

There's More Where That Came From

How large books have affected juvenile racing

by
Matt
O'Neil

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While it remains to be seen if the "Great State Challenge" will become a late season fixture on the stakes calendar, its inaugural running has had a profound effect on the 2002 freshman sires' race. Crackup's win in the day's Juvenile race virtually assured his sire, Distorted Humor the title of Leading Freshman Sire for the year.

Crackup earned \$150,000 for his sire and, with a little over three weeks remaining in the season (as of this writing), WinStar Farm's son of Forty Niner holds a \$137,000 lead over Elusive Quality. Awesome Again looks to have nailed down the third spot. With Toccet scheduled to run yet again in the \$200,000 Hollywood Futurity (G1), there is an outside chance the Deputy Minister stallion could pass Elusive Quality for second.

As mentioned in last month's column, this year's new crop of sires has posted some historically significant numbers. Elusive Quality has tied Red Ransom with six first crop juvenile stakes winners. With Grand Slam (21) and Elusive Quality (20) joining Tale of the Cat (24), three of this year's freshmen have now sired 20 or more winners. This is the first time that's ever happened.

Awesome Again, regardless of Toccet's performance at Hollywood, stands a good chance to exceed the \$1,000,000 mark for progeny earnings. If he does, it will mark the second straight year that three freshman sires have exceeded \$1,000,000 in juvenile progeny earnings.

Also mentioned last time, from 1991 to 1999, no freshman sire made it to the \$1,000,000 milepost and 2002 will mark the fourth straight year that that measure has been reached. In order to get a little more perspective on the overall state of juvenile racing in America, and consequently to put these numbers in to some historical context, we called in the folks at BRIS for some statistics.

Purse structure

In 1991, the year Capote was Leading Freshman Sire with \$1,197,349 in progeny earnings, there were 6,357 total two-year-old races run in the country and the average purse for juvenile maiden races was \$10,952 (see *Table V*). In 2002, the numbers will end up in the 4,600 range for races with an average maiden purse of around \$26,000.

In the period from 1991 to 2002, the average purse for a juvenile maiden event rose 141%. That figure outpaced purse growth for non-juvenile maidens whose average purse increased at a 131% clip. This rise in purses in and of itself might seem to explain the explosion in first-year stallion progeny earning totals. However, there is also evidence that the juvenile purse structure has actually weakened in the past three years.

The majority of the aforementioned 141% average maiden purse growth occurred in the mid-1990s. From 1994 (inclusive) to 1996, average juvenile maiden purses grew nearly 30%. During the next three years they grew another 22%. But in the current three year period beginning in 2000,

average maiden purse growth has only been 9%, while older maidens have seen their purses go up by nearly 13%.

There has also been a rather drastic reduction in the number of juvenile stakes races being carded in America, more than would be expected despite the overall drop in juvenile races. From 1992 to 1999, the percentage of juvenile stakes races from all juvenile races run has exceeded 10% each year except for 1993 (9.4%). In 2000, that figure dropped off to 8.1%, down to 7.6% in 2001 and was 8.3% as of mid-November 2002.

This seems to indicate that while everyday purses for juveniles are higher than they ever have been, juvenile stakes programs have taken a major hit. Since a horse can obviously win a maiden race only once, the subsequent weakness in big-pot opportunities would not seem conducive to multiple stallions siring first crops with earnings in excess of \$1,000,000.

More and more

If the purses are not the main reason for the increased juvenile earnings, then it must be the larger and larger foal crops these sires are producing. Interestingly, we have yet to see this trend consistently affect the General Sires List as no sire outside of Storm Cat has exceeded \$9,000,000 in yearly progeny earnings. In fact, the year's General Sire leader, likely to be El Prado, will be hard pressed to reach \$7,000,000.

The larger foal crops, however, do seem to be the main factor in aiding eight stallions achieve first crop juvenile earnings of over \$1,000,000 in the past three years (this includes Awesome Again). Prior to 2000, there had been only seven.

Looking at the foal crop size of the top five leading freshman sires by progeny earnings since and including 1991, it is clear that they are now benefiting from foal crops much larger than ever before. In 1991, the average foal crop of the top five freshman sires was 42, in 1992 it was 37 and in 1993 it was 44. From there through 2001, the average foal crop of the top five leading freshman sires inched up towards 70: in 1998 an average of 59 foals; in 1999, 64; in both 2000 and 2001 the average was 68.

In 2002, that number has ballooned to 87. With both of the Ashford stalwarts Tale of the Cat (100 foals) and Grand Slam (122 foals) crashing the top five this year, this year's number may be abnormally high. It is clear, however, that the plateau of foal crop members is higher than it was 10 years ago. This is really no surprise; we know that more stallions are covering more and more mares.

It will be interesting to observe the General Sires List in the years to come. As these larger crops mature and are followed by other bulging crops, should we see a stallion approach \$15,000,000 in progeny earnings in the next five years?

What if the earnings of the General Sire List leaders remain stagnant, while the top few freshman sires continue

to top the \$1,000,000 mark every year? If that were to happen, it might be the clearest proof yet that American breeders have overemphasized early precocity over durability. Only time will tell.



