



BREEDERS' CUP FOCUS: DIRT MILE

BY JASON SHANDLER

Owner	Centennial Farms
Breeder	Gracefield Equine & Hargus Sexton
Trainer	James A. Jerkens

Corinthian

Centennial Farms has owned some pretty amazing horses since beginning its operation in 1982.

Run by its founder and chairman, Don Little Sr., and president, Don Little Jr., Centennial has had the fortune of racing 1992 Eclipse Award Sprint champion Rubiano, 1993 Belmont Stakes (gr. I) winner Colonial Affair, and 1998 Fountain of Youth Stakes (gr. II) winner Lil's Lad, as well as many others.

In all, Centennial Farms has had more than 60 horses that have won or placed in graded stakes. But for all its success, there has never been a Breeders' Cup champion.

The Massachusetts-based company is hoping that will end this year with Corinthian, a sparkling 4-year-old colt who is being pointed to the inaugural \$1-million Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile at Monmouth Park Oct. 26. By Pulpit, out of Easy Goer mare Multiply, Corinthian was one of two yearlings purchased by Centennial Farms at the Fasig-Tipton Saratoga 2004 select yearlings sale. He was purchased for \$385,000.

"He was a big, rangy yearling," Don Little Jr. said. "Obviously, he had an incredible pedigree, but we could tell that he was not going to be an early blooming 2-year-old. We took our time with him."

Corinthian seemed to be on the fast track early, however, winning two of his first three races, including an allowance victory over Jazil to start his 3-year-old campaign. Bred in Kentucky by Gracefield Equine and Hargus Sexton, Corinthian then crossed the finish line first in the Fountain of Youth (gr. II), but was disqualified to third.

Corinthian was still one of the early favorites for the 2006 Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I), but a minor fracture of the left hind ankle put him on the sidelines for more than four months. A skin infection later shelved the hard-luck colt until the beginning of 2007.

"It was frustrating," Little said. "But it has always been our philosophy to do right by the horse, and that you don't have to have a Derby winner to have a good stallion prospect."

Corinthian has turned out to be that prospect, as he has three wins this year, two of them graded stakes. The last victory was in the \$600,000 Metropolitan Handicap (gr. I) at Belmont Park May 28, Centennial's first grade I winner since Colonial Affair's 1994 Jockey Club Gold Cup (gr. I) score.

"It was a long time coming," Little said. "We have a lot of really good people and a great selection team, so we knew it would happen again eventually."

Since the Met Mile win, Corinthian, who has earned \$727,273 from 11 starts, was unplaced in a pair of grade I stakes in his last two starts. But Little remains confident trainer Jimmy Jerkens will have him ready for the Breeders' Cup despite nearly two months on the sidelines.

"He's training terrific," Little said. "His blood work couldn't be any better. If you look at his career, his sharpest races have been when Jimmy has given him a layoff. It would be great to win a Breeders' Cup. We've been close with a couple, but have been a little unlucky."

At the very least, Centennial has a stallion prospect. Corinthian will be retired to stud at Gainesway Farm in 2008.



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MATT DEAN/EQUUS PHOTO

PULPIT, b, 1994	A.P. Indy, 1989	Seattle Slew, 1974	Bold Reasoning My Charmer
	CORINTHIAN, ch c, March 7, 2003	Preach, 1989	Weekend Surprise, 1980
MULTIPLY, b, 1992		Easy Goer, 1986	Mr. Prospector, 1970
	Add, 1985		Narrate, 1980
			Alydar, 1975
		Relaxing, 1976	Buckpasser Marking Time
		Spectacular Bid, 1976	Bold Bidder Spectacular
		Number, 1979	Nijinsky II Special



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