

The coincidence that Fair Play followed Rock Sand as a stallion was to have momentous consequences for the *American Stud Book*.

James R. Keene at Castleton had achieved extraordinary success with the Domino–Commando line and imported English mares and to a lesser extent with Ben Brush and imported mares, and the H.P. Whitney stud exploited the Peter Pan–Broomstick cross with good if less spectacular results (Equipoise was the only first-class horse produced in the Whitney stud by the Peter Pan–Broomstick cross), so, too, did the Fair Play cross on Rock Sand mares produce a string of good horses.

Fair Play was the first stallion in America to sire six winners of more than \$100,000 each: Man o’ War, Display, Mad Hatter, Chance Shot, Chance Play, and Mad Play. Everyone of them except Display carried the blood of Rock Sand on the dam’s side; and Display was a plodder who never won in New York.

YEAR	AGE	STS	1ST	2ND	3RD	EARNED
1907	at 2	10	3	3	2	\$16,735
1908	at 3	16	7	8	1	\$70,215
1909	at 4	6	0	0	0	\$ 0
Lifetime		32	10	11	3	\$86,950

Keene and Whitney bred for early maturity and speed, but the Keene pedigrees had some stoutness on the dam’s side, and they swept the boards in three-year-old racing in a way the Whitney horses never could match.

The late William Woodward Sr. told the author that, when he was forming his Belair Stud, before 1920, August Belmont advised him: “Billy, breed to stoutness, because when you get one that can run, you have a very good horse.” Woodward followed his advice, and won the one and a half-mile Belmont Stakes five times in ten years.

With no quick-maturing, sprinting blood in his pedigree and virtually none in the pedigrees of the Belmont mares, it was not to be expected that Fair Play would sire quick-maturing, sprinting stock. Nor did he. His percentage of stakes winners (18 percent) was lower than that of Broomstick (25 percent) and also lower than that of Domino (42 percent) and Commando (37 percent). Furthermore, his percentage of winners was only 51 percent as against a breed average of 54 percent. This last figure, however, is somewhat misleading, since Belmont chose not to train a substantial number of his fillies.

As with other late-maturing, staying strains, the wastage was considerable, but the good ones were very, very good.

Physically, Fair Play strongly resembled his maternal grandsire, Bend Or, also a chestnut with a white face and also an excellent sire. Bend Or, though, was a

horse of placid disposition, while Fair Play was full of fire. Fair Play led the sire list three times, in 1920, 1924, and 1927, and he was probably the best colt bred and raced by Belmont in the United States.

Man o' War, his great son, was certainly a better racehorse than was Fair Play, but Belmont had the misfortune to sell him, and Tracery was also probably a better colt (he won the St. Leger, etc.) but Belmont raced him in England and sold him as a stallion to Argentina.



KEENE AND MORGAN

Display

Even in recent years, some 60 percent of American stakes winners have carried the blood of Fair Play, and there is no better source for soundness and stoutness among the American strains than he.

His grandsire, Bend Or, sired the mighty Ormonde (unbeaten English Triple Crown winner)

and Fair Play did as well: He sired the great Man o' War.

Fair Play died in December of 1929, and there is a bronze statue of him at E. Barry Ryan's Normandy Farm in Lexington.¹

End Notes:

1. E. Barry Ryan bought Normandy Farm, part of Joseph Widener's Elmendorf Farm, in the 1950s. It is now owned by Nancy Polk. Ryan died in 1993.

MAN O' WAR

At irregular intervals, sometimes spaced many years apart, horses appear on the Turf that have an electrifying effect on racing men. The blood surges, and the pulses quicken at the very sight of such Olympians on the track, and this reaction is not strictly related to racing performances.

In France, Ksar (1918) had it, so that it was a national disaster when he was beaten, which happened a few times. Native Dancer had it, and in recent times, Secretariat had it.

Going back farther, Colin (1905) had it, and the writer listened to old-time horsemen talk about him with an otherworld expression on their faces. Man o' War was the first great horse the author ever saw perform. We can still remember vividly the first time we ever saw him. It was Futurity Day at Belmont Park. In order to be sure to get a good look at Man o' War, we left the stands early. In those days there were some large trees in the Belmont paddock, as well as clumps of laurel. Rounding some of the laurel bushes, one was flanked by tall trees whose branches nearly met overhead, like a gothic arch. Underneath this arch, framed by the dark shadows behind, stood a chestnut colt, with ears pricked. He radiated majesty, energy, and power—a veritable Alexander—awaiting the moment for new worlds to conquer. It was fifty-five years ago, and we never saw such a sight again.

