

Who's Hot?: The Trending Sires of Summer

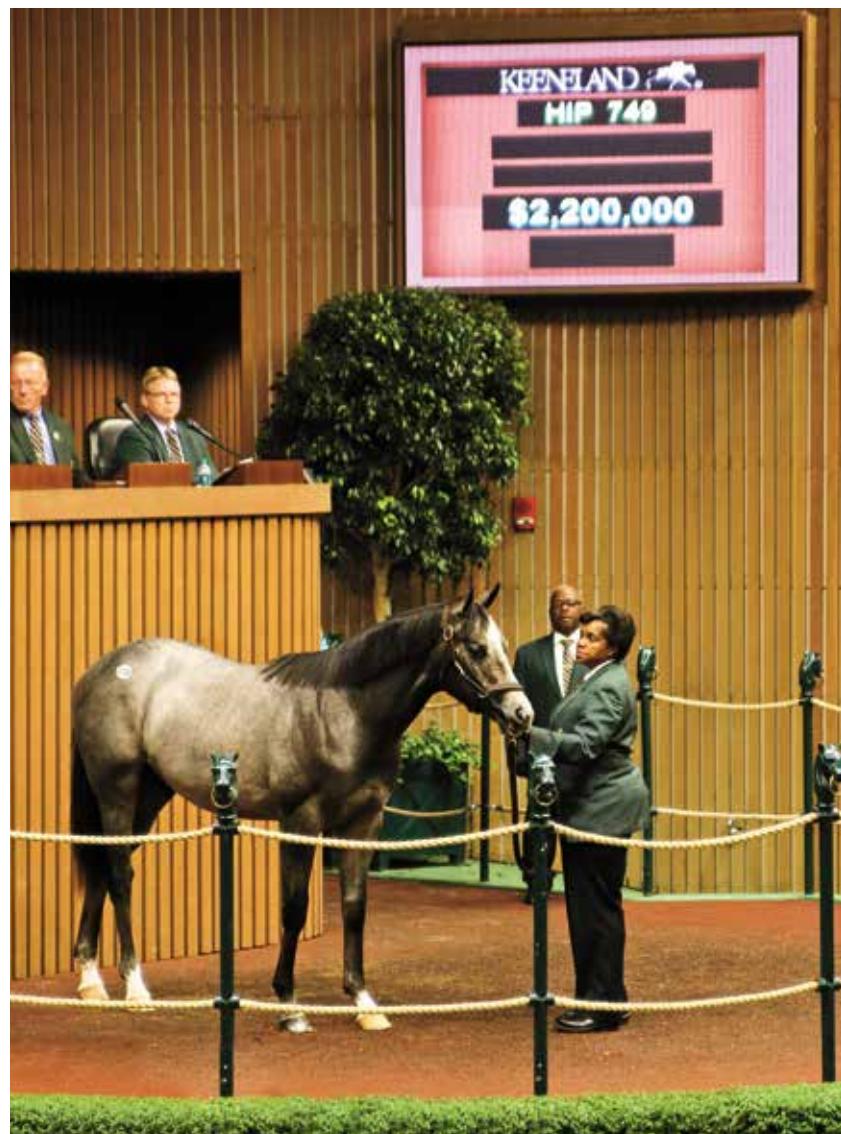
abor Day barbecues and the final call to post at Del Mar signaled the end to another exciting summer racing season in North America.

No stallion made a bigger impact on those North American black-type events than Ramsey Farm's Kitten's Joy. The 2013 champion sire again leads all North American stallions with 16 stakes winners in 2014, 12 of them winning over the 100 days between Memorial Day and Del Mar's final day on Sept. 3.

Half of Kitten's Joy's 2014 stakes winners are first-time stakes winners and include his latest graded winner, Munirah, who prevailed in the Boiling Springs Stakes (gr. IIIT) on Labor Day. Although the El Prado stallion has been receiving a growing number of outside mares in recent seasons, nine of his 12 summer stakes winners were bred by owners Ken and Sarah Ramsey. It will be interesting to see going forward if other breeders have the same broad success with Kitten's Joy.

It's hard to imagine Kitten's Joy (or any other stallion) catching current general sire leader Tapit, who also had a fantastic summer. The Gainesway Farm headliner was represented by a total of eight North American stakes winners this summer, including his first classic winner in Belmont Stakes (gr. I) hero Tonalist. Tapit also saw a pair of his yearlings bring seven figures at the Fasig-Tipton Saratoga sale and four more at Keeneland September, including the \$2.2 million co-sale-topper through Book 3. Tapit has now sired 10 \$1 million-plus auction yearlings in his career.

