

International

Champion St Nicholas Abbey slated to return on Sunday at the Curragh, page 7

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Wednesday,
March 30, 2011

Animal Kingdom joins Pluck in distinct mix of homebreds

Barry Irwin's Team Valor International has tapped diverse sources for its racing stable for many years, perhaps most notably in the discovery of Zimbabwe sensation Ipi Tombe (Zim), by way of South Africa.

A similarly wide-open breeding approach has yielded fireworks from a fairly small group of homebred three-year-olds, first with Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G2) winner Pluck and again last weekend with Animal Kingdom's victory in the Vinery Racing Spiral Stakes (G3) that placed him on the path to the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (G1).

Pluck is the first foal out of the South African-bred mare Secret Heart (SAf), by Fort Wood, while Animal Kingdom is the first product of the German-bred mare Dalicia (Ger), by Acatenango.

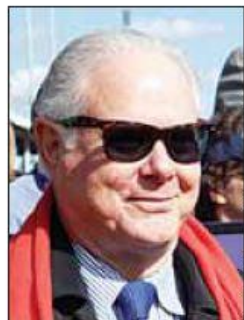
Neither is an exception—Irwin said the partnership has eight active broodmares in

the U.S., and seven of them were imported.



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ANIMAL KINGDOM



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IRWIN

"I've always liked foreign mares and we've normally sold all of our good ones, but on the South African stuff, if I like them, I will bid against the partnership myself sometimes or buy them from them," Irwin said. "Without wanting to say anything bad, they're just sounder horses over there. They've got class and even if they come here and they're maybe not the best racehorses we have, they still have incredible bone, and I just think mixing up the pedigrees and introducing new blood is a good idea."

Animal Kingdom would qualify as a distinct mix. His sire, Leroidesanimaux (Brz), was the champion turf male of 2005. He never raced on a dirt or synthetic surface in North America.

Irwin and Richard Haisfield bought Dalicia, a German Group 3 winner, at Baden-Baden in 2005 for a sale-record \$483,960 (400,000 euros) at the Goffs Autumn



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Team Valor enjoying success with homebreds

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mixed sale, and she later won an optional claiming race at Hollywood Park.

The same year, Irwin brokered Haisfield's acquisition of Leroidesanimaux as a stallion prospect for Stonewall Farm.

Irwin brought the two horses together in the mating that produced Animal Kingdom. Team Valor also is the owner and breeder of a three-year-old colt by Leroidesanimaux out of the South African-bred mare Ginger Sea (SAf), by Western Winter.

The colt, named Badlerobrown, finished second by a neck in a Churchill Downs maiden special weight race on the turf in October in his only start to date.

Animal Kingdom raced on synthetic surfaces in his two starts as a two-year-old and finished a close second on the grass at Gulfstream Park on March 3 before his 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ -length triumph on Turfway's synthetic Polytrack surface in the Spiral.

"I had two of these 'Leroys' last year with Randy Bradshaw [for their early training], and he would remark, 'If I knew these things were by A.P. Indy, I would feel better. They act and look like real horses, but with pedigrees like that, you've got to wonder,'" Irwin said. "He's been telling me all along that both of them could run on the dirt. Until we train them on the dirt and see what happens, who the heck knows?"

"It kind of defies logic that a horse with a pedigree like this would actually be a dirt horse. When I breed these things, I'm breeding to race, period. When you breed a German mare, you're not expecting a dirt horse. When [Animal Kingdom] was two, he was tall and narrow. Now, he has broadened and filled out and has a chest on him and a hip and he's got great posture, and he looks like a solid American horse."

Pluck, by More Than Ready, finished fourth in a Tampa Bay Downs allowance race on March 12 in his first start of the year. The goal since the Breeders' Cup has been an ambitious trip to Europe for the Poule d'Essai des Poulains (Fr-G1) (French Two Thousand Guineas), but the assignment will hinge on Pluck's next start in the Transylvania Stakes (G3) on April 8 at Keeneland Race Course.

"If he wins and looks impressive, then we'll go to the French Guineas; if not, we'll just back off on that idea and figure out what else we can do with him," Irwin said. "He's trained really well. He works with Animal Kingdom all the time and gallops out much better than him, and he's usually going a little easier. So we haven't lost confidence."

"It was depressing that first race the way that it went. He never really landed a blow and kind of got messed up on the turn—when he should have been accelerating he was trying to find his feet. It just didn't work out."—Jeff Lowe