

Centurion: Essence of a Champion

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In the thoroughbred industry, it's often said that you breed the best to the best and then hope for the best. That certainly wasn't the case when Blue Grass Centurion took out the Supreme Champion ribbon at the National Show in early November at Canberra – all the ingredients were there for the championship recipe, and they were expertly combined and brilliantly presented.

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At Maxim's le Grand Salon (3, rue Royale, next time you're in Paris) you'll sample some of the world's greatest dishes, prepared and presented to perfection.

For the perfect alpaca, ask judge Allan Jinks: "Quite simply the best alpaca I've ever seen", said one of the most experienced judges and breeders in the world.

It was early November, and he was describing Blue Grass Centurion, the 18-month old light fawn male that had been awarded the Supreme Champion ribbon at the 10th Annual National Alpaca Show. And just like the world's great dishes, Centurion's victory was a combination of good ingredients, hard work, skill and a touch of luck.

The journey for owners Murray and Judy Stannard of Encantador Alpacas of Armadale, WA began in early 2003. They had just concluded the sale to NSW of their very good male Encantador Centurion, and were looking for a new stud animal, preferably with some bloodlines novel to Western Australia. Meanwhile, Julie and Arthur Mavros of Blue Grass Alpacas at Goulburn, NSW, had decided to wind back their operations, and there was some outstanding stock for sale.

So all the right circumstances came together, and there was something in the bank with which to do the business.

The Stannards applied their not inconsiderable skills and experience, and worked hard to select a male meeting their requirements. They decided on Blue Grass Centurion and, after some hard bargaining, purchased him despite interest from several other major industry players.

Centurion had won the Champion Junior Male ribbon at the (short-fleece) Canberra Royal in early March, so he had some credentials, but it was a bold move on the part of the Stannards to punt on the youngster, and to then back their judgement to the extent of \$40,000.

The initial return on the investment was rapid: at the Sydney Royal, in mid-April soon after the purchase was completed, Centurion was awarded the Supreme Champion title. The national title seven months later and the dish was complete.

Some fortunate timing, of course, but the best of ingredients - skilfully researched - was the real reason for success.

And Blue Grass Alpacas had done the hard work. It was a case of recognising the quality of the product.

Blue Grass Centurion is by Purrumbete Warrior out of Purrumbete Vanilla. Warrior (SW), a son of Jolimont Conquistador (SW) and winner of a plethora of broad ribbons in his own right, was sold the the Mavros' at the National Auction of 2000 for \$125,000 and immediately made his mark as a quality sire with progeny like Blue Grass Waterloo Sunset, Blue Grass Chimu, Blue Grass Star Warrior, Forestglen Song of Joy and Lotus Dream Tang Dynasty doing well at top shows.

Vanilla (LF) is one of those rare females that seems to almost do no wrong. A daughter of Purrumbete Exquisite ((SLF) x Purrumbete Ledgers Dream (SW)), Vanilla is yet another Haldane-bred marvel. The Haldane brothers must be to Australian alpacas what the Wright brothers are to powered flight. She has had five crias to date – all in April or May – and is the matriarch of her very own dynasty. Her efforts may one day provide her dam Exquisite with a reverence to rival the established Purrumbete

heroines of the Australian industry: Sweet Freedom, True Perfection, Ice Star, Angel Face (through Portia), Chimu, Dreamtime, Reflection, Sun Dial and Showpiece.

Vanilla's first cria, Blue Grass Leading Lady (SLF) - by Purrumbete El Dorado (SMF) - is a Sydney Royal Supreme Champion, a broad ribbon winner at the 1998 National Show, and already the dam of three (out of three) top-flight performers, including Blue Grass Leading Lady 2, third placegetter at this year's National in the Mature Female Section after being Champion Senior Female at the National in 2001. Blue Grass Queen of the Night and Blue Grass Amazing Grace, her other crias, have both won at very competitive shows in the past two years. And, sure enough, Leading Lady 3, a daughter of Leading Lady 2, popped up with a ribbon in the Junior Female Section at the 2003 National. Where will it end?

