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How Charlie Appleby has taken over from Baffert and O'Brien



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Proof that no other trainer anywhere is a match for Charlie Appleby right now

James Willoughby | February 22, 2019



Cover photo: Kristen Manning

Charlie Appleby (right) with Blue Point after his success in the G2 Meydan Sprint at Meydan, one of two Group victories that sealed Appleby's ascent to the top spot in the rankings. Photo: Dubai Racing Club/Erika Rasmussen

Symmetry is everywhere – especially if you look hard enough. And symmetry has long been taken as propitious, either by primitive societies intent on interpreting coincidental natural phenomena as manifestation of their deities, or by modern ones who insist that pure randomness in sport actually has some ethereal cause called ‘momentum’.

So, retaining a natural suspicion of symbolism, we can look back at Quorto's win in the G1 National Stakes at the Curragh last September as at least a watershed moment in the training career of Charlie Appleby. After all, Quorto winning Ireland's most important juvenile race 14 years after his own sire, Dubawi – and clocking almost exactly the same time, could be significant.

Here was a Godolphin colt turning away Aidan O'Brien's number one son of Galileo with the kind of impunity reserved only by special horses. Appleby had parked his tank

The thing that grabs you about Appleby's horses-in-training is the amazing concentration of quality.

on the turf staked out as the Ballydoyle lawn by the brilliant O'Brien's 11 previous victories. And, in a similar spot to where so many Godolphin upstarts had foundered in the past, this one delivered – all guns blazing.

As you have read in this space for a long time now, Appleby is very, very good at training racehorses. His results speak for themselves, but their aggregation – and, more importantly, the terrific efficiency with which they have been garnered – prove this beyond all doubt. There is no need to trot out the tables again: Appleby's horses have won Group and Graded races at a rate like no other trainer for over a year now. He leads the world in strike rate, head-to-head winning percentage and several other metrics that have powered the TRC Global Rankings algorithm to promote him to #1.

We have had no choice. If your business is the mathematics of ranking performers by time-ordered results, there is no other answer, in our opinion. If you put anyone else at #1 for now, you do not reflect both what has happened in the recent past and how it tends to project to the future. Sure, you can point to O'Brien having had more winners than Appleby, but it is only 25-24 in the last six months – and O'Brien has had three times more runners and fewer G1 winners!

But this is no dispute about legacy. If racing ended today, Appleby would not rank in the top 500 global trainers in history, whereas O'Brien would have to be in the top ten. O'Brien is a phenomenon, and the horse power he can call on is more numerous and more powerful in the aggregate than it has ever been. He will be back. We are depending on it.

O'Brien needs to develop another generation of champions, however. His ranks are populous but not dominant like they were. Doubtless, he probably has at least half a dozen or so Group 1 runners from last year's 2-year-olds who were not able to announce themselves because there was illness in the ranks. But you

cannot rank trainers on what might have been.

After Quoto's victory, Appleby went on a torrid run. He won the G1 Sir Rupert Clarke in Australia, the G1 Prix de l'Opera in France, the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf in the U.S. and the G1 Melbourne Cup in Australia, in the latter becoming the first British trainer to land Australia's most famous race.

Amazing concentration of quality

Cross Counter, the hero of that last piece, is a mighty good horse who will make a lot of noise in the staying division this year in Europe, but he won't be a lonely standard-bearer among Appleby's older middle-distance horses. The trainer returns last year's Derby winner Masar, the Opera winner Wild Illusion, progressive Group winners Old Persian, Brundtland, Loxley and Ghaiyyath – the latter carrying this writer's strongest recommendation for top honours.

The thing that grabs you about Appleby's horses-in-training is the amazing concentration of quality. Look down the names of his horses aged three and above and you will find yourself saying: "That's good", "He's much improved", "She's getting better", "He is thriving" etc. In an era where top trainers around the world have strings of multiple hundred well-bred horses, which affords a degree of profligacy, it seems that Appleby is wasting a lot fewer shots than many others.

This week at Meydan, Appleby won all three Group races. Last week, he won two of the three. Racing in Dubai is a 'home' fixture for Godolphin like no other, of course, but racing in Ireland is hardly an uphill struggle for O'Brien. All trainers have their advantages.

Racing in Dubai is not a mirage, however. Appleby's horses really are running huge figures nearly all the time to win. The clock proves it. And, given his pan-global success last year, it seems a bit ridiculous for some to claim that Meydan victories are flattering to Appleby's numbers. Even the

most ardent O'Brien admirer – of which this author counts himself as one – knows that Group races in Europe are now harder to win than they have ever been – and that counts without John Gosden, Andre Fabre, Sir Michael Stoute or other all-time greats currently in possession of a trainer's license.

International racing right now is an absolute treat. The quality has surely never been higher. There are trainers and jockeys of both sexes to watch and marvel at, week in and week out. Many of those names are listen here in the features written by our great team of contributors at Thoroughbred Racing Commentary.

