

A special look at the top stories from [thoroughbredracing.com](https://thoroughbredracing.com). July–Aug 2022

# TRC



## Who's the daddy?

*Our list of the Top Ten greatest sires of the last 100 years*



Also inside: What is it that makes Saratoga so great? / What makes Del Mar so great? / James and Edward Cummings / An everyday language lesson in equine etymology / Focus on Flightline, the 'once-in-a-generation' horse / What They're Thinking – Jenine Sahadi



# DON'T LET THE WORLD PASS YOU BY



NOV 4 & 5



KEENELAND

*A Breed Apart*

The Breeders' Cup World Championships make their triumphant return to Keeneland on Nov 4 & 5. Great seats are still available, but won't be for long. Buy yours today to secure your spot to witness the world's top thoroughbreds at one of racing's most iconic tracks. Your tickets are waiting — buy now before they're gone.

[BREEDERSCUP.COM/TICKETS](https://breederscup.com/tickets)



# Top 10 sires of the last 100 years

Nancy Sexton | AUGUST 09, 2022

*Bloodstock expert Nancy Sexton ranks the stallions who have left the most indelible mark in the last 100 years.*

## 1. NORTHERN DANCER (1961-1990)

Nearctic – Natalma (Native Dancer)  
Stood: Windfields Farm, Canada;  
Windfields Farm, Maryland, USA

Northern Dancer was a game changer as far as the industry was concerned, and not just in North America but Europe as well.

It is racing folklore how the horse's diminutive stature and late foaling date (May 27) deterred buyers at the annual yearling auction staged by his breeder,

E. P. Taylor's Windfields Farm. Thus Northern Dancer remained in Taylor's ownership, and luckily so as it turned out.

Trained by Horatio Luro, Northern Dancer was a Canadian champion at two and returned to win the Kentucky Derby (in a record two minutes flat), Preakness Stakes and Queen's Plate during a championship season at three. Never out of the first three in 18 starts, he was tough and versatile to go with his immense talent – and it was those attributes that stood him in such good stead at stud.

When Northern Dancer retired in 1965, the idea of sourcing stock out of America to race in Europe was just taking hold. Northern Dancer, aided by the Triple Crown achievements of his second-crop son Nijinsky, accelerated the process.

---

Below left: In an earlier life: before his legendary stud career, Northern Dancer won the Kentucky Derby, Preakness Stakes and Canada's Queen's Plate

Below right: Game changer: Northern Dancer was a prepotent influence in North America and Europe, transforming the bloodstock industry worldwide.



Nijinsky's trainer Vincent O'Brien, backed by Robert Sangster and John Magnier, were quick to target Northern Dancer's stock and with tremendous results, coming out of Kentucky with another Derby winner in The Minstrel as well as the Classic winners El Gran Senor and Lomond.

Demand for his stock was the driving force behind the inflation of the bloodstock market during the 1970s and 1980s – led by a colt who sold for \$10.2m in 1983, 49 of his yearlings sold for \$1m or more – and by 1985, it was rumoured that breeders were paying up to \$950,000 to secure his services at the age of 25.

What was remarkable about Northern Dancer's success is that it was achieved during an era of small books; as an example, his 1980 crop of 31 foals contained four G1 winners, among them Lomond and Shareef Dancer, while out of a similarly small group born in 1981, El Gran Senor, Northern Trick, Secreto and Sadler's Wells each tasted Classic success.

As anticipated, Northern Dancer left behind an array of successful sire sons led by Sadler's Wells, who rewrote the record books during his time at Coolmore. Others such as Nijinsky, Be My Guest, Nureyev, Danzig, Storm Bird, Lyphard, El Gran Senor, Fairy King, Northern Taste, Vice Regent and Dixieland Band also became influential stallions in their own right, in many cases successful enough to forge their own legacy.

As such, Northern Dancer is today an ubiquitous presence within pedigrees, and indeed quite often appears duplicated several times over.

## 2. NEARCO (1935-1957)

Pharos – Nogara (Havresac II)

*Stood: Beech House Stud, Newmarket, Britain*

No mention of Nearco would be complete without a nod to the influence wielded by his grandsire Phalaris, whose male line came to be responsible for Native Dancer (via his son Sickie), Buckpasser (via Pharamond) and Brigadier Gerard and Shergar (via Fairway).



However, it endures at its strongest through Nearco, by Pharos. A product of Federico Tesio's Premio Dormello, also the source of Ribot in later years, Nearco swept through his 14-start career unbeaten for his breeder capped by a victory in the Grand Prix de Paris, his last outing and the only one outside his native Italy.