Vanilla's 1999 drop was Blue Grass Cushla (SLF), a full sister to Leading Lady and a ribbon winner at the NSW Southern Regional Show as a juvenile. She is already the mother of Blue Grass Winter Princess (SW) by ILR Peruvian Drambuie, a broad ribbon winner at the Canberra Royal in 2002.

By now it was time for a boy, and along came Blue Grass Bollinger (LF) by Benleigh Ringleader (SW). He made his show debut in the summer of 2001 at the beautiful NSW village of Berry, and left his rivals standing. He maintained Vanilla's amazing record as a producer by winning a blue at the 2001 National, being Supreme Champion at the Canberra Royal and going on to another Championship at Canberra a year later. In between, he scooped the pool at other shows and his fleece took out awards at the 2001 National.

Blue Grass Elle Dorado (SMF), a full sister to Leading Lady and Cushla, came along in 2001. Her fame probably lies ahead as a producer, for she gave birth in March this year to a three-quarter brother to Blue Grass Centurion.

Add Centurion himself, and you have a spectacular array of talent – all from a rather plain looking (and that's probably flattering her - I inspected her recently) female that just happens to have the best quality genes.

But even in the early days, there had been indications of Vanilla's quality, despite Exquisite's first two daughters achieving little of note in either the show ring or the serving barn. In the very same month as Vanilla emerged from the womb, her elder half brother Purrumbete Son of the Sun (MF), by Purrumbete Inti (SLF), was taking out the Champion Junior Male ribbon at the Sydney Royal. He would carry his winning ways into 1997.

Vanilla herself won ribbons at the Sydney and Canberra Royals of 1997, and that same year The Gorge La Minti, a son of Vanilla's half-sister Purrumbete Summer Sunshine (SLF) had done well at St Ives, Hawkesbury (a broad ribbon) and the Sydney Royal.

When the Mavros' sold, buyers came from everywhere, and Purrumbete Vanilla was purchased by a syndicate comprising two well known NSW studs: Warralinga and The Gorge. No surprise there, as two leading alpacas judges in Lyn Dickson and Julie Bird are principals of the syndicate. They were cheering almost as much as the Stannards when the Supreme title went to Centurion in Canberra. The reason? Vanilla was at the time carrying his full brother or sister.

Just as at Maxim's, you get the best of ingredients, have them prepared by people who know what they're about, add tough business skills and a good environment and there you have it ... and all the better for a dash of Vanilla.

Purrumbete Exquisite (SLF) 2087 (Imp Chile). Dam of:

Satimer Chloe (Blk/W) A1039 (F by unknown sire) 9/9/90.

Purrumbete Summer Sunshine A2252 (F by Purrumbete La-Mancha (SLBr)) 1/1/94. Dam of:

The Gorge La Minti (LF) 10047 (W by Purrumbete Inti (SLF)) 12/10/95. 2nd M12-18W Sydney Royal 1997; Champion Senior Male Hawkesbury 1997; 1st M18-24W/F/BI Hawkesbury 1997; 2nd M12-18F St Ives 1997

PURRUMBETE SON OF THE SUN (MF) A2291 (M by Purrumbete Inti (SLF)) 19/3/95. 2nd M6-12F St Ives 1996; Champion Junior Male Sydney Royal 1996; 1st M6-18F Sydney Royal 1996; 2nd M18+F Sydney Royal 1997; 2nd M18+W/F Adelaide Royal 1997; 2nd HF<18All Adelaide Royal 1997; Supreme Champion Kangaroo Valley 1997; Champion Senior Male Castle Hill 1997; Champion Senior Male Kangaroo Valley 1997; 2nd M12-24All Canberra Royal 1997

Purrumbete Vanilla (LF) A2488 (F by Purrumbete Ledgers Dream (SW)) 21/3/96. 2nd F6-12L Canberra Royal 1997; 3rd F12-18W Sydney Royal 1997. Dam of:

