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» RACE WATCH

Brad Davidson analyses the entire Randwick card

Waller's army on the march

RAY THOMAS

CHAMPION trainer Chris Waller's numerical dominance has never been more absolute than at Randwick tomorrow.

In an unprecedented show of stable strength, he is saddling up eight runners in both the Group 1 \$1 million TAB Epsom Handicap (1600) and Group 1 \$750,000 The Metropolitan (2400m).

The bookies have Waller poised to complete the rare Epsom-Metropolitan double, a feat he achieved with He's Your Man and Opinion in 2014.

Waller's Epsom "Army" includes TAB Fixed Odds favourites D'Argento (\$420) and Unforgotten (\$440), plus Shillelagh, Single Gaze, Mister Sea Wolf, Religify, Tom Melbourne and Paret.

In The Metropolitan, the Waller stable is represented by favourite Brimham Rocks (\$5), Libran, Patrick Erin, Alward, The Lord Mayor, High Bridge, Opposition and Jake's Hill.

Waller, aiming for his fourth Epsom five years after wins with Boban (2013), He's Your Man (2014) and Winx (2015), is finding it hard to split D'Argento and Unforgotten.

"I can't fault the way D'Argento has come through his last-start run," Waller said of the four-year-old's closing second behind Home Of The Brave in the Theo Marks Stakes.

"He's a very good horse drawn well (barrier one) and it gives James McDonald every chance to get him to switch off and settle.

"This horse has a great turn of foot, as was evident on Tuesday morning when he let down strongly at the end of his gallop. I'm really excited by his chances."

Unforgotten, winner of the ATC Australian Oaks this year, is attempting to become the first to win the Chelmsford Stakes-Epsom Handicap double since Filante in 1996.

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Martin primed for another Star turn

D'Argento has sensational credentials for The Epsom. Picture: AAP



RAY THOMAS

D'ARGENTO and Fiesta can continue the remarkable affinity syndicator Denise Martin's Star Thoroughbreds has with the Epsom Handicap meeting by securing a Group 1 double at Royal Randwick tomorrow.

Flashy grey D'Argento is the \$420 favourite to win the \$1 million TAB Epsom Handicap (1600m) and Fiesta is on the second line of betting at \$750 for the \$500,000 Flight Stakes (1600m).

Sydney's feature spring carnival race day has a special significance for Martin. A decade ago she celebrated an Epsom quinella with Theseo and Bank Robber.

And it was at this race day in 1999 that Martin's famous Star Thoroughbred colours of purple and white stars were carried to a breakthrough Group 1 win with Danglissa in the Flight Stakes.

"We have two very good chances with D'Argento and Fiesta but it is such a tough day of racing," Martin said.

"D'Argento should run well in the Epsom but it is not an easy race to win, there are so many good horses in the field.

"Fiesta is such an honest filly. She never runs a bad race but we are up against Miss Fabulass."

Martin has been involved in the syndication business for 25 years and has introduced thousands of

new owners to the racing industry.

She has raced a string of outstanding gallopers under the Star Thoroughbreds banner, including five-time Group 1 winner Theseo, Golden Slipper hero Sebring, Driefontein, Foxplay, Stoway, Primrose Sands, Kingsgate and Squamos.

"I'm very proud of Star," Martin said.

"We have marvellous owners and the biggest thrill for me is watching them have success at the highest level. It is an indescribable feeling."

Martin has probably never had such a quality team of top-flight racehorses in training at the same time as she has this season, including D'Argento, Fiesta, Invincibella, Noire and Dealmaker.

Martin doesn't spend huge sums for her horses either, having purchased D'Argento for \$135,000 as a yearling and paid \$150,000 to secure Fiesta.

Both have been shrewd investments. D'Argento has won four races from nine attempts, including the Group 1 Rosehill Guineas, amassing nearly \$800,000 in stakes and becoming a very valuable potential stallion prospect.

Fiesta has won two races from nine starts — the Group 2 Silver Shadow Stakes and Group 3 Widden Stakes — and been placed in another six. She has already earned more than \$500,000.

"I remember inspecting D'Argento as a yearling and he was such a lovely, athletic colt," Martin said.

"D'Argento just stood out to me, not only because of his colour, and he had this great presence about him. All the jockeys who ride him talk about his fluid action, too.

"Fiesta was a filly I thought we would not be able to afford. She is by I Am Invincible and I expected her to bring a lot more than the \$150,000 it needed to buy her. I thought she was a bargain at that price."

'I inspected D'Argento as a yearling and he was such a lovely, athletic colt'

DENISE MARTIN

MOONEE VALLEY, RANDWICK & CAULFIELD

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