



2004 Mares Bred

By Eric Mitchell

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If Ross Perot were to discuss the current trend toward breeding stallions to larger and larger books of mares, he would probably describe a great big sucking sound emanating from sires in the \$50,000 to \$99,999 range. Sires in this price range are attracting, at double-digit rates of growth, an expanding share of the North American broodmare population.

The average book size for the \$50,000-\$99,999 range is tracking 16.4% higher than last year's. *TBH MarketWatch* derived this percentage by comparing the average number of reported mares bred year-to-date in 2004 (112) with the equivalent year-to-date average for 2003 (102). [See the chart on page four.] Based on recent history, the final percentage increase is likely to be higher. The growth in the number of mares bred in this stud fee range between 2002 and 2003 was 24%.

Not surprisingly, the stallions being bred to 100 or more mares per season dominate the \$50,000-\$99,999 fee range. *MarketWatch's* study of mares bred showed that 13 out of 21 stallions (62%) in the \$50,000-\$99,999 range were bred to at least 100 mares in 2004. Fourteen stallions in this fee range bred 100 or mares last year. Two stallions—Point Given and Awesome Again—dropped below the 100-mark in 2004. Point Given's book size dropped to 95 from 104, and Awesome Again's book dipped to 91 from 101. The decrease in these sires' books was more than offset by a 54% increase in the mares bred to Ashford Stud's Fusaichi Pegasus, whose book size jumped from 125 to 193. It would be more than a little surprising if Awesome Again's book remained below 100 for 2005, considering that he is the sire of two Breeders' Cup World Thoroughbred

Championship winners this year—Ghostzapper in the Classic-Powered by Dodge (gr. I) and Wilko in the Bessemer Trust Juvenile (gr. I). Awesome Again's stud fee will be \$125,000 for 2005, up from \$75,000.

In other stud fee ranges, only stallions with fees from \$25,000 to \$49,999 have a higher percentage of triple-digit books, with 67.6% (25 of 37) being bred to 100 or more mares. The percentages are significantly lower in the remaining five stud fee ranges *MarketWatch* uses as tools to monitor the stallion market. Among sires with fees of \$100,000 or more, the percentage of 100-plus books is 37.5% (three of eight); in the \$15,000-\$24,999 range it is 34.4% (11 of 32); for \$10,000-\$14,999 range it is 34% (17 of 50); for \$5,000-\$9,999 it is 12.8% (18 of 140); and for sires with fees of \$5,000 or less, it is 3% (five of 171).

Among stallions with at least two years at stud and that have been bred to a minimum of 25 mares, Fusaichi Pegasus is the leading sire by number of 2004 mares bred to date. The handsome son of Mr. Prospector is also on track to have the highest percent increase in book size among sires in the \$50,000-\$99,999 range. Fusaichi Pegasus' fee for 2005 is \$100,000, up from \$85,000 in 2004. The next three leading sires by number of mares bred to date in 2004 also stand at Ashford Stud. They are Grand Slam (191 mares), Van Nistelrooy (186) and Tale of the Cat (185). Ashford Stud also stands Hold That Tiger, the leading entering sire of 2004 by number of mares bred with 199.

Other leading stallions by book size are Doneraile Court with 184 mares bred and Stormy Atlantic

with 183. Both stallions stand at Hill 'n' Dale Farms for a 2005 stud fee of \$15,000. (Continued on page 3)

Leading Sires by 2004 CI

Sire	2005 CI	2004 MB
2005 First Foals		
Empire Maker	5.91	111
Vindication	4.93	140
Mineshaft	4.63	104
Aldebaran	3.16	101
Sligo Bay (IRE)	3.01	103
2004 First Foals		
Street Cry (IRE)	2.57	129
Red Bullet	2.36	87
Oriente	2.23	115
Came Home	2.05	106
Johannesburg	2.04	175
2003 First Foals		
Monarchos	3.09	76
Tiznow	2.74	123
Aptitude	2.24	129
Point Given	2.21	95
Trippi	2.00	147
2002 First Foals		
Giant's Causeway	4.67	130
Fusaichi Pegasus	3.31	193
War Chant	2.74	57
Dixie Union	2.69	101
Lemon Drop Kid	2.52	112
2001 First Foals		
Forestry	3.45	141
Stravinsky	2.51	143
Silver Charm	2.29	103
Menifee	2.25	70
Victory Gallop	2.20	116
2000 First Foals		
Touch Gold	5.04	106
Awesome Again	3.92	91
Swain (IRE)	2.99	66
Distorted Humor	2.82	145
Elusive Quality	2.61	140
1999 First Foals		
Eltish	3.29	72
Pulpit	2.92	109
Lost Soldier	2.62	44
Smoke Glacken	2.20	116
West Acre	2.01	72

