FURTHER SPECULATION

Last week I inveigled TDN International Editor Kelsey Riley into offering her “columnist’s choice” picks for success among four crops of unproven North American stallions with first foals 2013-2016, which we presented as well as my own. This week--special treat--we have expanded our scope even further by asking TDN’s other columnist, Andrew Caulfield, to weigh in along with us on European sire prospects from the same four ‘sire crops.’ Today, the three of us make our personal picks for F2013 European sires, with their first 2-year-olds racing this year, and F2014 sires, with their first yearlings—and this time we have a ‘main pick’ and an "under-10,000" or "10,000 and under," depending) pick. Next week we’ll make our picks among the F2015 (first foals 2015) and F2016 (standing first season 2015) prospects. We agreed to rule out only horses standing for 50,000 or more, a list that consists only of F2014 Frankel and F2016’s Australia and Kingman, since they are all great prospects, and who wouldn’t pick them?

F2013 SIRES: 1ST 2-YEAR-OLDS 2015

There are only five F2013 stallions standing in Europe for more than £10,000 or €10,000 for 2015, and not surprisingly they were the five F2013 European stallions to average the equivalent of $80,000 or more at last year’s yearling sales. Darley stands, at Dalham Hall, the leading 2014 freshman yearling sire in Europe and North America in Dubawi’s good-looking Group 1-winning son, ‘market darling’ (auction market equivalent of a TDN Rising Star; Super Saver, Trappe Shot and Zoffany are other recent ‘market darlings’) Poet’s Voice (£12,000 in 2015), who had 56 yearlings average the equivalent of $157,154 last year (click here). Coolmore stands three of the five: 2011 G1 Epsom Derby winner Pour Moi (£12,500; 44 yearlings averaged $118,619); Canford Cliffs (£12,500; 92 yearlings averaged $80,538); and Zoffany, a Group 1-winning 2-year-old by Dansili (£12,500; 94 yearlings averaged $80,196).

Ireland’s Ballylinch Stud, home of the 2014 leading European freshman sire, Lope de Vega, stands Dream Ahead (£15,000; 74 yearlings averaged $115,504), winner of five Group 1 races at six and seven furlongs, who rounds out the five.

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“There were only 4% more catalogued (479 vs. 461) to Goffs February Mixed Sale last week, but a massive improvement in the clearance rate resulted in 30% more horses sold than last year, with a 31% gain in gross. The percentage of withdrawals dropped from 19% to 14%; and the percentage sold of those which went through the ring improved from 68% to 81%, meaning the percentage sold of those catalogued jumped from 55% to 69%. Very strong demand for short yearlings.”                  – Bill Oppenheim

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his fifth lifetime start when Mickael Barzalona, riding for the wizard Andre Fabre, stood up to celebrate before the finish line, so easily did Pour Moi win the 2011 Derby in what proved to be, unfortunately, his final career start. So how good was he? We can really only speculate, but, trying to read M. Fabre’s demeanor, I think he was pretty confident that day.

Additionally, I thought Pour Moi did very well in the marketplace: 44 yearlings averaged the equivalent of $118,619, placing him second to Poet’s Voice by yearling average for this group. Pour Moi himself is out of a Darshaan mare, and to my eye looks more Darshaan—so much so that I wouldn’t hesitate to breed a mare with Sadler’s Wells in her pedigree to Pour Moi, creating nominal inbreeding to Sadler’s Wells—and, as an individual, Pour Moi does ‘exude class,’ like those Darshaans could do. I think you can make a good case for all five of the European F2013 sires noted above whose yearlings averaged over $80,000, but Pour Moi is my pick—though I might get a one-year extension to 2016, when he has his first 3-year-olds, before we really know.

KELSEY: It came as somewhat of a surprise last year to see ZOFFANY’s first yearlings flying off the shelves at the sales (94 sold from 103 through the ring at an average of $80,196 off a €7,500 stud fee), but looking back on his race record, maybe it shouldn’t have been such a surprise. Zoffany was actually a tough-as-nails racehorse; he made seven starts as a 2-year-old for five wins and three stakes victories. His first stakes win came in the Listed Golden Fleece S. in his fourth start, when he notched a 101 RPR.

He won the G3 Tyros S. with a 108 three weeks later, and took the G1 Phoenix S. with a 115 a further two weeks later. He was third in the G1 National S. with a 106 to round out his juvenile campaign. Zoffany wouldn’t win again, but nonetheless his best performances came as a 3-year-old. He gave Frankel (GB) one of his biggest scares, running him to three-quarters of a length in the G1 St James’s Palace S.

