

BREEDING

Pedigree Analysis



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LECOMTE

The Lecomte Stakes (gr. III) at Fair Grounds Race Course & Slots, won this year by Vicar's in Trouble, is an important prep race for the Louisiana Derby (gr. II). Few are aware that the race commemorates a colt who was, at one point, the fastest horse in the world and figures in the pedigree of this year's winner and in the pedigree of every other American race horse to boot.

In 1849 Gen. Thomas Jefferson Wells of Louisiana sent his prized mare, Reel, by Glencoe, to Kentucky to be bred to Boston at Col. E.M. Blackburn's farm. Although only 16 years old, after many miles traveled as a racehorse and as a stallion, Boston was literally on his last legs. He struggled through his final breeding season and died in late January 1850.

The following spring Reel produced a fine chestnut colt that Wells named Lecomte (sometimes spelled Lecompte), after his friend Ambrose Lecomte. The equine Lecomte showed amazing speed early. In his first start, in April 1853, when still considered a 2-year-old (at the time, the universal birthdate was May 1, not Jan. 1), he won his first race, one-mile heats, running the second heat faster than the first; in fact faster than any other horse had up to that time (1:45 ½).

Lecomte ran through four more races undefeated until he met a juggernaut named Lexington, a bay colt from that same final crop by Boston. In the Great Post Stakes, over four mile heats, Lexington beat Lecomte, handing Wells' colt his first defeat. A week later they met again in the Jockey Club Purse, but Lecomte turned the tables and handed Lexington his first defeat. The victory was

notable because in the first heat Lecomte had set an American record of 7:26 for four miles.

Their paths parted and Lecomte won four more races before Lexington loomed large in his life once again. Since their last contest, Lexington ran against the clock and lowered Lecomte's record to 7:19. Their rematch came in the Jockey Club Purse in the spring of 1855. Said to have been recovering from colic, Lecomte bowed to Lexington in the first heat and withdrew before the second, giving Lexington the win.

Wells bred Lecomte to a few mares that season, and the next as well. Lexington's owner, Richard Ten Broeck, retired his champion to stud in 1855 but was clearly impressed with the colt that had beaten him. In 1856 he bought Lecomte from Wells and sent him as part of an invasion force to England to prove the quality of American-breds. Lecomte's half siblings, Prioress and Starke, both won stakes there. Prioress became the first American-bred stakes winner in England when she won the 1857 Cesarewitch Stakes. Lecomte did not fare as well. His best effort was third in the 1857 Warwick Cup, and then he suffered another bout of colic, dying in October 1857.

Lecomte left behind two small crops of foals, born in 1856 and 1857. His best were the good colts Umpire and Sherrod, but there was one other worth noting, an unnamed filly foaled in 1857 that Wells bred out of his mare Edith, by Sovereign. Edith was from the same Gallopade female family as Lecomte and his dam, Reel, and the Lecomte filly was inbred 3x3 to the great sire Glencoe and 3x4 to Gallopade.



COURTESY DARBRY DAN

Vicar

In 1866 Wells sent this uniquely bred filly to a young stud he owned, War Dance, by Lexington, out of Reel, who was a half brother to Lecomte. The result was Lizzie G., a filly who was even more intensely inbred: 2x3 to Reel, 3x3 to Boston, 3x4x4 to Glencoe, and 3x4x5 to Gallopade.

Lizzie G. produced the good horse Goodnight, and his full siblings Faustus, Mannie Gray, and Alice Gray, all by Enquirer. Mannie Gray foaled the top racemare Correction; the brilliant runner and sire Domino; and the fillies Lady Reel (the dam of Hamburg), Mannie Himyar (the dam of Blackstock), and Bandala (from whom descended Kentucky Derby winner Zev). From Alice Gray came the Canadian great Bunt Lawless.

The family bred on, producing King's Plate winner Horometer; Joe Widener's good colt Haste (dam's sire of Triple Crown winner Count Fleet); Horse of the Year Twilight Tear and another Calumet champion, Before Dawn; the speed demon and sire Fleet Nasrullah and the good colt Vicar. One branch produced Triple Crown winner Affirmed and Horse of the Year Ghostzapper.

This year's Lecomte Stakes was won by Vicar's in Trouble, a son of Into Mischief, whose sire, Harlan's Holiday, was out of an Affirmed mare. His dam, Vibrant, was by Vicar. There are several crosses of Count Fleet, his brother Count Speed and close relative Better Bee, not to mention innumerable lines back to Domino and Hamburg. None of this would have happened without that single daughter of the brilliant Lecomte. **BH**

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