

LION'S PRIDE

With a sterling 2-year-old resume and record 140 juveniles to state his case, **Lion Heart** is a pick of many to end the year as America's top first-crop sire. There is plenty of racing still left in 2008, but so far Lion Heart is the king of the first-crop jungle.

As of mid-July the son of Tale of the Cat has nine winners, a pair of stakes winners, and more than \$400,000 in progeny earnings to his credit. Stakes winner number one came June 6, when the Steve Asmussen-trained Lyin' Heart took the \$103,700 TTA Sales Futurity at Lone Star Park. The colt, who is out of a mare by Green Dancer, finished second in the Bashford Manor Stakes (gr. III) at Churchill Downs less than a month after his first stakes win.

On the same day as Lyin' Heart placed in the Bashford Manor, Lion Heart recorded stakes winner number two when Azul Leon, who is out of the Cure the Blues mare Quick Blue, captured the Hollywood Juvenile Championship Stakes (gr. III) at Hollywood Park for trainer Doug O'Neill.

Lion Heart leads his crop in winners, stakes winners, and progeny earnings, but several other freshman sires are showing early promise as well.

In his racing days **Friends Lake** was a good late-season 2-year-old before going on to score in the Florida Derby (gr. I) in the spring of his sophomore year. The Airdrie Stud stallion has sired only a single winner as of this writing, but it's a good one. Screen Your Friend broke his maiden in his third start June 4 and just over a month later he was led into the winner's circle after taking the Bashford Manor Stakes. He is out of the Rare Performer mare Screen Prospect, a grade III winner herself.

The first winner for Florida-based **Peace Rules** is also the sire's first stakes winner. Out of the Unbridled mare Mamita, the misleadingly-named Trifecta King, making only her second start, won the Cinderella Stakes at Hollywood Park in May.

Congo Kaye wasn't the first winner for the Adena Springs Kentucky stallion **Congaree**, but like Trifecta King, the filly broke her maiden in a black type race. Congo Kaye came storming from last place to take her debut in the Juan Gonzalez Memorial Stakes at the Pleasanton Fairgrounds. Congo Kaye has a rather interesting pedigree. Her sire

Congaree is inbred to Northern Dancer 3 x 3 through Arazi's dam Danseur Fabuleux and Congaree's damsire, Mari's Book. Congo Kaye's dam adds two more strains of Northern Dancer (through Danzig and Nureyev), giving Congaree's first stakes winner four doses of the great Windfields stallion at 4 x 4 x 5 x 4.

Ontario-based **Where's the Ring** has 64 juveniles in his first crop, more than any other freshman stallion standing north of the border. The fact that he is a stakes-winning son of Seeking the Gold from a good Pin Oak Stud family (he is a half brother to the dam of 2007 leading third-crop sire Broken Vow) explains his popularity. He has his supporters feeling good so far with his unbeaten Cawaja Beach, winner of the Shady Well Stakes at Woodbine July 13.

Lion Heart is the overall leading juvenile sire in America by progeny earnings as of mid-July, but the veteran Lane's End stallion **Dixie Union** is the leader by juvenile stakes winners, with three so far in 2008. The last weekend in June was an especially successful one for the Dixieland Band stallion. On Saturday, June 28, his daughter Garden District, who had previously placed second in the Kentucky Stakes (gr. III) against males, found the girls a little easier to handle in the Debutante Stakes (gr. III). Out of a mare by Unbridled's Song,

Garden District held off the Medaglia d'Oro filly Rachel Alexandra by a neck to earn her first stakes win. The following day it wasn't nearly as close in the Astoria Stakes at Belmont as Bold Union waltzed home by 9¾ lengths. She too is out of a Mr. Prospector-line mare, the Fortunate Prospect daughter Bold World.

Dixie Union's third juvenile stakes winner came July 13 when Super Dixie took the Angie C. Stakes at Emerald Downs. The filly is out of a mare by He's Tops, a son of the mare She's a Talent, who also happens to be Dixie Union's second dam.

Exchange Rate is ranked second, sandwiched between Lion Heart and Dixie Union, in terms of juvenile progeny earnings, thanks in large part to a (Continued on page 16)




Lion Heart



Friends Lake

(Continued from page 15) pair of June stakes winners. The undefeated Southern Exchange took the \$150,000 Victoria Stakes at Woodbine June 15. Just over two weeks later Juliet's Spirit took another rich Woodbine event, the \$150,000 My Dear Stakes.