The forthcoming season in Europe is poised to be one of the most exciting we have seen for years. When O'Brien hits the straps on his comeback, it will be rousing for many of his long-term fans. There has been nobody like him, and there probably never will be. From a statistical standpoint right now, however, it is Appleby who has wowed. It is Appleby who has proved himself among the elite – where he arguably did not reside two years ago.

We captured his rise to prominence with no prior and no bias, which followers of TRC Global Rankings depend on. There is no need for convoluted arguments when it comes to ranking trainers. We offer no comment about 'how good' they are. The order reflects who is more likely to win a head-to-head match-up today, suitably abstracted from every other factor, such as geography or prize money.

If you are making an inference about stallions, for example, using results just in Europe and the U.S., you are excluding a lot of data from Australia, Japan, South America and elsewhere. We include all the best races – no matter where they are run and how much is at stake – simply because more meaningful data leads to more robust predictive accuracy.

TRC Global Rankings continue to tell the story of global racing like no other resource. And that story is an absolute blockbuster.

The lavish Las Vegas racetrack that went bust in 13 days

Jeff Lowe | February 25, 2019



Opening day: Las Vegas Park in April, 1953. Photo: Keeneland Library Thoroughbred Times collection

Las Vegas has been a sustained success as the home of the NTRA/DRF National Handicapping Championship, which was contested for a 20th time in Sin City earlier this month at Treasure Island Hotel and Resort, yet the combination of glitz, glamour and gambling there failed to produce a winner in Las Vegas's lone attempt at launching a major racetrack.

Las Vegas Park, located just off the strip on the present-day location of the Las Vegas Country Club, went bust after just 13 days of live racing in 1953, a total failure of what was intended to marry the city's growth as an entertainment and gambling destination with Thoroughbred racing's boom period as one of America's most popular sports.

Track leadership was ambitious and certainly not lacking in credentials: President Lou Smith had operated Rockingham Park since 1931, Vice President Webb Everett came from Santa Anita Park, where he had been the only racing secretary and handicapper since the track's opening in 1934, and Clement L. Hirsch was a successful businessman who would go on to be a co-founder of the Oak Tree Racing Association.

With the benefit of 66 years of hindsight, it appears they were simply too ambitious, sparing little expense with a facility costing \$4 million (equivalent to roughly \$38 million in 2019) and daily operating costs that would have required \$400,000 in daily handle (\$3.6 million in 2019) to break even.

The backbreaker may have been Las Vegas's population at the time: just 25,000 in the city and 50,000 within Clark County. Today, Las Vegas proper is home to more than 600,000, and Clark County more than two million.

Las Vegas Park was a struggle from the start, as the original racetrack concept, led by Joseph Smoot, was racked with delays and scandal.

Smoot, who had an early hand in the launch of both Santa Anita Park and Hialeah Park, eventually was charged with felony embezzlement and the track project went bankrupt after about \$1 million had been spent on the unfinished venue.

Lou Smith and a long list of investors stepped in to complete the facility and proceed with a race schedule that was supposed to fit neatly in between the end of the Del Mar meet just after Labor Day to the start of the Hollywood Park meeting in late fall, catering to horses and horse fanatics from Southern California.

Some of the horses came — Hirsch provided his 14-time stakes winner Blue Reading for the opening-day feature — but big spenders from California were largely absent for a track that was billed



The Las Vegas track during construction in 1951. The clubhouse and grandstands appear largely complete, but the inside rail has not been installed. The turf course, which was never used, is being watered. Photo: Las Vegas News Bureau

as the first to offer a \$500 betting window.

The opening-day crowd was reported as 8,200 for a facility designed to hold 20,000 or more. Even then, the day was mired with problems: long traffic delays along a single route into the parking lot, searing heat, major tote issues and a disappointing handle of \$252,683.

After tote malfunctions persisted throughout the first weekend, the track closed down for three weeks to allow another tote system to be installed, but attendance and handle never picked up and some race purses were down to \$800 by mid-October, a far cry from a lavish stakes schedule that was supposed to feature a \$100,000 futurity but went mostly unfulfilled.

A turf course, which would have been the first used for racing in the western United States, also never got out of the gate.

Clement Hirsch's tenure in Las Vegas did mark the start of his long association with California-based trainer Warren Stute. They would continue as an owner-trainer tandem for more than 40 years until Hirsch's death in 2000. Stute died seven years later. His brother, Melvin, also a longtime trainer, was Warren's assistant during Las Vegas Park's short history.

"My brother sent his best horses to

Las Vegas since Mr Hirsch wanted to support the racetrack, and I kept a string back at Santa Anita," said Melvin Stute, 92. "I did go over there to Las Vegas for two days. While I was there, there was nobody at the races. It was a very nice, first-class facility. The directors' room, all the high-end areas, were something special. The gamblers just did not show up. Too much else going on, I guess."

