



## People

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By Bluestone

### LEADING WATER TO A HORSE

Tony Holmes may have left his native New Zealand in 1984 to move to Lexington, but that hasn't kept him from borrowing new techniques from his homeland.

Holmes, who owns Marula Park Stud, noticed a trend at dairy farms in New Zealand and decided to try it in the Bluegrass. Farmers had taken to using portable irrigation systems in their pastures that could be left in with livestock and moved wherever needed.

"It has only been in New Zealand for about six years, and two years ago I noticed them when I was driving," Holmes said. "I made inquiries and was getting ready to import them when I found out they started to sell them here. I love it."

He is not the only one. The mares and foals have adjusted well to the new device, standing under the water when they get hot and preferring to graze in areas where the system has been.

"I am glad I feel so comfortable with it," Holmes said. "When you first go into something new, you worry that you are doing something that is a little different and you don't know how the horses will react."

Holmes, who enjoys training for tri-

athlons and playing squash, plans to purchase more irrigation systems. Because of a powerful well on his property, he has been able to handle the summer drought with more ease than others. In addition to the irrigation system, he also uses a drip system to water his trees.

Marula Park Stud, which is named after the first Thoroughbred mare Holmes



The irrigation system at Marula Park Stud

bought and sold for a profit, is home to about 20 broodmares. Holmes lives on the property with his wife, Susan, and teenage children Sarah and Michael.

Included in Holmes' broodmare band is Checkered Flag, the dam of Aug. 4 West Virginia Derby (gr. III) winner Zanjero, who was bred in partnership with Dr. Walter Zent.

"It was a really special moment when

Zanjero went to the Kentucky Derby (presented by Yum! Brands, gr. I)," Holmes said. "Tim Thornton (Airdrie Stud's general manager) invited us to a box. It was special to see him before the Derby, and I was with my mentors."

After working in New Zealand and Australia as a mechanical engineer and then a dairy farmer, Holmes spent one season on a Thoroughbred farm before coming to Lexington, where Thornton was his only contact.

"He picked me up from the Greyhound bus station," Holmes said. "It had always been a dream to come to Lexington. He basically adopted me when I came over here. Dr. Zent, I worked for him for a breeding season, and I was his gofer. He was my boss, and now he is my good friend and main partner. He was the same as Tim; he took me under his wing."

In addition to Zanjero, Holmes and Zent also bred Stevie Wonderboy, the champion 2-year-old male of 2005 in partnership with John Gunther. They bought his dam, Heat Lightning, while she was carrying the future champion for \$62,000 and sold her three years later for \$1.1 million.

"I've been lucky, but you've got to position yourself for luck too," Holmes said.

By Amanda Duckworth



In 2002, War Emblem (pictured) became the fifth Keeneland September yearling sale graduate to win the Kentucky Derby (gr. I). Name the other four.

Last week's answer: Bee Mac

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