BLUE GRASS LEADING LADY (SLF) A22070 (F by Purrumbete El Dorado (SMF)) 11/4/98. 2nd F6-12F C-N (NSW) Reg 1998; Reserve Champion Junior Female C-N (NSW) Reg 1998; Champion Charles Ledger (NSW) 1998; Reserve Champion Junior Female National Spring Classic 1998; 1st F6-12F National Spring Classic 1998; Supreme Champion Canberra Royal 1999; Supreme Champion Sydney Royal 1999; Champion Intermediate Female Sthn (NSW) Reg 1999; 1st F18+F Sthn (NSW) Reg 1999; Champion Junior Female Sydney Royal 1999; 1st F6-12F Sydney Royal 1999. Dam of:

BLUE GRASS LEADING LADY 2 (F) A38760 (F by Shanbrooke High Society (SMF)) 4/5/00. 3rd F6-12F National 2000; Champion Senior Female National 2001; 1st F18-30F National 2001; Champion Fleece Goulburn Fleece Show 2002; 1st HF18-30D Goulburn Fleece Show 2002; 3rd F30-48W National 2003. Dam of:

Blue Grass Leading Lady 3 (SLF) A69606 (F by Jolimont Warrior (SW)) 26/3/03. 6th F6-12F National 2003

Blue Grass Queen of the Night (SMF) A54131 (F by Shanbrooke High Society (SMF)) 6/5/01. 2nd F6-12F Canberra Royal 2002; 1st F12-18F Sthn (NSW) Reg 2002

Blue Grass Amazing Grace (SLF) A54121 (F by Jolimont Warrior (SW)) 12/5/02. 2nd F6-12F Canberra Royal 2003; 1st F6-12F Sydney Royal 2003

Blue Grass Cushla (SLF) A30874 (F by Purrumbete El Dorado (SMF)) 7/4/99. 3rd F6-12F Sthn (NSW) Reg 1999. Dam of:

BLUE GRASS WINTER PRINCESS (SW) A54137 (F by ILR Peruvian Drambuie G220 (SLF)) 27/7/01. Champion Junior Female Canberra Royal 2002; 1st F6-12W Canberra Royal 2002; 3rd F12-18W Sthn (NSW) Reg 2002

Blue Grass Warrior Princess (SLF) A54148 (F by Jolimont Warrior (SW)) 17/7/02.

BLUE GRASS BOLLINGER (LF) A38765 (M by Benleigh Ringleader (SW)) 20/5/00. Supreme Champion Berry 2001; Champion Junior Male Berry 2001; 1st M6-12F Berry 2001; Supreme Champion Canberra Royal 2001; Champion Junior Male Canberra Royal 2001; 1st M6-12F Canberra Royal 2001; 3rd M12-18F Charles Ledger (NSW) 2001; 3rd Most Valuable Light Fleece National 2001; 1st M12-18F National 2001; 4th HF18-30F National 2001; Champion Senior Male Canberra Royal 2002; 1st M18-30F Canberra Royal 2002; 2nd M12-18F Aust Sheep & Wool Show 2003

Blue Grass Elle Dorado (SMF) A54111 (F by Purrumbete El Dorado (SMF)) 31/5/01. Dam of:

Blue Grass Southern Warrior (SLF) A69601 (M by Jolimont Warrior (SW)) 18/3/03.

BLUE GRASS CENTURION (LF) A54110 (M by Jolimont Warrior) 31/5/02. Champion Junior Male Canberra Royal 2003; 1st M6-12F Canberra Royal 2003; Supreme Champion Sydney Royal 2003; Champion Junior Male Sydney Royal 2003; 1st M6-12F Sydney Royal 2003; Supreme Champion Perth Royal 2003; Champion Intermediate Male Perth Royal 2003; Best Fawn Perth Royal 2003; 1st M12-18F Perth Royal 2003; Supreme Champion National 2003; Champion Intermediate Male National 2003; 1st M12-18F National 2003

Purrumbete Juvena (W/MBr) A17421 (F by Purrumbete Highlander (SW)) 12/11/97.