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TRC



The transformation of Lady Eli

Also inside: Winx: soars so high so often / Lope De Vega leading the way at Ballylinch / Racing's golden age - when the Triple Crown was merely a prep for the big handicaps / What They're Thinking: Olivier Peslier

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Transformed by parenthood: fiery Lady Eli is now a gentle, nurturing mother

Michele MacDonald | April 22, 2019



Lady Eli and her new War Front foal: "She has done everything right," says Hill 'n' Dale's John Rasmussen. "She's just top class." Photo: Michele MacDonald

Wrapped in the days bridging winter's lionlike bluster and the arrival of spring's gentle touch of lambs, a similar kind of natural epiphany has unfolded at Hill 'n' Dale Farms in Kentucky.

The transformation reached a critical stage when Lady Eli, the champion mare who heroically returned to Grade 1 glory after battling back from an attack of laminitis that could have killed her, lay down in her deeply bedded stall to give birth to her first foal on March 21.

Hill 'n' Dale owner John Sikura and farm manager John Rasmussen already had been experiencing waves of anxiety about this moment. As Rasmussen succinctly noted, "It's always life and death when you have a foaling — it can only go one of two ways."

With Lady Eli, who had been purchased by Sikura on a \$4.2 million bid at the Keeneland November breeding stock sale, there were additional layers of concern assuming that both she and her foal made it through the crucial juncture of birth.

How would this fiery mare — nearly as well known for the orange traffic cones positioned at her racetrack stall warning passersby of her saber-sharp teeth as she was for wicked bursts of speed that propelled her to five G1 triumphs — take to motherhood?

Just as winter melted softly into spring in the same month, Lady Eli has noticeably mellowed as she and her blaze-faced colt by

Cover photo: Michele MacDonald



The foal boldly scampers in ever-widening circles, cajoling her to keep up as she shakes her head and strides after him, dutifully intent on keeping her young one in line. Photo: Michele MacDonald

War Font have bonded since his arrival into this world. And just as she rose to surpass the sternest challenges in racing, Lady Eli has, by all accounts at the farm, excelled in her budding new career as a broodmare.

Sikura, who described Lady Eli as being “very vigilant, tough, aware and protective of her space”, said she now has “directed all of that energy to being a great mother”.

“And she is a beautiful mother,” he said after watching Lady Eli and her colt canter around a small paddock near his office in mid-April. “He’s a lovely first foal, a great type and healthy — all you could expect from the mare. We’re looking forward to growing a great athlete. So, we’re going to breed her back to War Front and we’re anticipating the future,” he said.

For Rasmussen and his staff, the colt’s birth, Lady Eli’s reaction to him and their subsequent time together has evolved as ideally as they could have wished.

“She’s really done everything you could ask of a maiden foaling mare as far as accepting the foal and taking care of the foal and teaching him how to behave. And the experience has mellowed her, which is

good,” Rasmussen said. “As you know, she was pretty high strung on the track and this has really evened her out.”

The foaling itself proved to be “straightforward” and without incident, he recounted.

“About an hour before she had the colt, she got uncomfortable. She obviously wasn’t sure what was happening, but she was acting a little like she was in pain. She then broke her water and had the foal 15 or 20 minutes after that,” Rasmussen said.

“She got up fairly quickly and was curious about what was behind her there. But she immediately knew it was her baby and just took to it. It’s always scary with maiden mares, but it was particularly so with her because you know how independent she is. But she has done everything right. She’s just top class,” he said.

In the first few days after the foaling, Lady Eli was a bit tentative about the interaction of Hill ‘n’ Dale staff members with her colt, but Rasmussen did not cite any behavior beyond the realm of ordinary.

“She was a little protective in the beginning, which is normal because they

just want to take care of their baby, but now that he’s a little older, she’s kind of backed off that attitude a little bit,” he said. “The first few days, it took a little time to get a hold of him and her both.

“But she couldn’t have done any better than she has,” he added.

During the course of regular farm duties, such as feeding the horses and cleaning stalls, Rasmussen and his staff began to notice Lady Eli subtly changing. As they would enter the stall where she and her colt reside or when they would prepare them for turnout, Lady Eli was, day by day, less aggressive.

“She’s just more like a normal broodmare now than she was before, when you always had to kind of guard yourself and be ready for anything because she would more than likely come after you with her ears pinned and teeth first,” Rasmussen said. “But that has changed. She’s just more relaxed.”

At the same time, Lady Eli has been diligent in caring for her colt. When asked to describe how he saw the 7-year-old daughter of Divine Park guide her baby through an introduction to life, Rasmussen said she was particularly attentive to how close he was to her when

they first were released in their paddock.

"When you turn them out the first time, you typically always see the foal run next to the mare. But they don't know that when they're born — that's something the mare teaches them; that's a protection thing," he noted. "Some maiden mares will not know that they have to teach their baby that so they will just take off and leave the baby behind.

"But Lady Eli is always just a short distance away from him. The first week or so she followed him around the paddock, versus the other way around. That's how mares do it — show them to stay close — and that's pretty impressive," he said. "Now that he's a little older, he'll venture off a little bit and she's not as concerned about it, but I promise you she always has her eye on him, which is how you want mares to be."

As soon as she and her foal are led out of their Hill 'n' Dale barn, with longtime employee Abi Orantes holding one of the shanks, Lady Eli glances around to be sure there are no dangers in the landscape and then fixes her gaze on the colt. If he is not directly beside her, she repeatedly looks back to be sure he is safe.

As Rasmussen points out, there is a different glow in her eyes these days. Gone is some of the keenness sparked by racing competition and the rigors of training, replaced by a kindly devotion to her colt.

Little charmer

Orantes has played a significant role in this metamorphosis, the first small degrees of which began with her adjustment to the relaxed pace of life at the farm.

"She likes her surroundings and she likes Abi leading her out. That's her main guy and that's how she does best," Rasmussen said. "In the beginning, we were really treating her just like a stallion because that's kind of how they are — they like the routine and being with the same person. That's how she does best, too, and we try to keep her in her comfort zone."

While Lady Eli is the newest star in the Hill 'n' Dale broodmare band, a leading light by virtue of her performances as well as her auction price when sold by Jay Hanley and Sol Kumin, her colt is a scene stealer, even in her electric presence. It's impossible not to be charmed by him.

A glowing bay, like his dam, and marked by his sire with a pair of white socks in addition to his blaze, the colt leaps forward in exuberance when following Lady Eli to their



Scene-stealer: "He bounces around and acts like a little man, like a kid at private school waiting for the chauffeur to show up," says John Sikura. Photo: Michele MacDonald

paddock. As soon as they are released, he boldly scampers in ever-widening circles, cajoling her to keep up as she shakes her head and strides after him, dutifully intent on keeping her young one in line.

"He's got a little bit of her in him, I think, because it's almost like he knows there is something special about him. He almost carries himself that way, like he is proud of himself," Rasmussen said. "He just knows that he deserves the air that he is breathing. He's full of energy and feeling good."

"He bounces around and acts like a little man, like a kid at private school waiting for the chauffeur to show up," Sikura said, laughing. "He has a confidence about him, which is great."

Alert and curious, the colt is well aware of visitors and awards them with a series of balletic spins and leaps followed by bursts of running as fast as his legs will power him. When his audience turns to leave, he flops into the grass, his eyelids blinking, as Lady Eli hovers protectively over him.

Since Hill 'n' Dale is a commercial breeding farm, Rasmussen indicated that the colt likely will one day be the featured attraction in a sale consignment. But there are no firm plans and for now, Lady Eli and her colt have months to enjoy the pure equine pleasures of grazing and galloping together.

"In a few weeks, they will be out in a bigger area with more mares and foals. We have to get Lady Eli bred back and hopefully we'll pronounce her pregnant real soon," said Rasmussen. He added that Lady Eli's feet have not troubled her and are

judiciously managed due to the laminitis she experienced.

Extraordinary heart

"They're not normal feet and they never will be, so she wears a special shoe. But it's like you and me, we wear comfortable shoes, too, the ones that fit the best. And this is the one she likes, so that's the one she gets to wear," he said. "There's no reason to change anything because she is happy. We're just maintaining what is there. I don't foresee her having any problems in the future."

