

Fast Freshmen

Cherokee Sheik,
Irish Ace lead
cast of new winners

BY MATT O'NEIL

Kentucky-based writer Matt O'Neil will take a periodic look back at the Saratoga 2-year-old races, with an emphasis on pedigree and sales analysis.

Egyptian businessman Ahmed Zayat has been pouring millions into the yearling and 2-year-old-in-training markets the past few years and many of his purchases are realizing quick dividends.

His Zayat Stables has unveiled several good looking winners this year, in America and Europe, including E Z Warrior, winner of the Hollywood Park



Tod Marks

Irish Ace graduated in style at Saratoga Saturday for owner/breeder Tracy Farmer

Juvenile Championship July 4.

His latest promising runner is Cherokee Sheik, winner of the second race Thursday. The filly, whose dam is out of a sister to Dynaformer, earned her first victory in her second start with a win over Tale Of The Queen. Zayat pur-

chased the daughter of Cherokee Run at OBS March sale for \$440,000 this year.

New York-bred Laurentide Ice posted the biggest winning margin of the week Friday. Under Rafael Bejarano, the Intidab filly bided her time behind a three-way speed duel, before accelerat-

ing past the tiring leaders to win by 8 1/4 lengths. She is one of only eight 2-year-olds in her sire's third crop. Intidab is best known for last year's Grade III Rebel Stakes winner Greater Good and

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Freshmen —

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was moved from New York to Kentucky on the strength of that runner.

Saturday victor Irish Ace was perhaps the most impressive and professional winner of the week, though. The Grand Slam colt rushed up the inside after a less-than-perfect beginning and was under pressure from his outside throughout the first half-mile. At the top of the lane he found another gear for jockey Eibar Coa and won nicely with his ears pricked.

Irish Ace is a Tracy Farmer-homebred.

Zanjero, who was to have made his debut on the canceled Wednesday card, checked in a wide fifth. Purchased by Ron Winchell for \$700,000, Zanjero topped the list of Cherokee Run's yearlings sold in 2005.

Two other refugees from what looked to be a strong field of maidens on Wednesday made it back to the entry box for the second race on the Sunday card.

One of those was Elusive Value, who opened up 5 1/2-length lead after blazing a quarter in 21 4/5 seconds. The \$500,000 colt by Elusive Quality is out of the Grade III winner Silver Tornado, a sister to both El Corredor and Roman Ruler. He eventually faltered and finished in the fourth slot.

The rapid fractions set it up for the closers and Temecula Creek pounced from his early third-place position. Despite lugging in down the lane, the

son of Gulch and the Argentine stakes winner Serenita, won by 3 1/4 lengths. De Lucia, a son of Songandaprayer bought at OBS April for \$375,000, got up for second after being pinched at the break and racing wide and greenly.

Monday's second race was the meet's first turf sprint for juveniles at the meet and it was the wildest baby contest so far. Mr. Goodkat led wire-to-wire and held off 16-1 Yankee Bay despite Javier Castellano losing his whip. John Velazquez, aboard the favored Three Lions, probably wishes it was he who lost his stick. In the midst of a serious late run down the center of the course, Three Lions ducked out sharply after being hit left-handed. Velazquez lost his irons and had to settle for fourth. He was the second jockey in the race to lose his footing after Edgar Prado came loose from Thunder Rising on the far turn. He ended up last of seven.

Mr. Goodkat is by the Ashford Stud stallion Tale Of The Cat and was the second winner of the week for his sire and third of the week for the farm (along with the Grand Slam colt Irish Ace). During the first week of the meet, the Johannesburg colt Seat Daddy won the Grade II Sanford by a nose over another Johannesburg son Tefuelsburg. Week One also featured two good-looking Fusaichi Pegasus maiden winners, Kauai Calls and the Hopeful-bound Pegasus Wind. In all, one third of the first 18 baby races at the Spa have fallen to the progeny of Ashford Stud stallions.

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