All three of Exchange Rate's grade I winners are out of

mares that carry the family influence of Buckpasser. The first two stakes winners from his fourth crop are continuing that trend. Southern Exchange is out of a mare by Woodman (whose damsire is Buckpasser) while the dam of Juliet's Spirit, Juliet's Way, carries a connection to Buckpasser through his half brother Bupers, the sire of her second dam (My Bupers). 

Worldview

By Kristen Manning

AUSTRALASIAN SIRES WRAP-UP

A few standout performers that win the very richest races during a season customarily determine the annual Australian sires championship.

But that isn't the case this year. Coolmore's outstanding stallion **Encosta de Lago** claimed the title by way of consistently siring high-class gallopers.

With prize money for 2-year-old races so generous in Australia, a stallion able to sire early runners has an advantage, but Encosta de Lago sired only two juvenile stakes winners, and only one in Australia.

While the impeccably bred Merlene de Lago (daughter of 1996 Golden Slipper Stakes [Aus-I] heroine Merlene) showed off her wares in South Africa, on his sire's home turf Von Costa De Hero proved himself to be one of the most talented youngsters of the year.

In fact, he was a mere half of a head away from victory in the 2008 AAMI Golden Slipper, just failing to pick up the season's juvenile star **Sebring** after storming home wide.

A horse that caught the eye of Darley (which laid down AUS\$5 million for a half share) after his VRC Sires' Produce Stakes (Aus-II) victory, Von Costa De Hero is intriguingly bred on a 2 x 3 cross of the full brothers Fairy King and Sadler's Wells, sons of Northern Dancer and the Bold Reason mare Fairy Bridge.

It was not even Encosta de Lago's 3-year-olds that garnered him his accolades. His three stakes winners of that age – Miss Marielle, Road To Rock, and Tan Tat De Lago – were smart without being stars.

Rather, the Encosta de Lago offspring just get better as they mature, and it is the achievements of his 4-year-olds and up that saw him take out the year's leading sire title with prize money earnings in excess of AUS\$10.4 million. That sum doesn't even take into account the HK\$2.3 million won by his Hong Kong-based sprinting sensation, Sacred Kingdom.

Current standouts for Encosta de Lago include Princess Coup, Sirmione, Racing To Win, and Shadowways, all of whom are group I winners, while Laura's Charm (a group II winner), Douro Valley, and Cocinero also won stakes races for their sire. The Pure Blonde St. George Stakes (Aus-II) was a highlight, as the first three (Princess Coup, Sirmione,

and Douro Valley) are all by Encosta de Lago, while the same three finished second, first, and fourth, respectively, in the Darley Australian Cup (Aus-I).

Encosta de Lago is an Australian-bred group I winner (1996 VicHealth Cup) with a decidedly international pedigree. His sire Fairy King did not prove especially popular as a shuttler but did sire seven stakes winners. His dam Shoal Creek, by the New Zealand stalwart Star Way who passed away this year, descends from the Kentucky-bred Mr. Prospector mare Rolls. Shoal Creek has always had fertility problems; following Encosta de Lago's arrival in 1993, the mare failed to produce another foal for six seasons.

Shoal Creek's dam Rolls has also made her mark as the dam of Arrowfield Stud's **Flying Spur** who, at the time of writing, is fighting with **More Than Ready** for second on the Australian general sires list.

A great grandson of the legendary matriarch Fanfreliche, Flying Spur was an exceptionally talented galloper – winning the Golden Slipper at 2 and later adding to his resume the Cadbury Australian Guineas and the All-Aged Stakes (both Aus-I).

Always well respected as a stallion, Flying Spur has really taken off over the past few years and he was last year's leading sire with progeny earnings of more than AUS\$10.4 million. This year has not been quite as good for him, but it has still been a strong one. Krupt is his 2-year-old stakes winner; Dealer Principal, Espurante, and Forensics are his leading 3-year-olds; and his older stakes winners – Casino Prince, Maslins Beach, Mentality, Zupaone, and November Flight – have all proved fine representatives of the breed.

Another good performer for his sire, Magnus was not a winner this season but did have three runner-up efforts in group I races, including the Krisflyer International Sprint (Sin-I), fighting that race out with fellow Australian Takeover Target.

Flying Spur is also shaping up well as a broodmare sire, his daughter Purespeed the dam of the season's outstanding 2-year-old Sebring. Beaten just once in six starts, the good-looking chestnut is by Vinery's U.S. shuttler More Than Ready.

A winner of the grade I King's Bishop Stakes at Saratoga,