It's far too early for any forecasts of what Lady Eli's War Front colt may be able to accomplish at a racetrack or sale, or if she will be able to give him and future foals the extraordinary heart that fired her dauntless career and enabled her to defy laminitis. But her characteristics, including her gentle mothering skills, are all that any breeder could desire.

"We're optimistic about the future," Sikura said.

"She's a special mare," Rasmussen observed while reflecting on the simple yet memorable moments he has witnessed of this ferocious champion evolving into a nurturing dam.

"The way she has accepted her colt has been really special to watch," he said. "I've seen that before, but I've also seen the opposite, too, where they don't accept the foal and become almost a little worse in temperament. So, I'm just glad that she took the path that she did.

"She'll be like this for the rest of her life. She's just at peace," he declared.

Winx: surely no other horse could have soared so high so often

Amanda Duckworth | April 14, 2019



Ultimate tribute: the skywriter high over Randwick spoke for everyone. Photo: Amanda Duckworth

Amanda Duckworth reports from Randwick on a moment in history when the world's favorite racehorse bowed out with her 33rd consecutive victory and a world-record 25th G1 win.

On Saturday, in front of a sold-out crowd, Winx did what Winx does. She won. Her victory in the G1 Longines Queen Elizabeth Stakes wasn't particularly flashy, and on paper, it was a race she should have won. But, as anyone who has spent any time with horses knows, "should have" and "did"

are very different things. Ultimately, that level of consistency is Winx's legacy.

As a skywriter etched out the words IMMORTAL WINX above Royal Randwick, the crowd cheered, and many cried. Winx flags waved in the air and a large number of fans forewent fancy headwear so they could don a Winx baseball cap.

Memorabilia was sold out across the track, but before the hats and the pins were gone, people happily stood in long, long lines to claim a tiny part of history.

Somewhere along the line, Winx became her own sports team. Horse racing always faces the problem that the horses ultimately are the superstars, but they tend to only be around for a season or two. Winx was so good, for so long, that she became her own entity.

How that final race unfolded

Love her or hate her, many racing aficionados can quote stats about Winx like they are reciting their times tables at

school. Her wins. Her losses. Who she beat. Who she never faced. How much money she earned. Her owners. Her trainer. Her jockey. Her breeding.

Even those disgusted by the fact she never left Australia still discussed her, meaning she won there, too. After all, arguing passionately against something takes just as much time and energy as arguing for something. Sometimes more.

For context, Winx's winning streak began in May 2015. At the same time, American Pharoah was in the midst of his historic Triple Crown run. On the day Winx retired, American Pharoah's first foal to race became his first winner (Monarch Of Egypt at Naas).

Between then and now, Winx went to post 33 times, and she never lost.

Leading up to Winx's final run, she made headlines when she kicked a sign during a media call. Ever practical, trainer Chris Waller had to remind everyone that she is, after all, a horse.

That's a beyond-obvious statement, but so much has been put on Winx in the twilight of her career that doing something horses do every day was covered by international news outlets. Winx undoubtedly brought people together, and it surpassed just the idea of sport.

There is currently a mural of Winx in downtown Sydney. When I was walking away from it, I realized a man was walking toward it with his phone out. We smiled at each other, a fleeting moment in time. We both appreciated the other for being there, even though we will never cross paths again.

I know of at least one group of friends who flew from Melbourne to Sydney the day of the Queen Elizabeth just to see Winx one last time. They surely were not the only ones there who made such a journey.

Before the race, a number of jockeys not riding in it came out on the turf course to watch. Some were in silks because they were in the next race, some tossed sport coats over their attire. Most had their phones at the ready to document history. There are few higher compliments on a racecourse than the jockey colony coming out to see a specific horse run.

Then there is Nini Vascotto, who works for the Australian Turf Club and was often



A lifesize mural of Winx and connections in downtown Sydney. Photo: Amanda Duckworth

the one putting the victory rug on Winx after races. I met Nini last year through mutual friends, when she travelled to Melbourne for the Cox Plate just to watch Winx go for history.

It, too, was a great race day filled with laughter and toasts to the good times, but somewhere along the way, as a gentle courtesy, someone pulled me aside to let me know of Nini's troubles. A kind and wonderful woman, Nini has been fighting stage four breast cancer for eight years.

When Nini was diagnosed, she was given five to eight years to live. The math was never in her favor, and between the Cox Plate and now, things have gotten a bit rougher. Still, she was there on Saturday to share one final race day with a mare who has given her so much pleasure, so consistently, for years.

Although her story was well known to those in the industry, Nini became a front-page news story in Australia when jockey Hugh Bowman mentioned her after Winx won her penultimate race. Nini had made it to the track that day, but just barely, due to her health.

In the immediate aftermath of the G1 George Ryder Stakes, in and among the normal post-race interview questions, Bowman took the time to say, "Our thoughts go out to Nini, who has been a stalwart working here at the ATC, and we know she has been in ill health for some years.

"I am sure that this win today will give her strength that she wouldn't have had without it and that goes for many people, not just Nini, many, many people that just need a bit of a lift."

Winx gave people something to cheer for, and she did it without error for years. It's easy to tally up the race statistics on Winx. It's much harder to tally up how many Ninis are out there.

Winx's healthy constitution and drive to win never waned, which is hard to come by. Winx's connections accepted that their horse belonged to so many more people than the ownership line reads, and they shared her.

Could they have shared her more internationally? Yes. Could Winx have done more? Yes. The answer to those types of questions is always yes, though, and they have nothing to do with horses and everything to do with human nature. It's why the sport exists, really, and it makes for interesting debates.

But, on Winx's part, she did what was asked of her, and she did it well, every single time. Dependability is an underrated virtue, and it is one of the easier ones to take for granted. Winx's career wasn't one of a single defining moment, but rather a story of collected works that will be nearly impossible to duplicate. It was only fitting that she got to go out a winner.

WITHOUT EQUAL

“Frankel has 34.4% 95+ runs and an average speed figure of 82.0. He’s in a class of his own; at a guess, probably his own sire, Galileo, would be the only sire with similar numbers if we could go back that far.

“But his metrics are mostly in the superstar sire category: 9% GSW foals in his first three crops. But what is absolutely beyond dispute is that as a sire he has what we could say is the highest ‘cruising speed’ ever.”

BILL OPPENHEIM

The Stallion Spectator Ratings
Year-End 2018 Edition

FRANKEL

2008 b h Galileo - Kind (Danehill)

2019 Fee: £175,000 1st Oct Special Live Foal

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Lope De Vega leading the way as Ballylinch aims to make its second century just as good as the first

Nancy Sexton | April 17, 2019



Lope De Vega at Ballylinch: "I wasn't surprised with the success of his first crop," says John O'Connor. "But I was delighted as he can throw a big horse. He has plenty of scope himself but is certainly an influence for speed." Photo: Ballylinch Stud

In a quiet corner of Ballylinch Stud, there lies a succinct reminder of the powerful heritage that supports the stud as it moves forward into its 105th year. It comes in the simple form of an array of horse shoes, each representing those major names associated with the McCalmont era and displayed within the stallion box built specifically for the arrival of The Tetrarch in 1915.

Indeed on a bright spring day, it doesn't take too much imagination to envisage that phenomenon, who was to have such a profound influence on the breed, entertaining visitors back in that elaborately decorated stable. But then that is the ethos of Ballylinch, a place where aspiration has long run in tandem with tradition.

After all, the stud is under the stewardship of only its third owner, American John Malone, who purchased the property from the Mahony family



Ballylinch Stud is in County Kilkenny, within the Mount Juliet estate. "The Malones [the owners] have great appreciation for lands and the countryside, and for honouring the heritage of properties," says managing director John O'Connor. Photo: Horses of Legend

in 2014, and, in managing director John O'Connor, it has someone who has held an integral position since joining in 1988.