Tesio subsequently sold Nearco for £60,000 to bookmaker Martin Benson, who installed him at Beech House Stud in Newmarket. The sire of close to 90 stakes winners in total, including Derby winners Dante and Nimbus, his was an influence that would change the course of the breed.

His son Nasrullah forged his own sire line as did Royal Charger, the backbone to the Hail To Reason line responsible for Sunday Silence and Roberto. However, it is as the sire of Nearctic, sire of Northern Dancer (see above), that the Nearco sire-line has come to be most dominant. Either way, it is a safe bet that the vast majority of Thoroughbreds running today contain Nearco somewhere in their background.

As an aside, the Tesio stud book at Dormello contained the following note on Nearco: "Beautifully balanced, of perfect size and great quality. Won all his 14 races as soon as he was asked. Not a true stayer ... he won these longer races by his superb class and brilliant speed."

Nearco: bred by Federico Tesio, unbeaten in 14 starts on the track and went on to change the course of the Thoroughbred breed

---

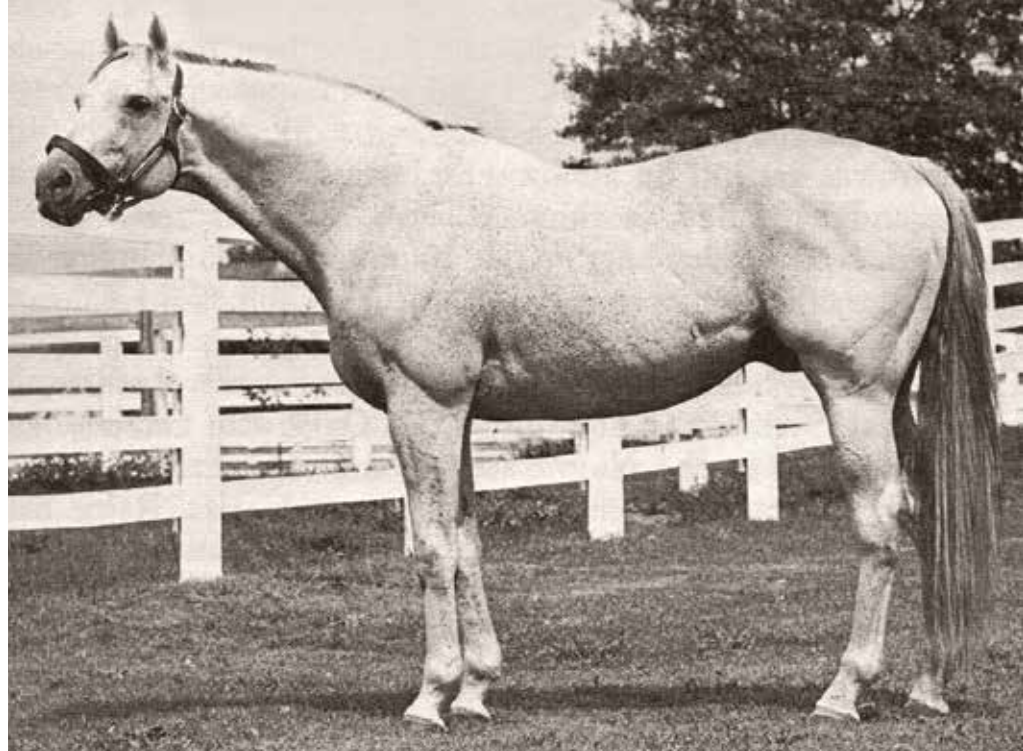
## 3. SADLER'S WELLS (1981-2008)

Northern Dancer – Fairy Bridge (Bold Reason)

*Stood: Coolmore, Ireland*

It was at the height of appreciation for the progeny of Northern Dancer that Sadler's Wells graced the track. Like plenty of his sire's best sons, he was trained in Ballydoyle by Vincent O'Brien and although rated inferior to his celebrated paternal half-sibling El Gran Senor, landed a Classic success of his own in the 1984 Irish 2,000 Guineas before running second in the Prix du Jockey Club. The winner that day was Darshaan, another subsequently highly successful stallion, while in third was the similarly influential Rainbow Quest; rarely has the outcome to one race had such an impact on the breed.

At an introductory fee of Ir£125,000, Sadler's Wells never lacked for opportunity, especially as his retirement coincided with the dawn of the big book era. But it was apparent when his first crop contained the 1988 Dewhurst Stakes dead-heaters Prince Of Dance and Scenic that here was a potentially exceptional stallion, a view consolidated when Old Vic and In The



Wings emerged as other older first-crop representatives and champion Salsabil headed his second.

In time, Sadler's Wells would earn 14 British and Irish champion sires' titles, thereby breaking the record set by Highflyer back in 1798. Along the way, there were 73 G1 scorers, including the Derby winners Galileo and High Chaparral, and 328 stakes winners.

