

Slow Going

Freshmen sires yet to hit stride

by
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It's been well noted, here and elsewhere, that the group of 2007 first crop sires carries exceptionally high expectations. While it's still very early in the juvenile racing season, none of the 2007 freshman has yet stepped up. In fact, as of this writing, the leading first crop sire by progeny earnings was Posse, who had yet to sire a winner from his first 11 starters. And while there had only been six juvenile stakes races run in North America through the first three weeks of May, only one horse sired by a first crop sire has taken a top three position.

Of course, this is likely only an aberration and there have been some promising winners by some of the 2007 freshmen so far.

The Mr. Prospector stallion Aldebaran used his closing kick to win such one turn fixtures as the Met Mile (G1) and Forego Handicap (G1) en route to an Eclipse Award. His very first starter used similar tactics to wear down the favored Fusaichi Pegasus colt Brooke's Valentine to win the first juvenile maiden in New York on May 17. The colt, now named Ascot Hall, was purchased at the 2006 Fasig-Tipton July sale for \$200,000, the fourth highest Aldebaran yearling sold.

Sky Mesa, another of the big name freshmen, is also on the board with his first winner. His \$150,000 Saratoga yearling, Twenty Eight Hours, closed from well off the pace to take a 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ furlong maiden contest at Keeneland on April 26.

Motavato is the first winner for Grade 2 victor and multiple classic-placed Proud Citizen. Favored in his Derby Day debut at Delaware Park, the colt dueled early before spurting away to an easy nine length score for trainer Gary Contessa.

The speedy Runaway Groom stallion Najran has but three early starters, none going off at higher odds than the 70-1 Sky Cape. But it is that colt who will go down as his sires' first winner after using a late run to take a 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ furlong maiden special at Hollywood Park on May 20.

Regionally speaking

Several regional stallions have also been represented by their first winners. The Louisiana-based Gone West son Authenticate actually has two winners so far from his first crop of 51 foals. One of those winners, Dr. Nick, was a \$120,000 September yearling (the highest priced youngster by his sire) and broke his maiden in special weight company at Churchill Downs on May 19. Authenticate is an unraced son of Grade 1-winner Lakeway and was purchased for \$3.3 million yearling at the 2000 Keeneland September

yearling sale. He stands at Le Mesa Stallions in bayou country for \$3,000. As of this writing only the Kentucky-based Zavata and the New Mexico stallion Premeditation has as many at two winners.

Rock Slide and Decarchy are brothers to the more heralded first crop sires Mineshaft and Empire Maker. But both of the regional-based stallions have sired their first winners before their famous siblings.

Mineshaft's older full brother, Rock Slide, stands in Maryland for \$5,000 and the multiple stakes-winner was represented by his first winner on April 26. His daughter Happy Hailey went off favored in the first race at Pimlico that day and cruised to a two length victory.

Decarchy is a graded-winning older half-brother to Belmont Stakes (G1) winner Empire Maker. He stands at Magali Farms in California and had his first winner, Timehascometoday, emerge at Turf Paradise on April 29.

Three Florida-based freshmen are now on the board with their first winners, too.

Smooth Jazz will try to carry on for his recently deceased sire, Storm Boot. His Louisiana Jazz wired a field of Louisiana-bred maidens at Evangeline Downs on May 11.

Awesome of Course is the first son of Awesome Again with runners. He has just eight registered juveniles in his first crop, but his first starter, Honey Honey Honey, found his way into the Calder winner's circle on May 12.

Full Mandate has one of the larger 2007 first foal crops (74) and he too has a winner from his first two starters. His son, Thoroughly, broke through with an easy score at Hollywood Park on May 16.

With the freshman slow off the mark, there is plenty of room at the top of the overall juvenile charts for the veteran stallions. Avalyn Hunter made the case for Exchange Rate in last month's issue (Sunshine State, OBI May 2007) and it looks like his juvenile crop will carry on his momentum.

His son, Rated Early, took the Kentucky Breeders' Cup, the year's first graded event for juveniles on Thursday of Derby week. The colt is another Exchange Rate stakes winner out of a Mr. Prospector-line mare and he has ensured that his Florida-based sire will have at least one graded winner from his first four crops to race. Exchange Rate has also been represented by two other juvenile winners from as many starters. **JOE**



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