

The Speed, The Stalkers and The Closers

by RUDI GROOTHEDDE

With the first crop of 2-year-olds by California's freshman sires of 2003 having already been in action for a few months, it's time to take a closer look at those stallions whose progeny have made it to the winner's circle. Even though it is still a long way to go before the end of the season, an examination of those sires who retired to stud for the 2000 season will hopefully provide enough clues as to who will be this local division's leader by the end of this year.

The Speed

Leading the money won standings with progeny earnings of \$58,094 from seven starters, the highly touted Free House is starting to fulfill the high hopes everyone has had for him right from the start. The Vessels Stallion

Farm resident also shares the lead when it comes to winners, courtesy of victories at Hollywood Park by both his son Head of the House (July 2) and daughter



Free House's Head of the House

ter Free's Lil Lass (July 4). With 50-plus foals of 2001, four of whom have sold for an average of over \$75,000 as 2-year-olds this year, the future certainly looks bright for Smokester's California-

bred son who was a multiple champion and earner of over \$3 million.

As the stallion currently engaged in a close battle with Free House for bragging rights as the Golden State's leading freshman sire of 2003, Perfect Mandate has also seen his progeny perform well with earnings of \$56,520. Of his three runners, two of them—Badgett's Mandate (Bay Meadows, June 12) and Military Mandate (Hollywood Park, June 18)—have won. This son of Gone West also became the first California-based freshman sire to have a stakes horse, when the former of these two colts ran second in the Everett Nevin Alameda County Futurity at Pleasanton on July 4. It's a very promising start for this Old English Rancho stallion who numbered under 30 foals in his initial crop.



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The Stalkers

The only other stallion with a couple of winners to his name is Epic Honor who, interestingly enough, has been back in training since last covering mares during the 2002 season. These two victories by his daughter Epic Beauty and son Epic Power—at Stockton and Solano on June 19 and July 11, respectively—along with the appearance of another starter from an original crop of approximately 20 youngsters, has resulted in progeny earnings of \$14,795 for this graded stakes winner.

Of the other four locally based sires who have now had a winner since retiring to stud three years ago, the Special T Thoroughbreds duo of Comic Strip and Mud Route are also well placed in the money won standings. The latter, who had close to 40 foals in 2001, was successfully represented by the filly Bronze Route at Hollywood Park on June 19. Comic Strip, who started his career in Ken-

tucky and had six members from his first crop of around 30 foals sell for an average of over \$100,000 as juveniles earlier this year, was responsible for the colt Cash Button who won at Aqueduct on April 10. Mud Route, with only one other starter, has progeny earnings of \$27,100 while his



Mud Route's Bronze Route

neighbor's \$25,056 was gleaned from just three runners.

The Closers

The Golden State's other two freshman sires to have seen one of their runners reach the winner's circle,

are Hedrick Ranch's Emerald Crème (In Excess (Ire)) and Schvaneveldt Ranch's Bustopher Jones (Storm Cat). The former's two starters have earned \$12,395 and include the June 1 Bay Meadows winner Bolted Heart, while the latter's son Itsagreekthing won at Les Bois Park on June 12.

Rounding out this review are five more California stallions who, though yet without a winner, are still worth a mention. Trail City (Pepper Oaks Farm) has progeny earnings of \$15,264 from a couple of runners, while the four starters from Ken Arnold Ranch's Sir Fir and the three starters from Golden Eagle Farm's Event of the Year have banked \$11,625 and \$10,960, respectively. Finally, the Blue Sky Training Center stallion Guarani has seen his four runners earn \$10,410, while Old English Rancho's Lucayan Prince has two runners and \$6,930 to his name.

NOTE: All statistics are up to and including Sunday, July 20, 2003.