

BLOODSTOCK WORLD



Nancy Sexton talks to Peter O'Callaghan, owner of up-and-coming Woods Edge Farm in Kentucky

THE name O'Callaghan is synonymous with success in Europe; Gay O'Callaghan is at the helm of successful pinhooking and stallion operations from his Yeomanstown and Morristown Lattin Studs, as is brother Tony, who stands the likes of Red Clubs and Redback at his Tally-Ho Stud in County Westmeath.

It has taken just eight years for Gay's son Peter to assume a similar reputation from his base in Kentucky, Woods Edge Farm. Since taking over the property, which was developed by Ron Kirk, in the spring of 2001, the farm has gone from strength to strength, consigning Graded stakes winners such as Street Boss, Belgravia, Run Away And Hide and It's No Joke, as well as becoming home to a significant domestic and international clientele.

And last season the farm made its first foray into the stallion market when acquiring Malibu Stakes winner Latent Heat. All in all, Woods Edge is a name that can only become more notable as time goes on.

"It's a beautiful place," says O'Callaghan. "There are an amazing amount of trees and it's a very European-type of farm. It's the sort you would see in Ireland and it has a great feeling to it. Ron Kirk did a super job with the place, so we haven't had to do that much to it."

Woods Edge featured on O'Callaghan's radar in the autumn of 2000 after a yearling sales season at Jerry Dilger's Dromoland Farm. Prior to that, O'Callaghan had spent three years with Aidan O'Brien before working a two-year-old sales season in Ocala, Florida, with noted juvenile consignor Nick de Meric.

"I'd grown up in the industry at home and after school I went to work at Ballydoyle," says O'Callaghan. "That first year we had Classic Park, Desert King and Strawberry Roan, and then, of course, later there was Bernstein, Fasliyev, Giant's Causeway and Istabraq. Aidan's attention to detail and work ethic is amazing, and it was great to see how he evolved as a trainer from year to year.

"The job with Nick de Meric was also very educational because they train a lot of horses for those sales and it's a completely different way of doing things. Nick and his wife,



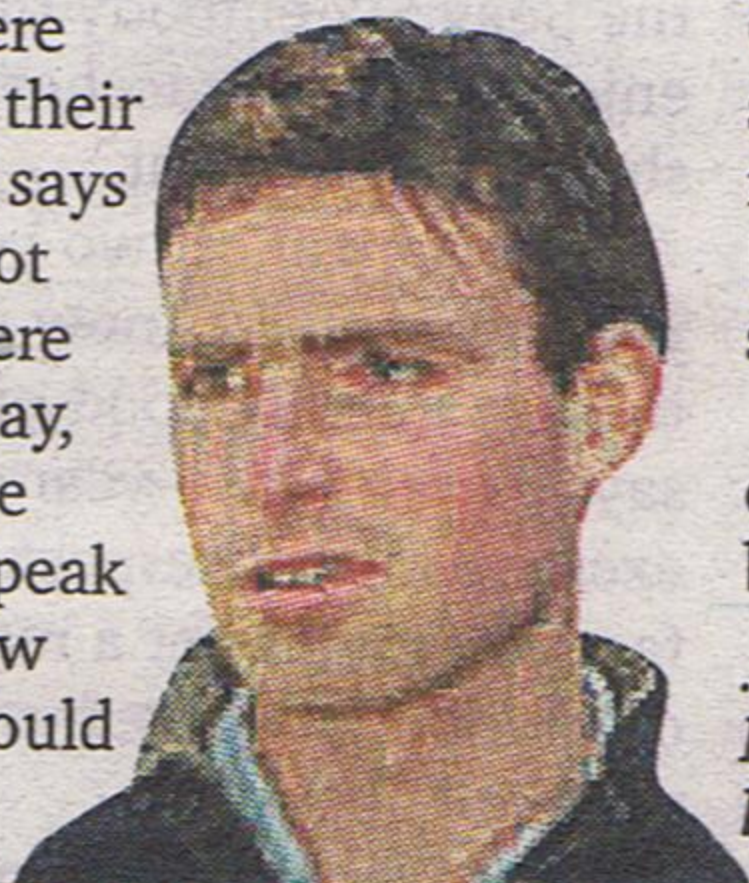
Grade 1 winner Latent Heat (left), seen in his pomp, has settled into life well as a stallion at Woods Edge Farm

FOLLOWING A RICH FAMILY TRADITION

Jacqui, were very good to me, as was Jerry Dilger – nobody does a better job than Jerry and that's reflected through his results."

Part of Woods Edge's appeal was that it was on the market as a running concern and, thankfully for Peter and his team, many of the established clientele agreed to give them a chance. As time has gone on, more clients have come on board, in particular those from Europe, allowing O'Callaghan to purchase the nearby Angus Glen Farm. As a whole, the farm currently houses approximately 140 horses, split evenly between mares and youngstock.

"We were fortunate that when we took over, some of the clients who were already there decided to keep their horses with us," says O'Callaghan. "Not all the clients were guaranteed to stay, but it gave us the opportunity to speak to them and show them what we could do."



He adds: "After our first good year at the sales in 2002, people took notice, and not only we were able to maintain our clientele but added to it and did more trading. We've grown rapidly over the past two or three years."

O'Callaghan is most optimistic about the farm's first resident stallion, Grade 1 winner Latent Heat, whom he acquired from Juddmonte and syndicated for the 2008 season. According to O'Callaghan, the stallion's first foals prompted plenty of return business this season from breeders including Juddmonte, which retained several breeding rights to the son of Maria's Mon.

"He's a great-looking horse from a great, fast Juddmonte family," says O'Callaghan. "He had a lot of natural speed himself and always ran great numbers on the Ragozin sheet [well-respected US handicapping system] and mostly 100+ Beyers.

"If another stallion came along who could pay his way, we'd stand him, but those horses are hard to find and

Peter O'Callaghan: "We'll keep our heads down and keep trading"

it's very difficult to compete with the big farms. You've got to ask: 'Would I breed from him? 'Would I buy a foal by him?' Latent Heat just had a lot of the right qualities and ticked all the boxes commercially."

Last year, Woods Edge sold more than \$6 million-worth of horses and has already hit the ground running at the ongoing Keeneland September Sale as the vendor of a \$575,000 Exchange Rate filly, for whom O'Callaghan and Ben McElroy paid \$105,000 at last year's OBS Fall Sale, and a \$390,000 Medaglia D'Oro colt.

Given his family's aptitude for pinhooking, it is no surprise that a large part of O'Callaghan's time is taken up purchasing youngstock to resell. An average year will see him and his partners purchase 30 foals, four to five of whom are usually destined for Europe. This year, however, he has sent just the one back home to Ireland.

"Hopefully, we'll sell some yearlings well and take it from there," he says. "At the moment the business is tough, but we'll keep our heads down and keep trading."