



BY DEIRDRE B. BILES

Seattle Surprise

If you had tried to pick which first-crop stallion would be the leader at this year's five major select sales of 2-year-olds in training, you might have chosen 2004 champion sprinter Speightstown. Even though the son of Gone West didn't do his best running until he was 6 years old, he flashed enough speed to suggest his progeny might do well early at the shorter distances.

Maybe you went with another champion of 2004, Smarty Jones, because his Kentucky Derby (gr. I) and Preakness (gr. I) success would make him popular with buyers who had the long-term goal of racing a classic winner. Possibly, you backed Lion Heart, whose victory in the 2003 Hollywood Futurity (gr. I) indicated he could sire high-class precocious runners, or even Medaglia d'Oro, who was a grade I winner at 3, 4, and 5.

But whatever your decision, you probably didn't end up with Seattle Fitz, who wound up leading the pack based on the average price brought by his offspring. To be fair, the large number of Speightstown progeny that sold, 16, probably diluted their average of \$349,313. But it still was impressive that Seattle Fitz' three offspring averaged \$350,000 considering that he was only a grade II winner, didn't capture an added-money event until he was 5, and was bred in Argentina.

Lion Heart finished third behind Speightstown, with nine offspring selling for an average of \$295,000 during the three-month, February through April, run of select auctions conducted by Barretts, Fasig-Tipton, Keeneland, and the Ocala Breeders' Sales Co.

Doug Arnold, who stands Seattle Fitz at Buck Pond Farm near Versailles, Ky., was surprised by the top ranking even though he believed the 9-year-old dark bay or brown horse had the potential to be a good stallion.

"You always hope that this kind of thing will happen, but it's a big shock when there are horses like Speightstown, who was the best of the best, and Lion Heart under him (in the rankings)," Arnold said. "With those horses, there is all this great hype. You know that when the buyers go to the sales and see 2-year-olds by them that they like, they're going to give a lot of money for them. Seattle Fitz is a horse that



COURTESY BUCK POND FARM

Seattle Fitz stood for \$8,500 in his first season at stud

Seattle Fitz ranks as the leader among first-crop stallions at the five major select juvenile sales

has kind of risen from the ashes. Nobody really knew who he was."

The highest-priced select juvenile sired by Seattle Fitz was a colt out of the winning Whiskey Wisdom mare Whiskey Babe at the Barretts March sale. Kentucky bloodstock agent Mike Ryan purchased the 2-year-old for \$600,000 from Scanlon Training Center, agent.

The stallion's other select progeny that sold were a \$290,000 colt out of the winning, stakes-placed Pentelicus mare Come-

tuseibella and a \$160,000 filly, named Fitz Just Right, out of the stakes-winning Line In The Sand mare Light Line. Stonestreet Stables bought the colt from Scanlon Training Center, agent, at the Keeneland April sale. New Jersey horseman Buzz Chace purchased Fitz Just Right for West Point Thoroughbreds from Don Graham, agent.

"His 2-year-olds have matured into really nice looking horses," Arnold said. "They're very good footed, and they're good boned. They've all got good throats. Seattle Fitz is a complete outcross to all the Northern Dancer and Mr. Prospector blood, so I guess what you're seeing is hybrid vigor. We couldn't be more pleased."

But Seattle Fitz' rise to commercial prominence didn't come without a struggle.

When Arnold decided to invest in Seattle Fitz as a stallion, the Buck Pond owner was impressed with how the horse had performed on the racetrack. Seattle Fitz

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notched victories in the 2004 editions of the Brooklyn (gr. II), Aqueduct (gr. III), and William Donald Schaefer (gr. III) Handicaps while carrying the colors of West Point Thoroughbreds. But it was the Brooklyn effort that really caught Arnold's attention. In that race, Seattle Fitz fought off challenges from Newfoundland and Dynever while completing the 1 1/8 miles in 1:46.30, which then was the race's second-fastest time ever.

"The way he did it was very inspiring," Arnold said, "and when I had a chance to look at the horse, I saw that he was a gorgeous animal. He stood over a lot of ground, and he had a really beautiful shoulder, neck, and head. He also had a real big walk."

But Seattle Fitz' pedigree was a big question, especially in terms of how appealing it would be to Kentucky breeders. While the horse's sire, Fitzcarraldo, was a group II winner in Argentina, Arnold noticed strong ties in Seattle Fitz' bloodlines to North America through an ancestor, Blenheim II, who once was a leading sire domestically. Blenheim II's offspring included two-time Horse of the Year and 1941 Triple Crown winner Whirlaway.

"It's a sire line that has really done well here in the past, but it has just kind of died out in this country," Arnold said.

The Buck Pond owner also liked the fact Seattle Fitz' broodmare sire was 1977 Triple Crown winner Seattle Slew. In addition, Arnold was impressed with the female side of Seattle Fitz' pedigree because it was developed by a former prominent Kentucky breeder, Leslie Combs of Spendthrift Farm.

