

BREEDING

Pedigree Analysis



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ALL-WEATHER SIRES

While I was giving a talk at the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association's Pedigree and Conformation Clinic in October, an interesting question came up. How has form on synthetic racing surfaces played out in the breeding arena?

When all-weather surfaces came onto the scene at the end of the last decade, no one knew what to expect, but the need for safer racing was important for the industry. Turfway Park was the first to switch from a dirt track to a synthetic one in 2005. Woodbine and Keeneland made the change in 2006, and Hollywood Park followed suit later that year. Del Mar and Arlington Park switched before their meets in 2007 while Golden Gate Fields and Santa Anita Park went synthetic over that summer. Santa Anita's surface was problematic, and management switched back to traditional dirt in December 2010.

Initially it seemed that many turf runners were making successful switches to the synthetics, but it wasn't a hard and fast rule, and it was difficult to tell which dirt horses would handle it at all.

At the end of 2007, the leading sire of synthetic surface runners was Bold Executive, a stallion based in Ontario. Synthetic winnings made up 80% of his total progeny earnings, and, undoubtedly, most of that was won at Woodbine in Ontario. Several other Ontario-based sires were near the top of the charts, including Kiridashi (seventh) and Bold n' Flashy (11th). All three sires were sons of Bold Ruckus, Canada's 10-time leading sire, a dirt sprinter.

Trailing Bold Executive in 2007 were Tiznow, A.P. Indy, Bertrando, Stormy Atlantic, and Giant's Causeway. Tiznow and Bertrando are from the Relaunch male line, which is an apparent trend.

Tiznow, A.P. Indy, and Stormy Atlantic all have close crosses of Seattle Slew. The high placings of Stormy Atlantic and Giant's Causeway, both sons of Storm Cat, might be a bloodline thing, or support the notion that turf horses handle synthetic surfaces well. California-based Bertrando (fourth) and In Excess (10th) were taking advantage of their home state's mandate to switch all tracks to synthetic surfaces.

In 2008 the all-weather sires were led by Street Cry, and the four sires behind him were Bold Executive, Tiznow, Elusive Quality, and Giant's Causeway. California-based Unusual Heat, also a noted turf sire, was sixth.

In 2009 the top five synthetic sires were Street Cry, Smart Strike, Bold Executive, Empire Maker, and A.P. Indy. In 2010 the leading five were Bold Executive, Candy Ride, Where's the Ring (Ontario-based), Giant's Causeway, and Maria's Mon.

The data are starting to suggest that top sires in any location were going to get good runners on the available tracks. The best sires that got high class on both dirt and turf were also getting runners on synthetics, but would runners who excelled on all-weather tracks pass on this preference for other surfaces?

In 2007, the second year Turfway's Lane's End Stakes (gr. II) was run on the all-weather track, the winner was Hard Spun (by Danzig), who has since become a very good sire. His first three crops include 23 stakes winners and last year's champion 3-year-old filly Questing. His best runners have run especially well on dirt and turf, with no preference for synthetics.

The winner of Keeneland's 2008 Lane's End Breeders' Futurity (gr. I) was Square Eddie (by Smart Strike), who was well-placed going to stud in California.



Midnight Lute

LEE THOMAS

He is a promising freshman sire in 2013 with Sprouts, a stakes winner on synthetics at Del Mar and Betfair Hollywood Park, in his first crop.

Colonel John (by Tiznow) won the 2008 Santa Anita Derby (gr. I) and is another leading freshman sire, represented by Concave, winner of the Sorrento Stakes (gr. II) at Del Mar, and dirt grade I-placed Colonel Joan.

The first Pacific Classic (gr. I) run on synthetics in 2007 was won by Student Council (by Kingmambo), now sire of three stakes winners on dirt and turf. The Hollywood Futurity (gr. I) at Hollywood was won in 2006 by Stormello (by Stormy Atlantic), who has sired multiple turf stakes winner Rosengold. The 2007 winner, Into Mischief (by Harlan's Holiday), is the sire of grade II dirt winner Vyjack and Goldcents, winner of the Nov. 1 Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (gr. I). The 2008 winner Pioneer of the Nile (by Empire Maker) is a top freshman sire, with the dirt grade II juvenile Cairo Prince.

The most successful all-weather runner-turned-sire so far is Midnight Lute (by Real Quiet), winner of the 2007 Sentient Jet Breeders' Cup Sprint (gr. I) in the slop at Monmouth before repeating in the TVG-sponsored event on the all-weather track at Santa Anita. He has sired seven stakes winners on dirt and synthetic surfaces from two crops to race.

The early evidence suggests ability on all-weather surfaces isn't as dominant a genetic trait as turf ability appears to be. Stallions that have performed well on synthetic surfaces are siring top runners on dirt, turf, and all-weather courses with no obvious bias, and that's a clear positive for the industry. **BH**

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