Giacomo's unlikely Derby victory vindicates entire sire line

by Rommy Faversham

Giacomo's stunning victory in Saturday's Kentucky Derby (G1) brings new vitality to one of the American Thoroughbred's oldest remaining male lines, that of hallmark stallion Himyar (1875) through his son Plaudit.

NTRA Photo

GIACOMO

Rarely in vogue and often on the verge of extinction, this distinct line has somehow survived in tail-male for more than a century without recording a single classic triumph. Giacomo's 50.30-to-1 shocker on Saturday is this line's first Derby win since his tenth generation sire Plaudit prevailed back in 1898.

Plaudit was trained by eminent horseman John E. Madden and stood at Hamburg Place outside Lexington. His best son King James (1905) could not match strides with elite contemporaries Colin and Fair Play but became a handicap champion at age four.

The Plaudit line, chronically attenuated throughout the 20th century, does seem to have enjoyed continued success in one particularly important contest, Belmont Park's Metropolitan Handicap (G1).

King James' victory in the 1909 "Met Mile" was followed by a runner-up finish in the race by his son Spur, who proceeded to sire Metropolitan winner Sting. Sting was the sire of Metropolitan Handicap winner Questionnaire. After several generations of placings in the race by Plaudit's few remaining direct descendants, Holy Bull captured the Metropolitan Handicap (G1) in 1994.

To the contrary, prior to Giacomo's performance, the Plaudit line had not, since its founder, done much running in the Kentucky Derby. Giacomo's sire, Racing Hall of Famer and Derby favorite Holy Bull, tired badly in the slop after a poor break from the gate in the '94 edition of the classic.

The great multiple champion Dr. Fager, a close relative of Holy Bull's sire Great Above and winter book favorite for the 1967 Derby was, with his questionable knees, steered clear of the Triple Crown trail. Dr. Fager's sire, 1951 Santa Anita Derby winner Rough'n Tumble, came up lame soon after arriving in Kentucky. In 1942 Rough'n Tumble's sire Free for All, another winter book favorite, hurt himself in the Derby Trial and was retired.

So really, in patrilinear terms, Giacomo's Derby victory avenged more than just his sire's most memorable failure. It avenged a whole sire line.

Just the tonic to help keep the old top strain going.

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Giacomo, Gr/ro. c., 2002

Holy Bull 91 478 fls, 22 SWs SI 1.92 DI=5.00	Great Above 72 13 wins, $331,377, SW 603 fls, 39 SWs SI 1.33 DI=2.67	Minnesota Mac 64 244 fls, 18 SWs SI 1.83 DI=1.50	Rough'n Tumble 48
			*Cow Girl II 49
		Ta Wee 66 5 fls, 4 SWs DI=3.00	Intentionally 56
			Aspidistra 54
	Sharon Brown 80 3 wins, $45,860 13 fls, 2 SWs DI=2.75	Al Hattab 66 363 fls, 44 SWs SI 1.93 DI=2.80	The Axe II 58
			*Abyssinia II 53
		Agathea's Dawn 70 11 fls, 0 SWs DI=1.96	*Grey Dawn II 62
			Agathea 55
Set Them Free 90 6 fls, 1 SW DI=3.57	Stop the Music 70 11 wins, $448,922, SW 667 fls, 46 SWs SI 1.76 DI=2.23	Hail to Reason 58 308 fls, 43 SWs SI 4.40 DI=3.18	*Turn-to 51
			Nothirdchance 48
		Bebopper 62 15 fls, 3 SWs DI=2.04	Tom Fool 49
			*Bebop II 57
	Valseuse (Fr) 73 Unraced 7 fls, 2 SWs DI=5.15	Tyrant 66 486 fls, 35 SWs SI 1.18 DI=6.25	Bold Ruler 54
			*Anadem II 54
		=Barbarossa (Fr) 68 6 fls, 1 SW DI=1.84	=Cambremont (Fr) 62
			=Barbara (GB) 47

HIMYAR
- PLAUDIT
  - KING JAMES
    - SPUR
      - STING
        - QUESTIONNAIRE
          - FREE FOR ALL
            - ROUGH'N TUMBLE
              - MINNESOTA MAC
                - GREAT ABOVE
                - HOLY BULL
                - GIACOMO