"All the pieces were there," Arnold said.

And the price was right.

"I didn't have to give a huge amount," said Arnold of the private transaction.

But even though the Buck Pond owner could point to plenty of North American influences in Seattle Fitz' pedigree and the horse had a modest stud fee of \$8,500, promoting him as a stallion turned out to be an uphill battle.

The Jockey Club's records showed that Seattle Fitz was bred to 56 mares in 2005 and 47 mares in 2006.

"We tried to get people interested, but it was difficult," Arnold said. "He was a hard sell from the beginning."

In 2007, Seattle Fitz covered only 17 mares.

"It was kind of tough," Arnold admitted, "but I wasn't giving up."

He started seeing some light at the end of the tunnel last summer. Four Seattle Fitz offspring, including two consigned

First-Crop Sires of Sale 2-Year-Olds*					
Sire	No. Sold	Highest Price	Lowest Price	Average Price	Median Price
SEATTLE FITZ	3	\$600,000	\$160,000	\$350,000	\$290,000
Speightstown	16	\$1,700,000	\$9,000	\$349,313	\$275,000
Lion Heart	9	\$750,000	\$25,000	\$295,000	\$310,000
Congaree	4	\$410,000	\$80,000	\$266,250	\$287,500
Friends Lake	7	\$450,000	\$70,000	\$220,714	\$205,000
Medaglia d'Oro	13	\$900,000	\$14,000	\$214,538	\$120,000
Toccet	6	\$410,000	\$75,000	\$202,500	\$145,000
Saarland	4	\$300,000	\$57,000	\$184,250	\$190,000
City Place	6	\$325,000	\$20,000	\$182,500	\$160,000
Pleasantly Perfect	3	\$380,000	\$50,000	\$175,000	\$95,000
Tapit	8	\$375,000	\$60,000	\$171,250	\$140,000
Strong Hope	3	\$300,000	\$90,000	\$170,000	\$120,000
Scrimshaw	3	\$435,000	\$20,000	\$165,000	\$40,000
Cuvee	9	\$450,000	\$20,000	\$160,778	\$110,000
Read the Footnotes	5	\$220,000	\$30,000	\$154,000	\$150,000
Alke	4	\$250,000	\$75,000	\$146,250	\$130,000
Chapel Royal	14	\$400,000	\$12,000	\$138,214	\$105,000
Spanish Steps	4	\$300,000	\$21,000	\$126,500	\$92,500
Action This Day	4	\$175,000	\$50,000	\$102,500	\$92,500
Smarty Jones	4	\$165,000	\$30,000	\$102,500	\$107,500
Even the Score	7	\$180,000	\$20,000	\$66,429	\$50,000
Peace Rules	7	\$105,000	\$4,500	\$62,786	\$75,000

* At the five major select sales

by Buck Pond, were entered in the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July select yearling auction. One was bought back, but three were sold for prices of \$30,000, \$52,000, and \$155,000.

"I've got to give credit to Fasig-Tipton's people because they'll take a chance when they see something they like and put it in their New Sire Showcase," Arnold said. "You could tell that the good trainers and the buyers liked what they saw."

The buzz, according to Arnold, began

lowered to \$6,500 after last season, will cover around 100 mares, according to Arnold.

"We've put our heart and soul into this, so it's really been a lot of fun," he said. "One of the things I love about this business is that a good horse can come from anywhere. Something like this can happen to anybody if they work hard. You're always just one horse away from brilliance."

Developing a stallion like Seattle Fitz isn't a new venture for Arnold. Veteran sires Bernstein and Doneraile Court started their breeding careers at Buck Pond and were sold to larger farms after achieving success.

"Both of them ended up being pretty nice horses, and I think Seattle Fitz will end up right alongside of them," Arnold said. "They (Seattle Fitz' progeny) are big, strong, two-turn-looking kind of horses, and based on their size, they might be a little slow starting off, but they should be ready for the big 2-year-old races and the Breeders' Cup. If I was a betting man, I would think Seattle Fitz would make it in a big way."

Arnold wants to continue standing Seattle Fitz at Buck Pond.

"Except for one guy who has one share, I own 100% of the horse," Arnold said. "I've had several people say they would be interested in investing if I syndicate him or they want to know how much I would take for a quarter interest. I would like to keep him here if I can afford to. But for now, I'm just going to wait and see. So far, it's been a blast." 🐾



ANNE M. EBERHARDT

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then, but it was the performance of Seattle Fitz' offspring after they were put in training that really made breeders start to take the stallion seriously.

"The interest has been unbelievable," Arnold said. "His horses are really good athletes and they possess a great deal of speed. Early on, before people knew anything good was happening, they would call me and say, 'I've got this Seattle Fitz that's extremely fast; this horse is a freak.'"

This year, the stallion, whose fee was