

## ***Unbridled's Song Plays On Through His Sons***

By Ray Paulick

*"Fate loves the fearless."* – James Russell Lowell, 19th Century American poet.

Was it fate that kept Unbridled's Song in the United States after Japanese buyer Hiroshi Fujita detected an ankle chip in the colt shortly after bidding \$1.4 million to purchase him at the 1995 Barretts March sale of 2-year-olds in training?

Only months earlier, Ernie Paragallo, working with the late Buzz Chace, bought the colt from the first crop of Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic winner Unbridled for \$200,000 at Fasig-Tipton's Saratoga Sale.

This would have been a pinhooking home run, but Paragallo and Chace decided to take the horse back, with Paragallo fearlessly predicting victory later that year in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile.

Unbridled's Song fulfilled that brash prediction.

You could say fate also played its hand in the following year's Kentucky Derby, when Unbridled's Song was plagued by a bruised foot and quarter crack, following a smashing 5 3/4-length triumph in the Florida Derby and a solid victory in the Wood Memorial. Trainer Jim Ryerson battled the problems with foot specialists and bar shoes in the three weeks between the Wood and the Derby, a time when even the smallest interruption in training can spell disaster for a would-be classic hopeful.

Unbridled's Song responded fearlessly.

Only days before the Run for the Roses and while wearing special egg-shaped bar shoes on both front feet, Unbridled's Song cut a hole in the wind with a blazing half-mile workout. Then, in the Derby itself, after being saddled with the outside post position in a field of 19, the gray colt chased after sprint-like fractions through the opening six furlongs, and took command on the turn for home.

This was horse racing's version of Willis Reed limping off the bench to help the 1970 New York Knicks win an NBA title or Kirk Gibson blasting a pinch-hit home run for the Dodgers to win the opening game of the 1988 World Series, then barely able to jog around the bases.

There was no fairy tale finish, though, in the Kentucky Derby. The fast fractions, the training interruptions and the bar shoes he wore in the race were too much to overcome. Unbridled's Song was passed in the final furlong by four horses, including Grindstone, the winner. He was beaten 3 3/4 lengths.

In defeat, Unbridled's Song likely gained as many admirers among horsemen as would have gotten had everything gone his way that spring and he'd won the Kentucky Derby.

Time marches on. Unbridled's Song wouldn't win again until late November, after being transferred to the barn of trainer Nick Zito. He won his 1997 debut, a sprint at Gulfstream Park, then fractured his cannon bone training for the Donn Handicap. Retired to Taylor Made Farm to stand that same year, the big horse enjoyed an enormously successful career at stud, siring more than 100 stakes winners.

He died suddenly last July at the age of 20, but there are coming 2-year-olds and yearlings and mares ready to foal future stars from his final 2014 crop.

There is also a legacy in stallion barns in Kentucky, New York, Florida and elsewhere. Unbridled's Song has become a very successful sire of sires.

In 2013, his son standing at Ashford Stud, **Dunkirk**, produced from an A. P. Indy mare Secret Status, led the freshman sire list, thanks in large part to the successes of Havana, winner of the G1 Champagne and second to New Year's Day in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile.

Seventh on the freshman list was Hill 'n' Dale's **Zensational**, a son of Unbridled's Song out of a mare by Phone Trick. Eleventh was **Old Fashioned** (out of a Meadowlake mare), who followed his sire to the stallion barn at Taylor Made. A fourth son of Unbridled's Song, **Noonmark** (out of a Storm Cat mare) was the leading first-year sire in New York. He stands at Sequel Stallions.

**Rockport Harbor** was leading sire of 2-year-olds in 2013, making Unbridled's Song the first horse since Nasrullah in 1967 to sire annual leaders of both the freshman and juvenile sire lists in the U.S. Sadly, Rockport Harbor (from a Copelan mare) died in August from laminitis, just one week after his sire's death. Rockport Harbor began his career at Darley in Kentucky and was moved to Pin Oak Lane Farm in Pennsylvania.

Juddmonte Farms' **First Defence** (out of G1-winning Seattle Slew mare Honest Lady and from the family of Empire Maker) was the eighth-ranked second-crop sire of 2013.

More are on the way.

Darley's champion **Midshipman** (Avenue of Flags mare) has his first 2-year-olds this year. Sequel's **Mission Impazible** (Hold Your Peace mare) will have his first foals in 2014.

Entering stud at Taylor Made this year with a \$15,000 fee is G1 winner **Graydar**, who brothers Duncan and Ben Taylor both said is as close to Unbridled's Song – in looks, class and style – as any horse they've seen.

"He's big and good looking and was a freak of nature as a racehorse," said Ben Taylor, who manages the family farm's stallion division. "He was a very talented horse."

Graydar won 5-of-6 starts racing at 3 and 4, his biggest victory coming in the G1 Donn Handicap at Gulfstream Park when he earned a 109 Beyer Speed Figure. He is out of a winning mare by Dehere, the same cross as **Will Take Charge** (Unbridled's Song–Take Charge Lady, by Dehere), the leading 3-year-old of 2013 who will be retired to Three Chimneys Farm at the conclusion of his racing career.

"His best sons at stud are just now getting runners, and Will Take Charge and some of the others have a big shot to make it," Taylor said of Unbridled's Song. "I'm excited that his line is going to continue."

Three other sons of Unbridled's Song are entering stud this year: **Emcee** (Ocean Crest mare) will stand for \$7,500 at Sequel Stallions in New York; **Winslow Homer** (Summer Squall mare), \$5,000 at Journeyman Stud in Florida; and **Keep Up** (out of Kentucky Oaks/Spinster winner Keeper Hill, by Deputy Minister), \$4,000 at Mill Ridge Farm in Lexington.

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