

SEA THE STARS SPECIAL TRIBUTE

Exceptional racehorse will be given outstanding chance to succeed at stud

Tony Morris says decision to base him in neutral camp is a good one



GREAT racehorses do not always make great sires. That fact has been common knowledge virtually since the dawn of the breed, and for a classic example one need only to consider Brigadier Gerard, the best miler of the last half-century, but a decided flop in his second career.

However, the Brigadier did not possess outstanding pedigree credentials, and nor was he managed to best effect as a stallion. He had his reasons for failure from the outset, and the results he got came as no great surprise.

If Sea The Stars is to fail, it will not be for either of those reasons. He is a half-brother to Galileo, who has already headed the sires' list once and will probably do so again before very long. And the fact that he is retiring to Gilltown amounts to a guarantee that he will be astutely managed and afforded the very best of chances that any stallion could receive.

Crucially, Sea The Stars will be based in a neutral camp. To have stood him under the banner of either Coolmore or Darley would have seriously damaged his prospects due to the ongoing feud between those acknowledged colossi of the breeding industry. While both prefer to support their own stallions, and express no interest in each other's, they cannot afford to ignore a horse who begins his stud career with impeccable credentials,

perhaps even a breed-shaping sire of the future.

Coolmore and Darley are bound to support Sea The Stars with top-quality mares, and it is inconceivable that other major private and commercial breeders will choose not to patronise a horse of such exceptional merit. Juddmonte, Shadwell and every other outfit committed to playing in the premier league of bloodstock will become involved.

And it can only be a tremendous boost to his prospects that he will have the backing of the Aga Khan, who has already nominated his unbeaten Arc heroine Zarkava as one of the novice stallion's mates for 2010, and whose 200-plus broodmare band is recognised as the world's best, replete with individuals of outstanding quality from families shrewdly developed

over many generations.

So how can such a paragon fail? There are still reasons enough, including – horror of horrors! – a lack of fertility. That crucial factor has blighted many a prominent runner's second career. Think George Washington, Cigar, El Gran Senor – the list is extensive if we feel the need to contemplate the worst possible scenario.

It is also a fact that there is no form to guide breeders in the matter of whether Cape Cross can succeed as a sire of sires. Before Sea The Stars came along his sire was known best for his outstanding daughter Ouija Board; he had no colt successful above Group 2 level, worthy of a place at stud. Many stallions get high-quality products who prove unable to transmit that merit to another generation.

We must also recognise that, even if his fertility is fine and he gets runners of Classic calibre, he will not sire a son as good as himself. The real superstars never do, because they represent a peak and what inevitably follows is a phenomenon known as retrogression to the mean.

Sea The Stars is moving into a very different sphere. His exceptional merit as an athlete will stand him in good stead for just a limited period, and beyond that time his reputation will depend on what is now unknown – his ability to get high-class progeny.

All we can be sure of is that he will be granted outstanding opportunities to make his name a second time around.



Sea The Stars: set to cover the Arc winner Zarkava

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He wasn't really Irish, he was everyone's

My Sea The Stars moment

Bruce Millington



IT WAS nearly as fascinating watching Sea The Stars before his races as during them throughout his all-conquering march to immortality.

Humans really shouldn't be captivated by the sight of a brown farm animal being led at a walk past their eyes, but Sea The Stars had that effect on his adoring fans.

At York, Sandown and Longchamp, I joined the

throng. We stood and gawped as he breezed past in that carefree manner of his. It wasn't just the sight of him in all his gleaming magnificence. It was something more.

Perhaps we struggled to find a correlation between the amiable way he prepared for the task for which he was bred and the lethal, almost cruel way he battered his rivals once the action began to unfold.

In the paddock he had the demeanour of a docile beach donkey, patiently waiting for the next fat kid to clamber aboard. Minutes later, upon Mick Kinane's signal, he turned into a one-punch heavyweight, knocking his rivals spark out with a single devastating move.

The contrast between the two faces of Sea The Stars was stark. Special. Akin to Mike Tyson ambling towards the ring with his hands in his pockets, whistling to himself, then brutally smashing seven bells out of the poor guy put in front of him.

All around the gorgeous Longchamp parade ring, as he faced his final examination, they clapped as he strolled past, like a polite, slow-motion Mexican wave.

And then someone unfurled an Irish flag. Briefly, I wondered why. Then I remembered he was trained in Ireland. And yet it still seemed a slightly strange thing to do. Because Sea The Stars wasn't really an Irish horse at all. He was everyone's horse.