Man o' War was foaled on March 29, 1917, at August Belmont's Nursery Stud near Lexington, the result of a mating between the home sire Fair Play, with Mahubah, a daughter of another home sire, Rock Sand (winner of the Triple Crown of 1903 in England). Mahubah, who had won only one race, was described by her trainer as having very good speed but being excessively nervous (like the dam of Lexington). Belmont, who did not approve of strenuous racing of fillies in any case (especially after the disappointing stud career of champion Beldame), did not persist and sent Mahubah to stud after very few starts.

Mahubah bred five foals, all by Fair Play, and three were stakes winners. First came a filly, Masda, born when Mahubah was a five-year-old; Masda won a stakes

and also bred three stakes winners.

With a barren year intervening, Mahubah next foaled Man o' War.

When Belmont decided to sell his 1918 crop of yearlings, the United States was in World War I, and Belmont had been commissioned as a major in the army. He wanted to give his entire time and effort to the war, and he had no way of knowing that the war would be over in November of 1918. Allegedly, his first inclination was to hold out Man o' War, which he regarded as the best of his crop, but on second thought, he decided to sell everything.

There may have been something to this tale, as Louis Feustel—who afterward trained Man o' War—later said that when he inspected the Nursery Stud yearlings at the farm, he had not been shown Man o' War. After fruitless efforts to sell the entire yearling crop, for prices reported as from \$42,000 to \$30,000, the yearlings were put up for sale at Saratoga. Man o' War was among them.



Sam Riddle

The author once asked the late Max Hirsch and the late Colonel Phil Chinn, who each enjoyed exalted reputations as judges of yearlings, why each one had not bought Man o' War for his own account. The answers were revealing:

Max Hirsch said (seriously), "He was too nervous. He had pawed a deep trench in the dirt underneath the webbing of his stall door."

Col. Chinn, who really neither knew nor cared about pedigrees and thought they were a prime subject for jesting, remarked, "His third dam was by Macgregor. That Macgregor cross stopped me." This comment was followed by a joyful chuckle.

The second dam of Man o' War was by Merry Hampton, who was a very poor sire, and the fourth dam was by Underhand, another very poor sire. None of these mares made a worthwhile mark on the track or at stud. Furthermore, Man o' War's only American strain was his sire line, back to Australian. So, three-quarters of Man o' War's pedigree was very good and one-quarter was very bad.

What are the odds against breeding a colt like Man o' War in any case? From a line of mares like he came from, one would need a computer to calculate the odds.

Many tales were circulated as to who was the underbidder for Man o' War. The most likely candidate seems to have been Robert L. Gerry, who was looking for a hunter prospect and was attracted by Man o' War's size. This circumstance was not unlike the advice the late Edward Kennedy received from many quarters—to castrate his big gray colt and put him by as a steeplechaser. The colt was The Tetrarch.

By such slender threads are fame, fortune, and stud book history woven together.

The Saratoga sale average that year was \$1,038, and Man o' War brought \$5,000, so there must have been at least two bidders who were keen to have him. Praise for him at that stage was not universal, as Louis Feustel said of his first sight of the colt: "Very tall and gangling, he was thin and so on the leg as to give the same ungainly impression one gets in seeing a week-old foal."

Feustel, to his honor, confessed that he thought some of the other Belmont colts might be better. Man o' War was somewhat Roman-nosed and short in the neck.

The most expensive yearling at the sale was Golden Broom, bought by Mrs. Walter M. Jeffords Sr. at \$15,600. She was the niece of Mrs. Samuel D. Riddle, whose husband bought Man o' War. Riddle had been a good amateur rider in his younger days and was increasing his stable at the time he bought Man o' War.