Galileo went on to assume his sire's championship mantle in seamless fashion at Coolmore, which also reaped the benefits of standing Montjeu, the sire of 31 G1 winners including Camelot, and High Chaparral, a resounding success in both hemispheres. Another son, the Kentucky-based El Prado, was the 2002 champion sire of North America, where he left behind leading sires Kitten's Joy and Medaglia d'Oro.

Also a multiple champion broodmare sire, Sadler's Wells can be credited as a force behind the rejuvenation of the breeding industry in Europe.

#### 4. NATIVE DANCER (1950-1967)

Polynesian – Unbreakable (Geisha)  
*Stood: Sagamore Farm, Maryland, USA*

Nicknamed 'The Gray Ghost', Native Dancer was one of the first horses to capture the imagination of the outside public through television as winner of

all but one of his 22 starts for owner-breeder Alfred G. Vanderbilt. That sole loss came in the 1953 Kentucky Derby, when a closing second to Dark Star, but that did little to take the gloss off a championship career that consisted of successes in the Preakness, Belmont, Travers and Hopeful Stakes among many other major wins.

Native Dancer went on to become a stallion of immense influence. Native Dancer spent his stud career at his owner's Sagamore Farm in Maryland, where despite never leading the champion sires' list, he became a stallion of immense influence.

The line is at its most potent today through Raise A Native, a brilliant but fragile two-year-old who became hugely influential himself as the sire of Mr. Prospector (a champion sire who threw the successful sires Fappiano, Forty Niner, Gone West, Gulch, Kingmambo, Machiavellian, Miswaki, Seeking The Gold, Smart Strike and Woodman), Alydar (a leading sire), Exclusive Native (sire of Affirmed) and Majestic Prince.

Native Dancer also left behind Dan Cupid (sire of Sea Bird) and Atan (sire of Sharpen Up) as well as Natalma, the dam of Northern Dancer.

Above left: Sadler's Wells: modern-era bloodstock hero was a 14-time British and Irish champion sire. Photo: Coolmore

Above right: The 'Gray Ghost': after a glittering racing career in which he was beaten only once, hugely popular Native Dancer went on to become a stallion of immense influence

#### 5. GALILEO (1998-2021)

Sadler's Wells – Urban Sea (Miswaki)  
*Stood: Coolmore, Ireland*

Galileo is the benchmark by which recent excellence is measured.

It is remarkable to think that just one stakes winner, Innocent Air, emerged out of his first crop of two-year-old runners in 2005. But the tide was to turn to such a magnificent degree that today he possesses 12 British and Irish sires' championships (one of them secured in 2017 with an incredible total close to £12m), and perhaps with the prospect of more to come.

When Tuesday landed the Oaks, she became his 18th individual winner of a British Classic; the list also includes a record five Derby winners (New Approach, Ruler Of The World, Australia, Anthony Van Dyck and Serpentine). Magical Lagoon became his 96th G1 winner altogether in the Irish Oaks.

As a racehorse, Galileo was the champion three-year-old colt of 2001 for the Coolmore partners, his fluency





Left: The late Galileo, who died in July 2021: 12-time champion sire cast an almighty presence over the breed after assuming mantle of world leader from his own sire, Sadler's Wells. Photo: Coolmore

Left below: 'Lord Derby's Horses Hyperion and Fairway with their Grooms Chinnery and Cain': two old boys let loose for the afternoon, as captured by Munnings. Photo: © The Estate of Sir Alfred Munnings, Dedham, Essex



of movement and physical and mental stability showcased to great effect through victories in the Derby and King George. And it is those attributes, in particular that physical and mental toughness, for which his progeny are lauded time and time again.

Galileo died last summer having cast an almighty presence over the breed, whether in terms of production or his evolving legacy as a sire of sires and broodmare sire.

He has over 20 G1-producing sons at stud led by Khalid Abdullah's unbeaten champion Frankel, regarded by many as the best racehorse of the recent era who claimed his first British and Irish sires' championship last year. He also boasts 40 G1 winners as a damsire, among them Ghaiyyath, Saxon Warrior, Snowfall, Sottsass and the Classic-winning siblings Magna Grecia and St Mark's Basilica.

## 6. HYPERION (1930-1960)

Gainsborough – Selene (Chaucer)  
*Stood: Woodland Stud, Newmarket, Britain*

Hyperion was famously so small that a special feed trough had to be constructed for him as a yearling. Yet despite his stature – Lord Derby's homebred stood 15.1 hands high at full maturity – he won the Derby and St Leger and later became a six-time champion British and Irish sire. He was also among the top ten leading sires on 16 occasions, a record at the time surpassed by only St Simon.