Las Vegas Park did have the distinction of being America's first racino, as the Las Vegas Gaming Commission allowed 165 slot machines to be placed at the track as an extra revenue source and to provide bettors with rapid action, in true Vegas fashion. Slots, though, were not nearly enough.

"Californians go to Las Vegas to throw the dice against the cushion of the crap table, watch the little ball twirl and whirl until it tick, tick, ticks and finally plops into a number on the roulette wheel, watch for those bars on the one-armed bandits and hear the dice click against the cage at chuck-a-luck," wrote Leon Rasmussen in the September 12 edition of the Thoroughbred Record magazine. "Las Vegas — I believe there are about 35,000 of them — are just not enough



The clubhouse and turf club on one of the few race days at Las Vegas Park in 1953. Photo: Keeneland Library Thoroughbred Times collection

to contribute materially to the success of the track. Racing needs population, and although Las Vegas does not hew to convention in very many ways, it is still not quite fabulous enough to sustain a track as pretentious as this one hoped to be.”

After brief forays with Quarter Horse racing in 1954 and auto racing in 1954 and 55, Las Vegas Park was abandoned and eventually torn down in the 1960s.

Most of the racing plant is now the site of the Las Vegas Country Club, which opened in 1967, while a corner section of the 480-acre racetrack property was utilized for the massive International hotel that debuted in 1969 with Barbra Streisand and Elvis Presley headlining the grand opening. The hotel was known for many years as the Las Vegas Hilton and now is the Westgate Las Vegas Resort and Casino.



One of the few races that were ever run at Las Vegas Park. Photo: Keeneland Library Thoroughbred Times collection

Ten ex-European horses who went from strength to strength for U.S. stables

Nicholas Godfrey | February 04, 2019



The FBI had information about 'shenanigans at Finger Lakes'. It turned out "there was no great amount of chicanery"

With Khalid Abdullah's Juddmonte team leading the way, transatlantic transfers have become fairly commonplace in the modern era of international flat racing. What follows is a list of ten of the most successful switches since the 1970s, featuring only horses who either won a North American championship or were inducted into the Hall of Fame.

To be eligible for inclusion, a horse has to have officially represented a U.S.-based trainer, which rules out the likes of renowned equine pioneer All Along, handled by Patrick Biancone for an unprecedented six-week international spree in 1983 that resulted in North American Horse of the Year honours. That formidable filly remains the only European-trained horse ever accorded the ultimate honour in North American racing.

For all her admirable exploits in the Washington DC International when trained by Maurice Zilber, the great Dahlia is another to miss out because she was a shadow of

her former self by the time she joined Charlie Whittingham.

Similarly, horses who jetted in and out of Europe to claim championships thanks to their exploits at the Breeders' Cup are also ruled out, even if they left an indelible impression on U.S. racing by their exploits (think Miesque, Goldikova and Ouija Board, among others).

Finally, only racing (not breeding) achievements in North America (not Europe) have counted for the purposes of this list, which is in chronological order.

So here you go: let the arguments commence!

1. Snow Knight

- foaled 28 Feb 1971
- ch c Firestreak - Snow Blossom
- Owner: Windfields Farm (E.P. Taylor)
- Trainer transfer: Peter Nelson to Jim Bentley to Mack Miller
- Europe: 3 wins from 10 races
- North America: 6 wins from 12 races
- U.S. honours: Champion turf horse (1975)

Fractious colt overcame injuries in early career to become one of the biggest shock winners in Derby history with a 50/1 victory at Epsom under Brian Taylor; only other British victories had come in minor events.

Sold for a reported Can\$1 million to E.P. Taylor, he did not thrive in three runs at Woodbine before moving across the border, where famously patient U.S. trainer Mack Miller worked his magic on the highly strung individual to the extent that he won the Man o'War and a division of the Manhattan before beating Arc runner-up Comtesse de Loir on a return to Toronto for Canada's greatest race, the Canadian International - then it was one of the most competitive international races in the world.

2. Exceller

- foaled 12 May 1973
- b c Vaguely Noble - Too Bald
- Owner: Nelson Bunker Hunt
- Trainer transfer: Maurice Zilber to Charlie Whittingham
- Europe: 7 wins from 15 races
- North America: 8 wins from 18 races
- U.S. honours: Hall of Fame (1999)

Top-class middle-distance/stayer when trained in France, Exceller was the champion without a championship, attaining lasting celebrity when beating a

pair of Triple Crown winners in a historic Jockey Club Gold Cup at a muddy Belmont in 1978. Switching between dirt and grass as a 5-year-old in the States, he ran up a string of victories before his famous Jockey Club success, where he closed from miles back – 22 lengths according to the chart – and then just touched off the courageous Seattle Slew, with Affirmed fifth with a slipped saddle.

Despite six G1 wins in 1978, was never rewarded with a year-end championship; did enough, though, to be voted into the Hall of Fame two decades later and feature at No.96 in Blood-Horse magazine's Top 100 Racehorses of the 20th Century.

