

Stars getting started

Keeneland's spring race meet includes important two-year-old sale

By Pete Denk

Keeneland will become the first sales company in North America to hold a juvenile sale on the all-weather Polytrack surface when it hosts its April Two-Year-Olds in Training Sale on April 17.

Holding a training sale on a new surface would have seemed like a radical idea just a few years ago, as a horse's value can swing by hundreds of thousands of dollars based on pre-sale workouts. But with the proliferation of Polytrack and other all-weather surfaces on the American racing landscape, the number of graded stakes races to be run on synthetic surfaces has increased rapidly.

The 2007 April sale—which is tied into Toyota Blue Grass Stakes (G1) weekend to create a festival of world-class racing and auction—has landed in a unique position.

“The Polytrack is an exciting angle this year, and it's the



Photo by Z

At last year's Keeneland April Two-Year-Olds in Training Sale, eventual Grade 1 winner Point Ashley sold for \$725,000.

most talked about part of this year's sale,” said Keeneland's Director of Sales, Geoffrey Russell. “Given the growing prevalence of synthetic surfaces, especially among tracks on such major racing circuits as Kentucky, California and Illinois, it's important that buyers have a chance to see horses perform on Polytrack.”

This year's catalog contains 226 horses, with 94 different stallions represented, including Awesome Again, Danzig, Distorted Humor, El Prado (Ire), Forestry, Giant's Causeway, Gone West and Kingmambo. Freshman sires with their first crop of two-year-olds include Aldebaran, Empire Maker, Harlan's Holiday, Hold That Tiger, Mineshaft and Vindication.

The two-year-olds will be on display at under-tack shows on April 9 and 16, beginning at 10:30 a.m. As with all Keeneland sales, the workouts and auction are free to the general public.

“We encourage people to come and watch the preview days on the two Mondays prior to the sale and then come out and watch the excitement of a Thoroughbred auction,” Russell said. “Training sales are an important element of the sales industry, and the April sale was designed to capture the enthusiasm of the race meet and the middle of Triple Crown fever.”

The April sale has a reputation for featuring later-developing horses, who have a little more stamina than their peers at the two-year-old sales of February and March. Stars of the 2006 April sale included Day Pass, a \$725,000 purchase who won the Nashua Stakes (G3) to complete his undefeated two-year-old season for buyer Darley Stable, and Point Ashley, who won the Del Mar Debutante Stakes (G1) after being purchased on a \$725,000 bid from Zayat Stables.

The average price for a horse at the 2006 sale was \$211,954, a 30.6-percent increase from 2005. 🐾

Pete Denk is a staff writer for *Thoroughbred Times*.

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Keeneland April Two-Year-Olds in Training Sale
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