

Naming the Nags

LOUISE M. ACKERMAN

LAST YEAR I named a pure bred foal and registered the name with the Jockey Club in New York. The name accepted by the Club may not consist of more than fourteen letters, with spaces and punctuation marks counting as letters, nor more than three words. The name may not be that of a living person, nor a famous or notorious person, nor a famous horse. It may not be a trade name, an advertising slogan, nor a copyrighted name, such as the title of a song, a play, a movie, a book or a magazine. Nor may it be a name the spelling or pronunciation of which is similar to a name already in use. In naming my foal I adhered to these rules because they are the general rules set forth by the Jockey Club for the naming of thoroughbred horses. And although the registration number assigned my foal was 523693, indicating that that many different names have been accepted by the Club under its rules in the past, I was successful in thinking up a name never before used. My colt is officially named Chesty Sweeper.

To a person not familiar with the blood lines of thoroughbred horses, that name has no particular significance, but the name is a combination of parts of the dam's name, Chestacola, and the sire's, Sweeper's Son, both officially registered with the Jockey Club. Combining names to indicate the breeding is a common way to name foals. Star Blen was sired by the stallion Blenheim II and out of the dam Starweed. Star Blen's half brother, Bull Weed, is by Bull Lea and out of the same dam, Starweed. Spotted Bull is not bovine in species but is a stallion sired by Bull Dog and out of Spotted Beauty. Other examples which come to my mind are: Battle Dust by Battledore and out of Cloud O' Dust, Grand Admiral by War Admiral and out of Grand Flame, and Teddy's Comet by Teddy and out of Flying Comet.

A certain announcer at horse shows in the Middle West used

to have fun when my daughter rode the mare, Chestacola, into the ring by solemnly announcing that Chestacola was by Chesterfield and out of Coca Cola, the well known brand names of a cigarette and a soft drink. The spectators always laughed because they understood that method of naming horses. Actually Chestacola is by Star Flash and out of Patricola, the "Chest" part of her name being from her chestnut color.

Some families of thoroughbred horses are more famous than others and the progeny of these lines are more promising as racers, hunters, steeplechasers, or cavalry mounts, depending on the use for which the animals are bred. One of the most sought after blood lines is, of course, the Man O' War, and any breeder fortunate enough to have blood of that incomparable sire in his foal's veins is sure to try to put the fact into the foal's name. Eternal War, as his name indicates, is a descendant of Man O' War. Eternal War was sired by Eternal Bull but his dam was Red Haze, a daughter of Man O' War whose nickname was Big Red. War admiral is a son of Man O' War, as is War Relic. War Grey is a daughter.

Man O' War's sire was Fair Play whose blood line is considered one of the three great American lines. Breeders always hope for another Man O' War. The names of many of Fair Play's descendants are combinations of words with either Fair or Play included. Examples of these names are: Fair Rochester, Fairday, Fair Avis, and Fair Star; Chance Play, My Play, Display, and Head Play. These names all indicate the famous forebear.

The family of horses headed by the stud, Milkman, is a more recent promising family of thoroughbreds, and the name, Milkman, has led into a bonanza of names. Milkman was out of the dam, Milkmaid. Some descendants of the line with "milky" names are: Milky Way, Pasteurized, and Powdered Milk.

An important strain of thoroughbred horses was headed by the imported stallion, Sweeper, he by Broomstick. There have followed many names indicating the forebear—Chimney Sweep, Sweeper's Son, Sweep On, Sweep All, Sweepsta, and my pride and joy, the yearling, Chesty Sweeper.

Sometimes a foal is named by inference rather than by actual repetition of parts of names. The recent sensation, Native Dancer, is by Polynesian and out of Geisha Girl. The parents of Eiffel

Tower were Beau Pere and La France. Pretty Paws is by Gallant Fox. Guillotine's dam is Blade of Time, who was sired by Sickle. Greek Ship is by Heliopolis out of Boat, she by Man O' War. This method of names sometimes strains the imagination but can result in satisfactory names.

Of course, not all foals are named in a serious vein. I suspect facetious intent when I see such registered names as Little Sip (sired by High Ball), Wee Nip (out of Bourbonette), Dustaway (by Whisk Broom II), Fizzaz (by Bubbling Over), Big Pebble (out of Beach Talk), Quickly (by Haste), The Cad (by Lovely Night out of Kissantell), Get Off (out of On Her Toes), and Slap and Tickle (by Greek Bachelor). Whoever named those thoroughbreds was having fun!

Occasionally a breeder will name a foal with a name having local significance. Three middle west thoroughbreds were named respectively: Kansas King (bred in Kansas), Ashland Babe (bred near Ashland, Nebraska), and Pawnee Girl (from Pawnee City, Nebraska). There are other such names in the registry book of the Jockey Club.

The oddest names are the ones in which syllables are combined to concoct words resulting in sometimes sensible and sometimes nonsensical names. These are the names often seen on racing cards from the lesser circuits. The following names are ones actually registered with the Jockey Club: Sunayr, Beedle Boodle, Canfli, Xingu, Chippa, Dulzura, Warlou, Whichone, Dis Dame, Buginarug, and Ranikaboo. But somehow the great horses never seem to be afflicted with this kind of name. To so name a foal would seem to discourage the animal from any attempts to achieve greatness.

The important thing to note throughout this discussion of the naming of thoroughbred horses is that the rules of the Jockey Club have been followed. The breeders submit names, three choices for each foal, but a name is really given by the Jockey Club. The final arbiter is the Registrar of the Club. If none of the first three choices is acceptable, the Registrar will request more names until a name is sent that can be used by that particular foal.

The Jockey Club intends to sanction names having no connotations which are in poor taste because the names are often blared loudly over public address systems at race tracks, horse shows, and

other places where crowds gather. However, the Jockey Club did not foresee the use a certain New York hotel would make of horses' names when the hotel named various room and lounges after famous horses. The hotel had rooms named for Man O' War, Gallant Fox, Twenty Grand and others but it has steadfastly refused to name a room after one popular race horse whose registered name is Assault.

Lots of fun has been poked at the names of race horses. Spike Jones made a recording, *Feetlebaum*, of a fictitious race won by a horse, Feetlebaum. Spike, in reporting the race, worked in such phrases as "Cabbage leads by a head—," "Sea Sick's on the rail—," "Mother-in-law is bringing up the rear—," and "Girdle comes into the stretch—." But most horses have sensible names although there really was a filly, Girdle, that won the Ladies Handicap at Belmont in 1903.

Before too long the Jockey Club will be assigning the registered number of one million. The millionth name will be limited in letters and will not be the duplication of any other name. Since there are only twenty-six letters in our alphabet, the future naming of foals will pose a problem in mathematics because there is a limitation to the possible pronounceable fourteen letter names. Horses could be identified by their registration numbers but numbers would be a dreary substitute for these wonderful names.

On my desk at the moment are the blanks for naming another thoroughbred foal. The dam is Classys Spic and the sire is Our Shadow. Some important antecedents of the foal are Broomstick, Black Toney, Dark Ronald, Ben Brush, Domino, Bend Or, Torchbearer, and Royal Rose. I must select three names to submit to the Jockey Club. What syllables shall I choose? What fourteen letters? What word or words? What will be a proud and beautiful name for a proud and beautiful filly?