Yes, Queally’s ride on Frankel was questionable, but Zoffany nonetheless ran a 120 RPR, and backed that up two weeks later with a 119 head-second in the G1 Prix Jean Prat in France. Zoffany’s busy campaigns likely got the best of him thereafter; he finished off-the-board in three more Grade/Group 1s in France and the U.S. His highly productive 2-year-old and 3-year-old seasons, however, reflect toughness and consistent high-level performance. The son of Dansili comes from a productive family. He is out of the Machiavellian mare Tyranny (GB)—Machiavellian is also the damsire of Shamardal and Dark Angel—and is a three-quarter brother to the stakes-placed Wilshire Boulevard (Ire) (Holy Roman Emperor {Ire}). Zoffany’s yearlings sold for up to 475,000gns (top colt) and 260,000gns (top filly), and his stud fee has jumped up to €12,500 for 2015.

ANDREW: When assessing a new stallion’s prospects, ask yourself whether he is based at a stud with a reputation for “making” stallions. With DREAM AHEAD, the answer is very much in the affirmative: he stands at Ballylinch Stud, which is also home to Lawman and Lope de Vega. Lawman, a debutant of 2011, had three Group 1 winners, and a total of eight group winners, in his first two crops, while Lope de Vega established himself as the undoubted star of last year’s newcomers, with four group winners headed by G1 Dewhurst S. winner Belardo.

So can Dream Ahead maintain this impressive sequence? To do so he will have to shrug off the stigma of having been cast off by Darley for as little as $11,000 as a weanling, but that proved no hindrance on the racetrack. Officially rated the equal of the great Frankel as a 2-year-old after a pair of Group 1 successes, Dream Ahead continued to shine at three. He not only confirmed his class but also his fighting qualities in the process of adding three more Group 1 victories, plus the title of Europe’s champion 3-year-old sprinter.

The fact that he is a son of the generally disappointing Diktat has to be set against more likeable aspects of his pedigree. His grandsires Warning and Cadeaux Genereux both ranked among the stalwarts of the British industry and his first three dams—Land of Dreams, Sahara Star and Vaigly Star—were all very talented sprinters with plenty of juvenile ability.

This encouraging background translated into some excellent returns at the sales. Off a €17,500 fee, he had fillies sell for 400,000gns and €350,000 and a colt for 300,000gns, with plenty of good judges among the buyers of his higher-priced progeny. He looks set for a fast start.

F2013 UNDER 10K SIRES
**BILL:** From the team that brought you Big Bad Bob, The Irish National Stud’s €1,000 stallion (pay now)

**ELUSIVE PIMPERNEL.** He was bred and is owned, like Big Bad Bob, by Mrs Cristina Patino’s Windflower Holdings. He is from the same family as Big Bad Bob (he’s by Elusive Quality out of Cara Fantasy, a half-sister by Sadler’s Wells to Big Bad Bob’s grandam, Persian Fantasy). And he was a better racehorse than Big Bad Bob, who did win four times as a 2-year-old, culminating in the Listed Autumn S.; but his only group win came in a Group 3 in Germany. Elusive Pimpernel won the G3 Acomb S. as a 2-year-old and ran second to St Nicholas Abbey in the G1 Racing Post Trophy, and came back at three to win the G3 Craven S. at Newmarket and run a good fifth in Makfi’s 2010 G1 English 2000 Guineas. From an initial crop of 53 registered foals (much bigger than Big Bad Bob’s first crop, though quite a few are still unnamed and some may be for jumps racing), Mrs Patino will have 14 2-year-olds by Elusive Pimpernel in training this year, according to her racing manager, BBA Ireland’s Patrick Cooper. And as for supporting your own horse, Snow Fairy’s first foal is a filly from Elusive Pimpernel’s third crop recently foaled at The Irish National Stud. Can lightning strike twice?

- **KELSEY:** Zoffany’s former Ballydoyle barnmate
- **RODERIC O’CONNOR** represents the “magic” Galileo over Danehill cross. His dam, the U.S. stakes winner Secret Garden, descends from the G1 Cheveley Park S. winner Durtal (Ire) (Lyphard), and has also produced the 925,000gns stakes winner Dazzling (Ire) (Galileo {Ire}). Roderic O’Connor was a Group 1 winner at two and three over a mile. He finished second to Frankel in the G1 Dewhurst S. in his third start with a 119 RPR, and won the G1 Criterium International two weeks later with a 118. His second Group 1 came in the Irish 2000 Guineas with a 117 RPR. Roderic O’Connor stands at Ballyhane Stud for €7,500 (see Andrew on Frozen Power for more on Ballyhane).