The Tetrarch is buried just yards from today's stallion yard, which now houses its own important influence in Newspaperofrecord's sire Lope De Vega. Young classic winners Make Believe and New Bay also hold court alongside champion Fascinating Rock, while a dual-purpose influence continues to be maintained by Beat Hollow.

In addition, the broodmare band continues to strengthen as the result of ongoing investment, while burgeoning partnerships with others, in particular the China Horse Club, offer the promise of a fruitful season on the track.

Not that the stud has ever assumed a backseat. While its association with The Tetrarch will long be celebrated, the latter years of that McCalmont era also ushered in stallions such as Fortino, sire of Caro, Arc hero Sassafra, the first horse to beat Nijinsky, and Appiani, sire of another Arc hero in Star Appeal. More recently while under the ownership of entrepreneur Tim Mahony, it was home

to Soviet Star and the revered dual-purpose stallion King's Theatre, and bred G1 winners such as Red Rocks, Belardo, Chriselliam and Al Wukair.

"It is a place with a very interesting and long history, and we're conscious of that," says O'Connor.

"It's only had three owners in a century, quite incredible.

"It was built from scratch by Dermot McCalmont to form a base for retiring The Tetrarch. The Tetrarch's box, the stud housing and the original boxes in the main yard and foaling unit are the original buildings. They were the nucleus of the stud in 1915, and we attempt to keep the character of the place as far as we can while modernising it.

"The McCalmonts ran the farm very well - the lands were very well maintained. They could afford to do it well, that's why the buildings have lasted. And we do try to keep them in their original condition."

Ballylinch Stud lies near Thomastown, County Kilkenny, within the Mount Juliet estate. The house is today a hotel, but, for much of the 20th century, it was the private McCalmont residence; thus, when

the time came in 1915 for Major Dermot McCalmont to retire his unbeaten colt The Tetrarch to stud, the estate with its ample lands split by the River Nore was the obvious option.

The Tetrarch, known as 'The Spotted Wonder' on account of the strange markings splattered on his grey coat in his younger years, had swept through his 2yo season unbeaten for Atty Perse, his seven victories including the Champagne and Coventry Stakes.

Injury prevented him from returning to the track at three, and so the son of Roi Herode was retired to Ballylinch, where he would become a leading sire despite only siring 130 foals. Among them was McCalmont's 2000 Guineas winner Tetratema, also buried at Ballylinch, and the Aga Khan's flying filly Mumtaz Mahal, who left an indelible on the stud book via her grandson Nasrullah.

At the time of The Tetrarch's death in 1935, he had been sterile for a decade, instead passing some of the time as a hack to bring the mail in and out of Thomastown.

“Mares would quite often come from abroad by boat from Holyhead and they would catch the train to Thomastown...”

“A big book at that time was 40 mares and he would be covering in the 30s,” says O’Connor. “But the combination of fertility problems and a lack of enthusiasm restricted those numbers even further.

“Mares would quite often come from abroad by boat from Holyhead and they would catch the train to Thomastown, and they would walk from Thomastown to here.”

It was that sense of history that was key in attracting the attention of Tim Mahony when the estate came up for sale in late 1987.

“Tim had bought Mount Juliet and Ballylinch, and was intrigued by the stud farm and wanted to bring it back,” says O’Connor. “Sean Collins, his first advisor, had told him all about the history.”

Mahony’s purchase of Ballylinch from Victor McCalmont, who switched his energies to the neighbouring Norelands Stud, passed without the inclusion of a single Thoroughbred. O’Connor was at that time managing Baroda Stud on behalf of the executors of the late Sean Doyle and was hired to make the switch to Ballylinch.

An influence for soundness

“Originally I had planned to manage my own farm, but then the challenge of Ballylinch came up,” he says. “Dermot Weld had just started to train for Tim Mahony, and I remember him saying to me that he was going to be big in the business.

“Through Sean Collins, Tim had bought some mares and, when I came here, there were four of them on the place. Tim agreed that we would need to restock and allowed me to buy some mares that turned out to be very influential.

“One of the most significant was [G3 winner] Ingabelle, who we bought privately in Tom Lacey’s kitchen. She was tough herself and became an influence for soundness.

“Another mare, [G1 Heinz 57 Phoenix Stakes winner] Pharoah’s Delight, was

bought also privately. Her daughter Pharmacist was influential for us as the dam of Red Rocks.”

Ingabelle, by Taufan, left behind eight winners including the stud’s 1995 Moyglare Stud Stakes winner Priory Belle and fellow G1 winner Eva’s Request. Her Danehill daughter Danielli is now maintaining that tradition having bred the ill-fated Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf winner Chriselliam and G2 winner Very Special.

Another foundation mare, Caerlina, is the granddam of G1-winning miler Al Wukair while Majinskaya, became the granddam of another top miler in Belardo, himself a real Ballylinch success story as a first-crop son of Lope De Vega.

Meanwhile, the acquisition of G2 winner Uncharted Haven, fittingly a descendant of Victor McCalmont’s champion Mesopotamia, brought access to a family subsequently responsible for classic heroine Just The Judge.

Thus, when John and Leslie Malone stepped in to buy Ballylinch in 2014, they came into possession of a healthy going concern with much to offer.

One of the largest landowners in the U.S., the Malones also paid €28 million for the Kildare-based Castlemartin Stud from Sir Anthony and Lady O’Reilly around the same time to complement a growing bloodstock portfolio that had gained momentum several years earlier with the acquisition of Bridlewood Farm in Florida.

“Ballylinch wasn’t actively for sale at the time,” says O’Connor. “The Malones had bought Bridlewood Farm and retained George Isaacs, who was managing it, and that was the start of their serious bloodstock enterprise.

“They expressed an interest in having a farm in Ireland and, through John McCormack, made an approach on Ballylinch.

“It was seamless because everything on the farm - the stock all the way down to the yard brush - was sold. George came over and helped appraise the

stock with John. All the staff stayed and all the horses were transferred as well, so there never any anxiety.”

Great appreciation

He adds: “At the time when the Malones were doing their due diligence on Ballylinch, and it was unclear whether a deal would be done - as there was no hurry on selling it, Castlemartin came up for sale. That was always going to be a quicker sale and, because of that, a move was made to buy it. I think it’s fair to say that it’s one of the most beautiful farms in Ireland, one of the jewels of the country. It has had a lot invested in it and that will continue.

“The Malones have great appreciation for lands and the countryside, and for honouring the heritage of properties. John Malone is obviously a very big landowner in America, and he has an appreciation of what land can do for the environment.”

The broodmare band currently numbers around 60 and includes several recent high-profile purchases, notably listed winners Modernstone and Chartreuse, purchased for 1,000,000gns and 825,000gns respectively, Screen Star, the dam of G1 winner Lumiere who was purchased for 675,000gns, and Wonderfully, a G3-winning sister to Gustav Klimt bought for \$1.8 million.

The classy Normandel, meanwhile, was bought late last year and turned over to Jim Bolger, who recently sent her out to win the G3 Park Express Stakes.

Another recent acquisition, the promising Galileo filly Solage, came into the fold when purchased through Meridian International in December for €1 million.

“Castlemartin was bought without any stock,” says O’Connor, “and numbers were increased to reflect that now we had two large farms to populate.

“We were trying to buy at a particular level to enhance an already strong band and we have formed some very good partnerships with similar minded outfits.”

“I wasn’t surprised with the success of Lope De Vega’s first crop but I was delighted as he can throw a big horse,”

Joint venture

One such partnership is with Lucien Urano’s Ecurie des Charmes, with whom the stud campaigns recent listed winner and classic hopeful Tifosa.

“We’ve always had a presence on the track, largely to boost the broodmare band, and we’ve managed to race some very nice fillies,” says O’Connor. “This is the first year that we have a slightly increased number in training, which reflects us keeping some well-bred fillies from some of the best mares.

“Now we also have a joint venture with China Horse Club in some colts. We have seven of those, scattered between France, Ireland and the UK. And if any of them are good enough, the plan is to stand them here.”

The group includes the first foal out of Irish 1000 Guineas heroine Just The Judge, a Dubawi colt who topped last year’s Arqana August Sale when bought for €1.4 million.

