

BLOODSTOCK SPECIAL BREEDING ON A BUDGET

Cue the champ as snooker ace uses pedigree expertise to help launch Harbour Law stud career

INTERVIEW PETER EBDON

Martin Stevens

talks to the sporting star about his latest breeding venture



MANY inexpensive stallions will benefit from the support of their owners and various connections but Batsford Stud newcomer Harbour Law is surely the only one who has the backing of a bona fide world champion.

Peter Ebdon, who won snooker's highest accolade by beating Stephen Hendry in a nail-biting final at the Crucible theatre in Sheffield in 2002, is advising the Classic winner's owners Nick and Jackie Cornwell as they launch Harbour Law's stallion career.

Primarily, Ebdon – who now combines pedigree consultancy with continuing to play on the world snooker tour – is deploying his in-depth study of thoroughbred families to help source mares for Harbour Law, who has retired to the photogenic Batsford Stud in Gloucestershire after a career in which he finished second in the Queen's Vase and landed the St Leger at three, before finishing third to Big Orange in the Gold Cup at four.

"I've known Nick and Jackie a long time – our children went to the same school – but it wasn't until many years later that I realised what big breeders they were," Ebdon says, explaining how his association with the Cornwells began.

"I got in touch with them a few years ago to say I was thinking of setting up a professional pedigree consultancy business and asked would they like me to have a look at their mares. They're lovely people, so enthusiastic about their horses and putting such a big investment into racing, so it has been a pleasure to help them."

Incredibly, Ebdon finds the time to research pedigrees along with maintaining snooker practice and travelling around the world to play, as well as being a professional healer in alternative therapies.

"I'd been understudy to one of the world's leading professional pedigree consultants in Australia for four or five years and thought I'd like to set up my own business and pass on the knowledge," he says. "It's been my main passion for the last 30 years.

"I've spent literally thousands and thousands of hours on research, I find it fascinating, not least because



Peter Ebdon, who now combines pedigree consultancy with continuing to play on the world snooker tour, with Harbour Law at Batsford Stud in Gloucestershire

pedigrees are forever changing and developing – there's always a new crop of two-year-olds and stallions going to stud."

Ebdon's analysis is nothing if not thorough and from it he has acquired some vehement opinions on the best way to breed talented horses.

"I've gone back to the beginning of the breed and studied the most successful horses to see which ancestors were reinforced in their pedigrees, to notice consistent patterns again and again, which is why I'd encourage breeders to think more carefully about their mating selections," he says.

"I remember reading a few years ago that only one in approximately 300 horses become stakes horses. The reason behind that is because of the incompatibility of so many matings – most have very little chance even before the mare is covered because there's just no compatibility there.

"There's a lot of mating software out there – most studs have an online facility where you can test your mare – but most of those are very limited and basic as they completely dismiss the dam's side of the pedigree. If they don't, they look only at the damsires, so immediately 25 per

cent of the pedigree is completely dismissed and I think that's a mistake."

EBDON continues: "Those tools are very useful and are fine as a guide, but you have only to look at the results other professional pedigree consultants have been getting on a consistent basis for a long time to realise you have to go deeper. Breeders definitely put the percentages massively in their favour by using pedigree consultants."

There is plenty in Harbour Law's family for a pedigree pundit to get

their teeth stuck into, as he is by Lawman out of the winning mare Abunai from the fruitful Hascombe and Valiant Studs family of Beckford, Inchinor and Poet's Word.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, considering the six-year-old's grandsires Invincible Spirit and Pivotal were out-and-out sprinters, Ebdon feels there is scope to breed faster horses from him.

"I think it's entirely possible that by getting those genetically compatible mares to Harbour Law we can bring out those speed influences and breed faster horses despite him being a stayer and a St Leger winner. We'll be looking to double up on ancestors like the top milers Warning and Kris.

"That said, I think he could be a very successful jumps sire too. I've gone through the National Hunt stallion book and picked out 50 broodmare sires who I know will suit him straight away."

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