

BREEDING

Pedigree Analysis



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Dunkirk Picks Up Unbridled's Song's Torch

As the calendar flips over to a new year, it's always educational to look at the top freshman sires—those with their first crop of 2-year-olds—and see how this crop is unfolding. To date the leader is Dunkirk, by a margin of almost \$400,000 ahead of Pioneer of the Nile. Colonel John, Diabolical, and Kodiak Cowboy round out the top five.

Dunkirk has 14 juvenile winners, tied with other freshmen Diabolical and Kodiak Cowboy, but Dunkirk's winners include a pair of graded stakes winners, Havana and Dunkin Bend. Havana won the Foxwoods Champagne Stakes (gr. I) at Belmont and was second in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (gr. I) behind New Year's Day at Santa Anita Park, making him a serious Eclipse Award contender. Dunkin Bend won the Sapling Stakes (gr. III) at Monmouth. Dunkirk also has the stakes-placed runners Connoption Fit, Blacksilksstockings, Silver Screen Lady, and Bad River Belle.

Dunkirk is yet another good one by Unbridled's Song, and his dam is the 2000 Kentucky Oaks (gr. I) winner Secret Status by A.P. Indy (by Seattle Slew), so he's bred on a similar cross as Midshipman (dam by Avenue of Flags, by Seattle Slew) and First Defence (dam by Seattle Slew). A well-made horse at 16.1 hands, Dunkirk is not as tall as many of his sire's progeny, which should be to his advantage, and having started out at \$10,000, he's been bred to mares from diverse genetic backgrounds.

Havana is out of a mare by Kyle's Our Man, whose sire In Reality has been a grade I cross with this male line for generations. Fappiano did well with it (Serape, Unbridled), Unbridled did well with

it (Banshee Breeze), and Quiet American did well with it (Real Quiet). Unbridled's Song sired four grade I winners with In Reality in their dams (Political Force, Splendid Blended, Unrivaled Belle, and Unbridled Elaine).

Dunkirk's other graded stakes winner, Dunkin Bend, is out of a mare by Vindication, which makes him inbred 4x3 to Seattle Slew, the sire of both A.P. Indy and Vindication. This inbreeding to Seattle Slew along the "inside" of a pedigree, through broodmare sires, is a successful pattern and has worked well with other stallions carrying Seattle Slew in their dam's sire including Tiznow, Stormy Atlantic, and the late Dixie Union.

Dunkirk's position as a top juvenile sire is a little surprising in one regard as he was unraced at 2, but his sire, Unbridled's Song, is a potent source for early speed. In an interesting twist, Dunkirk was one of the best colts of his crop without winning a single stakes. A brilliant winner of his first two races at 3 at Gulfstream, he was second to Quality Road in the Florida Derby (gr. I), but was unplaced in Mine That Bird's Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I). He rebounded to run second in the Belmont Stakes (gr. I) behind Summer Bird, beating Mine That Bird for the place.

After the Belmont, Dunkirk underwent surgery for a condylar fracture in his left hind and was retired to stud at Ashford for 2010, ending his career of just five starts with two wins. At this point he might have been written off as just another fast but fragile Unbridled's Song who retired prematurely, and there were more than a few of those so he was priced at a conservative \$10,000. Zensa-



Dunkirk

tional, a more accomplished offspring of Unbridled's Song, topped this sire class when he entered stud the same year at a fee of \$25,000. Another, the grade II winner Old Fashioned, retired that season and stood for \$12,500.

At that point Unbridled's Song was in limbo as a sire of sires. Song and Aprayer was doing well and Even the Score had some good ones, but Buddha and Eurosilver had flopped and there were more unproven ones with foals in the pipeline, including Rockport Harbor, Political Force, and First Defence.

In time, Rockport Harbor disappointed in Kentucky and moved to Pennsylvania where he died in 2013, only to have his 2011 crop pop up with four stakes winners including Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (gr. I) winner Ria Antonia. Political Force never fired and went to Saudi Arabia in 2012. First Defence has a pair of good ones from his first crop including the grade I-winning filly Close Hatches and English group III winner Dundonnell.

The three Unbridled's Songs who retired in Kentucky in 2010, Zensational, Old Fashioned, and Dunkirk, all have first-crop stakes winners, so perhaps the page has turned for Unbridled's Song as a sire of sires.

This is good news for breeders who have also gambled on champion 2-year-old Midshipman, who entered stud in 2011, and Graydar, retiring for 2014, not to mention Eclipse Award contender Will Take Charge. These are all top-class sons of Unbridled's Song whose stallion stocks should be rising as a result of the freshman sire success of Dunkirk and his kin. **BH**

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