

A touch of magic

SALLY REID REPORTS FROM THE HOTLY-CONTESTED PINTO SECTION AT HASTINGS

Stanhopes Magician, a two-year-old colt who is literally one of a kind in New Zealand, and whose journey north to Hastings was nearly aborted, is 2010's Pinto of the Year. The fine young son of international champion Stanhopes Diddycoy was awarded the title over another exceptional performer: the all-conquering ridden champ, Kinky Boots. It was a decision described by one judge as "very hard".

The class, held in the welcome shade of the miniature ring, was packed with talent and a picture to watch. Entrants included the pony show jumper, Galaxy Spring Fever, winner of the pony stallion class, the gorgeous Larkspur Tango, tiny Little Miss Puzzle with young Georgia Hodges, and twin brothers Ben and Josh Bremner's pony mares, Touch of Colour and Picture Puzzle. Josh's Touch of Colour had earlier won Adult Pinto Pony of the Year; a sweet victory for the Whangarei 10-year-old, who broke his leg shortly before the show.

The big title class was whittled down to seven after the first round of judging:

Melanie Robinson's bay and white Glenmay Aragorn, Larkspur Tango, Lisa Gately's perfectly-patterned overo, Weiti Roma, Touch of Colour, Hawk Arrow, Kinky Boots and Stanhopes Magician. But soon the battle was down to two, and Stanhopes Magician finally emerged as victor.

The young colt, owned by Emma Steel and her magician husband Jonathan, of Magic Coloured Warmbloods in Christchurch, is the result of careful planning and waiting. A delighted Emma explains: "About five years ago, we decided to import some semen from a stunning coloured German warmblood, Stanhopes Diddycoy, who was standing in Europe – but as breeding would have it, it took us about three years till Marty arrived. He was worth the wait, though!"

There are just two Diddycoy offspring in New Zealand, and Marty is the only colt. The other, who also belongs to Emma and Jonathan, is a three-year-old bay gelding, and currently for sale to a good home. "There's no more frozen semen from Diddycoy available worldwide; they made

the decision last breeding season. So, we have the only two in New Zealand and obviously Marty is the only one that can carry on the good lines – Gottward, Gotthard/Ico – related to Milton."

Emma says the wait for the final decision in the title class was nerve-wracking. "We all thought it was a foregone conclusion that Kinky Boots would take the title after her Supreme win, so it was an even nicer surprise. And it was wonderful to have the Canterbury supporters behind us and to hear the cheer when he got the title."

Marty's dam is Emma's lovely Intermediate eventer Cyprus, a dark bay thoroughbred by the imported US sire, Musical Phantasy.

The colt's impact on the southern pinto scene was immediate. "At his first show [South Island Pinto Show, 2008] he was champion youngstock, champion registered pinto and supreme in-hand – and he was only two months old," laughs Emma. "Last year we took him to the warmblood championship show; he was the only coloured horse in the in-hand section and he won

champion youngstock."

Marty was again judged champion youngstock, as well as champion hack and supreme in-hand of show at this year's South Island Pinto Show. Encouraged by the win, and with \$500 of petrol vouchers from the Pinto Society, Emma decided it was worth embarking on the trip north to Hastings, with her 'support crew', Nikky Dalley.

"But we nearly didn't make it. We were stuck in Blenheim for 24 hours – the ferries weren't accepting livestock because of the bad weather; we almost had to turn around

and head home. The delay meant he was on the truck for a total of 11 hours on Thursday and we were plaiting in the dark for Friday's classes, but it all turned out all right! At only two years old he's done extremely well – more than we could have dreamed of."

Marty's future as a stallion is still undecided. "Originally, I just wanted to breed a quality coloured horse to event, but given how he's turned out and the interest we've had in him, we might have to think again!" says Emma. "But I would like to have him as a competition horse," she muses, proudly patting her boy.