

BREEDING

Pedigree Analysis



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THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

From the earliest days of breeding racehorses, a runner's pedigree was given by noting its sire, then its dam, granddam, and so on, along its "tail female" line, back to the earliest known mare. For example, Eclipse's dam, Spiletta, was described as "got by Regulus, her dam, Mother Western by Smith's son of Snake—(mare by) Lord Darcy's Old Montagu—(mare by) Hautboy—(mare by) Brimmer."

The value of a good female family is undeniable, but are some families better than others?

In the late 1800s a researcher named C. Bruce Lowe looked at all the winners of the three English classic races: the Epsom Derby, Epsom Oaks, and the St. Leger Stakes. After tracing the winners as far back as possible in the *General Stud Book*, he ranked each female line of descent by number of classic winners, and came up with 43 individual female families. The family that produced the most classic winners was designated as Family 1, the second most productive, Family 2, and so on.

Lowe had some observations and theories that he attached to each family, and his ideas were published after his death by a friend William Allison, in the book *Breeding Racehorses by the Figure System*. The work was both applauded and ridiculed by various camps. If nothing else came out of his research, Lowe provided us with a great way to identify the various female lines.

Later on more families were identified that couldn't be officially linked to any of the original mares, and these became additional English families, or ones from America, Australia, and other countries. Later, branches of some of the big-

ger families were defined, such as 1-a, 1-b, 1-c, etc.

The identification of "Family 1" as the female line that produced the most classic winners could have been because this family was innately superior, or, just as possible, because it was more numerous in the population to begin with. Whatever their nature, it's interesting to see how the female families have played out into the 21st century. Since it's May, let's look at the families most represented by Kentucky Derby winners since 1950.

Last year's winner, California Chrome, was from the American family known as A4, a prolific clan that has produced four Derby winners since 1950: Swaps, Iron Liege, Kauai King, and California Chrome. An earlier winner, Clyde Van Dusen, was foaled from the common ancestor of these five, the mare Wanda (1882).

Four winners are good, but A4 is not the leading female source of Kentucky Derby winners. That honor goes to Family 1, which produced 13 winners including Animal Kingdom, Super Saver, Smarty Jones, Grindstone, Go for Gin, Sea Hero, Unbridled, Spend a Buck, Swale, Genuine Risk, Riva Ridge, Proud Clarion, and Tomy Lee.

The leading branch of Family 1 in Derby winner production is 1-s, led by the imported French mare La Troienne (1926), whose descendants include four winners, Super Saver, Smarty Jones, Go for Gin, and Sea Hero; and La Troienne's half sister Adargatis (1931), ancestress of Spend a Buck. While this branch of the family is designated 1-s, some give La Troienne's branch a 1-x classification.

The "1-n" branch (to Chelandry, 1894) produced Swale, Genuine Risk, and Tomy Lee.

ANIMAL KINGDOM



DAVE HARMON

The second-leading family in recent Kentucky Derby winners is Family 4, with seven winners, including three from the 4-m branch, through the mare Red and Blue (1880): Sunny's Halo, Venetian Way, and Middleground. Two are from 4-d through Gay Hostess (1957): Real Quiet and Majestic Prince. Canonero II and Monarchos are from other branches of 4.

The third-leading female line is Family 23, specifically branch 23-b, which has produced I'll Have Another, Mine That Bird, Lil E. Tee, Winning Colors, Affirmed, and Tim Tam. All of these trace back to the imported mare Galopade (1828).

Family 2 has five winners. Giacomo, Spectacular Bid, Cannonade, and Northern Dancer, are all from the 2-d branch, with Cannonade and Northern Dancer both going back to the mare Almahmoud (1947) while Spectacular Bid's female line cuts in a little behind that, to the mare Dazzling (1904). All of them, including Secretariat, go back to an unnamed mare by Sleight of Hand in the mid-1800s.

This shows that in the last 50 years of Derby winners, the top seven producing families are Family 1, Family 4, Family 23, Family 2, Family 5, Family 3, and American Family A4. Outside of the unusually prolific 23-b and A4 families, the first five families by Bruce Lowe's figures also make up five of the top seven places today. **BH**

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