



# SELECTING YEARLINGS

US expert **JUDY WARDROPE** of **JW Equine** explains the

**A**sk anyone how they select yearlings for purchase and you will likely hear a range of selection criteria, if they are willing to share their secrets. Aside from straight legs and clean x-rays or good scopes, many of the explanations will be couched in subjective terms. Does well-balanced mean the same to everyone? How do you quantify a good walk? What is the 'look' of an athlete? Is a good hip or nice shoulder measurable? And the bottom line: How accurate are people when selecting and/or purchasing yearlings using these criteria?

A trainer and an agent were asked their opinions of the four yearlings – two fillies and two colts – used in this article. Here's what they thought:

Regarding the bay filly, the trainer said he didn't like her because she didn't look athletic, had a short hip and had a thick neck. The agent called her European-looking and angular, but thought she was pretty and that she would like the turf.

Regarding the chestnut filly, the trainer thought she was pretty

and looked like a sprinter. The agent had no comment.

Regarding the bay colt, the trainer said the colt was ordinary looking and not athletic based on his walk. The agent called him a good-sized, strong colt with a good shoulder, but thought he could have a stronger hind leg.

Regarding the dark bay colt, the trainer said he was a big colt with a weak back and hip. The agent called him a good-bodied colt with a nice head, neck and shoulder.

Did their comments make sense to you? Can you identify which were runners and which were failures at the track based on the comments of these two professionals? What did you think using your own observations and criteria?

Can you explain your choices in objective terms? It's not as easy as it sounds. But, if one learns how to identify the skeletal structure and can understand how it affects movement, one can use objective terms to assess racehorses, including yearlings. It's like adding another tool to one's shopping repertoire.

## BAY FILLY



## DAM

Her dam was unraced but has produced one winner of over \$16,000 with two foals to race from a total of six offspring. The dam is also a half-sister to a stakes winner and a stakes-placed winner.

## INSPECTION

1. Her LS (lumbosacral gap, which is just in front of the high point) is almost 3.8 metre (1 inch) back of the ideal position (in line between the top points of the hips). This is a limiting factor for lightening the forehand and for her proposed job as a racehorse. If you look at the photo upside down, you can see that she is weak through the loin and flank as a result. You can also see in the photo that she has not engaged her gaskin in producing power, which explains why she has very little development of that muscle.

2. Her stifle placement, which is well below where a sheath would be, is indicative of a horse that does best at distances exceeding 1600m (over a mile). She is also slightly shorter on the femur side of her rear triangle (top point of hip to point of buttock to stifle protrusion and back to point of hip), which shortens the rear stride, causes the hocks to trail behind and adds stress to the hind leg from hock down.

3. Although her length of humerus would give her a stride that matches the distance preferences of her hindquarters, she will have to work hard to use all of her reach due to her low-set neck (the base of her neck is not

## SIRE

Her sire was a champion grass horse and Gr2 stakes-winner of over \$1.5 million. This filly is from his first crop.

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