“He is with John Gosden,” says O’Connor. “He’s a big stamp of a colt, scopey with great movement. We pre-trained him here and we were very happy with how he progressed.

“We’ve very lucky that the contours of the property favour a good pre-training facility. They can get quite fit without going very fast because it’s a gentle climb, so we very seldom have an issue with soundness.

“Pat Shanahan joined us last year and he’s brought an extra dimension. We like to get an understanding of the horses before they leave - we like them to leave as confident, young racehorses.”

Incredibly popular

The septet within the China Horse Club venture also includes ‘a couple of’ colts by Lope De Vega. The son of Shamardal retired to stud in 2011 as the winner of the Poule d’Essai des Poulains and Prix du Jockey Club for Gestut Ammerland and is now one of Europe’s leading lights thanks to a roll call that contains 25 Group winners, among them Belardo, winner of the Dewhurst and

Lockinge Stakes, and Chad Brown’s brilliant filly Newspaperofrecord.

The latter was one of six juvenile stakes winners sired by Lope De Vega in 2018 bred the year his fee rose from €12,500 to €40,000. He is again incredibly popular this season at his new fee of €80,000, a figure that could very well soon be within six-figure territory should Newspaperofrecord and Phoenix Of Spain among others make the anticipated progress.

It will also be fascinating to see how the Ralph Beckett-trained quartet of Antonia De Vega (G3 winner), Feliciana De Vega (listed winner), Manuela De Vega (listed winner) and Dancing Vega (the impressive winner of her sole start) fare as 3yos this season for Waverley Racing, an outfit that has aggressively pursued Lope De Vega fillies at auction.

Fittingly, Prestige Stakes winner Antonia De Vega was bred by Tim Mahony’s daughter, Jenny Howes, out of Witches Brew, one of the mares she retained and nows boards at Ballylinch.

“I wasn’t surprised with the success of Lope De Vega’s first crop but I was delighted as he can throw a big horse,” says O’Connor. “He has plenty of scope himself but is certainly an influence for speed. I would say it’s been a long time since a French Derby winner sired a Cornwallis winner [Royal Razalma] in his first crop.

“He was a horse with great enthusiasm and a great stride. He had the ability to gallop relentlessly but he also had a serious turn of foot. I suspect he was a miler who had the class to win the French Derby based on what we see from the stock, which are I think predominantly milers.”

Lope De Vega owns an interesting background being inbred 3x3 to Machiavellian. Instead of shying away from that influence, however, O’Connor sent him Lady Livius, by the Machiavellian stallion Titus Livius, in his first season and was rewarded by breeding his first Group winner, Burnt Sugar.

“Yes, adding more Machiavellian was a calculated risk,” says O’Connor. “I’d bought

Lady Livius specifically to bring precocity to the young stallions as she was very quick herself, and she has done exactly what I hoped she would do.

“You don’t really see Machiavellian in Lope De Vega physically though - I think he’s all Giant’s Causeway.

“He is easy to use. He’s almost an outcross, and I think in the context of where the Thoroughbred is going, that’s important. For us, we’re lucky in that it means we can buy ones from the Danehill or Galileo line, especially as he’s done well with them. Danehill obviously works very well with him - I think that’s inbreeding back to Almahmoud at work.

“Last year’s crop of 2yos were the first conceived after he was champion first-crop sire, and he did what we hoped he would do. I think we’re entitled to be extremely optimistic this year when he has a serious crop of 3yos and 2yos to run for him.

“Pretty much all the big operations now want to use him, including American breeders.”

Meanwhile, it’s crunch time for fellow Poule d’Essai des Poulains winner Make Believe. Also successful in the Prix de la Foret for Prince Faisal, his first yearlings made up to 210,000gns.

“Make Believe had a lot of speed,” says O’Connor. “Andre Fabre said he felt that he could have won a July Cup, and he was vindicated in that when the horse that he beat in the Foret, Limato, went on to win the July Cup. But Prince Faisal was keen to retire him and obviously that suited us.

“We’ve supported these young stallions with decent mares and then we follow up and try to put them with good trainers. Make Believe’s progeny could be more precocious than people think. He puts a fair bit of muscle on them and I’d be surprised if he doesn’t achieve a fair bit with his 2yos this season.”

With proven older residents Lawman and Dream Ahead now based at Haras de Grandcamp in Normandy, there is undeniably a youthful flavour to the current roster. Next in line after Make Believe are



Make Believe: "His progeny could be more precocious than people think," says John O'Connor. "He puts a fair bit of muscle on them and I'd be surprised if he doesn't achieve a fair bit with his 2yos this season." Photo: Ballylinch Stud

New Bay, the 2015 Prix du Jockey Club hero, and Fascinating Rock, the Qipco British Champion Stakes and Tattersalls Gold Cup winner. The latter's first crop includes a half-sister to Burnt Sugar bought for €185,000 at Goffs last November by Camas Park Stud.

"We've invested plenty in the last number of years in stallions," says O'Connor. "I suppose we have a model that works for us in that we're happy to syndicate stallions and for the original owner to stay involved. I think people can have confidence with how we deal with them, but that's been made easy for me with the people that we work for. That allows us to have a spread of stallions.

Well placed to thrive

"New Bay had that change of gear that I like. It's something accentuated by the style of racing in France - they all quicken and the horse that can quicken better than the rest of the field has a real turn of foot.

"He's by Dubawi and is backed up by a serious Juddmonte female line that can genuinely produce stallions - it's the family of Oasis Dream and Kingman. There's every reason to think that this guy, a high-class

racehorse with a high-class family, will make a good stallion.

"Fascinating Rock was a high-class racehorse. He is a great mover and is passing it on. His owner, Maurice Regan, loves this horse and is very enthusiastic about making his stallion career."

Ballylinch is well placed to thrive in its second century of operation. Investment remains strong while it continues to be utilised as a boarding stud by a number of major breeders, including Vimal and Gillian Khosla, for whom Ballylinch raised and sold last year's Epsom Oaks heroine Forever Together; her Galileo sister went on to be sold by stud for €3.2 million to Phoenix Thoroughbreds at the Goffs Orby Sale last October.

And of course in Lope De Vega, Ballylinch is also in possession of a relatively young horse with the profile to play a major role in the future of the Thoroughbred

Breeders 'not taking a long-term view'

"I think times are challenging for the industry," says O'Connor, "and I think we

should as an industry look very carefully at where it is going at the moment. Breeders are not taking a long-term view - if you're building families on a farm, you must take a long-term view.

He adds: "We ourselves are lucky in that the Malones bought Ballylinch at a time when the broodmare band had established itself and Lope De Vega had burst on to the scene as a leading young sire. So I think the fact that we've been able to further invest in the stock and young stallions gives us a very good platform for the future."

And yet such is the reassuringly conscious appreciation of its heritage, that Ballylinch surely remains a property that Dermot McCalmont would recognise even today.

"Dermot McCalmont's youngest son, Michael, was the last McCalmont to be brought up at Mount Juliet," says O'Connor, "and when he visited the stud not that long ago, he told us that his father would be 'very proud' of what we have done here.

"I was delighted to hear that, and I hope that we can continue to make him proud."



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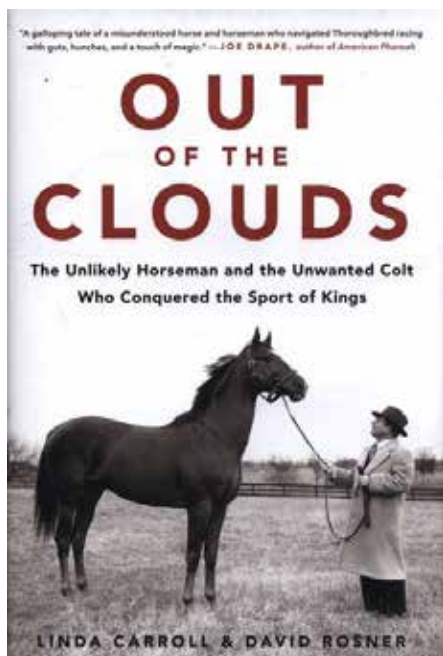
Racing's golden age - when the Triple Crown was merely a prep for the big handicaps

Paul von Hippel | April 15, 2019



Late bloomer: Stymie (pictured with Hirsch Jacobs) didn't win a stakes race until his 60th start, but he didn't look back after that and that same season became a champion. Meadors photo

Many racing fans know Linda Carroll and David Rosner's 2014 book 'Duel for the Crown: Affirmed, Alydar, and Racing's Greatest Rivalry'. Now Carroll and Rosner have won the prestigious Dr Tony Ryan Book Award for horse racing books with their second racing book, 'Out of the Clouds: The Unlikely Horseman and the Unwanted Colt Who Conquered the Sport of Kings'.