3. J.O. Tobin

- foaled 28 March 1974
- br c Never Bend - Hill Shade
- Owner: George A Pope Jnr
- Trainer transfer: Noel Murless to Johnny Adams to Laz Barrera
- Europe: 3 wins from 4 races
- North America: 9 wins from 17 races
- U.S. honours: Champion sprinter (1978)

American-bred colt shocked the racing world twice: firstly when he was transferred to the States following the retirement of legendary trainer Noel Murless, for whom he looked a superstar juvenile, then again as he ended the unbeaten run of Triple Crown hero Seattle Slew when making all in a breathtaking eight-length win in the Swaps Stakes (then a G1) at Hollywood Park in July 1977.

Belongs to an elite group in having become a champion on both sides of the Atlantic, having excelled on both turf and dirt, where brilliant speed made him a danger at the top level in the U.S.

Named America's champion sprint horse for 1978 (alongside Dr. Patches) when he won six of his 11 starts, mainly ridden by the 'Kentucky Kid' Steve Cauthen for trainer Laz Barrera, the jockey/trainer combination behind that year's Triple Crown winner, Affirmed.

4. Theatrical

- foaled 13 March 1982
- b c Nureyev - Tree Of Knowledge
- Owner: Bertram Firestone/Allen Paulson
- Trainer transfer: Dermot Weld to Bobby Frankel to Bill Mott
- Europe: 3 wins from 8 races

- North America: 7 wins from 14 races
- U.S. honours: Champion turf male (1987)

Notable for being handled by a trio of training legends, Theatrical was already established as a leading middle-distance performer in Ireland before his permanent move to the States.

Placed in three G1s for Bobby Frankel (including a narrow defeat by Manila in the notorious Breeders' Cup race where Dancing Brave was only fourth), he joined Bill Mott for a magnificent 1987 campaign in which he either made the running or raced prominently to win no fewer than six Graded stakes from nine starts. Victories included the Sword Dancer (via DQ), Turf Classic and Man o'War in New York before a triumphant return to California in the Breeders' Cup Turf, where he defeated Arc winner Trempolino.

5. Steinlen

- foaled on 14 March 1983
- b c Habitat - Southern Seas
- Owner: Daniel Wildenstein
- Trainer transfer: Patrick Biancone to D Wayne Lukas
- Europe: 4 wins from 10 races
- North America: 16 wins from 35 races
- U.S. honours: Champion turf male (1989)

After a series of minor victories, soft ground was to be Steinlen's undoing when his sights were raised in France. Already a mature horse, he was shipped to the States for his 5-year-old campaign and was kept typically busy across three seasons with D Wayne Lukas, landing a string of Graded stakes, most notably via a five-race winning streak in 1989, during which he won the Arlington Million and Breeders' Cup Mile at Gulfstream Park (had been second to Miesque 12 months earlier). Further successes followed as a 7-year-old before he was retired after coming fourth in Royal Academy's Breeders' Cup.

6. Kotashaan

- foaled 4 May 1988
- br c Darshaan - Haute Autorite
- Owner: La Presle Farm (Wertheimer Et Frere)
- Trainer transfer: Criquette Head to Richard Mandella
- Europe: 3 wins from 8 races

- North America: 7 wins from 13 races (also 2nd in Japan Cup)
- U.S. honours: Horse of the Year (1993), champion turf male (1993)

Though he was consistent enough in minor French Group company as a 3-year-old, nothing in Kotashaan's European resume would have suggested he would end up winning North American racing's most senior accolade as Horse of the Year in 1993.

Transformed as a 5-year-old in Californian turf races, winning six of ten starts (plus three seconds). Habitually rallying from well of the pace, he won major races on the west coast from 1m1f to 1m6f, his final success coming in the Breeders' Cup Turf, where leading Europeans Opera House and Hernando were among the vanquished. Sold to Japanese interests for stud duties, he was unlucky to finish second to Legacy World on his final start in the Japan Cup as his jockey misjudged the finishing line.

7. Intercontinental

- foaled 19 March 2000
- b f Danehill - Hasili
- Owner: Juddmonte Farms (Khalid Abdullah)
- Trainer transfer: Andre Fabre to Bobby Frankel
- Europe: 4 wins from 9 races
- North America: 9 wins from 13 races
- U.S. honours: Champion female turf horse (2005)

Several other Juddmonte transfers may have had more class and achieved more throughout their entire career (notably Quest For Fame and Banks Hill, two among many) but surprisingly few of them were U.S. champions after the move and few can have progressed quite as much.

Never successful above listed company in Europe, this blue-blooded Juddmonte homebred (full-sister to fellow champion Banks Hill and Dansili, out of arguably the most successful producer of the modern era in Hasili) capped an excellent 5-year-old campaign by beating Ouija Board at the Breeders' Cup. Having won the G1 Matriarch in 2004, she won five out of seven the following season, landing Graded stakes in Kentucky and California before securing her championship at Belmont. Three-time G1 winner Wandesta, U.S. champion turf female in 1996, was of similar ilk.