The exceptionally consistent City Zip did one better than Tapit with nine summer stakes winners. If there's been any knock on the Lane's End Farm-based son of Carson City it's a dearth of grade I winners. However, his career total in this category doubled in August courtesy of Palace, who nabbed the Alfred G. Vanderbilt and Forego handicaps (both gr. I) at



Hip 749, by Tapit out of Justwhistledixie, is the co-sale-topper at Keeneland September

Saratoga, and Personal Diary, the Del Mar Oaks (gr. IT) heroine. The latter is also the first grade I winner out of a mare by Tiznow, a grandson of City Zip's damsire Relaunch. We find a Relaunch double in another City Zip summer stakes winner, Jersey Girl Stakes winner Red Velvet, who is out of a mare by the Relaunch son Honour and Glory.

Curlin, English Channel, First Samurai, Ghostzapper, Giant's Causeway, and Lemon Drop Kid all had seven North American stakes winners over the summer. The first

two are sons of Smart Strike and the career trajectories of both took a sharp upward turn over those 100 days of sun.

In particular, the fourth-crop stallion English Channel, America's best turf distance runner in 2006 and 2007, raised his game to another level with a trio of graded winners and his first important dirt runner. A pair of those runners—5-year-olds Parranda and The Pizza Man—certainly follow in the footsteps of their sire. Parranda is now a six-time stakes winner on the lawn and scored a win at the grade

II level in late June. The Pizza Man has reeled off five straight black-type wins over the past year, including his first graded score in the Stars and Stripes Stakes (gr. IIIT) in mid-July. He followed that effort by fending off a European invasion in the American St. Leger Stakes on the Aug. 16 Arlington Million (gr. IT) card.

The biggest win for English Channel so far came the following Saturday when V. E. Day surged past grade I winners Tonalist and Wicked Strong to take the 145th Travers Stakes (gr. I). The Jimmy Jerkens pupil is English Channel's first grade I winner and second graded winner on dirt after Blueskiesnrainbows, winner of the San Pasqual (gr. III) over the winter at Santa Anita. English Channel's ledger now reads 17 stakes winners from 193 starters (8.8%). White fences are in his future as owner Brad Kelley is bringing him "home" to Calumet Farm for the 2015 season. Based on the way he's going, English Channel is a worthy resident of that historic stallion barn.

As summer began, the reputation of Smart Strike's third-crop son Curlin rested entirely on 2013 Belmont Stakes (gr. I) winner Palace Malice, who had reeled off four impressive victories in 2014. Moulin de Mougin then gave Curlin his second career graded



V. E. Day became English Channel's first grade I winner when he won the Travers Stakes

winner with her tally in the John C. Mabee Stakes (gr. IIIT) at Del Mar on Aug. 10. She's among Curlin's five new stakes winners since Memorial Day, indicating that he may be hitting his best stride as a sire.

The pedigrees of a pair of those new summer stakes winners are noteworthy. Cinderella Stakes winner La Grange and Blue Violet, upset winner of the Lady's Secret Stakes on Monmouth Park's Labor Day card, are both out of mares by stallions bred on the reverse of the Mr. Prospector/Deputy Minister cross that produced Curlin. La Grange is out of mare by Silver Deputy (by Deputy Minister out

of a Mr. Prospector mare) and Blue Violet is out of a mare by Awesome Again (by Deputy Minister, second dam by Mr. Prospector). They are among 11 black-type winners showing a double of Deputy Minister within four generations.

WinStar Farm's second-crop sire Pioneerof the Nile closed out the summer strongest of all with a trio of Del Mar graded winners in four days. His 3-year-old daughter Jojo Warrior is now a graded winner on dirt and all-weather after she got back to the winner's circle in the Torrey Pines Stakes (gr. III) Aug. 31. She was previously victorious in Santa Anita's Summertime Oaks (formerly the Hollywood Oaks, gr. II). That same afternoon where the surf meets the turf, the Pioneerof the Nile colt Midnight Storm made his stakes debut count by capturing the Del Mar Derby (gr. IIIT).

Three days later at Del Mar we saw the first star from Pioneerof the Nile's second crop when American Pharaoh sped to victory in the Del Mar Futurity (gr. I). The ridgling is his sire's first grade I winner and sixth overall stakes winner. It's worth noting that all six are out of mares from different broodmare sire lines: Mr. Prospector (Carson City), Northern Dancer (Yankee Gentleman), In Reality (Bertrando), Bold Ruler/Seattle Slew (Jump Start), Hail to Reason/Halo (More Than Ready), and Rough'n Tumble (Holy Bull). *By Matt O'Neil*



Hip 29, by Curlin, is a half to Beholder and Curlin's first \$1 million-dollar yearling