Fair Play, 1905	Hastings, 1893	Spendthrift, 1876	Australian, 1858	West Australian Emilia	
			Aerolite, 1861	Lexington Florine	
		Cinderella, 1885	Tomahawk, 1863	King Tom Mincemeat	
			Manna, 1874	Brown Bread Tartlet	
	Fairy Gold, 1896	Bend Or, 1877	Doncaster, 1870	Stockwell Marigold	
			Rouge Rose, 1865	Thormanby Ellen Horne	
		Dame Masham, 1889	Galliard, 1880	Galopin Mavis	
			Pauline, 1883	Hermit Lady Masham	
	Mahubah, 1910	Rock Sand, 1900	Sainfoin, 1887	Springfield, 1873	St. Albans Viridis
				Sanda, 1878	Wenlock Sandal
Roquebrune, 1893			St. Simon, 1881	Galopin St. Angela	
		St Marguerite, 1879	Hermit Devotion		
Merry Token, 1891		Merry Hampton, 1884	Hampton, 1872	Lord Clifden Lady Langden	
			Doll Tearsheet, 1877	Broomielaw Mrs. Quickly	
	Mizpah, 1880	Macgregor, 1867	Macaroni Necklace		
Underhand Mare, 1863		Underhand The Slayers Daughter			



Man o' War

(After Man o' War's prowess on the Turf had become a legend, Riddle at times assumed airs of pomposity in reminiscence. One day in the presence of his wife, who supplied most of the ready cash, he announced: "The greatest day in my life was the day I bought Man o' War." Mrs. Riddle cut him down to size: "Sam, the greatest day in your life was the day you married me.")

Both Man o' War and Golden Broom were sent to training quarters at Berlin, Maryland. It was then customary in this country to try yearlings in the autumn over a quarter-mile. When these two colts were pitted against each other, Golden Broom won by a half-length, which led to the erroneous conclusion, lasting into their two-year-old season, that Golden Broom was the better of the pair.

This subject of yearling trials should be of extreme interest to racing men. The late A.J. Joyner, who trained many high-class horses (including Fair Play and Whisk Broom II), and the late William Woodward Sr., who bred and owned a galaxy of good ones (Triple Crown winners Gallant Fox and Omaha, for instance), assured the author that yearling trials were "never wrong." By this they meant that the best yearling would prove eventually to be the best racehorse in any group of yearlings. It is a fact that West Australian (foaled in 1850), first winner

of the English Triple Crown, was backed by owner John Bowes for the Derby on the strength of his yearling trial, while Lord Lyon (Triple Crown), Hermit (Derby), and Bend Or (Derby) all were tried as yearlings and known then to be high-class colts. Why has the practice dropped out in England and Ireland?

One of the remarkable things about Man o' War was his constitution. When he was shipped out of Berlin to the old Havre de Grace track (now gone), he caught cold and ran a temperature of 106 degrees—but he was back at work within a week.

By the time the stable reached New York, the clockers had had ample opportunity to assess the merits of Man o' War. So sensational were his works that he was odds-on at 3-5 his first time out, in a field of maidens on June 6.

Man o' War came down a straight five furlongs in :59, winning by six lengths. Three days later, he was out again in the five and a half-furlong Keene Memorial Stakes. An old rivalry was renewed there, as Man o' War met On Watch, sired by Fair Play's old conqueror Colin. Man o' War came away at the finish to win by three lengths. In the

YEAR	AGE	STS	1ST	2ND	3RD	EARNED
1919	at 2	10	9	1	0	\$ 83,325
1920	at 3	11	11	0	0	\$166,140
Lifetime		21	20	1	0	\$249,465

Youthful Stakes on June 21, Man o' War gave On Watch twelve pounds and still won by two and a half lengths. Two days later, he was out again for the Hudson Stakes with an impost of 130 pounds. His odds were 1-10, and he won eased. Eleven days later, he won the six-furlong Tremont Stakes easily, carrying 130 again and giving fifteen pounds to Upset.

Thus, Man o' War had won five races in a one-month period, and he had made sport of 130 pounds, conceding lumps of weight with it.

After racing shifted to Saratoga, Mrs. Jeffords' Golden Broom won the Saratoga Special, and another informal trial with Man o' War was arranged. After a few strides, it was clear that Man o' War by then was the better of the pair, and he went his three furlongs in 11 seconds each.

After an easy win in the United States Hotel Stakes came a race that has caused endless discussion—the Sanford Memorial, on August 13, at six furlongs. Again Man o' War carried 130 pounds to Upset's 115. Many legends have it that jockey Johnny Loftus had Man o' War facing the wrong way when the start was made. Nevertheless, two horses, The Swimmer and Captain Alcock came away after him.

Golden Broom broke on top, followed by Upset. Loftus headed for the rails on the turn, and when Golden Broom began to tire, Willie Knapp on Upset took a slight lead on the outside. Lapped on the outside of Man o' War was Donnacona.