'Out of the Clouds' is the story of Hirsch Jacobs, born in 1904 to Jewish immigrants in New York. Jacobs grew up racing pigeons from tenement rooftops, started claiming and racing Thoroughbreds in the 1920s, and went on to win more races than any other trainer during the Depression and World War Two. He continued to be a leading trainer and breeder by prize money into the 1960s, and two of his family's horses won Triple Crown races in 1970, the year he died.

'Out of the Clouds' is also the story of Stymie, the 'People's Horse', who, after Jacobs claimed him in 1943 for \$1,500, went on to win over \$918,000 — a record at the time. Paul von Hippel talked to Carroll and Rosner about Jacobs, Stymie, and how racing has changed since the 1940s.

Who was Hirsch Jacobs? Who was Stymie?

Q: How ever did you find this story? Your first book, *Duel for the Crown*, was about the rivalry between Affirmed and Alydar, which is still well-known 40 years after it happened. But I must admit I had never heard of Stymie before.

A: Coincidentally enough, *Out of the Clouds* grew directly out of our research for that first horse racing book. While researching *Duel for the Crown*, we were so taken with the story of Hirsch Jacobs — whose daughter, Patrice, campaigned

Affirmed to the 1978 Triple Crown along with her co-owner husband, Lou Wolfson — that we over-wrote the section on him in our first draft and wound up having to leave most of it on the cutting-room floor.

At the time, we were surprised to discover that there existed no book-length dive into this rags-to-riches saga that seemed worthy of a Horatio Alger novel. When casting about for another horse racing narrative to propose for a possible book a few years later, we couldn't resist the chance to pick up those unpublished bits and expand on the untold parallel stories of the winningest trainer the sport had ever known and the Cinderella horse that made him a legend. In that sense, you could call *Out of the Clouds* something of a prequel to *Duel for the Crown*.

Q: Hirsch Jacobs spent the bulk of his career training claiming horses, like Stymie. You draw a line between 'claiming stables' like the one that Hirsch ran with his partner, Izzy Bieber, and 'society stables' with wealthy owners. How did the business of a claiming stable differ from that of a society stable?

A: This book gave us a chance to research and chronicle the fascinating history of claiming races, which have long constituted the backbone of the racing industry and account for the majority of all races run in the United States.

For aspiring horsemen with limited resources in a rich man's game that was dubbed 'The Sport of Kings' for a reason, claiming races were the great equalizer. Breaking into the racing game, there was no way Jacobs could have afforded to compete with the society stables, where the wealthiest owners bred, bought, and nurtured the best stock to run in stakes races. But he could afford to pony up, say, \$1,000 to claim a horse, confident that he could then step up his new acquisition to win at higher claiming prices and thus turn a small profit.

Unlike the society stables, claiming stables like Jacobs' were always in a state of flux, a revolving door through which horses were constantly being acquired and claimed away. While the society stables thrived on big purses

from the big stakes races, Jacobs' methodically built his claiming stable into a successful business, one cheap claimer at a time.

Q: Jacobs was known as a miracle worker who brought out hidden potential in horses after other trainers had given up on them. What were some of his methods?

A: The same discerning eye and uncanny horse sense that prompted Jacobs to claim an unwanted racehorse also enabled him to quickly diagnose the problem holding that horse back for its previous trainer, be it lameness, neglect, emotional distress, or some other affliction. Then he would proceed to work his healing magic with a combination of home remedies and equine psychoanalysis that he would shrug off as simple common sense.

We relied heavily on anecdotes that illustrate the soft-spoken trainer's intuition as an original horse whisperer and that detail his unorthodox training methods. Most engaging were his treatments for the many broken-down nags he claimed. If a horse was lame, he would reach into his bag of home remedies for special mudpacks, compresses, salves, liniment, vinegar, even the white iodine he might have just used to cure a troublesome corn on his own foot. His magic touch spurred racetrackers to saddle him with a backhanded compliment of a nickname: "The voodoo veterinarian."

Whenever the real vets would ask why on earth he was doing something they had never seen before, he'd matter-of-factly reply, "Because it works." No one could argue with that.

Q: Stymie's career got off to a slow start. What did Jacobs see in Stymie? Why did Jacobs believe so strongly in Stymie when the horse did so little to distinguish himself as a 2- and 3-year-old?

A: The book's prologue starts with Jacobs' first sight of Stymie parading around the Belmont Park paddock before the second race of his young career, a maiden sprint for 2-year-olds. Where other observers saw just a small, ordinary-looking chestnut, Jacobs alone saw potential. He saw perfect

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conformation and a regal, high-headed carriage that reminded him of Man o' War.

He immediately turned to Izzy Bieber and said with a knowing smile, "I got a feeling about that colt. I like the way he walks. He's a proud little thing."

After claiming Stymie out of his next race, Jacobs was baffled at how "any horse that looks as good as that" should be running so far out of the money in all his races. It became a daily challenge to figure out ways to spur this grandson of Equipoise and double great-grandson of Man o' War himself to run to his looks. Jacobs ran Stymie back in ten claiming races without any takers before finally deciding that this was a keeper ready to step up into allowance company and to continue improving slowly but surely.

Q: Although Jacobs was a genius with other horses, it's not clear that he did anything deliberate to turn Stymie's career around. What do you think explains why Stymie suddenly started winning races after World War Two?

A: During the war, Stymie had raced a staggering 28 times as a 2-year-old and 29 times as a 3-year-old without a break in between. Jacobs' training philosophy was to race his charges into condition, entering them in a couple of races a week and resting them with no works between starts. Stout as Stymie was, the back-breaking workload had to take a big toll on a little horse. What he needed was a good, long rest, and the government's wartime racing ban, which shut the sport down across the country for the first five months of 1945, gave it to him.

When the ban was finally lifted in the afterglow of VE Day, it was a different Stymie that hit the track running. The late bloomer had matured physically, muscling up and looking the part of the 4-year-old handicapper he now was. In his third start back, the 60th race of his career, he finally captured his first stakes race. From there, he never looked back, winning seven more major stakes that season and the most prize money ever earned by a 4-year-old to run away with the title of America's Champion Handicap Horse for 1945.

Q: The parallels between Stymie and Seabiscuit are hard to miss. Seabiscuit's career peaked just five or six years before Jacobs claimed Stymie, and in some ways Jacobs was trying to recreate Seabiscuit's story with Stymie. How are the stories of Stymie and Seabiscuit similar, and how are they different?

A: In many ways, Stymie seemed like the second coming of Seabiscuit: both were awkward little colts who started out as claimers and then toiled as workhorses for a couple of years, both bloomed late into unlikely superstars as 4-year-olds dominating the tough handicap division, both broke the all-time record for career earnings, and both enjoyed peerless popularity as true sports heroes inspiring the nation through turbulent times.

But there was one facet of their stories where the similarity breaks down: Contrary to popular myth, Seabiscuit was hardly a 'cheap claimer', running six claiming races without any takers for price tags ranging from \$2,000 to \$6,000 before being sold for \$7,500 as a 3-year-old to automobile magnate Charles Howard's society stable.

By contrast, Stymie was the very definition of a 'cheap claimer'. That's why Jacobs was able to claim him for a paltry \$1,500 and run him back in ten more claiming races without any takers. When Stymie finally blossomed into the first horse ever to earn over \$900,000 in purses, the 600-fold return on Jacobs' initial investment made this claim history's best bargain.