8. Main Sequence

- foaled 13 Feb 2009
- ch g Aldebaran - Ikat
- Owner: Flaxman Holdings (Niarchos Family)
- Trainer transfer: David Lanigan to Graham Motion
- Europe: 4 wins from 14 races
- North America: 5 wins from 6 races (plus unplaced in Dubai)
- U.S. honours: Champion older male (2014), champion turf male (2014)

Second to Camelot in Derby at Epsom after winning first four starts and progressing from handicap company but did not win again in Europe. After a winless four-year-old campaign following a gelding operation, this slow-starting, tail-swishing chestnut was sent to Graham Motion and went on to compile a flawless campaign at five, going unbeaten in four races, all of them G1s, culminating in the Breeders' Cup Turf. Won again in G2 company at the start of 2015 before an unavailing trip to Dubai and was retired after tearing a tendon in his final start.

9. Flintshire

- foaled 4 April 2010
- b/br c Dansili - Dance Routine
- Owner: Juddmonte Farms (Khalid Abdullah)
- Trainer transfer: Andre Fabre to Chad Brown
- Europe: 3 wins from 14 races (plus a win and 2nd in Hong Kong and Dubai)
- North America: 4 wins from 7 races
- U.S. honours: Champion turf male (2016)

Rather like his mentor, Bobby Frankel, European imports have always been an integral part of Chad Brown's operation. Honest, tough and sound, Flintshire became the trainer's highest-profile recruit so far when he made the typical Juddmonte switch for his 6-year-old campaign, by which time he was already firmly established as one of the best horses in Europe and a major player on the international stage.

Looked a cut above the U.S. crop in winning his first three starts (including a repeat victory in the Sword Dancer) but soft ground was his undoing in the Joe Hirsch Turf Classic before he was second (a position he often filled), a beaten favourite

behind Highland Reel in the Breeders' Cup Turf (where he was also second in 2014).

10. Sistercharlie

- foaled 13 March 2014
- b f Myboycharlie - Starlet's Sister
- Owner: Peter M Brant
- Trainer transfer: Henri-Alex Pantall to Chad Brown
- Europe: 3 wins from 5 races
- North America: 4 wins from 6 races
- U.S. honours: Champion turf female (2018)

Cannot yet be regarded as the best of Chad Brown's imported European fillies – a top Racing Post Rating of 115 puts her well behind Stacelita and below even Zagora – but last year's Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf winner has arguably achieved more since her move Stateside.

Runner-up in the Prix de Diane, she was narrowly beaten in that year's Belmont Oaks Invitational before really coming into her own as a 4-year-old, when but for a head she would have gone unbeaten in five starts. Still won four G1s, generally overwhelming her rivals with an irresistible late drive in the stretch.

Honorable mention: Cardmania

- foaled 8 Feb 1986
- b g Cox's Ridge - L'Orangerie
- Owner: Jean Couvercelle
- Trainer transfer: Myriam Bollack-Badel to Derek Meredith
- Europe: 11 from 43 races
- North America: 6 from 33 races (plus 4th in Hong Kong)
- U.S. honours: Champion sprinter (1993)

Hardly looked a world-beater across four busy seasons in minor French company, his most noteworthy success coming only towards the end of his 5-year-old campaign in a heavy-ground G3 barely worthy of the status in Italy.

Showed aptitude for dirt by adding a couple of G3s to his CV, but did not win again after his permanent move until a hat-trick in 1993, when he landed a last-gasp five-wide victory in the Breeders' Cup Sprint for U.S.-based Welshman Derek Meredith. There can be few more unlikely champions: Cardmania was seven at the time and won only one more race before being retired aged nine.

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Tattersalls

Another daughter of Secretariat is discovered - and she's 30 tomorrow

Patricia McQueen | February 13, 2019



Trusted Company has proven to be a "sweet, friendly horse" at Denise Gonsiewski's farm - but one who "doesn't like to be fussed with much". Photo: Patricia McQueen

There's nothing like good company for the holidays, and the 2018 holiday season will forever be extra special for Secretariat fans. It was in late November that Bev Dee's Bright Futures Farm acquired then 29-year-old Trusted Company, a recently discovered daughter of Secretariat who had been living quietly on a New Jersey farm for years.

"When I first heard that there may be another daughter of Secretariat alive, I was thrilled," said Dee. "And I feel strongly there are others, but will we ever know about them? Finding 'Company' was a fluke – a good fluke. Had she not needed a home, we'd have never known about her."

Trusted Company is the third foal of the Tom Gentry-bred Star Snoop, a mare by Stage Door Johnny out of Nosey Body, by Tom Fool. Purchased in 1981 for \$100,000 as a yearling by John Oxley, Star Snoop became a stakes-placed winner of three of 17 starts under the tutelage of trainer John Ward, earning \$24,094.