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Telephone: 859-278-2361

E-mail: marketwatch@bloodhorse.com

SIMMERING SUCCESS



Headley Bell

ANNE M. EBERHARDT

TBH MarketWatch recently did a study that compiled a list of broodmare buyers and then tracked the success of the foals out of mares they had purchased between 1996 and 2001. One of the agents who stood out among the 268 buyers in the study was Headley Bell's Nicoma Bloodstock Agency of Lexington, Ky., established in 1979. Nicoma ranked among the top 12 buyers by number and percentage of graded-stakes winners and stakes winners [See page four in the November 5 issue]. The foals out of mares purchased by Nicoma that were sold publicly as yearlings generated \$4,379,654 in gross sales, which is 34% more than the \$3,267,000 Nicoma paid for the mares. TBH MarketWatch Assistant Editor Jason Russo sat down with Bell recently to discuss his strategies for finding top-quality broodmares, how he plans matings to get the most out of those mares, and what he feels potential investors need to know before they get into the Thoroughbred breeding business.

MarketWatch: *What are the top three characteristics a broodmare must have before you will consider buying her?*

Headley Bell: I'll put family first, and from there, conformation. By family I mean an active family—if she has offered foals for sale and is breeding well. Racing performance to me isn't as important. I'm looking [to see] if she can breed a racehorse.

I refer to it like brewing a stew. There's no one ingredient that is going to make the stew good. It's a blend of things. I've got to put in the right ingredients to give it a chance. For instance, the Jacksons [Roy and Gretchen] and I, we bought a filly called Lazy Slusan, by Slewvescent, for \$750,000. She goes back to a very good family. Her second dam is a bit obscure, but she had enough that would make us believe she would be able to breed a racehorse.

To give you an[other] example, Tolie Otto and I bought Ruby Ransom, the dam of [multiple graded-stakes winner] Strut the Stage and another graded-stakes winning filly [grade III winner Sacred Song]. She's by Red Ransom, but she's out of the Mr. Prospector family. She was a little rat of a mare. But she could run well enough. You wouldn't have picked her out as far as a big, beautiful broodmare. But weighing the price—\$310,000—we took a shot that maybe we could breed a runner with the pedigree being so important.

MW: *What conformation flaws are you willing to overlook? What flaws in conformation can never be overlooked?*

H. B.: I think most everybody will tell you that back in the knee is something they can't live with. That seems to be the characteristic that's passed on the most. Conformation-wise, you'd like a well-balanced, medium-sized mare that gives you the option to go to a variety of stallions. Ideally, I love to have a mare that moves well.

MW: *Go through your checklist when assessing a mare. Are the things you check in order of their importance? Or do you judge each mare individually on her own merits?*

H. B.: I'll assess a mare based on pedigree. That's where I start. Conformation-wise, I'll take a look at the mare and see if [she]

fits with regard to the client and the [price]. I would just emphasize that conformation—yes, it's important, but it's just a part of the stew, and most of the broth is in the pedigree.

MW: *How much then, does prior knowledge of a particular family line come into play when you're looking at a broodmare? Are you loyal to certain family lines?*

H. B.: Knowledge and experience do play a part. You look to see families that are 'alive', and then you want to get into those families. Like Ruby Ransom—when we got into Mr. Prospector, we thought, 'Wow! We're in!' Her first foal was a Diesis filly [Sacred Song] we sold as a weanling for \$300,000, and it pays for the mare. She wasn't perfect in the sense that she was light-boned, but she became a group III winner and group I-placed.

MW: *When you buy a mare, do you already have in-mind which sire you're going to breed her to?*

H. B.: No. I really don't. I try to go one step at a time. If I'm fortunate enough to get the mares, I'll sort out the rest down the road.

MW: *What's your price range when buying mares?*

H. B.: I'm not a big spender. The \$250,000-to-\$500,000 price range is a good comfort level. But each client has a different price range and program. My clients can be big spenders. We spent \$900,000 for a Seattle Slew yearling this year and that was a lot of money.

MW: *When somebody hires you to buy a mare, what kinds of questions do you ask them before you go shopping?*

H. B.: Can you afford to be in this business? Are you aware of how expensive it is? When you buy a broodmare, you are buying a factory. And you need to think in terms of it being a factory, or you don't need to buy a broodmare. People that are new to the business don't realize how long a process breeding a racehorse takes. So that would be the second thing—are you aware of how long a process this is? I would make sure they knew what they were getting into.

MW: *When buying on someone else's behalf, is the customer always right?*

H. B.: It depends on the knowledge of that customer, first and foremost. But for the most part, I always feel the customer is right in everything they do. If I recommend something, and if it doesn't suit them, I pass, unless I can discuss it with them to the degree that they are comfortable. It's tough enough trying to be successful without having the anger of them saying, 'See, I told you so!' I don't want that.

