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January 7th, 2009

Damn Lies, Statistics, and the Anatomy of a Stakes Winner!

I read the Thoroughbred Daily News (TDN) with interest this week because international bloodstock writer Sid Fernando had a blockbuster column on Jan. 1 questioning the record keeping at equine.com, owned by The Jockey Club Information Systems, Inc.(TJCIS). This column was followed on Jan. 6 in TDN by TJCIS's Carl Hamilton's "clarification," which said that TJCIS basically has two ways of reporting data, one in line with "International Cataloguing Standards," (ICS) called "black-type" rules, and the other called "stakes rules," which do not follow the ICS principles.

In other words, two sets of rule books!

On Jan. 7 in TDN, respected horse trader Ed Price of Mohns Hill Farm LLC called a spade a spade in a letter to the editor, saying: "In my opinion, 'stakes rules' are only smoke and mirrors – if a race does not earn Black Type, Grade 1, Grade 2, etc., in all catalogs and reports, then it should not be used as such."

Ed and Sid are absolutely right! In fact, Werk Thoroughbred Consultants (WTC) and the Werk Nick Rating (eNicks) are *truly* independent in this regard. We use ONLY *unrestricted* stakes winners as determined by the ICS to calculate nicks. We enter and proof all stakes and pedigree information ourselves to make sure that quality, not quantity, is the basis of our ratings and recommendations.

We feel that only legitimate, unrestricted black-type events can generate the purest ratings, and we have been consistent about this for as long as we have been calculating nicks. You won't find "stakes winners" of \$25,000 stakes races in our database, nor will you find nick ratings based on phantom Grade 1 winners in our system. That's why the Werk Nick Rating is the industry standard, and we're proud of it!

This isn't the only time that Sid, Ed, and I have thought along the same lines, and Ed's response to Sid's article brought back memories of another time we agreed on something.

The year was 2001, and the mare's name was Truly Blessed. She was by the very good stallion French Deputy, owned by WTC client Irv Cowan, and she was out of Love Bunny, by Exclusive Native. She had been trained early in her career by Bob Baffert.

In 2001, Ed, who liked the mare physically, had Truly Blessed for sale, and I spoke to Bob about her because I was looking for a mare for Scoop Vessels for his stallion In Excess. Bob liked her on conformation, too.

I loved the stallion French Deputy, but what persuaded me to recommend the mare to Scoop was Sid's evaluation of her on several fronts. He thought the pedigree would improve, and that because she descended in tail female from the mare La Morlaye, also the second dam of Siberian Express – the sire of In Excess!— she would fit In Excess well (Rasmussen Factor 4×4). Sid had also seen Truly Blessed's half-sister, Helen D., in Argentina, and he knew Helen D.'s daughter Lovellon had won the

Argentine Oaks in 1999 and had been sold to race in California. He felt that on form Lovellon had a great chance to win a Grade 1 in the US!

In Oct. of 1998, Sid had left his position of Bloodstock Editor at Daily Racing Form, and was a private consultant in demand because of his vast knowledge of international form and international black type. His analysis proved to be spot-on. Lovellon won a Grade 1 in California in 2001!

Truly Blessed also did her part when bred to In Excess for Scoop: She produced the legitimate Graded SW Notional (\$733,240), now standing his first season in 2009 at Spendthrift Farm and a onetime serious Derby prospect!

There were no "smoke and mirrors" used to produce him, and his black type is real!

Posted by Jack Werk at 8:20 pm. Filed under: Uncategorized