Q: Stymie was known by the end of his career as the 'People's Horse', a label more recently associated with California Chrome. What was it about Stymie that captured the imagination and affection of common racing fans?

A: On the occasion of Stymie's 1949 retirement at the old Jamaica (New York) race course known as the 'people's track', the storied New York Herald Tribune turf writer Joe Palmer crafted a classic column, titled "Stymie — Common Folks", that says it all better than we ever could:

It is thoroughly appropriate that Stymie should have his final appearance at Jamaica, because he's a Jamaica kind

of horse. Man o' War, Equipoise and Whirlaway were all equine royalty from the day they were foaled. Stymie was common folks ... [Q]f all the world's stories, none has ever been preferred to that which leads to the public and very glorious triumph of the oppressed and the downtrodden. Jamaica's horseplayers are to some extent oppressed and downtrodden, and perhaps in Stymie they find a vicarious success.

Palmer's classic column goes on to tick off all the qualities that allowed Stymie to capture the imagination and affection of the common fan: from his blue-collar work ethic and his crowd-rousing stretch runs to his Algeresque rags-to-riches rise from cheap claimer to richest-ever racehorse and his legacy as the quintessential 'People's Horse'.

Q: Stymie had a rivalry with the 1946 Triple Crown winner, Assault, another horse who came from humble beginnings and overcame hardship. Why wasn't Assault the people's horse?

A: To be sure, both were little chestnut colts bred by the same Texas cattle baron, born in the same King Ranch foaling barn, and faced with the long odds to even make it to the racetrack. But that's where the similarity ends.

Stymie was obscurely bred of such unaccomplished parentage that his sire had managed to win just two very minor races while his dam failed to ever even finish in the money — hardly the cloth from which champion racehorses are cut or the stuff of which Thoroughbred dreams are made.

By contrast, Assault was the royally bred son of Bold Venture, the 1936 Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner, and a painstakingly planned mating between the King Ranch's foundation stallion and an Equipoise daughter. Not only was Assault thus welcomed into the world as equine royalty, but he would grow up to run in the colors of one of racing's richest stables, backed by the resources of America's largest farm sprawling over a million Texas acres. In the riveting rivalry between Stymie and Assault, suffice it to say that there could be only one true 'People's Horse'.

King Ranch trainer Max Hirsch was so exasperated by Stymie's early failures that he was about to sell him off for \$200 to a little girl when Hirsch Jacobs claimed him for \$1,500.

Q: Certainly Assault was better bred, but he also put a stake through his foot in his youth. Sportswriters called him the 'Clubfooted Comet' because he somehow managed to run soundly despite walking with a limp. Was the Stymie-Assault rivalry actually a contest between two horses that had overcome adversity in different ways — and not as clean a contrast as the rivalry between Seabiscuit and War Admiral, a generation before?

A: On the track, Stymie-Assault offered the same elements that would make Affirmed-Alydar the greatest of all rivalries: two stout-hearted champions with contrasting styles; ten compelling head-to-head confrontations; and a climactic Belmont Park showdown even more thrilling than all its considerable hype. But, more than that, what made Stymie-Assault uniquely fierce was the off-track rivalry between the dueling teams of human connections that had put both colts on a collision course ever since Assault's birth in the same King Ranch foaling barn as Stymie's.

King Ranch trainer Max Hirsch was so exasperated by Stymie's early failures that he was about to sell him off for \$200 to a little girl when Hirsch Jacobs claimed him for \$1,500.

Freed from Max Hirsch's ironfisted training regimen, Stymie thrived under Hirsch Jacobs' kid-gloved handling to reign as America's handicap king at the same time that Max Hirsch was campaigning Assault to the 1946 Triple Crown. It galled the King Ranch trainer that the same newspapermen who hailed Hirsch Jacobs as a genius for that claim also branded Max Hirsch as "the man who let Stymie get away". And the mutual animosity between Max Hirsch and Izzy Bieber poured more gasoline on a heated rivalry that kept intensifying with each Stymie-Assault showdown.

When they squared off at Belmont

in 1947 with racing's richest purse and the record for career earnings at stake, there was no escaping the comparison with the celebrated 1938 match race pitting another handicap champion in Seabiscuit against another Triple Crown winner in War Admiral.

Q: Your title Out of the Clouds refers to Stymie's come from behind style. He did that in individual races, and he also did it in his career when he started to win top races at ages four, five, six and seven after flopping at ages two and three. How did you choose your title? Does it apply to Jacobs as well as to Stymie? Does it explain why the pair captured the public's affection?

A: We wish we could take credit for choosing the title, but for that we owe a debt of gratitude to the publisher of Hachette Books, Mauro DiPreta. While editing the manuscript that we had submitted under the working title of The People's Horse, he was so taken by the phrase "out of the clouds" — which appeared in a chapter title and numerous times throughout the narrative — that he suggested it would make a lovely lyrical title. We just looked at each other and said in unison, "Why didn't we think of that!?"

Out of the Clouds worked so well for the double entendre you cite: the phrase referred directly to Stymie's signature come-from-out-of-the-clouds style, which in turn became the perfect metaphor for his swanlike metamorphosis from cheap claimer into the richest racehorse the world had ever seen.

But, more than that, you're right, it's actually a triple entendre: for the phrase did indeed also apply to Jacobs' own rags-to-riches rise from claiming trainer to the master of a racing and breeding empire who perennially topped America's annual earnings lists

for owners, trainers, and breeders. The parallel Algeresque tales of our equine and human protagonists captured the imagination of a postwar nation chasing their own American Dream and searching for the hope and optimism that Stymie and Jacobs personified.

Q: Even before Stymie, Jacobs had opportunities to work with high-class horses from society stables, with rich owners and top riders on contract. But he rejected those opportunities to keep working with cheap claiming horses until he started breeding his own champions. Why? It's like an investment banker continuing to trade penny stocks when he has a chance to work at a white shoe firm.

A: On the last racing day of his breakthrough year, right after saddling his 116th winner to clinch the title of America's winningest trainer for 1933, Jacobs was posed that very question by none other than the storied newspaper columnist Damon Runyon.

Having heard from sources that Jacobs had recently been approached by several rich society stables offering him top dollar for his exclusive services, Runyon ventured, "You ought to make a lot of money now." Jacobs' reply was characteristically matter-of-fact: "That wouldn't interest me. I'm perfectly content to go along with the way I am now. To be with the horses, and to be more or less my own master, and to win a race now and then. I envy no man, and I ask nothing better than I've got now. I get lots of pleasure out of life. I've got many friends. The world is very pleasant. Why should I give up contentment for a lot of money?"

Jacobs would maintain that philosophy even after he struck gold with his Stymie claim and parlayed it into a racing and breeding empire of his own to beat the society stables at their own game.

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Why we'll never see Stymie's like again

Q: One of things that struck me about Hirsch's stable is how frequently he raced his horses, sometimes twice in the same week. Stymie started 131 races, averaging more than a mile each, and Jacobs was disparaged for running his horses "like a fleet of taxicabs". Although Jacobs and Stymie were outliers, it does seem that horses had longer careers and raced more frequently then than now. It was the age of the 'iron horse'. By contrast, Justify, the 2018 Horse of the Year, retired after just six races. What has changed?

A: Back in the day, owners got into horse racing not as businessmen looking to fatten their bank balances but rather as sportsmen looking to line their trophy cases. This was true for everyone from the racing aristocracy with blue-blooded names like Vanderbilt and Whitney to the business tycoons behind dynasties like Calumet to independent horsemen like Hirsch Jacobs. Today's preoccupation with the big business of racing and breeding has changed all that.

Thoroughbreds are now bred and trained to peak for the Triple Crown races and then instantly parlay those successes into even bigger bucks in the breeding shed. The economics of the racing and breeding industry dictates that Triple Crown stars like Justify and American Pharoah retire from the track as 3-year-olds to the far more lucrative confines of the breeding shed.

