

Prices of NY-Breds at Auction Soared in 2011

By Mike Kane

Substantial gains by New York-breds at auction in 2011 helped the national thoroughbred bloodstock market bounce back in a big way after four years of declines.

Prices of New York-breds began to move upward following the announcement that the oft-delayed Video Lottery Terminal casino would open at Aqueduct Racetrack in the third quarter of the year. Revenue from the casino's machines fueled major hikes in purses and breeder awards in 2012, and increased demand for New York-breds.

Almost every year-on-year New York-bred sales statistic showed significant improvement, and some categories yielded record figures. A total of 705 New York-breds were sold at auction for \$27,371,414, a jump of 46 percent over the 2010 gross sales figure. The average price of \$38,825 was also a 46 percent improvement from the previous year.

Blood-Horse magazine reported in its 2011 Auctions Digest issue in December that on the national level, gross sales increased by 21 percent and average sales were up 27 percent.

Prices for yearlings led the way in New York, as average prices climbed 46 percent, from \$25,861 to \$37,635, and the gross sales figure of \$13,473,330 represented a 35 percent increase from 2010. Over the last 20 years, the \$37,635 average price ranks second only to the \$38,116 average recorded in 2007. The median price soared 67 percent to a record \$20,000, as a total of 38 yearlings sold for \$100,000 or more, double the number in 2010.

The highest-priced New York-bred yearling in 2011 was a colt by Medaglia d'Oro out of Summer Flash, bred by Gallagher Stud, who brought \$500,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Saratoga Select sale in August. John Ferguson purchased the dark bay or brown colt on behalf of Sheikh Mohammed of Dubai.

In October at Fasig-Tipton in Kentucky, a Lemon Drop Kid yearling filly out of Salty Romance sold for \$375,000, leading the way in the first phase of the Flying Zee Stable's dispersal of the racing and bloodstock of Carl Lizza, who died in July. Lizza's prominent breeding operation was based at Highcliff Farm in Delanson, and the dispersal at auctions in Kentucky and Maryland had a significant impact on New York-bred sales for the year.

The 2-year-olds in training sales results were extremely strong as well. A total of 206 sold for \$9,578,588, an 88 percent jump in the gross sales figure. The number of horses sold

climbed 56 percent, the average price rose 21 percent to \$46,498, and the median price of \$25,000 was up 25 percent. Twenty-three of the New York-bred 2-year-old sales were for six figures, compared to 12 in 2010. Nationally, *Blood-Horse* statistics show a seven percent decline in the average price and that the median was flat.

The top-priced New York-bred 2-year-old in training was the \$925,000 Flatter colt out of Silence Please being trained by Hall of Famer Bob Baffert for owner Kaleem Shah. Named Brigand and bred by Berkshire Stud, the colt finished second in the Grade 3 Hollywood Juvenile Championship Stakes and was fourth in the Grade 3 Best Pal.

Led by a \$280,000 Bernardini colt out of La Grand Mamma, the average price of weanlings improved by 26 percent to a record \$37,521. This represents a 98 percent gain over the 2009 average. The median price was up 111 percent to a record \$20,000, with six weanlings bringing six-figures prices, triple the number of the previous year. The gross sales total of \$2,363,823 was up 40 percent, a sharp reversal to two years of double-digit declines.

The only notable decline in the auction figures was the 12 percent drop in the average price for New York-bred mares. However, the 2010 average was pushed up by a \$1 million sale. The 90 percent jump in the median price to \$10,000 in 2011 reflects the overall growth of the market. The leader at \$280,000 was Mother Russia, a stakes winner in foal to Tapit.