

First-crop sires worth a look at Spa

BY MATT O'NEIL

Saratoga typically provides East Coast juveniles opportunities to go beyond the early staple of 5- and 5 1/2- furlong races. A look at last year's juvenile races at Saratoga shows that 67 percent of the 71 2-year-old races were run at 6 furlongs or farther. Included are the 1 1/6-mile grass races that have become prevalent. In 2005 there were 13 such races run, including a pair of late-meet stakes.

This year, the P.G. Johnson and With Anticipation Stakes give juveniles a chance on the turf. The dirt schedule reverts to its old ways of the Sanford, Saratoga Special and Hopeful for colts and the Schuylerville, Adirondack and Spinaway for fillies.

Pedigree obviously plays a key role in deciphering these races. While the progeny the most of the sires represented have established their tendencies, there are new and often unfamiliar sires with their first crops racing in 2006.

Last year, 21 percent of all 2-year-old races at the meet fell to the progeny of first-crop or "freshmen" sires, including stakes wins by offspring of the then-new sires Tiznow (Folklore), El Corredor (Adieu) and Black Minnalouche (Stream Cat).

So who are some of the new faces for 2006?

Officer and Johannesburg were two of the best juveniles of 2001, so it's little surprise they are the leading first-crop sires in 2006. They have been represented by double-digit winners and Officer already has a couple of stakes-placed runners. One of those, the filly Satulagi, is among Officer's two winners over European turf courses.

Officer is out of a daughter of the good turf runner Septieme Ciel. Since it looks like the turf portion of his pedigree is coming through, pay heed to his grass runners in addition to his runners on the main.



Tod Marks

Orientate was the sprint champion of 2002.

Johannesburg is also getting a mix of dirt and turf runners, as one would expect from a sire who was a champion in Europe and America as a 2-year-old. His early winners have been almost split between either side of the Atlantic. It has taken the Johannesburgs an extra bit of time (relatively) to find their best strides, but he has had six new winners since July 3.

The progeny of Jump Start have also caught fire in July with four new winners. The son of A.P. Indy won the 2001 Saratoga Special and his dam, the Storm Cat daughter Steady Cat, placed second in the 1995 Adirondack. It would be no shock to see a few Jump Start winners this season.

Orientate, the sprint champion of 2002 and winner of that year's Grade I Forego, has gotten off to a solid start with three winners and a stakes horse from only 12 starters. The son of Mt. Livermore did not win at 2, and didn't reach his peak until age 4 so his progeny can be expected to progress throughout the summer.

Three Wonders is a Florida-based son of Storm Cat. He's had four dirt winners to date, but his race record

and pedigree suggest his progeny should excel on the grass as well. He was a Grade III winner over the Delaware Park turf and is out of a Woodman mare.

Although Street Cry was an accomplished dirt runner (multiple stakes-placed at 2 in California, wins in the Dubai World Cup and Stephen Foster at 4), three of his first four winners have come on the turf in Europe. A quick look at his pedigree reveals of turf influences. He is by Machiavellian, an accomplished European stallion and his dam, Helen Street, was a champion in Ireland. That mare has produced three other stakes runners, all on turf.

Mizzen Mast has but two winners so far (including one in Japan), but he has some similarities to Street Cry. Despite a pedigree slanted toward turf, he was top class on the dirt in America, winning the Grade I Malibu and Grade II Strub before retiring to Juddmonte Farm. He's a son of turf champion Cozzene and two of his siblings are stakes-placed on the grass.

Preakness winner Red Bullet is the sire of only one winner so far, but his get should only improve as they mature and run longer. Red Bullet was unraced at 2 and is by the stamina stallion Unbridled out of a daughter of the turf-influence Caro. Some of these Red Bullets should run on the turf and most should appreciate the longer sprints.

Wheelaway is another son of Unbridled whose progeny have yet to shine in 2006. He's based down the Northway at McMahon of Saratoga. Despite the slow start, Wheelaway is still the most promising of the first-crop stallions standing in New York. During his racing career he won the Tampa Bay Derby and finished third to High Yield and More Than Ready in the Grade I Bluegrass. Last year, New York stallion Freud was represented by three first-crop winners at Saratoga.