

Freshmen Rule in the Bluegrass

Empire Maker, Macho Uno sweep the juvenile Grade 1's at Keeneland

by
Matt
O'Neil

*"Van
Nistelrooy does
have an edge
on Posse in
terms of
Group/Graded
winners so far."*

The 2007 Keeneland Fall opened with its annual 'Fall Stars' weekend offering several stakes for runners on their way to the Breeders' Cup. Two of the main events were Grade 1 races for juveniles, the Alcibiades on the Friday, October 5 opening day card and the Lane's End Breeders' Futurity the following day.

The Alcibiades was awarded Grade 1 status just last year and for the second consecutive year, a maiden found her way into the winner's circle. Although fanned some eight wide turning for home, the Empire Maker filly Country Star stormed home to capture the race. She is the second stakes winner for the 2003 Belmont Stakes winner and he became the second freshman sire, after Van Nistelrooy, to sire a Grade 1 winner.

Macho Uno became the third less than 24 hours later when his son Wicked Style remained undefeated with an authoritative win in the Lane's End Breeders' Futurity (G1). The champion son of Holy Bull also has the multiple stakes winner Swiftly Victress on his burgeoning resume. Two days after the Breeders' Futurity, Macho Uno was represented by his third stakes horse when Cool Gator ran second, beaten just a head, in the Grade 3 Grey Breeders' Cup at Woodbine.

October Firsts

On October 21, Golden Yank became the first stakes winner for the speedy Storm Cat son Yankee Gentleman. The juvenile colt, out of a mare by Derby winner Strike the Gold, proved best in the \$100,000 Remington MEC Mile on the Oklahoma Derby day card at Remington Park. He is among the 10 first crop winners thus far for his sire and the second stakes horse after Dazzling Derek, the third place finisher in the Bertram Bongard for New York-breds at Belmont Park.

Big Truck, winner of the Bongard, is the first stakes winner for the New York-based Hook and Ladder, who is showing high promise with his early runners. The colt, who is out of a mare by 1994 Kentucky Derby winner Go For Gin, is among the seven early winners for the Dixieland Band stallion. Among the others are I Promise, beaten a nose in the Grade 3 Schuylerville at Saratoga and the multiple stakes-placed (and unfortunately named) Spanky Fischbein.

Sligo Bay is among the four 2007 freshman stallions standing at Adena Springs South. While Macho

Uno has quickly made a name for himself, Sligo Bay is coming on strong as well. The son of Sadler's Wells was Group 1-placed as a juvenile in Europe and a Grade 1 winner on the turf in America at age four. It's therefore little surprise that his first stakes winner has come in a two-turn grass event. The October 11 feature at Keeneland was the JP Morgan Chase Jessamine Stakes run at 8 1/2 furlongs on the turf course and it fell to Sligo Bay's son Wind in My Wings. The colt is out of a mare by Pulpit and is the second stakes winner produced by his daughters thus far.

A Record Posse

Although Van Nistelrooy has made a race of it for the first crop sire title, Posse still holds the lead going into Breeders' Cup week. Whether or not he holds on he'll have etched his name into the record books along side Johannesburg as the only sires with seven first crop juvenile stakes winners. The feat was accomplished on October 12, when the gelding Vadheim won the Harvest Futurity at Fresno by a nose over Sky Cape (the first stakes horse for fellow freshman sire Najran).

Van Nistelrooy does have an edge on Posse in terms of Group/Graded winners so far. He is now the sire of three such winners after Raymi Coya won the So Sharp Stakes (G3) at Newmarket. The filly is the second Group winner in Europe for the Storm Cat stallion who was Group 2 winner in England in his racing days. He is also the sire of the American Grade 1 winner Set Play, winner of the Del Mar Debutante.

The Florida-based D'Wildcat is up to two stakes winners after his daughter Authenicat took the Victorian Queen Stakes at Woodbine. In fact the two runners immediately in arrears are also daughters of D'Wildcat, a son of Forest Wildcat who stood his first few seasons in Canada before relocating to Vinery South. D'Wild Lady and Lady D'Wildcat, the second and third place finishers in the Victorian Queen, are the fourth and fifth stakes horses for their sire so far from a first crop of only 39 named foals. 



Matt O'Neil is a freelance writer and thoroughbred marketing consultant and editor of Owner-Breeder International.