As Man o' War was pocketed with only a furlong to go, Loftus decided there was going to be no opening and pulled to the outside, to begin his charge. It was too late, and Upset lasted to win by a half-length.

Man o' War met Upset five times again and beat him every time, and what the racing public thought of Man o' War's defeat in the Sanford was reflected in the betting in the Grand Union Hotel Stakes ten days later: Man o' War again had 130 pounds up, to Upset's 125, and bettors made Man o' War 1-2. He won easily by a length.

In the six-furlong Hopeful, still at Saratoga, Man o' War again had 130 up, and he won by four lengths from the good filly Cleopatra, with Upset fifth. Man o' War was becoming fractious in his eagerness to run, and he held up the start of this race for twelve minutes by his unruliness.

Man o' War's next race was the Futurity at Belmont Park, then regarded as the most important two-year-old fixture of the year. Man o' War's weight was 127 pounds, after he had carried 130 in six successive races. His best opponent was John P. Grier (117), owned by H.P. Whitney and trained by James Rowe Sr. Man o' War was not in front for the first half-mile, but after that, he surged past John P. Grier and Dominique to win easily by two and a half lengths.

The *Daily Racing Form* handicapper, C.C. Ridley, gave his assessment of the 1919 two-year-olds: Man o' War, 136 pounds; Blazes, 120; and Upset, 116. This spread of sixteen pounds between top-weighted Man o' War and Blazes, second top-weight, was six pounds more than the spread assigned on the English Free Handicap of 1913 between The Tetrarch (perhaps the most sensational two-year-old of the twentieth century in England) and the second colt on the list [Corcyra].

As a two-year-old, Man o' War could demolish his fields with authority, yet his times recorded at that age were not truly extraordinary. He never ran six furlongs in better than 1:11. That particular phenomenon we often have observed: Where one horse demonstrates a great superiority over his competitors, his winning time often is quite ordinary, and if the superior horse had been absent, several of his competitors probably could have recorded a better time.

The best explanation we have heard of this apparent anomaly is that at some point in the race the superior horse pushes his competitors past their exhaustion points, and their speed dwindles away. This exhaustion phenomenon could occur within a hundred yards, whereas, had this exhaustion not occurred, their speed and action possibly could have been maintained to result in a very good time.

An example of this in modern times was the three-length victory of Brigadier

Gerard over Mill Reef in England's one-mile Two Thousand Guineas. The going was fast, but the time for the race was exactly the average over many years. Yet, Mill Reef went on to set new time records for the Eclipse Stakes and the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe. The same colt, however, in competition with Brigadier Gerard at one mile, could not even record average time for the Two Thousand Guineas.

In the autumn, as a two-year-old, Man o' War began to fill out to his generous frame. At Saratoga in August, he weighed 970 pounds, at Belmont Park he weighed 1,020 pounds, and over the winter his weight increased to 1,150 pounds and his height to 16 hands, 2 inches. As a three-year-old, he girthed 72 inches, which is not exceptional for a colt of that size. In appearance, however, he was wide in the fork between his front legs and deep through the heart.

Riddle thought the ten furlongs of the Kentucky Derby was asking too much of a three-year-old at the beginning of May with 126 pounds up. (How Man o' War would have laughed had he known of his owner's solicitude for him.) So, Man o' War opened his three-year-old campaign in the nine-furlong Preakness Stakes, run ten days after the Derby. He dashed off into an early four-length lead and cantered home by one and a half lengths from Upset and Wildair, each representing the H.P. Whitney stable, then the most powerful in the United States.

Man o' War next went to New York for the one-mile Withers Stakes—the nearest American equivalent to the English Two Thousand Guineas. Again, Man o' War broke fast and was under restraint all the way, winning under a stout pull by two lengths in 1:35 $\frac{4}{5}$ from Wildair. His time was two-fifths of a second faster than the American record (run around a turn), then held by the filly Fairy Wand. If one interprets this time literally, it means that Wildair equaled the old American record and therefore was as good as any horse previously seen in America over a mile. Wildair simply was not that good, so the time test has its limitations as a measure of class.

In the Belmont, then run over eleven furlongs, Man o' War had only one opponent, Donnacona, who did not have much merit. Man o' War won by twenty lengths in the time of 2:14 $\frac{1}{5}$, another American record. Man o' War next carried 135 pounds to an easy victory in the one-mile Stuyvesant Handicap, over a solitary rival in receipt of thirty-two pounds.

