

An examination (by the numbers) of Florida's mare population

BY MATT O'NEIL

In the September 2003 issue of *The Florida Horse*, we took a look at the ancestors found in the Florida stallion population. This time around we'll investigate the ancestors found in the other side of the equation—the mares.

In order to get a sense of the influences found in the entire population of Florida-based broodmares, we used mares that produced Florida-bred stakes winners in 2002 and 2003. While not all these stakes winners were sired by Florida stallions, most of these mares have visited stallions standing in the Sunshine State. In the two years prior to 2004, 354 individual mares produced a Florida-bred stakes winner.

Most of the ancestors surveyed are contemporary, defined here as born after 1950. *Spy Song* a foal of 1943 and *Rough n' Tumble* (1948) are the exceptions. As was found in the Florida stallion survey, there is little drama in who the most prominent ancestors are in the mare population.

Bold Ruler, a foal of 1954, is the most prevalent ancestor found in the Florida mare population. No real surprise there, as the great son of *Nasrullah* has had an enormous impact on the Thoroughbred breed the last half of the 20th century. In this case, he is found in 41% of the mares sampled. While his sire-line influence is relevant primarily through *Boldnesian* and his grandson *Seattle Slew*, the numbers for the Florida mare population show how diverse and wide-ranging his influence remains.

No single male strain is found in more than 5% of the mares sampled, with *Bold Bidder* and *Boldnesian* found at that rate. *Secretariat*, *What A Pleasure* and *Cornish Prince* are found in 4%. With all female strains lumped together, the figure also registers at 4%. *Seattle Slew* was found in only 2% of the mares sampled, which at first glance seems low. However, *Slew* was from

another era in that his largest foal crop numbered only 68. His sire-line while, solid with the success of the A. P. Indy and his sons, its growth has been more of a steady crawl than an explosion. As his influence in Florida and elsewhere grows this number will almost surely increase.

Indeed we already see evidence that it is growing. The median year of birth for the mares sampled is 1989. By dividing the sample into two halves, between those born prior to 1990 and those born in 1990 and after, we can get an idea of which ancestors influences are expanding, if at all, and at what pace. Seattle Slew is carried by only 1% of the mares born prior to 1990, but in 4% of the younger set of mares, an increase of 300%. Bold Ruler's overall influence grew at a 49% clip between the two samples.

The second most ubiquitous ancestor in the Florida mare population is Northern Dancer, whose sire-line, especially by comparison to Slew, has spread like wild fire during the past 40 years. The most recent blaze has been set by his grandson Storm Cat. Interestingly, only one of the 354 mares sampled carry Storm Bird (sire of Storm Cat) in their ancestry and none yet carry Storm Cat himself. With all the sons of Storm Cat (five in Florida and well over 20 in Kentucky) with large foal crops, that statistic will surely change sooner rather than later.

Of the Northern Dancer strains, his eldest stallion sire son, Nijinsky II, is found most often. Eight percent of Florida mares carry the great English Triple Crown winner. Nijinsky's son Baldski was a very solid Florida sire and he appears most frequently among the Nijinsky strains. Baldski was found in six stakes-producing mares born prior to 1990 but in only one born afterwards.

The overall Northern Dancer influence has grown by about 32%, but that growth has not come from Nijinsky II. He appears in the same percentage of the younger and older mares at 8%. Danzig, Dixieland Band and Lyphard, however, have all expanded their influences. Danzig, who was born in 1982, is found only once in mares born prior to 1990 and in five mares after (a 400% increase).

Dixieland Band (first crop born in 1986) is also singularly represented among the older mares, while he's found in seven of the younger set, an increase of 600%. Lyphard's influence was found to have grown at a 75% rate. As was discovered in the last study, Turn-To, along with Northern Dancer, are the most prevalent ancestors in the Florida stallion population at 56%. In the mare population, the Turn-To influence is found in 30% of mares sampled. However, Turn-To's growth in the population has been nearly twice that of Northern Dancer.

Turn-To is found in 23% of the older mare sample and 38% in the younger for an increase of 65%. The Turn-To influence is found in Florida primarily through his sons Hail to Reason and Sir Gaylord. Hail to Reason has the good sire sons Roberto and Halo while Sir Gaylord is the broodmare sire of Somethingroyal, dam of Secretariat. While Hail to Reason is found in 16% of the whole sample, 8th most among the ancestors surveyed, Sir Gaylord's influence has grown more rapidly. The former showed



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a 117% increase from the older mares to the younger, while Hail to Reason expanded his influence by 42%.

Tom Fool, at 28% is the fourth most prevalent ancestor found in Florida mares, with Raise A Native (26%) ranking fifth. This is a change from what was found in the Florida stallion population where Raise A Native reigns in 49% and Tom Fool in 42% of that population.

There is also much more diversification with regards to Raise A Native in the mare population than in the stallion. With the males, 69% of Raise A Native came through the Mr. Prospector strain while in the female pool, that figure is only 46%.

With the mares, other Raise A Native strains like Alydar, Majestic Prince and Exclusive Native are more prevalent. Not surprisingly though, only Mr. Prospector appears to be growing in the population. The three aforementioned influences are found essentially in equal numbers in both the younger and older mare population.

Mr. P, on the other hand has seen his influence grow by 191%.

Another ancestor that has had large growth in the Florida mare population is Ribot. Overall he is found in 21% of the mares sampled, ranking just behind Raise A Native. But when comparing the amount of Ribot found in the older half of the sample versus the younger his influence has grown by 100%. Most of that growth has come from the Tom Rolfe strain which grew at a rate of 250%.

Traditional Florida influence Rough n'Tumble, sire of Dr. Fager and damsire of In Reality is found in 17% of the overall sample of mares. In Reality accounts for the majority of that figure and is found in 11% of the total mares surveyed with Dr. Fager found in 4%. The Rough n'Tumble influence has not grown very much, only 13 % between the two sets of mares. In Reality has not grown at all and Dr. Fager has grown by 66%, but as we just mentioned his total influence remains

small. In Reality's son Valid Appeal is also found in 4% of the overall sample and has seen his influence grow marginally, by 25%.

Two other ancestors worth noting are Spy Song, a foal of 1943 and Damascus a member of the class of 1964.

Spy Song is found in 9% of the Florida mares sampled. This is somewhat surprising in that he is carried in the pedigrees of both Storm Cat (and also Mt. Livermore), but as we have already noted, Storm Cat has yet to exert a strong influence on the Florida mare population. His influence is one of the few that actually declined (by 50%), but one might see a rebound once the Storm Cat influence matures in Florida.

Damascus, a great runner and good sire, but the fact that he has very little male-line left, makes it surprising to find his presence in 9% of the mares sampled. Perhaps even more surprising is his influence has actually grown by 160%. ■

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