



## Statistics On Durability/Soundness Indicators

During the Welfare and Safety of the Racehorse Summit held by Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation and The Jockey Club at Keeneland last October, the consensus of a broad representation of industry leaders was that Thoroughbreds today tend to be less sound, rugged, and durable than in the past. This is a conclusion widely applied to The Jockey Club charts of declining starts per year — a steady phenomenon that has seen the average number of races for Thoroughbred starters slip from 11.31 in 1960 to 6.37 in 2006.

One of the committees created by the summit was requested to examine the pattern and determine if information that would shed light on it could be supplied to breeders. One of the strategies developed was to examine statistics from the standpoint of identifying bloodlines whose records excelled national trends in suggested durability and soundness.

The accompanying charts are presented to the industry by The Jockey Club Information Systems in the hope that breeders in various echelons of the bloodstock world might find them useful or at least thought-provoking. The committee worked through many versions and refined the statistics in two categories: percentage of a stallion's registered offspring that races at least once and lifetime average number of starts per starter by a sire. The average of the breed is 69%-70% starters from foals, and recent crops old enough for most careers to have been completed show about 16-17 lifetime starts per horse on average.

We acknowledge, of course, that what happens on the racetrack is only one of many possibilities as to what might happen. That is, the number of starts a horse makes is not the maximum number he/she might have made under different circumstances, including the owner/trainer management agenda and strategies. Thus, percentage of starters and average starts per horse are not straight-line indications of soundness and durability, but we regard them as useful indication of those qualities relative to the breed average and in comparison with other stallions.

Clearly, a horse — especially a filly — with a high-fashion pedigree has sufficient value as a breeding animal that he/she is far more likely to be retired early than is a horse of less pedigree potential. Thus, the high-fashion stallions are at a statistical disadvantage when a daughter, say, suffers a minor injury after two races and then is retired although physically capable of coming back to race after treatment or rest. Similarly, the offspring of an American stallion that is popular abroad would be expected to produce lower starts averages if sent to nations where horses in general are raced less frequently than at home.

The intent of these statistics is to point up horses whose records indicate a positive pattern. In many cases, it turned out that the facts highlight horses not prominent in more conventional sire standings (earnings, stakes winners, etc). In other cases, however, the statistics provide an additional positive in the records of stallions that *are* prominent in the more familiar methods of tracking stallion statistics.

The committee that has worked with these statistics understands that these lists might be more useful for breeders operating at stud fee levels and horse values somewhat below the top of the market. The Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation and The Jockey Club, of course, are concerned about the entire industry, so if these statistics are useful to *any* strata of the breed then the exercise can be deemed a success.

### *An Interim Measure*

These statistics are an interim step toward a more refined ability to use figures to reflect the durability statistics of stallions and bloodlines. The Jockey Club has contracted with a University of Kentucky professor and graduate student to work with the Durability Statistics Committee to develop an index that will be offered to the industry as an ongoing tool in helping breeders assess a stallion's and a sire-line's records.

Members of the Durability Statistics Committee are Edward L. Bowen (chairman), president of Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation; Dan Fick, executive vice president and executive director of The Jockey Club; James G. Bell, president of Darley USA; Rollin Baugh, an international bloodstock agent and a director of Del Mar; Mark Simon, editor and president of the *Thoroughbred Times*; Dr. Hiram Polk, breeder-owner and a distinguished physician in human medicine; Ric Waldman, head of Waldman Consulting Services and an associate of Overbrook Farm; Carl Hamilton, chairman and president of The Jockey Club Information Systems (TJCIS); and Mark Adkins, sales manager of TJCIS.