

# WINNING *Formula*



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DBS

The Hannon and Doyle father and son team have had another superb year led by DBS two-year-olds such as Tiggy Wiggy, Kool Kompany and Estidhkaar. **Catherine Austen** asks this partnership how they pick winners. Photography: **Sarah Farnsworth**

**I**n racing, success – regular, high-level success – is never down to an individual. It is the result of a team working together with the same aim and the same ideas. The buying and training partnership of the Doyles and the Hannons is the perfect example.

Their achievements in buying horses inexpensively – most often at DBS – and winning the game's biggest prize-pots with them are legendary. In recent weeks the highlights have been the exceptionally fast two-year-old Tiggy Wiggy's victory in the Group One Cheveley Park Stakes and Olympic Glory taking his Group One tally to four in the Prix de la Foret on Arc day at Longchamp.

The former, a Kodiak filly who cost £41,000 at DBS's Premier Yearling Sale in 2013, has won six of her eight starts to date and £381,182 in prize money. Olympic Glory, now four, was bought at the same sale two years earlier for £65,000 and his earnings are now approaching £1.5million. These are just two in a list that includes Paco Boy and Canford Cliffs.

"It started nearly 30 years ago with my grandfather, Jack

Doyle," says Ross Doyle. "He was a man with many strings to his bow – horseman, athlete and car salesman. He had a long association with Doncaster, buying Right Tack (winner of the 1969 2000 Guineas and Irish 2000 Guineas) there, and horses with Capt. Ryan Price."

The first sale Jack's son (and Ross's father), Peter attended was at Doncaster in 1971, where Jack and Capt. Price bought future champion sprinter Sandford Lad for 1,500 guineas. The die was cast, and Peter developed his own successful buying partnership with trainer Liam Browne, with whom he bought the 1982 Irish 2000 Guineas hero Dara Monarch.

In the early 1980s, Jack said that he couldn't go to Deauville that year, and told Peter to go there and meet a man called Richard Hannon.

"They had a couple of drinks at the races, and bought three or four yearlings together," says Ross. "That was the start of it."

Now Richard Jnr holds the reins at East Everleigh Stables, and the second-generation friendship and working relationship between the English Hannons and Irish Doyles is



Estidhkaar

## TOP TEAM



Kool Company



Canford Cliffs



Tiggy Wiggy

bearing ever-more luscious fruit.

Ross was nearly sidelined by rugby but, after a business studies degree, joined his father in the business in 2001. The first horse that he and Richard Jnr bought together was Group Three winner Rag Top in October 2001.

"They are good trainers and good people," says Peter. "The Hannons have very high standards for horses and you know where you stand. They know what they want, and we know it too. We all have the same eye."

Richard Jnr concurs. "We laugh that it works so well because we live in separate countries and are not in each other's pockets, so are pleased to see each other. And we trust each other."

Richard Jnr estimates that he buys 40 per cent of his yearlings at DBS – 39 in 2013 and 37 in 2012.

"What you get at Doncaster is racehorses," he says simply. "They are ready-made, hardened horses from very good nurseries, which means the job is already half-done."

Traditionally, Richard Hannon Snr was known as a genius trainer of two-year-olds, and the sharp, early-maturing types found at Doncaster were ideal.

"We've always looked for early types and DBS has always sold them," says Peter. "The type of horse sold at Doncaster has suited us over the years – well-balanced, early-looking types. And over the years they have got more quality horses that stay further."

"It used to be that we bought horses up to £100,000," Ross says adding: "The main criteria was to find physical athletes – pedigree was a bonus. We get a bit more leeway with the Hannons than some clients – we're able to pick a horse others might not, perhaps because the sire isn't necessarily fashionable, which doesn't mean the horse isn't a great physical specimen."