JOB
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Table I:
 Leading Sires of 2YOs by Number of Winners
 (All charts through 12/9/02)

RNK	STALLION	LOC	FOALS	WNRS	SWS
1	Tale of the Cat*	KY	100	24	3
2	End Sweep	died	95	23	2
3	Formal Dinner	FL	84	22	1
4	Cherokee Run	KY	82	21	2
	Elusive Quality*	KY	76	21	6
	Grand Slam*	KY	122	21	1
	Pentelicus	died	70	21	1
8	Langfuhr	KY	90	19	2

Table II:
 Leading Freshman Sires of 2YOs by Number of Winners

RNK	STALLION	LOC	FOALS	WNRS	SWS
1	Tale of the Cat*	KY	100	24	3
2	Elusive Quality*	KY	76	21	6
	Grand Slam*	KY	122	21	1
4	Formal Gold*	KY	66	15	
5	Announce*	KY	84	14	2
	Double Honor*	FL	65	14	1
	Souvenir Copy*	KY	104	14	1
	Swiss Yodeler*	CA	45	14	3
9	Concerto*	FL	43	13	1
10	Distorted Humor*	KY	67	12	4
	Partner's Hero*	MD	61	12	1
	Semoran*	FL	31	12	

Table V:
 Annual Statistics on Juvenile Racing Since 1991

YEAR	# 2YO RACES	# 2YO STAKES	AV 2YO MDN PURSE	AV OLDER MDN PURSE
2002*	3,943	328	\$26,415	\$22,878
2001	4,669	356	\$24,955	\$21,891
2000	4,652	381	\$24,249	\$20,266
1999	4,497	462	\$22,503	\$18,807
1998	4,572	458	\$20,526	\$17,086
1997	4,665	496	\$18,437	\$15,189
1996	4,695	482	\$17,233	\$13,905
1995	4,910	532	\$15,107	\$13,080
1994	5,184	533	\$13,276	\$11,478
1993	5,277	499	\$11,919	\$10,755
1992	6,166	774	\$11,330	\$10,050
1991	6,357	470	\$10,952	\$9,842

Table III:
 Leading Sires of 2YOs by Earnings

RNK	STALLION	LOC	FOALS	WNRS	SWS	EARNINGS
1	Storm Cat	KY	83	18	8	\$2,327,453
2	Seattle Slew	died	65	11	2	\$1,255,873
3	Distorted Humor*	KY	67	12	4	\$1,243,056
4	End Sweep	died	95	23	2	\$1,191,767
5	Cherokee Run	KY	82	21	2	\$1,158,051
6	Langfuhr	KY	90	19	2	\$1,130,719
7	Elusive Quality*	KY	76	21	6	\$1,116,606
8	A.P. Indy	KY	90	13	3	\$1,053,331
9	Awesome Again*	KY	73	10	1	\$963,400
10	Dehere	JPN	69	11	4	\$925,993
11	In Excess (IRE)	CA	70	13	3	\$910,391
12	Carson City	KY	82	15	3	\$848,980
13	Smart Strike	KY	55	10	2	\$848,339
14	Tale of the Cat*	KY	100	24	3	\$845,956
15	Pulpit	KY	50	9	2	\$801,915
16	Forest Wildcat	KY	76	18	2	\$793,013
17	Boston Harbor	JPN	66	14	2	\$736,681
18	Formal Dinner	FL	84	22	1	\$727,467
19	Grand Slam*	KY	122	21	1	\$712,641
20	Swiss Yodeler*	CA	45	14	3	\$686,711
21	El Prado (IRE)	KY	87	14	3	\$685,073
22	Touch Gold*	KY	86	8	1	\$674,027
23	Belong to Me	KY	84	14	2	\$666,916

Table IV:
 Leading Freshman Sires of 2YOs by Earnings

RNK	STALLION	LOC	FOALS	WNRS	SWS	EARNINGS
1	Distorted Humor*	KY	67	12	4	\$1,243,056
2	Elusive Quality*	KY	76	21	6	\$1,116,606
3	Awesome Again*	KY	73	10	1	\$963,400
4	Tale of the Cat*	KY	100	24	3	\$845,956
5	Grand Slam*	KY	122	21	1	\$712,641
6	Swiss Yodeler*	CA	45	14	3	\$686,711
7	Touch Gold*	KY	86	8	1	\$674,027
8	Coronado's Quest*	KY	52	11	3	\$543,581
9	Stormy Atlantic*	FL	44	9	3	\$541,661
10	Indian Charlie*	KY	76	10	1	\$504,903
11	Concerto*	FL	43	13	1	\$492,277
12	Skip Away*	KY	88	10	1	\$463,014
13	Deputy Commander*	KY	87	10		\$424,775
14	Banker's Gold*	KY	52	11	1	\$422,730
15	Souvenir Copy*	KY	104	14	1	\$415,454
16	Kiridashi*	ONT	60	10	1	\$401,105
17	Benchmark*	CA	45	10		\$397,004
18	Announce*	KY	84	14	2	\$396,416
19	Favorite Trick*	KY	71	8		\$381,305
20	Formal Gold*	KY	66	15		\$378,768
21	Partner's Hero*	MD	61	12	1	\$371,016
22	Dance Brightly*	KY	78	7		\$361,546
23	Lucky Lionel*	FL	44	11		\$344,157

* FRESHMAN SIRE