With his 111-day career from gate to finish, Justify has taken that trend to a new level. And it isn't just horse racing's stars. Since the 40s, horse racing's golden age when 'The Sport of Kings' reigned as the king of sports, the average number of races per Thoroughbred runner has plummeted by 70 percent from 45 career starts to just 12 today.

In his classic column, Joe Palmer famously calculated that Stymie had raced a staggering total of "142 miles, plus half a furlong and sixty yards" — or 135 miles more than Justify.

Obviously, horse racing has changed dramatically in the intervening seven decades. Today's Thoroughbred racehorses are decidedly less sound, less rugged, and less durable than their ancestors from the sport's golden age — a result, in part, of breeding trends and training practices that have had a deleterious effect on racing's popularity.

Q: Stymie was a plodder who was at his best outlasting horses in longer races. That was a particular asset in Stymie's era, when there were more long races — not just a mile and a half, but two miles, two and a half miles. We don't race those distances any more. What happened?

A: Unlike their predecessors, today's breeders have a need for speed. Thoroughbreds today are increasingly bred and built for speed at the expense of strength, soundness, and endurance.

They're bred to be sprinters and milers and, if they have the right bloodlines in their pedigree, to then get the classic distance of a mile and a quarter and fulfill the dream of every breeder, owner, and trainer to win the Kentucky Derby and maybe get a shot at the Triple Crown. These days, the Belmont Stakes — the aptly dubbed 'Test of the Champion' that makes contenders earn their Triple Crown coronation over a grueling mile and a half — constitutes a marathon.

Stymie, the classic slow starter and fast finisher who was just getting warmed up a mile and a quarter into a race, would no doubt get a kick out of that.

Q: That's an interesting observation. You know, a couple of years ago I looked at the history of pace in the Belmont Stakes. In the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, horses didn't slow down much at the end of the Belmont; they ran the last quarter-mile only 0.2 seconds slower than the quarter-mile before, and 1.5 seconds slower than they ran the first quarter-mile, out of the gate. Today horses start faster

but finish slower. They run the last quarter-mile a full second slower than the quarter before, and two full seconds slower than the first quarter-mile of the race.

When I wrote that article, I emphasized the finding that horses don't seem to have lost much stamina since the 1970s. But I should have looked back further, to the iron horses of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s.

Today we hold Triple Crown winners in awe, but when Assault won the Triple Crown in 1946, many fans thought he was just another horse, the best of a bad crop, and still had to prove himself against older horses on the handicap circuit. Why wasn't the Triple Crown more important? Why isn't the handicap circuit as important now?

A: The post-war racing boom signaled the climax of a bygone era when the Triple Crown series — then in its adolescence as an achievement and hardly the transcendent attention-grabbing spectacle it is now — was still viewed as spring training that prepped 3-year-olds for a long career in the major leagues of the handicaps.

Whirlaway and Count Fleet may have captured America's imagination with their Triple Crown glories of the early 40s, but injury turned them into shooting stars gone too soon. Left in their wake were the durable handicap horses like Stymie and Armed and Assault, forging careers long enough to become part of the permanent firmament.

Previous decades saw the likes of Exterminator (20s) and Seabiscuit (30s), beloved iron horses whose stars burned brighter with each passing year. But later decades would see the diminishment of the handicap division, making exceptions of such perennial Horse of the Year winners as Kelso (60s), Forego (70s), John Henry (80s), and Cigar (90s).

In the runaway landslide voting for 2018 Horse of the Year, is it any wonder that the 5-year-old Accelerate's dominance of the handicap division and the Breeders' Cup Classic was no match for the supernova Justify's Triple Crown burst?

As horse racing became his favorite sport to cover, to watch, and to bet, he found kindred spirits in Hirsch Jacobs and Izzy Bieber.

The cast of characters

Q: A character I was surprised to meet in your book was Damon Runyon, whom I knew only as the author whose stories inspired the musical *Guys and Dolls*. What is Runyon doing in your book? How was he connected to Jacobs and Stymie?

A: Long before emerging as America's most popular short story writer, Damon Runyon was its preeminent newspaper columnist and sportswriter. As horse racing became his favorite sport to cover, to watch, and to bet, he found kindred spirits in Hirsch Jacobs and Izzy Bieber.

Bieber was, quite literally, a character straight out of a Damon Runyon short story. Having long known Bieber as a pugnacious Broadway ticket scalper and fellow inveterate gambler, Runyon used him as both source and model for some of the colorful characters immortalized on the stage as *Guys and Dolls* and in the dictionary as 'Runyonesque'. In fact, of all the real-life hustlers and gangsters populating Runyon's Broadway, the storied writer himself acknowledged that none was more Runyonesque than the man he called 'Beeb'.

So, when Runyon decided to try his hand campaigning a few Thoroughbred racehorses of his own, Beeb introduced him to his partner, Jacobs, then an up-and-comer on the cusp of becoming America's winningest trainer. "I have finally found a man who seems to have the ideal philosophy of life," Runyon led off the first syndicated column introducing Jacobs to the American public.

Both kindred spirits at the top of their respective professions, Runyon and Jacobs became fast friends. When they weren't whiling away countless hours at the Jamaica and Saratoga tracks where the trainer based his stable and conditioned the writer's horses, they

and their families were spending Sunday afternoons together at the Runyons'. It's no coincidence that Jacobs and his wife named their only daughter Patrice after Runyon's wife.

Q: Looking through the photographs in your book, I noticed that Stymie's groom, Joe Jones, was black. You see this a lot in the stories of great race horses, including *Secretariat*, *Ruffian* and *California Chrome*. The jockeys, trainers, and owners are white and Hispanic, but the grooms and exercise riders are often black. It's an uncomfortable history, especially since black jockeys dominated the sport before they were driven out in the 1910s and 1920s. What do we know about Joe Jones' aspirations and his relationship with Jacobs and Stymie? To his credit, Jacobs named Stymie's first foal after Jones.

A: The parting shot in the book's photo insert — a compelling image of Joe Jones holding the reins and staring into Stymie's eyes on the Jamaica track as the 'People's Horse' regally basks in the cheers one last time during his farewell appearance — captures the close relationship and special bond they had shared for years.

Though we were never able to glean enough about Jones' aspirations to paint a portrait of him in the book, John Jacobs, then just a young boy destined to become his father's assistant trainer, did provide some brushstrokes about Jones' techniques. John Jacobs remembers Jones as "a very, very nice man who could get along with a horse unbelievably ... a calming influence, talking and singing to them ... very easy on a horse. ... They were relaxed around him".

Which is why Hirsch Jacobs entrusted Stymie to his favorite groom once the late bloomer finally started showing some potential. Jones' knack for dealing

with each horse's unique temperament enabled him especially to handle the high-strung and headstrong Stymie, who would get so amped and unmanageable prepping for big races that Jacobs sometimes confined him to his stall.

It's a measure of the groom's relationship with both his boss and his horse that, as you noted, Jacobs named Stymie's firstborn Joe Jones.

Q: Your book is tremendously engaging, with lifelike detail about events that took place 70-80 years ago — not just races, but conversations that took place in boarding houses, at Lindy's New York delicatessen, and in the streets of Havana. How did you do your research? What were your sources and how did you find them?

A: Starting with the proverbial "first draft of history", we were fortunate that the intertwined stories of Hirsch Jacobs and Stymie were chronicled in real time by some of the most lyrical and literary newspapermen ever to grace a press box — from Damon Runyon to Joe Palmer and his pal Red Smith, the revered columnist who eloquently eulogized both the equine and the human protagonists of our book.

If the written testimony of such eyewitnesses and of racing historians gave the narrative its skeleton and flesh, then its heart and soul derived directly from the reminiscences of Jacobs's three children, who generously shared their time and thoughts in numerous in-depth interviews along with a treasure trove of mementos, family photos, and personal correspondence. In addition to their insights into Hirsch's personality and philosophy, they shared priceless anecdotes that our research never could have uncovered. Without all of those written and spoken sources, there could have been no *Out of the Clouds*.