Born on Valentine's Day

The mare was sold, carrying Trusted Company in utero, at the Ryehill Farm dispersal at Keeneland in November 1988. The buyer at \$110,000 was Brookvale Farm. On February 14, 1989 (making tomorrow her actual 30th birthday), the chestnut mare produced a flashy chestnut filly with a big white blaze and two white feet. Born in New York, the breeder of record was Stone Ridge I.

Interestingly, Star Snoop's best foal by earnings was Stars All Around, a 1990 filly by Secretariat's son Risen Star (guess where her name came from!) She was a sturdy sort, winning nine of 84 starts over six years.

As a yearling, Secretariat's daughter was sold at the Keeneland July sale for \$52,000; consigned by Brookvale, the filly was purchased by Ken L. Wright.

Unlike her three-quarter sister Stars All Around, Trusted Company was a failure at the races. She made her one and only start at Birmingham Race Course as a 4-year-old on July 28, 1993. She was the 3/1 second choice in a six-furlong maiden special weight for owner James Schumann and trainer Kevin Wright. Breaking last, she showed little and finished tenth of 12. That was it and she was off to the breeding shed.

Her life as a broodmare began in Kentucky. Her first foal, born in 1995, was Haydad, a colt by Septieme Ciel who was unraced. As it turned out, that was the only colt among her nine registered foals; the rest were all fillies. Her 1996 filly by Septieme Ciel was unplaced in one start, but her third foal, a 1997 filly by Northern Park named Cot Dot Sue, earned \$51,208 while winning nine of 45 starts in Illinois and Ohio.

At some point after that, Company was sold privately to New York breeder John Michelotti, who bred her last six foals. She gained a little local fame in October 2007, when an article in the Middletown (New York) Times-Herald Record showcased Thoroughbred breeders in the county, including Michelotti. The author, Nathan Mayberg, likened Company's appearance to that of her famous sire. He noted that the owner was mostly a commercial breeder, but would keep those that gave him a "special feeling" – and Company, "whom he bought because she reminded him of Secretariat," wrote Mayberg, was one of those.

The mare's first foal for Michelotti ended

up being her best runner, a 2000 gray filly by Smoke Glacken named Shesasmokin, bankrolling almost \$100,000. Although she only won one of 25 starts, she did earn black type, finishing third in the Maid of the Mist, a New York-bred stakes at Belmont Park. As a broodmare, she produced the multiple stakes-placed runner Uncle Smokey, an earner of \$153,136.

Company had five more registered foals, the last in 2008. The first three were unraced; Michelotti raced the last two but neither would win at the races. She had some back luck as a broodmare; two additional foals were born dead and her final foal also died shortly after birth.

The easy life

After that, Michelotti retired the mare from his broodmare band and sent her to his niece Michele in New Jersey – he wanted to keep Company in the family and Michele had bought a small farm herself not long before. Years earlier, Michele had helped her uncle with the horses on the farm and was likely there for some of Company's foals – she remembers the gray filly Shesasmokin in particular.

"Company has a very sweet disposition; she would follow me around just like a dog – I'd call her and she'd come." The mare loved racing in the field with the other horses – perhaps she found the competition much easier in retirement than she did in her one start as a racehorse. "She was always ahead because her stride was so long," said Michele, noting that most of her stock were Quarter Horses.

A pony named Turbo was Company's best friend during her years with Michele. She laughs when she described how Company would stand next to the gate and seemingly teach Turbo how to change leads. "She would go in a circle, changing her leads, showing that pony what to do. It was amazing." Occasionally Turbo would magically open the gate and get into the field with Company, where her mothering instincts would really surface. "She would guard him as if he was her baby, and wouldn't let any other horse go near him."

Even as she got older, Company still loved to just take off in the field, running and bucking. "She really enjoyed herself and loved it here."

Unfortunately, circumstances ultimately dictated that Michele sell the farm and find homes for her horses and other animals.

The owner had been working on that throughout the past year, but it's especially difficult to rehome an elderly horse, and, at age 29, Trusted Company was at risk if a suitable home wasn't found. Enter Denise Gonsiewski, a local animal welfare advocate, who had a passing acquaintance with Michele through a local trail riding club.

Gonsiewski had learned of Michele's predicament and spread the word that she was available to help with the animals. Then, one day last fall, who did she find at the local feed store but Michele? They struck up a conversation, and before long Gonsiewski started the process of finding homes for some of the few animals that remained. Michele had mentioned that one was a daughter of Secretariat. That didn't matter to Gonsiewski, who doesn't really follow Thoroughbred racing. She just wanted to find a good home for the old mare.

She started by looking up 'Secretariat's daughter' online, and she read about this author's work. She reached out and eventually we made the connection with Bev Dee. Like any good welfare advocate, Gonsiewski investigated Dee through her rescue network, and heard nothing but good things. Paperwork-transferring ownership to Bright Futures was prepared.