**ANDREW:** Considering that FROZEN POWER started out at a fee of only €4,500, this son of Oasis Dream will have to make his name the hard way. Fortunately, he is based at Joe Foley’s Ballyhane operation, which has a reputation for turning inexpensive stallions into prolific winner-getters. This process is partly a numbers game and Ballyhane did a good job with Frozen Power in his first season, which resulted in 115 foals. Yearling buyers clearly liked what they saw, with colts selling for 110,000gns, 80,000gns and 75,000gns.

Foley probably has Frozen Power’s disappointing 4-year-old campaign to thank for this well-bred horse falling into his price range. Frozen Power is better judged on his efforts in his first two seasons. He won three of his first four starts, including a listed victory at Deauville, and progressed to land the German 2,000 Guineas at three.

He had cost Godolphin 500,000gns as a yearling in 2008, his price being a reflection of his first-rate bloodlines. His sire, Oasis Dream, had been a champion at two and three and was already well on his way to becoming one of England’s highest-priced stallions. And his dam, Musical Treat, had already been represented by that magnificent filly Finsceal Beo, who went so close to completing a remarkable treble in the 1,000 Guineas equivalents in Britain, France and Ireland in 2007.

Frozen Power is one of several sons of Oasis Dream which have already been given their chance at stud. Four of them have sired stakes winners and one of them--Showcasing--gave Lope de Vega a very good fight in the battle for first-crop honors last year, despite having started out at only £5,000.

**F2014 SIRES: 1ST YEARLINGS 2015**

This sire crop is dominated by Juddmonte’s Frankel, unbeaten in 14 starts and the highest-rated racehorse in history. The over-and-under on his 2015 yearling average, for his first crop, is $1-million. In due course we will learn whether Frankel can transmit his class as a stallion, or whether he throws to anything other than his race record as a sire—which most do.

In a way, there’s not any debate about whether a breeder or buyer ‘uses’ Frankel: if you can afford to, you do. If not, well, there’s plenty of us in that category.

Besides Frankel, only four European stallions with their first yearlings will be standing for more than 10,000 (£ or €) in 2015; two are horses with key form behind Frankel, two came from Australia. The horse with the best form behind Frankel has to be Excelebration. The Coolmore partners bought into him after he won the G2 Hungerford S., against older horses, as a 3-year-old.
Before the Hungerford he had already been placed twice behind Frankel as a 3-year-old: second in the G3 Greenham, a Guineas prep, then third in the G1 St James’s Palace S. (Zoffany second), in between which he won the G2 German 2000 Guineas by seven lengths. He then won the G1 Prix du Moulin, at a mile, in September, and ran second again to Frankel, beaten four lengths in the G1 Queen Elizabeth II S. At four he was second two more times to Frankel in Group 1’s at a mile, and won two more Group 1’s at a mile after Frankel stepped up to 10 furlongs. In the G1 Queen Elizabeth S. in 2012, Excelebration won by four lengths himself, running an RPR 131. In other words, Excelebration was a clear second among European 2012 milers; he was as far ahead of the rest as Frankel was ahead of him.

Newells Park’s Nathaniel ran twice against Frankel, in what were the first and last races for both. In between he won the G2 King Edward VII at Royal Ascot and upset older horses, at three, in the G1 King George VI and Queen Elizabeth S., and also over 12 furlongs. At four he won the G1 Eclipse S. over 10 furlongs, was beaten a nose by Danedream in the 2012 ‘King George’; ran second to Snow Fairy in the G1 Irish Champion S.; and ran third, behind Frankel and Cirrus des Aigles, in the 2012 G1 Champion S. Remarkably, I think, in five of his last six starts he ran identical RPR’s (Racing Post Ratings) of 127, establishing Nathaniel indisputably as a very consistent, high-class horse, effective from 10-12 furlongs.

Two horses who started their careers in Australia are also among this small group. So You Think, who I wrote about last Dec. 31 (click here), won 10 Group 1’s--five in Australia and five in Europe--and ran RPR’s from 124-129 a total of 17 times. That’s quite amazing. So You Think was a 10-12 furlong horse, but the other 10k + Australian horse from this sire crop, Darley’s Sepoy, by Elusive Quality, comes from the other end of the distance spectrum. Sepoy won ten of his first 11 starts in Australia, at distances ranging from five to six furlongs, running RPRs between 119-126 in ten consecutive races.

