

Asmussen stable rules freshmen

BY MATT O'NEIL

2-YEAR-OLD RACING

The 2-year-old book at Keeneland has not quite closed with a juvenile race Thursday and a pair scheduled for Friday. However, it's fairly easy to sum up what has transpired thus far.

The main story has, of course, been Steve Asmussen's domination. He has won six of the nine baby races run at the meet and most of those were "good things." Four of his six winners were sent off as the favorite, including the odds-on Datrick. But his other two winners paid nicely, with Appealing Zophie returning \$11.20 to her backers and Sentry rewarded her faithful with a nearly \$20 win pay.

Asmussen had at least one starter in each of the first nine baby races and not only won 67 percent of the contests, he won with half of his 12 total starters.

With Asmussen dominating, juvenile genius Todd Pletcher was shut out of the baby winner's circle. He started a total of just four at the meet, three of

whom went to the post favored. All but one of the Pletcher trainees hit the board though, with two placing second.

One of those runners, the odds on Audacious Chloe, lost a tough one in Wednesday's third race. The More Than Ready filly, hammered down to 3-5 under new stable rider Garrett Gomez, chased Asmussen trainee She's A Roughin It through a first quarter in 22.50 seconds. Audacious Chloe drew on even terms at the top of the stretch and opened up on her pace rival at the quarter pole. However, while those two fillies were going hoof to hoof, the Touch Gold filly Pro Pink was winding up five wide around the final turn. She maintained her momentum down the stretch and got up over Audacious Chloe in the shadow of the wire, prevailing by a half-length.

At \$50.20, Pro Pink was by far the longest-priced juvenile winner of the



Carlos Ramos

Pro Pink (8, Robby Albarado) catches Audacious Chloe near the wire Wednesday.

meet. Her clocking of 53.42 seconds was the slowest final time of this year's winning 2-year-olds by .52 seconds. She was also the first 2006 winner for her trainer Jamie Sanders, who was 0-for-4 at the meet and 0-for-16 in 2006 going into the race.

Interestingly, another spring meet juvenile winner got her trainer off the 2006 duck as well. The Came Home filly Beautiful Home was Barbara Beagle's fourth starter of the year and became her first winner April 13.

Beautiful Home was the only spring winner sired by a 2006 first crop sire. A

total of 15 individual progeny of freshman sires competed in the first nine juvenile races. Johannesburg has the largest foal crop of his peers and fittingly was represented by the most starters with four. His son, Daytona, put the best finish up on the board with a second on Sunday. Two William Heiligbrodt homebreds by Abajo started at the meet, with Paljo running fourth on Opening Day and Joangel running second April 13. Both will get another chance to win under the dogwoods with the former in Thursday's second and the latter in on Friday.

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