Dee knew she'd be able to get some financial support for Company as she has the other horses at Bright Futures. "That makes it easier to say yes to taking on another very senior horse in the middle of winter. They are so expensive to care for."

There was one remaining challenge. Dee had no room at her farm in Western Pennsylvania, so Company needed to be boarded. Gonsiewski and Michele tried to find a suitable farm in the local New Jersey area, but were coming up empty – they had very high standards, which no one could meet. Plan B was for Gonsiewski to board the mare herself, and Company arrived at her farm on November 29.

"She's in good hands; I trust Denise," said Michele. "I was very fortunate."

A new chapter

On her arrival at Gonsiewski's farm, Company was scared and nervous. "She didn't know where she was and just looked lost. It was really sad." She didn't want to confine the mare in an unfamiliar stall right away, so, for the first couple of nights, Company stayed just outside the barn in a

covered area. She was able to touch noses with a pony through a little door on the side of the barn. “Company and my pony Clover were nibbling each others’ faces for the longest time,” said Gonsiewski. “It was very cute, and he was very comforting to her.”

On the second day, the Arabian mare Enya started taking an interest in the new arrival. Gonsiewski’s competitive trail riding horse, Enya had a history of taking on an equine ‘project’, so it wasn’t surprising that she quickly replaced Clover as Company’s four-legged companion. Enya would hang out on the other side of fence, and, at feeding time, Company would take a bite, then look around to make sure Enya was there. She’d take another bite, and look around again.

Gonsiewski knew Company was used to being with other horses, so, with good weather that second day, it was time to turn her out in the field with Enya for a while. “She was lost and needed someone to show her what to do. So wherever Enya walked, Company followed. She was glued to Enya’s side.”

The old mare showed signs of stress on the second night and Gonsiewski was up all night checking on her. But she got over it and was fine the next day. Out with Enya again, the two haven’t been separated since.

Gonsiewski’s other horse, the gelding Doc, was also introduced to Company. Enya was very protective that first week, not allowing Doc to get close to the newcomer. In the ensuing weeks Company and Doc have become a little more friendly and the small herd – which includes Clover and a donkey named Nacho (who also came from Michele’s farm) – has settled into a nice routine, with Enya and Company the dominant pair.

One of the first signs that Company would be fine in her new home came a little more than a week after she arrived. On the day of my visit, she mostly just wandered around the field, never venturing too far from Enya. But, when turned out to a different area on the farm, she and Enya both spontaneously exploded and ran off. Company was thoroughly enjoying herself and maybe showing off a little for the camera. “That made me so happy,” said Gonsiewski. “That showed how good she was feeling; she would never have done that [otherwise].”



Trusted Company: finding out about her was a fluke, says Bev Dee, of Bright Futures Farm.
Photo: Patricia McQueen

In great shape

After a few weeks, Company appears to have gained a little weight. A dental exam found some loose molars, worth monitoring but not addressing at this time. Because of that, though, she does not respond well to hard treats. Overall she seems to be in great shape for her 30 years.

The mare has proven to be a “sweet, friendly horse” but one who “doesn’t like to be fussed with much”. That said, as she grows to trust her caretaker more every day, she seems to gradually want more attention. She also does well with the two local boys who volunteer to help around the farm. “They really saved the day when I first got Company,” she said, explaining that she had spent so much time helping the mare adjust that she was exhausted.

The boys, Marcus and Erik, enjoy horses; they had both been to the farm because Gonsiewski is Marcus’s piano teacher. They had seen the Secretariat movie and

were very interested in helping with such a historically significant horse when they learned Company was coming.

Gonsiewski is also thrilled – the mare’s famous sire may not have been the reason she got involved in the first place, but, as a true animal advocate, she knows the importance of a high-profile horse in the overall scheme of things. “I love that I’m a part of this, because one day I really would like to open up a rescue of my own.”

Meanwhile, she is enjoying Company, who has a habit when drinking water that amuses her no end. “She laps water like a dog. Horses don’t usually do that.”

Footnote

Bright Futures Farm, an accredited Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance facility and 501(c)(3) charity, is looking for sponsors to help pay for Trusted Company’s board and expenses. For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/2XCIG7h>

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What They're Thinking: John Sadler – what we need for racing to really thrive in Southern California

Daniel Ross | February 05, 2019





John Sadler: "We need to bring in marketing teams – there are plenty of experts in those fields we could employ - to better understand what young people are looking for." Photo: Kentucky HBPA

About as steady a mainstay of the Southern California racing circuit as any horseman plying their trade there over the past few decades, John Sadler saw his star reach meteoric heights last year thanks to the exploits of Accelerate, the Breeders' Cup Classic champion and a five-time G1 winner in all. Last month, he was honored with the Eclipse Award for older dirt male.