BILL: Talk about a Market Darling, what about SEPOY as the Magic Millions sale in Queensland last month--26 yearlings from his first Australian crop sold in their Book 1, for an average of A$286,346, including an A$1.2-million colt bought by Spendthrift Farm; an A$850,000 filly bought by the China Horse Club; and two other colts brought A$575,000 and A$520,000, respectively. Sepoy was third on average at the sale, behind only champion sires Fastnet Rock and Redoute’s Choice, and was comfortably leading first-crop sire of yearlings. So You Think was second, with 16 yearlings in Magic Millions Book 1 averaging A$234,888.

By contrast, 20 foals from Sepoy’s first Northern Hemisphere crop averaged the equivalent of US$70,468 last year, while eight foals by So You Think averaged $42,654. Expect big advances for both at the Northern yearling sales later this year; in the meantime it will be interesting to see how both sell at the Inglis Easter Yearling Sale in April.

Sepoy, as mentioned, was all about speed; he never ran further than six furlongs, and in his first 11 starts, he won ten and was second once. He made six starts at two, winning five including two six-furlong Group 1’s, the Blue Diamond S. and the Golden Slipper. In the first half of his 3-year-old campaign he ran five times, winning all five, including another two Group 1’s. When he returned from a spell the following February (still as a 3-year-old), he was only fifth in a Group 1 prep in Australia, then ran down the field in Dubai in the G1 Golden Shaheen (synthetic track) and, later in the year, he was again down the field in the G1 July Cup in Newmarket, on heavy ground. So it didn’t all go to plan at all after the first half of his 3-year-old season, but up until then, he proved himself a sprinting superstar. That point obviously wasn’t lost on buyers at Magic Millions last month. He’s also a really good-looking horse so last month is very unlikely to be the last time you see his name in lights this year.

KELSEY: Standing for £20,000 at Newells Park, NATHANIEL looks like a good bet considering what we already know. By Galileo, he comes from one of the most prolific current families in the global stud book. His dam, the Group 3 winner Magnificent Style (Silver Hawk), has also produced the G1 Fillies’ Mile winner Playful Act (Ire) (Sadler’s Wells), who sold to John Ferguson for $10.5 million at Keeneland November in 2007 and has produced two graded winners in the U.S. and a stakes winner in England. Nathaniel is a full to G1 Irish Oaks winner Great Heavens (GB), and a half to four other stakes winners (two graded) in the U.S. and UK. Magnificent Style herself is a half-sister to G1 Strub S. winner Siberian Summer (Siberian Express).

Nathaniel’s race record reads just four wins from 11 starts, but he had the misfortune of running into monsters on a number of occasions, and his Racing Post Ratings paint a truer picture; Nathaniel notched an RPR of 127 on five occasions, including his last four starts. Nathaniel started just twice as a 2-year-old for two seconds, and in fact finished second by a half-length to Frankel on debut; the closest anyone would finish to the unbeaten champion. He broke his maiden first-out as a 3-year-old and after finishing second to Treasure Beach (Ire) (Galileo {Ire}) in the G3 Chester Vase, bypassed the Classics in favor of the G2 King Edward VII S. at Royal Ascot, where he drubbed future G1 Melbourne Cup winner Fiorente (Ire) (Monsun {Ger}) by five lengths.
Nathaniel recorded his first 127 next out when beating the 2010 Derby winner Workforce (GB) (King’s Best) by 2 3/4 lengths in the G1 King George, and he got a respectable 123 for his fifth-place finish in the G1 Champion S. to close out the season. Nathaniel bested Farhh (GB) (Pivotal {GB}) first-up in the G1 Coral-Eclipse as a 4-year-old, the first of four-straight 127s. The next came when he was second by a nose to Danedream (Ger) (Lomitas {GB}) in the King George; second to Snow Fairy (Ire) (Intikhab) in the G1 Irish Champion S., and third to Frankel in the Champion S.

Nathaniel finished second to Frankel (again) by weanling average last year ($140,654), but he was well clear of Excelebration (Ire) in third ($85,866). Furthermore, his median of $148,696 was remarkably similar to his average, suggesting a uniform quality amongst his 19 sold (from 23 offered).

ANDREW: With three wins from three starts, HARBOUR WATCH appeared to be well on his way to proving himself the best son of that popular sire Acclamation. His total winning margins stood at more than ten lengths and he was so impressive in landing the G2 Richmond S. that he was installed as ante-post favorite for the 2012 2,000 Guineas. Although he made his final start at the end of July, Timeform considered his Richmond S. performance superior to anything they saw in the top end-of-season juvenile events. Sadly he wasn’t able to race again.

