

The Final Factor

Does first crop juvenile average predict sire success?

by
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The two year-old sales season is in full swing and it won't be long before the juvenile racing season kicks off. With that in mind, we thought it would be worth taking a look at the relationship between first crop juvenile sales averages and first crop sire performance.

While predicting the top first crop sires, both short and long term, is a popular parlor game, there can also be great financial rewards. The savviest stallion prognosticators can take advantage of often deflated fourth year stud fees. The classic approach of buying low and selling high is never more feasible (or dangerous) than it is when sending a mare to a fourth year stallion. Those who bred to stallions like Distorted Humor when he last stood for \$10,000 or Stormy Atlantic in his final year in Florida, rightfully boasted all the way to the bank.

The criterion for evaluating a given stallion has always been gradually revealed. First race record, conformation and pedigree are all that breeders have to go on. By the second year, the in-foal mare averages from the previous years' bloodstock sales and the quality of the first foals being born in the spring are the next hints. Third year stallions have had their first weanlings to market. Fourth year stallions have both yearling sales histories and, beginning early in the breeding season, their two year-olds are on the track training for the juvenile sales. But just how good is the juvenile sales market at predicting first crop sire success?

For this study we queried the Brisnet database to find the first crop juvenile sales averages for each stallion going back to (and including) 1997. For the sales average component, we considered only stallions who had three or more first crop juveniles sell. The top ten sales leaders from each crop were then compared with the year-end top ten on The Blood-Horse first crop sire standings.

In the early years covered by the study, two year-old buyers were reasonably adept at picking the 'right' first crop sires. For the three year period from 1997-1999 the leading first crop sire was among the top five in juvenile sales average: 1997 leading freshman sire Gilded Time ranked fourth in his crop in terms of two year-old average, in 1998, End Sweep was the fifth best juvenile seller of his crop and the following year Cherokee Run ranked third in first crop juvenile average.

But since 1999 only one top five juvenile sales stallion, Tiznow, has gone on to rank in the top five on the freshman sire standings.

Honour and Glory (leading freshman of 2000) ranked only 11th among his peers in juvenile average.

In 2001, freshman leader Valid Expectations ranked 7th in juvenile sales average, but the next three years the leading first crop stallions had juvenile averages that ranked outside the top 15 of their crops: Distorted Humor ranked 19th in first juvenile average, Stravinsky ranked 16th and Successful Appeal checked in 18th.

It was admittedly a little risky using juvenile averages, which are subject to manipulation by one big sales horse. But a single big runner can and does decide the first crop sires race as well. In 2005, Tiznow was the beneficiary of both - a seven figure two year-old at the sales and a Breeders' Cup-winning champion on the racetrack. In the past ten years he is the only first crop sire champ to also lead his peers in first crop juvenile average.

Better Than Average Success

Looking at the first crop sires another way - how the leading first crop sires by juvenile average later fared, the two year-old market looks a little better as a predictor of stallion success. While two-year-old buyers have often overlooked the eventual leading first crop sire, the stallions who they have ordained with their dollars have turned out pretty well, especially in the long term.

In 1997 Alydeed ranked first in terms of juvenile average among the first crop sires. He went on to rank fourth among his peers on the first crop progeny earnings chart, but it's fair to say that the son of Shadeed has been a disappointing stallion overall. He is the sire of the Sovereign Award winner Primaly, but he currently stands in Pennsylvania for a \$3,500 fee.

The next five leading first crop juvenile sales sires can all be safely called successes though. Dehere ranked second among the 1998 freshman and he has been a very solid sire, one whose commercial reputation in America might well be greater if not for a few years stint in Japan.

Not For Love's first crop of two year-olds averaged \$272,750, thanks mainly to the \$2 million La Salle St. While that runner never panned out, Not For Love ranked 10th on the 1999 first crop sires list and has also been a very useful sire from his Maryland base.

Unbridled's Song ranked 7th on the 2000 freshman standings after his juveniles averaged a crop-high \$229,178. He was also the beneficiary of a \$1 million juvenile, Songandaprayer. That runner is one of Unbridled's Song's six Grade 1 winners and he now stands for a \$200,000 fee.

The juvenile market picked Pulpit in 2001 and he is now the sire of four Grade 1 winners and is booked full for 2007 at an \$80,000 service fee. Stormy Atlantic led all first crop sires in juvenile average in 2002 (with the \$1.9 million filly Atlantic Ocean leading the way) and later ranked ninth on the freshman sires list. His early success (along with his stellar pedigree) prompted a move from Florida to Kentucky. His reputation has only grown since; he was the leading juvenile sire of 2006 and now stands for \$40,000.

The next four stallions that lead their crops in juvenile average are a mixed bag. Menifee has quietly been a solid racehorse sire, but is anything but a hot commercial commodity. Fusaichi Pegasus has been inconsistent, but does have some promising three year-olds in 2007, members of his third crop that could tip the

popularity scales back in his favor. Tiznow has but two stakes winners in his first two crops, but is another with several promising second crop three-year-olds. We don't yet have enough information on last year's leading first crop juvenile sales sire, Red Bullet who had a big sales horse in the \$2.5 million Barretts purchase now named Unbridled Slew. 



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Leading First Crop Sires (1997-2006)

Year	Leading First Crop Sire	Average First Crop Juvenile Price	Juvenile Sales Rank
1997	Gilded Time	\$69,608	4
1998	End Sweep	\$80,608	5
1999	Cherokee Run	\$150,111	3
2000	Honour and Glory	\$77,200	11
2001	Valid Expectations	\$75,980	7
2002	Distorted Humor	\$45,863	19
2003	Stravinsky	\$64,283	16
2004	Successful Appeal	\$63,210	18
2005	Tiznow	\$179,066	1
2006	Street Cry	\$61,696	13

Leading First Crop Juvenile Sales Sires (1997-2006)

Year	Leading First Crop Juvenile Sales Sire	Average First Crop Juvenile Price	First Crop Sire Rank
1997	Alydeed	\$81,454	4
1998	Dehere	\$224,750	2
1999	Not For Love	\$272,625	10
2000	Unbridled's Song	\$229,178	7
2001	Pulpit	\$508,333	7
2002	Stormy Atlantic	\$228,800	9
2003	Menifee	\$268,333	15
2004	Fusaichi Pegasus	\$1,085,942	3
2005	Tiznow	\$179,066	1
2006	Red Bullet	\$205,580	19