

# The Year's Top 10 Freshmen

## *Distorted Humor tops Elusive Quality*

by  
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In last month's column we had all but declared Distorted Humor to be the Leading Freshman Sire of 2002. While that has indeed proved to be true, the intrigue in the past month made such a pronouncement premature.

First, there was still \$1,000,000 in juvenile stakes purses up for grabs, three quarters of that figure was offered courtesy of the slot players at Delta Downs. There was also the matter of the appeal of the medication suspension levied against Elusive Quality's son Elusive City for two victories in Britain.

As it turns out, Tale of the Cat was the only freshman sire to take advantage of the Bayou riches, with his daughter My Trusty Cat taking the \$250,000 Delta Princess Stakes on December 20. That win pushed Tale of the Cat over the \$1,000,000 mark in first crop progeny earnings and secured the fourth spot on the year-end freshman sire list. The win also ensured that 2003 is the first year in which four first-crop stallions exceeded \$1,000,000 in progeny earnings.

While Tale of the Cat finished a clear fourth, the order of the top three freshman sires was still technically in question until January 9, 2003. With the appeal of Elusive City's disqualification from his maiden score and the Richmond Stakes (G2) officially unresolved, the American Jockey Club and consequently *The Blood-Horse*, had kept the \$74,005 in disputed funds in Elusive's Quality's account. The standings provided by Brisnet.com showed Elusive Quality minus the disputed amount. The ruling on January 9 upholding the disqualification not only served to give Distorted Humor the title once and for all, but also knocked Elusive Quality down to third place, a mere \$5,556 behind Awesome Again.

### **Awesome Toccet**

Awesome Again, primarily on the strength of his hickory son Toccet, put in a late challenge for freshman supremacy. Even without Toccet's \$755,610 in earnings however, Awesome Again would still have finished thirteenth on the first-crop sires list. For a sire who didn't figure to be a particularly good juvenile sire, he has had a stellar start by any measure.

Grand Slam is another who has begun his stallion career in impressive fashion, placing fifth on the freshman sires' list. He was second behind Tale of the Cat with 23 winners and ranked only behind Elusive Quality with eight stakes horses. He was also the victim of some misfortune, as his highly regarded son Slammed was killed in a barn mishap.

Checking in sixth was Touch Gold, who, like his Adena Springs comrade Awesome Again, did not necessarily figure to sire precocious juveniles. And for the most part he did not, with only nine winners. He did however provide a glimpse of the quality he can produce with the serious filly Composure, who gave Storm Flag Flying a scare in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1).

Early season leader Swiss Yodeler has very quietly hung around to finish squarely in the top 10 with \$747,366 in progeny earnings. He was dominant in early summer, showing the way both in terms of progeny earnings and

winners. The speedy California-based son of Eastern Echo has also shown surprising late season strength. Since early October he has added six winners, a stakes winner and three other stakes horses to his profile. He is also the highest ranking regional (non-Kentucky-based) freshman sire.

Coronado's Quest was a little slower to come around than Awesome Again and Touch Gold, but with an autumn flourish, he has given little reason to believe he won't be a major stallion in the years to come. His initial juvenile crop counts 13 winners, three stakes winners, and six total stakes horses. He has also shown impressive versatility as he has sired stakes winners on both sides of the Atlantic, including a group two winner in England. With only 52 named foals from this first crop, those numbers look all the better.

### **Atlantic crossing**

The Storm Cat stallion Stormy Atlantic earned a ninth place finish with only 44 named foals, and more importantly earned his way to Kentucky after standing his first four seasons in Florida. Overall, he has sired nine winners and three stakes winners including the grade three winner Atlantic Ocean. That filly made headlines in March by bringing a record \$1,900,000 at the Barretts Sale. Adding to her luster (and her sire's) is the fact that she is now a stakes winner on both the dirt and turf.

Indian Charlie rounds out the top 10 with \$545,822 in progeny earnings. He racked up 13 winners and five stakes horses including the stakes winner Jazz Lady.

While much has been made (in this column and elsewhere) of the jostling in the top 10 this season, the exact order of finish is almost irrelevant. The fact that these young sires have proven they can sire quality racehorses is the ultimate measure to their managers and ultimately to breeders.

Elusive Quality, Distorted Humor, and Awesome Again are all booked (way) full in 2003. Distorted Humor and Elusive Quality have seen their stud fees double and triple respectively over last year's. Those would still be facts even if Elusive City had not been given Gastrogard.

In regard to the overall juvenile standings, Storm Cat reigned supreme for the sixth time in the last 11 years. While the word amazing is practically synonymous with this stallion, his eight juvenile stakes winners in 2002 bring that word to mind again. His daughter Storm Flag Flying brought down the house on Breeders' Cup Day and is sure to be named Champion Two-Year-Old Filly. With a cleaner break, Storm Cat's Hold That Tiger may well have proved best four races later. Storm Flag Flying will become Storm

Cat's first American champion in late January. Perhaps Hold That Tiger will become his first Kentucky Derby winner come early May. **JOB**



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