ABRAMS and Auerbach made a difficult decision this year. They decided to turn down lucrative offers from Kentucky studs and keep their stallion in California.

On the one hand, they both wonder what might have been if Unusual Heat had had better books of mares from the start. On the other hand, they have come to terms with the idea that a unique combination of a state breeders' incentive programme, the acumen Abrams has developed with the horses, and the lack of a commercial slant to Unusual Heat's career, is the key to their present and future success.

The California incentive programme means that not only do Abrams and Auerbach receive breeders' awards when horses they bred win, they also receive stallion awards worth 15 per cent of the winner's share of prize-money in better-quality races run in California for any horse sired by Unusual Heat.

Abrams says they will not raise Unusual Heat's fee above \$20,000, because they do not want to price out owner-breeders.

"If you raise the stud fee to \$30,000, there'll be better mares bred to him, and a lot of these foals would be put in public sales,"

explains Abrams. "Right now, they're breeding to him not for commercial purposes, but because they own a nice mare and they want to have a good runner. If you raise the stud fee you're going to price out the guy who owns the \$20,000-\$30,000 mare."

More commercially bred foals would likely mean more horses sent out of state, resulting in less income for Unusual Heat's owners. Abrams also fears the stallion, at 18, would be lost in the competitive shuffle of the commercial market. Perhaps, after all, his unorthodox development has been the best of all possible worlds.

Auerbach has now witnessed what an exceptional sire can achieve, and she and Abrams have become convinced that his success is due to his female family, beginning with his dam, Rossard, who won just about every Classic for colts and fillies in Denmark and Sweden before travelling to the US to win the Grade 1 Flower Bowl Handicap.

Consequently, she would like to improve the quality of California breeding stock, first of all by discouraging the breeding of poor quality mares. She recognises the irony.

"Having said that, how do you figure it out? Because we had no business, basically, standing Unusual Heat, and yet look what an amazing story he's been. Everybody in this business has the same dream – they want to take this backyard mare or that backyard stallion and turn them into lightning in a bottle. You don't really want to take that dream away from people. But you don't want to encourage breeding mediocrity to mediocrity either."

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