Peter says that his best buy was Canford Cliffs. A £50,000 yearling from DBS's 2008 Premier Yearling Sale, he proved an outstanding racehorse, winning the Coventry Stakes at Royal Ascot on his second start. In his 3-year-old season he took the Irish 2000

Guineas, the St James's Palace Stakes and the Sussex Stakes, while at four he started with a Lockinge Stakes triumph and then conquered Goldikova at Ascot in the Queen Anne Stakes.

"When you look at a horse at the sales, the first two or three seconds are the most important – the feeling a horse gives you, the way he fills your eye, the way he stands there like a natural. Canford Cliffs was the perfect example of those qualities," Ross recalls. "His sire Tagula was in something of the twilight of his career, but we'd had lots of good ones by him and Canford Cliffs really stood out as a physical specimen."

Ross's own vote for their most satisfying purchase goes to Paco Boy, on whom they spent just £30,000 at the 2007 DBS Breeze-Up Sales. The son of Desert Style far outstretched his pedigree and raced for four seasons, winning three Group Ones and four Group Twos' and more than £1 million in prize-money.

"What he gave back to his owners, to Richard and to the yard can't be



Sky Lantern



expressed," says Ross. "He was the first horse to bring Richard (Snr) to tears! And he came along in the early years of Richard (Jnr) and I working together, so he was a confidence-booster that we were on the right track."

Both Canford Cliffs and Paco Boy – and other Hannon/Doyle purchases such as Zebedee – are now making promising starts to their stallion careers.

Ross adds: "Richard (Jnr) has been a huge driving force in encouraging owners to spend more on horses. He's very good at meeting new clients and at giving them the belief and confidence to work with us. They have spent money on enhancing the facilities at home and have done the same with the horses."

The team do sometimes now exceed that £100,000 budget, they bought this year's Superlative Stakes and Champagne Stakes winner Estidhkaar, owned by Hamdan al Maktoum, for £200,000 at DBS's Premier Yearling Sales in 2013, for example. But they are still more likely to spend £40,000 on the likes of dual Group Two winner Kool Kompany.

"DBS is great value. Horses are worth the money there," emphasises Ross. "We buy 20-30 yearlings there every year, mostly at the Premier Sales, which is the most at any individual sale, and it's been that way for the past few years."

What sorts of things are they looking for in a horse?

"As well as having presence, a horse must have a good walk. They must be relaxed, walk with their head down and have a fluent action," says Ross. "They must have very good knees. A lot of pressure is

put on that area and is important for them to be structurally correct.

"And it's important that the horse is good-looking. The Hannons buy on spec, and looks are more important to catch the eye of an owner than pedigree."

The Hannons and Doyles form a powerhouse that is the envy of many in racing – and it is built on the solid rock of purchases from Doncaster Bloodstock Sales. [richardhannonracing.co.uk](http://richardhannonracing.co.uk) [doylerracing.com](http://doylerracing.com)

#### WINNING STREAKS

HORSE	PRICE	SALE	BIG WINS	TOTAL WINNINGS
<b>PACO BOY</b>	£30,000	2007 Breeze Up	3xGr1, 4xGr2, 1xGr3	£1,078,287
<b>CANFORD CLIFFS</b>	£50,000	2008 Premier Yearling	5xGr1, 1xGr2	£951,724
<b>STRONG SUIT</b>	£40,000	2009 Premier Yearling	3xGr2, 1xGr3	£346,561
<b>OLYMPIC GLORY</b>	£65,000	2011 Premier Yearling	4xGr1, 2xGr2, 1xGr3	£1,419,773
<b>TOORMORE</b>	£36,000	2012 Premier Yearling	1xGr1, 1xGr2, 1xGr3	£260,220
<b>TIGGY WIGGY</b>	£41,000	2013 Premier Yearling	1xGr1, 1xGr2	£381,182
<b>ESTIDHKAAR</b>	£200,000	2013 Premier Yearling	2xGr2	£92,937
<b>KOOL KOMPANY</b>	£40,000	2013 Premier Yearling	2xGr2	£196,582