MW: *Has the situation ever arisen where you have had to disagree with a client?*

H. B.: No, I don't want a situation where you even have to consider that. I want everybody to be on the same page. I say, 'Can you afford this?' That's a pretty hard question. 'Do you have the patience? Are you aware of what this is going to take?' Their answers are going to dictate whether or not I really want to work with them. I'm picking clients as well as I'm picking horses, to be quite honest.

MW: *Suppose I want to buy a mare. I have the money, and I approach you for your services.*

H. B.: What do you want? This is where I'd listen very carefully. Are you doing it because you want to go to cocktail parties and tell your friends you're in the horse business? Which is fine, but I'm probably not your guy. Or are you doing it because you always sat up against the rail? [Headley thumps a fist against his chest to mimic a quick heartbeat and the feeling of horses thundering down the stretch.] It's important that we have the same agenda.

MW: *Do you shop for mares in the regional markets?*

H. B.: No. My clientele's needs aren't met by the regional markets. If pedigree is your emphasis, you're not going to get that elsewhere [outside the major markets].

MW: *How much does the covering sire influence your decision to buy a mare?*

H. B.: The covering sire is significant, but it's not as significant as the [family], because the clients I cultivate have long term programs. It's probably not even as significant as conformation. It might not even be as significant as the broodmare sire.

MW: *How much do state-bred programs, such as in New York, influence the value of a foal a mare is carrying?*

H. B.: It hasn't affected me because I'm in a different position professionally. It just doesn't happen to be where I place my emphasis. Where the horse is raised I think is vital. That's as key an ingredient to me as these other factors we're talking about. There are programs, or farms, which enhance one's broodmare program a lot more than somebody else's. Runnymede [Farm, owned by Catesby W. Clay] and Stone Farm are programs that I respect a lot. I can't emphasize enough how vital a part of my program that is. Mill Ridge is the "fire" that is cooking the stew.

MW: *The state of the breeding industry in Kentucky at present is what?*

H. B.: I think the state of breeding in Kentucky is very good.

The over-production of foals, which I think is significant, concerns me. With the number of foals these stallions produce today, it's almost like artificial insemination.

MW: *Do you see artificial insemination being common someday?*

H. B.: I sure hope not. I'll get out [of the business]. That's not even an option. All the over-breeding, where money dictates and drives everything we do—I personally hate it. At Mill Ridge, we don't do that. We don't think it's in the horse's best interest.

MW: *It is understandable in some respects, breeding stallions as much as stud farms do, given what stud fees are. Eventually, though, a stallion's foals saturate the market.*

H. B.: Well, I don't disagree with that. John Magnier [of Coolmore Stud] is brilliant. The reality is, these guys are dictating the way we all conduct our business. What [Coomore/Ashford Stud] would say is, 'Instead of breeding Fusaichi Pegasus to 200 mares, we'll go down to 125. But instead of him being \$125,000, he's going to be \$250,000. You make your choice.' Their argument would be, 'We're giving you value. We're trying to give you the best opportunity to breed a racehorse, and use our stallions.'

I realize they're [Coolmore] highly successful. I'm not being derogatory about those guys. It's just that artificial insemination is my main concern, and this is as close to artificial insemination as you can get.

MW: *Do you buy older mares? Is there an age at which you would no longer consider a mare?*

H. B.: Yes, if it's a family that I want to be into, and she's not a problem mare. For example, we looked at Radiant Ring [foaled in '88] last year. I'm not biased toward age. Nor am I biased toward necessarily using older stallions. That's the thing about this business—you can think you know this or that about it and then something proves you wrong.

My mother, Alice Chandler, was fortunate to breed the legendary Sir Ivor, who was by Sir Gaylord, out of Attica. She tried it [breeding foals from the Sir Gaylord-Attica cross] four other times, and there was only one Sir Ivor. One needs to keep that in mind. If it were as simple as breeding this stallion to this mare to get [a successful racehorse], we wouldn't be talking. The fact is, there are so many things that affect what we're trying to do, and I don't begin to think that I have all the answers. The Sir Ivor story is a healthy reminder of that.

I'll look at a mare, say it's a Carson City mare, yet she's out of a Dynaformer mare, for example. In my mind, when I'm looking at that mare, even though she's by Carson City, and everybody identifies her as a Carson City mare, to me she's a Dynaformer. And when I'm doing my mating, I'm thinking in terms that she's more of a Dynaformer than she is a Carson City mare, and plan my crosses accordingly. This process works when considering the stallion blend as well. For example, I don't think El Prado is a Sadler's Wells.

I try to come up with something that makes sense. I'm not a herd mentality player. I am not one who follows fashion, because I think there is too much opportunity out there for value, as long as you're not being too cheap. I try to anticipate stallion cycles and utilize them when they are a value rather than at their peak. Thankfully, my clients go along with that as well. 