

VIAREGGIO (IRE)

By Sid Fernando

Irish-bred Viareggio, who stands at the property of Joe and Jackie King at Indian Hills in Edwardsville, is 19 years old and has what I'd call an "heirloom" pedigree—meaning that he is the possessor of an old and historic sire line and family that's not often seen now but is full of class and extreme stamina.

He's a son of Caerleon, who was bred at historic Claiborne Farm. Foaled in 1980, Caerleon was a son of the great—and last—English Triple Crown winner, Nijinsky. The latter was Northern Dancer's best racing son and one of his best sire sons and stood at Claiborne his entire career. Caerleon's dam, Foreseer, was by Round Table, and the next dam, Regal Gleam, was by Hail to Reason. This outstanding family traced to his sixth dam, the blue hen and hugely influential La Troienne, through fifth dam Big Hurry.

Purchased at auction by Robert Sangster and trained by the legendary Vincent O'Brien—who also trained Nijinsky—Caerleon won the Grade 1 French Derby in 1983 and four of eight starts. He was named the champion three-year-old colt in France in 1983 and went to stand stud at Coolmore. His sire is the only stallion to sire the winners of the Kentucky, French, Irish and English derbies, something not even Northern Dancer or Sadler's Wells could accomplish.

Not many of Nijinsky's sons became top-class stallions, but Caerleon did, siring at least 125 stakes winners. His best was the 1991 Epsom and Irish Derby winner Generous, but he also sired such as Group 1 Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe Marienbard, Group 1 Grand Prix de Paris winner Grape Tree Road, Group 1 St. Leger winner Moonax, and Group 1 Yorkshire Oaks winner Only Royale. Each of these—like many of Caerleon's progeny—were best at 12 furlongs or up in Europe.

That said, Caerleon also had his share of Graded stakes winners in the US, including Grade 2 American Derby winner Overbury, multiple US Grade 1-winning mare Kostroma, Grade 1 Pacific Classic Stakes winner Missionary Ridge (who was bred by Sangster's Swettenham Stud and made 42 starts), plus Ancient Title Stakes winner Corwyn Bay, Santa Barbara Stakes winner Auriette, Long Island Handicap winner Coretta, etc.

In short, Caerleon sired very high-class stock that needed more than a mile (usually 10 furlongs, preferably turf) to show best.

Viareggio's female side is also geared to stamina, and the tail-female line is very European. Viareggio's dam is by the stallion Corvaro, a son of the stamina influence Vaguely Noble. The second dam is by Mill Reef, an Epsom Derby winner and the originator of a stout line in Europe through Shirley Heights, sire of Darshaan. The sheer stamina of the line can be seen in Viareggio's dosage profile, dosage index, and center of distribution. His DI, 5-3-13-11-

2, is most heavily represented with 13 points in the “classic” category with an additional 11 points in the “solid” category—giving him a dosage index of 0.74 and a CD of -0.06. These are numbers rarely seen in racehorses today and suggest that stamina (and turf prowess) will be transmitted by Viareggio to his offspring, something in very short supply in the US.

Viareggio never raced at two, won one of four starts at three in France, then was sent to race in the US. All told, he made 60 starts and won 18 races. A one-eyed horse, he was raced by Fairmount Park trainer Eugene Young and ran until age nine and amassed more than \$300,000 in earnings.

With very limited opportunity at stud, Viareggio has sired some hard-knocking racehorses like himself, including Littlebrownroad, with almost \$170,000 in earnings to date. Littlebrownroad, a winner in 2011, has made 80 starts and won 11 races and placed an additional 32 times. He’s from a Mr. Prospector-line mare (whose sire is Gold Alert). Another of his runners, Kanskat, earned \$94,000. Both of these runners also had serious stamina dosage numbers and profiles.

Unfortunately, the racing climate in the US is speed oriented and does not afford sires such as Viareggio much in terms of opportunity. But there are enough races at a mile or more, especially on turf, and these are the types of events that Viareggio’s offspring should be targeted for. If placed correctly, the Viareggios will thrive on distance and turf.

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