Both Harbour Watch’s sire, Acclamation, and grandsire, Royal Applause, have proved very effective sires of 2-year-olds and a couple of Acclamation’s sons are already keeping up the good work. Dark Angel--another who raced only at two--was rated 113 by Timeform, compared to Harbour Watch’s 121. Even so, Dark Angel has proved a major success as a stallion, siring a string of group winners in his first four crops. Equiano, another son of Acclamation, had three group performers among his first runners last year.

Harbour Watch also has the distinction of having the blue hen Fall Aspen as his third dam, so he represents a fair gamble at £7,500. He has the added attraction of being free of the Danzig blood that supplied the Fall Aspen family with five group winners, including a pair of July Cup heroes, so he has plenty of options. However, it was an Octagonal mare that supplied Harbour Watch with a 240,000gns filly among his first sales weanlings. Another of his weanlings, a 62,000gns colt out of a Dubawi mare, has two lines to Fall Aspen, through the sisters Sheroog and Colorado Dancer (dam of the great Dubai Millennium). Perhaps we will be seeing more of this cross.

F2014 (Other) 10K & UNDER SIRES

BILL: Coolmore’s POWER strikes me as a horse who has slipped under the radar. He ran six times as a 2-year-old, winning four, including the G2 Coventry S. at Royal Ascot and the G1 National S. at the Curragh, and his only two defeats came in Group 1’s, when second in the Pheonix S. in Ireland, and to Parish Hall in the Dewhurst S. at Newmarket. He was well adrift in the G1 English 2000 Guineas won by stabledmate Camelot, and in the G1 St James’s Palace S. at Royal Ascot, but in between came back to form by winning the G1 Irish 2000 Guineas. So he won the Coventry, the National S., and the Irish 2000, and was second in the Dewhurst. That’s a lot of form for an €8,000 stallion. His sire, Oasis Dream, has quite a few young sons at stud, of which Showcasing is the pick so far, so there’s no reason to think his pedigree is an impediment to sire success, especially as his dam is a half-sister to Footstepsinthesand from the very accomplished family of Dancing Rocks.

KELSEY: As Bill mentioned last week, Giant’s Causeway is not-so-quietly creating his own dynasty as a sire-of-sires, and it seems likely he will branch off from Storm Cat into his own line. Giant’s Causeway’s Shamardal sired last year’s leading European first-crop sire Lope De Vega, and Shamardal will this year be represented among the new sire class by Darley Kildangan’s CASAMENTO, who won the G2 Beresford S. and G1 Racing Post Trophy (RPR 121) both over a mile as a 2-year-old and added the G3 Prix du Prince d’Orange as a 3-year-old. Casamento is a half-sister to Wana Doo (Grand Slam), the dam of dual Group 1-winning miler Toronado (Ire) (High Chaparral {Ire}), and the family also boasts plenty of success in Australia. Casamento’s weanlings were well-received last year, selling for up to €210,000 (top filly) and 110,000gns (top colt) with an average of €47,037. Casamento stands at Kildangan this year for €5,000.

ANDREW: I have to declare an interest here, as I suggested the mating that produced the very good but rather luckless sprinter BATED BREATH. A Group 1 victory proved frustratingly elusive for this half-brother to the high-class Cityscape. He failed by only a half-length in Dream Ahead’s July Cup, by a nose in Dream Ahead’s Sprint Cup, by a neck in G1 Nearctic S. and by three-quarters of a length in the G1 King’s Stand S. Part of his problem was that he rarely got the fast ground that brought out the best in this handsome horse, one exception being the time he defeated Sole Power in the G2 Temple S. But the same could also have been said of his sire Dansili, another who narrowly failed to become a Group 1 winner, and that hasn’t prevented Dansili from becoming one of the world’s best stallions.

Three sons of Dansili have so far sired group winners, and there was a lot of buzz at last year’s yearling sales about the first crop by Zoffany, another of Dansili’s fastest sons. Bated Breath has been given every chance to follow in their footsteps.
Breeders who attended Banstead’s show of Frankel foals last summer will have seen Bated Breath’s imposing daughter out of Zenda, the classic-winning dam of Kingman.

His first sales weanlings also impressed. Sired at a fee of £8,000, they achieved a median of over 32,000gns and an average of over 39,000gns, with Shadwell going to 130,000gns for his colt out of a Zamindar mare.

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