



Nancy Sexton's BLOODSTOCK WEEK

EDWARD WHITAKER (RACINGPOST.COM/PHOTOS)

WHEN faced with an incoming stallion of the ilk of American Pharoah, this industry throws itself into a state of immense anticipation. It is only natural. Like Frankel and Secretariat before him, American Pharoah retired to stud with his reputation as one of the great runners of his era intact.

As the first American Triple Crown winner in 37 years, he was a national icon, one potent enough to attract a crowd of 15,000 to just watch him turn in a morning gallop at Saratoga. He won eight Grade 1s, \$9 million in prize-money and even adorned the front cover of *Vogue*.

Yet as we all know, when it comes to the bloodstock world, it can be a double-edged sword. Expectations are greater – and to some unforgiving eyes will always be unattainable – and there is further to fall. Add in the stellar books that these young high-profile stallions cover at eye-watering fees and there really is no room for error in a market that often needs little excuse to grow cold.

It has to be said, however, that American Pharoah is living up to expectations and more in his second career at Coolmore's Ashford Stud in Kentucky. Following events from last week's Breeders' Cup at Santa Anita, where he was particularly well represented, American Pharoah leads the American leading first-crop sires list by nearly every metric.

For instance, a prize-money haul of more than \$2.3m places him almost \$800,000 clear of his closest pursuer Constitution. It is also enough to narrowly make him America's leading general two-year-old sire ahead of Into Mischief, for the time being at least. He is also the leading sire by winners with 20, ahead of Darby Dan Farm's Tapiture on 18. That winning group includes four stakes winners, an achievement matched only by his Ashford studmate Competitive Edge, and three Graded stakes winners.

Nor can one of his contemporaries hold a torch to his tally of nine black-tie horses.

One of the most interesting aspects of American Pharoah's evolving stud career has been his progeny's propensity towards turf.

American Pharoah never ran on turf and while the career of his sire Pioneer of The Nile coincided with the era of California's experimentation with synthetic surfaces, he is, after all, a member of the Unbridled sire line more readily associated with dirt racing. Yet trainer Bob Baffert always maintained that American Pharoah possessed the mechanics to be just as effective on turf.

Coolmore also haven't held back in their endeavour to cultivate him as an international force, their early support consisting of a number of accomplished turf runners with several of the resulting progeny now in training at Ballydoyle.

American Pharoah's early winners do include plenty of dirt talent, including American Theorem, second to Eight Rings in the Grade 1 American Pharoah Stakes at Del Mar, and Grade 1 Hopeful Stakes fourth American Butterfly. Another representative, Skygaze, also recently finished first in the Group 3 Mazarine Stakes on Woodbine's Tapeta surface, only to be disqualified for



Four Wheel Drive (right): the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint winner is a son of American Pharoah

American Pharoah living up to billing with his juveniles

American Pharoah's stakes horses

FOUR WHEEL DRIVE

(c ex Funfair by More Than Ready) won Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint - Gr.2, Futurity Stakes - Gr.3, Rosie's Stakes - Listed

Bred by Glenvale Stud

SWEET MELANIA

(f ex Sweet N Discreet by Discreet Cat) won Jessamine Stakes - Gr.2, 3rd Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf - Gr.1

Bred by St Elias Stables LLC

MAVEN

(c ex Richies Party Girl by Any Given Saturday) won Prix du Bois - Gr.3

Bred by WA Ward

ANOTHER MIRACLE

(c ex Retraceable by Medaglia d'Oro) won Skidmore Stakes - Listed, 3rd Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint - Gr.2

Bred by Betz/J. Betz/CHNHHK/D.J. Stables/Lamantia/CoCo/Ramsby

American Theorem

(c ex Mighty Renee by Maria's Mon) 2nd American Pharoah Stakes - Gr.1

Bred by Sierra Farm

Monarch Of Egypt

(c ex Up by Galileo) 2nd Phoenix Stakes - Gr.1

Bred by Ran Jan Racing

*Skygaze

(f ex Skyscape by Mt Livermore) 3rd Mazarine Stakes - Gr.3.

Bred by Normandy Farm LLC

Also sire of Listed-placed Envied and Saqqara King

*Won Mazarine Stakes but demoted to third

interference and placed third.

On the other hand, 13 of American Pharoah's runners have also struck on turf. For much of the season, one of the most high-profile examples was Monarch Of Egypt, a colt out of 2012 Poule d'Essai des Pouliches second Up. The mare is a Galileo half-sister to Dutch Art now in the hands of Jan Vandeboos Naify's Ran Jan Racing following her \$2.2m sale by the

Coolmore partners in January 2015.

Monarch Of Egypt headed back into the fold when bought for \$750,000 by MV Magnier as a yearling and has gone on to fulfil a valuable role, first when getting the job done on his debut at Naas to give American Pharoah a first winner with his first runner, before finishing second to Siskin in the Group 1 Phoenix and Group 2 Railway Stakes.

Not long after Monarch Of Egypt won at Naas, Wesley Ward sent out his homebred Maven to win his debut on dirt at Aqueduct. Yet he also wound up on turf, notably when becoming American Pharoah's first stakes winner in the Group 3 Prix du Bois at Chantilly in late June. France is also home to Ocean Atlantique, the €1.1m Arqana May Breeze-Up sale-topper who bolted up last month at Saint-Cloud for Andre Fabre.

All the while, American turf momentum behind American Pharoah has continued to grow. In August, Another Miracle won the Skidmore Stakes on the lawn at Saratoga (having previously lost his maiden tag on dirt) and Four Wheel Drive took the Rosie's Stakes at Colonial Downs en route to a three-length win in the Grade 3 Futurity Stakes at Belmont Park.

Another striking example is the Todd Pletcher-trained Sweet Melania, who won the Jessamine Stakes on turf at Keeneland having started her career with two non-winning efforts on dirt. That American Pharoah turf trend was very much in evidence on the opening day of Breeders' Cup 2019 as Four Wheel Drive and Another Miracle finished first and third in the Juvenile Turf Sprint and Sweet Melania ran third in the Juvenile Fillies Turf. It's unlikely that many people expected American Pharoah – as a Belmont Stakes winner

– to throw a two-year-old capable of pulling apart a five-furlong Graded stakes race, but in Four Wheel Drive that is exactly what has materialised.

Trained like Maven by Wesley Ward, the colt showed blistering pace last Friday, subduing the competition from the start to remain unbeaten in three outings.

Four Wheel Drive was bred in Kentucky by Glenvale Stud out of Funfair, a relation to Group/Grade 1 winners Persian Knight and Reluctant Guest. Like a number by her sire More Than Ready, Funfair possessed plenty of speed, as she demonstrated when taking the 2010 Colleen Stakes over five furlongs at Monmouth Park.

That speed is obviously again shining through in the case of Four Wheel Drive, her third foal.

NO-ONE would dispute that American Pharoah has had every opportunity to do well, far greater than any of his contemporaries.

A first book of 208 mares included 55 Group/Grade 1 winners and/or elite producers, and he has been similarly well supported since; look no further than this year's crop of yearlings, which includes the \$8.2m daughter of blue hen Leslie's Lady. Recently released figures also show that he covered a book of 178 mares in 2019 at a fee of \$110,000.

But American Pharoah's start is one that places him on an extremely good footing going forward. Crucially, a number of his progeny appear to have inherited his good disposition, judging by remarks made by different trainers throughout the year, and with many appealing as likely physical improvers at three and beyond, it will be disappointing if he doesn't have a big year in 2020.