THEY FOUND

Mischief

Two-year-olds from his best-bred
crop to date have included:

\$1,500,000

OXO Equine's Larry Best

\$1,300,000

Team Casse's Justin Casse

\$1,000,000

Coolmore's M.V. Magnier

\$800,000

Cromwell Bloodstock's
Gatewood Bell

\$750,000

Phoenix Thoroughbreds'
Amer Abdulaiziz



INTO MISCHIEF


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What They're Thinking: Olivier Peslier: 'If I tell someone in France I am a jockey, they think I mean a DJ'

Sally Ann Grassick | April 09, 2019



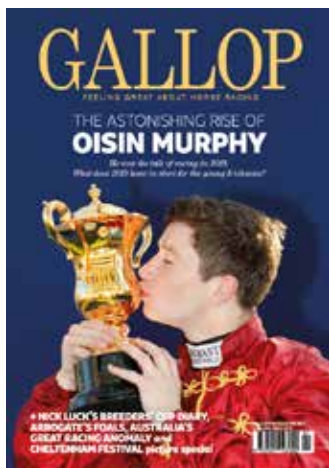
Olivier Peslier after Goldikova's historic third consecutive win in the Breeders' Cup Mile at Churchill Downs in 2010. Photo: Gary Mook/Breeders' Cup

Olivier Peslier has been one of the world's very best riders for 30 years. A four-time French champion, he has a list of international big-race victories to his name that is arguably unmatched - including four Arcs, two French Derbys, an Epsom Derby, an Irish Derby, seven Hong Kong International Races, four Dubai World Cup day races, three Arima Kinens, two Japan Cups and five Breeders' Cup races (three on Goldikova in the Mile).

Even at 46, with a reduced schedule, he is currently as high as #57 in the TRC Global Rankings.

It is surely impossible to name a jockey who has been successful in more countries - Peslier has ridden winners in France, Britain, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Mauritius, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada and the U.S.

Thoughtful, as well as extremely knowledgeable, Peslier has long been an idol and mentor for many young riders in the French weighing room, and his views on the sport always carry plenty of weight.



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Who do you think is the most important figure in the history of racing around the world?

For me, one of the people who has had the biggest influence on both racing and breeding has to be Prince Khalid Abdullah. I was lucky enough to ride some good horses for him, and I even won the Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf on Banks Hill in his famous colours.

Every jockey dreams of wearing those colours. The one horse of his that I would have loved to have ridden is definitely Frankel; what an impressive horse he was.

The breeding operation Prince Khalid has created is phenomenal, and they manage to produce a champion almost every year. It is such an impressive achievement to have won the best races all over the world and with horses trained by many different trainers too.

Which is your favourite venue and race (anywhere in the world)?

That is easy, Ascot! I love Longchamp too, obviously, but the week of Royal Ascot is a special occasion when the best horses in the world come together to race. It is not just the racing either, the atmosphere is unbelievable with everybody dressed up in their finest, all hoping to get a glimpse of the Queen. It is pure class!

To be able to say that you won even one race at Royal Ascot is a huge deal for any jockey. From the impressive grandstand when you step out onto the beautiful track to the atmosphere when

you return to the winners' enclosure, it is everything that I love about racing.

My favourite race in the world would have to be the Arc. Every French jockey dreamed of winning the Arc as a child, and I was lucky enough to achieve that four times.

I grew up seeing paintings and statues of Arc winners and, after winning my first Arc, it was incredible to think that I would be in some of those artworks for future generations to see. It brings together the champions, both 3-year-olds and older horses, from all over Europe and beyond at the end of the season. It is a true championship race. (Watch Peslier's most recent Arc triumph - in 2012 aboard Solemia).

What is your fondest memory in racing?

I have so many wonderful memories from my career, but the years I spent in Japan are very special to me. It was an incredible sensation to have 180,000 people applauding and shouting "Peslier, Peslier" as I cantered past the grandstand on my way to the winner's enclosure. That is twice the capacity of the Stade de France!

That feeling and the goose bumps I used to get when riding in front of the Japanese crowds are something I have never experienced in any other country in the world.

What do you see as the biggest challenge racing faces today?

The biggest problem facing us here in France is actually getting people to

come to the races. They don't have the same issue in the UK as racing is in their genes there. People come racing in France to bet and that is obviously very important, but we also need to show them that racing is a sport too.

People love football as a sport, whether they bet on it or not, and they are willing to spend €150 on a jersey or €200 to go and see a match. We need to change people's perception of racing and the best way to do that is to get them to come to the races. The French racing public are getting older, and there currently isn't a younger generation of fans coming behind to replace them, which is a real concern for our sport.

If you could change one thing in racing, what would it be?

I wish our racecourses were more accessible by public transport. In Japan, just like at some tracks in the UK or Australia, you can take a train that stops at a station right on the racecourse.

Chantilly is easy enough for the public to get to, but that is not the case for somewhere like Longchamp or Saint Cloud. Half the time, when you get in a taxi to go to one of those racecourses, the driver doesn't even know where they are.

I would love racing to have the same stature in France that it does in other countries, so that the public could get to know the equine and human stars of our sport. The English public know the top jockeys over there, but, if I tell someone in France that I am a jockey, they think I mean a DJ!

TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS

The Thoroughbred Racing Industry's ranking system

Available at thoroughbredracing.com

Thoroughbred racing has its rankings of the world's leading horses and the world's best races, but the sport is devoid of meaningful classifications of the humans involved, the jockeys, the trainers, the owners.

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TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS



28 April 2019

Jockeys

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Ryan Moore	Great Britain	1091
2	Mike E Smith	USA	1065
3	Christophe-Patrice Lemaire	Japan	1063
4	Hugh Bowman	Australia	1054
5	William Buick	Great Britain	1051
6	Zac Purton	Hong Kong	1050
7	Frankie Dettori	Great Britain	1048
8	Jose L Ortiz	USA	1037
8	Mirco Demuro	Japan	1037
10	Joel Rosario	USA	1030
11	Javier Castellano	USA	1029
12	Flavien Prat	USA	1027
13	Irad Ortiz Jr	USA	1026
14	Joao Moreira	Hong Kong	1025
15	Kerrin McEvoy	Australia	1019

Trainers

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Charlie Appleby	Great Britain	1082
2	Chad C Brown	USA	1066
3	Bob Baffert	USA	1061
4	Aidan O'Brien	Ireland	1056
5	John Gosden	Great Britain	1043
6	James Cummings	Australia	1030
7	Saeed bin Suroor	UAE	1029
8	Chris Waller	Australia	1022
9	Darren Weir**	Australia	1019
10	John Moore	Hong Kong	1018
11	Andre Fabre	France	1013
12	John Size	Hong Kong	1012
13	Sir Michael Stoute	Great Britain	1007
14	Jerry Hollendorfer	USA	1001
15	Tony Cruz	Hong Kong	1000

Owners

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Godolphin	Australia	1085
2	Coolmore Partners	Ireland	1068
3	Sheikh Hamdan Al Maktoum	Great Britain	1046
4	Magic Bloodstock Et Al	Australia	1038
5	Juddmonte Farms / Prince Khalid Abdulla	Great Britain	1028
6	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1026
7	China Horse Club Et Al	Australia	1021
8	WinStar Farm Et Al	USA	1017
9	Head of Plains Et Al	USA	1010
10	Madaket Stables Et Al	USA	1009
11	Silk Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1006
12	Klaravich Stables Et Al	USA	1005
12	Lloyd Williams Et Al	Australia	1005
12	Patrick Kwok Et Al	Hong Kong	1005
12	U Carrot Farm	Japan	1005

Sires

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Dubawi	Great Britain	1083
2	Galileo	Ireland	1057
3	Deep Impact	Japan	1046
4	Frankel	Great Britain	1045
5	Scat Daddy	USA	1044
6	I Am Invincible	Australia	1040
7	Lord Kanaloa	Japan	1029
7	Street Cry	Australia	1029
9	Quality Road	USA	1028
10	Sea The Stars	Great Britain	1025
11	Teofilo	Australia	1024
12	More Than Ready	USA	1022
12	Pierro	Australia	1022
14	Candy Ride	USA	1021
14	Kitten's Joy	USA	1021