Man o' War's next race, the nine-furlong Dwyer Stakes, was the most famous in his career. James Rowe Sr., trainer for H.P. Whitney, had trained more horses of the highest class, going back to Hindoo (1878), than anyone else then active (or perhaps even since then) in America. He had tried Man o' War seven times and beaten him once through a fluke with Upset, and he had been second three times

with Upset, once with Wildair, and once with John P. Grier.

Rowe had trained Sysonby and unbeaten Colin, both enshrined among the four or five best horses seen in America in the twentieth century. After all, Wildair had been within two lengths of Man o' War in the Withers, and John P.



War Admiral

Grier had been within two and a half lengths of him in the Futurity. So, when Rowe declared that no horse in the world could give John P. Grier eighteen pounds, as the conditions of the Dwyer required, the racing world listened with respect.

The author saw that race fifty-four years ago, and it is still vivid in memory. There were only two starters, both chestnut colts. John P. Grier was small, like so many of the Ben Brush strain; Man o' War

looked like a muscular giant. The air was filled with rumors: Feustel did not want to run Man o' War and had given him a full feed at lunch time; Man o' War had his shoes removed; Riddle, confronted by these obstacles, insisted that Man o' War run anyway. We now regret that we never asked either Riddle or Feustel about the truth of such tales.

As the colts broke, John P. Grier was completely hidden by the larger Man o' War. We could not see Grier at all, until the colts had gone about a half-mile, which was covered in :46, two-fifths of a second faster than the track record; six furlongs took 1:09 $\frac{3}{5}$, one and two-fifths seconds faster than the track record, and the two colts were still locked together. Into the stretch they came, and jockey Eddie Ambrose called for a great effort from John P. Grier, who got past Man o' War for a few strides. A shout went up from the crowd: "He's beat!"

Then we saw Clarence Kummer draw his whip and use it on Man o' War, who

seemed to lengthen stride. The mile was reached in 1:36, two-fifths of a second faster than the track [Aqueduct] record. There gallant little John P. Grier faltered, and Man o' War came on to win by one and a half lengths in 1:49 $\frac{1}{5}$, a new American record. Note that it required :13 $\frac{1}{5}$ to run the last furlong. Man o' War had not quickened; he, too, was faltering, but not as badly as John P. Grier. Two very good colts had given literally their full reserves of speed and stamina and Man o' War had a little more left at the end. To Rowe's surprise, Man o' War had proven at least twenty-one pounds better than John P. Grier, who probably was the next best three-year-old of the year and who later proved to be a good sire.

The rest of Man o' War's Turf career was an uninterrupted series of triumphs during which he never was brought to a drive. At Saratoga, he took the Miller Stakes and the historic ten-furlong Travers. Back at Belmont Park, he won the thirteen-furlong Lawrence Realization by about a hundred lengths, lowering the previous record for the distance by four and one-fifth seconds. In the Jockey Club Gold Cup, then run at one and a half miles, he set another record, 2:28 $\frac{4}{5}$.

In Maryland, he shouldered 138 pounds for the Potomac Handicap, and over a heavy track set another track record, 1:44 $\frac{4}{5}$ for one and one-sixteenth miles. That time Man o' War was giving Wildair thirty pounds.

A match race then was made with Sir Barton, the best of the 1916 U.S. crop, who had won the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, Withers, and Belmont Stakes. This was over ten furlongs, to be run at Windsor, Ontario, Canada, for a \$75,000 purse [and \$5,000 gold cup] to the winner. It was not much of a race, as Sir Barton was suffering from sore feet at the time. Man o' War won by seven lengths in 2:03, lowering the track record by six and two-fifths seconds.

The famous gambler Chicago O'Brien was present at this contest and was told he was a fool when he wagered \$100,000 on Man o' War at odds of 1-20. After Man o' War romped home, O'Brien asked: "Can you tell me any other way I could make \$5,000 in two minutes?"

Man o' War's earnings of \$249,465 set a new American record, surpassing those of Domino, made in 1893.

Handicapper Walter S. Vosburgh told Riddle that if Man o' War remained in training as a four-year-old he would be set to carry more weight than any other horse ever had shouldered in America. Since Roseben had carried 150 pounds and 148 pounds more than once, Riddle sensibly decided to retire Man o' War.

In his new sphere at stud there were both triumph and tragedy. There were 90 named foals in his first five crops, and 26 (29 percent) of these won stakes, compared to a national average of 3 percent. Overall, he sired 64 stakes winners from