

Sand and deliver: Magic sales prove yet again it's all about breeding



Clockwise from main: the spectacular annual Magic Millions beach run at Surfers Paradise; champion breeding stallion I am Invincible; proud owners Harry and Arthur Mitchell on the opening day of the Magic Millions sales

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The spectacle of a dozen thoroughbreds galloping across Surfers Paradise main beach turned heads on the tourist strip for the Tuesday opening of the annual Magic Millions yearling sales, but it was one horse that later had everyone talking and a few spending big.

Hundreds of spectators gathered on the beach to marvel at the yearly exhibition sprint and bar-

rier draw ahead of Saturday's race day and to catch a glimpse of the celebrities and professional jockeys riding the unfamiliar sands on retired racehorses.

It was a bit of fun and games before the serious business got under way down the road in the auction ring in a packed shed of billionaires, horse trainers and the hopeful looking for the next Winx.

And the star of the show was I Am Invincible.

He'd had an unremarkable racing career and was far from a world

beater but there was something about the handsome stallion that prompted the owners of a then small-time NSW stud to buy a roughly \$500,000 half stake in I Am Invincible after he retired just over a decade ago.

That relatively undecorated sprinter is now the hottest property in Australian horse racing, with a name that draws millions whenever his progeny enter the auction ring.

It was a life-changing purchase for brothers Harry and Arthur

Mitchell who run Yarraman Park stud at Scone in the Hunter Valley, and whose fortunes were transformed by the stallion's breeding success.

The bankability of I Am Invincible was on display on the first day of the 2024 Magic Millions yearling sale at the Gold Coast on Tuesday when the 16th horse listed for sale in the 1468-horse catalogue sold for \$1.2m to trainer Tony Gollan and Queensland cattle baron Jennifer Acton – the same combination behind the

filly's champion mother Outback Barbie.

The hubbub had barely died down when, 10 minutes later, the bidding again breached the million dollar mark. Lot 19, a colt, sold for \$1.3m. And by 5pm, I am Invincible's five progeny had together yielded \$4.35m.

"You feel very blessed that you own a horse that ends up being so good, because no one knows how good they're going to be," Harry Mitchell said

"We bought a fairly inexpen-

sive stallion prospect who turned out to be the bestseller in Australia.

"He's a stunning-looking horse, that's really why we bought him, and he throws beautiful looking horses. It's been a bit of a dream, really."

At last year's sale, three of I Am Invincible's progeny sold for more than \$2m a piece, with a combined gross yield across 44 colts and fillies of more than \$32m.

With humble racing winnings of \$270,050 and just one Group 3 win to his name, the stallion last

year commanded a standing fee of \$302,500 and his own value is estimated at \$40m.

The reason for his success after racing comes down to the fact that I Am Invincible keeps producing winners. He has sired 14 individual Group 1 winners, including Brazen Beau, Voodoo Lad, Invincibella and Home Affairs, and more than 60 stakes winners.

"It's lovely to see stock sell so well and race so well. We watch them run and it's been very special for our family," Mr Mitchell said.

Now aged 19, I Am Invincible's breeding book has been reduced to about 125 a year to reduce his workload.

"He's a very happy, healthy horse and he's had a very good year but he's in his 12th year (of breeding) and we are starting to cut his number of mares back," Mr Mitchell said. "He's in great fettle and hopefully he can be champion sire this year and make it three years in a row."

SPORT P24