The 6-year-old son of Lookin At Lucky, has just embarked on his new stallion career at Lane's End, but Sadler, even without his flag-bearer, still has the likes of Catapult and Catalina Cruiser to aim at big races this year.

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

That's a tough question. I guess you'd have to go back to the beginning, and historic figures like Federico Tesio, who wrote the early books on breeding horses. Then, in America, I think the Hancock family has been important, going back to Man o' War, and those great early horses in America. But I don't really have any idea how to answer that properly.

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

I think my favorite venue is Santa Anita. I was born and raised here. It's a beautiful track – it holds up well. You've got the mountains in the background. The downhill turf. Certainly, Belmont is beautiful as well – lots of good choices. I've been to Ascot, but I haven't been to that many tracks [worldwide]. That said, I love our home track.

As for the race, I think my favorite race is, like most Americans, the Kentucky

Derby. In Europe, it would be the Arc [de Triomphe]. It's the most iconic race in Europe, from my perspective.

What is your fondest memory in racing?

Winning the Breeders' Cup Classic in 2018 [see video below]. Pretty fresh in my mind, just having done it, though still a little bit of a blur – that feeling as we were getting close to the wire when we knew you were going to win. A really great way to end the year for that horse.

Another fond memory is coming to the track as a young child with my parents. They actually loved to picnic in the infield. I've been coming to Santa Anita a long time, so I've got great memories of those great racing days with my parents.

And one of my other fondest memories was winning in Dubai, when we won the Golden Shaheen [Our New Recruit, 2004]. That was quite a night – a beautiful track there [at Nad Al Sheba]. It was hot and steamy. That was a great win also.

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

I think getting the next generation interested. We have an aging fan base, and so, attracting young people is the biggest challenge.

I think we need to have more scholarship days, like they do in Keeneland, which is always well attended. We need to bring in marketing teams – there are plenty of experts in those fields we could employ - to better understand what young people are looking for. When you do see young people at the races, they seem to like the whole mix of entertainments, so maybe more things to do on-track in between races.

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

I'm going to go local here, because those are the issues that I deal with – we need one more track open to really thrive in Southern California. Meaning, we need Del Mar to stay open year-round.

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TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS



3 March 2019

Jockeys

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Ryan Moore	Great Britain	1093
2	Mike E Smith	USA	1063
3	Christophe-Patrice Lemaire	Japan	1054
3	Frankie Dettori	Great Britain	1054
5	Hugh Bowman	Australia	1052
6	William Buick	Great Britain	1046
7	Zac Purton	Hong Kong	1045
8	Mirco Demuro	Japan	1042
9	Jose L Ortiz	USA	1035
10	Joel Rosario	USA	1034
11	Javier Castellano	USA	1027
12	Flavien Prat	USA	1026
12	Irad Ortiz Jr	USA	1026
14	Joao Moreira	Hong Kong	1024
15	Kerrin McEvoy	Australia	1013

Owners

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Godolphin	Australia	1076
2	Coolmore Partners	Ireland	1074
3	Sheikh Hamdan Al Maktoum	Great Britain	1045
4	Magic Bloodstock Et Al	Australia	1037
5	Juddmonte Farms / Prince Khalid Abdulla	Great Britain	1028
6	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1021
6	WinStar Farm Et Al	USA	1021
8	China Horse Club Et Al	Australia	1019
9	Patrick Kwok Et Al	Hong Kong	1015
10	Head of Plains Et Al	USA	1010
11	Klaravich Stables Et Al	USA	1004
11	Peters Investments Et Al	Australia	1004
13	Hajime Satomi	Japan	1003
14	Michael Dubb Et Al	USA	1002
15	Lloyd Williams Et Al	Australia	1001

Trainers

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Charlie Appleby	Great Britain	1078
2	Bob Baffert	USA	1068
3	Chad C Brown	USA	1065
4	A P O'Brien	Great Britain	1063
5	John Gosden	Great Britain	1051
6	Saeed bin Suroor	Great Britain	1029
7	Darren Weir**	Australia	1028
8	John Moore	Hong Kong	1017
9	J Size	Hong Kong	1014
10	Chris Waller	Australia	1013
10	Sir Michael Stoute	Great Britain	1013
12	James Cummings	Australia	1008
13	A Fabre	France	1007
14	A S Cruz	Hong Kong	1006
15	Jerry Hollendorfer	USA	999

Sires

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Dubawi	Great Britain	1081
2	Galileo	Ireland	1062
3	Frankel	Great Britain	1046
3	I Am Invincible	Australia	1046
5	Deep Impact	Japan	1044
5	Scat Daddy	USA	1044
7	Sea The Stars	Great Britain	1026
8	Quality Road	USA	1025
9	Kitten's Joy	USA	1024
9	Teofilo	Australia	1024
11	Street Cry	Australia	1023
12	Candy Ride	USA	1020
13	Curlin	USA	1017
13	Lord Kanaloa	Japan	1017
13	More Than Ready	USA	1017