Naturally, much of Hyperion's success was achieved in Britain,

where he sired the brilliant Sun Chariot, the Fillies' Triple Crown winner of 1942, alongside Owen Tudor (won the 1941 Derby), Godiva (1940 1,000 Guineas and Oaks) and Aureole (1954 King George and a champion sire).

Yet Hyperion's influence was also keenly felt in America. His first-crop Classic-placed son Heliopolis headed to the US where he became a champion sire while St James's Palace Stakes winner Khaled left behind the outstanding Swaps and the unraced Alibhai sired 54 stakes winners.

Aristophanes also went to Argentina where he sired South American sensation Forli, who later stood with success in Kentucky.

Once powerful on both sides of the Atlantic as well as Australasia through his champion grandson Star Kingdom, Hyperion's sire line has sadly dwindled in recent years. However, he was an exceptional influence through his daughters, most notably in his role as the damsire of Northern Dancer's sire Nearctic, meaning that he remains ever present within the backgrounds of many high-profile horses today.

In acknowledging Hyperion, tribute must also be paid to his dam Selene, who also foaled Sickie (the great-grand sire of Native Dancer) and Pharamond II (the grand sire of Tom Fool, sire of Buckpasser etc).



## 7. DANZIG (1977-2006)

Northern Dancer – Pas De Nom

(Admiral's Voyage)

Stood: Claiborne Farm, Kentucky, USA

Danzig showed brilliant speed during his brief career on the track, never challenged to win each of his three starts by daylight for Woody Stephens. Knee problems brought an early curtain down on his career but such was his blatant talent that Seth Hancock was still inclined to give the stocky colt a chance on his Claiborne Farm roster in Kentucky – a decision that was rewarded many times over.

From an early stage, Danzig proved he could throw major runners on both dirt and turf, siring multiple G1 winner Chief's Crown out of a first crop of 29 and top European sprinter Green Desert out of a similarly small second crop. Big names such as Dayjur, Danehill, Polish Precedent, Anabaa and Elnadim would follow in Europe while the likes of Lure, Langfuhr, Dispute, Hard Spun, Dance Smartly and War Front kept his name in lights in the US.

In all, he left behind approximately 200 stakes winners and led the North American champion sires' list on two occasions, in 1991 and 1992.

Regarded as a fine source of speed, the Danzig sire line has become particularly commercial in Europe, where Danehill and Green Desert in particular have forged their own sire lines; Danehill became a remarkable force across both hemispheres while Green Desert is an important influence primarily through sons Oasis Dream and Invincible Spirit. In Kentucky, Danzig's place has been ably assumed at Claiborne by War Front, to date the sire of 23 G1 winners.

## 8. DANEHILL (1986-2003)

Danzig – Razyana (His Majesty)

Stood: Coolmore, Ireland; Arrowfield

Stud, Australia, Coolmore, Australia

For all the successful sire sons that Danzig left behind, he flows particularly strong through Danehill.

Danehill was an outstanding stallion in the northern hemisphere, where he sired 40 G1 winners ranging from the champion sprinter Mozart and miler Rock Of Gibraltar to Derby hero North Light.

But it is in the southern hemisphere where he truly dominated; indeed, he altered the breeding industry to such an extent in Australasia that today stallions with no or little Danehill in their background are marketed positively as such.

Out of a close relation to Northern Dancer, Danehill was raced by his breeder Prince Khalid Abdullah and trained by Jeremy Tree, for whom he won the 1989 Cork and Orrery Stakes and Haydock Sprint Cup. At that time, Abdullah's stallion operation was in its infancy and Danehill was sold to stand at Coolmore in Ireland. From the start, he was a regular shuttler to Australia, initially to Arrowfield Stud, and it was there that his stud career took flight, with an army of early good horses led by three consecutive winners of the Golden Slipper.

Danehill came to be placed on a similarly exalted pedestal in Europe. He went on to win three British and Irish sires' championships, to go with

Left: Danzig: son of Northern Dancer was responsible for about 200 stakes winners featuring big names on both dirt and turf. Photo: Claiborne Farm

Right: Danehill: the Danzig blood flowed strongest through Danehill, an outstanding stallion on both hemispheres but a truly dominant force in Australasia. Photo: Arrowfield Stud

the nine achieved in Australia. He is the most successful sire in history with 349 stakes winners to his credit, 89 of them at the highest level, and possesses a number of G1-producing sons, among them the Australian-bred Fastnet Rock and Exceed And Excel, both of whom followed their sire's example by transcending the different hemispheres. Others include Danehill Dancer, Dansili and Kodiak in Europe and Redoute's Choice and Flying Spur in Australia.

## 9. NASRULLAH (1940-1959)

Nearco – Mumtaz Begum (Blenheim)

Stood: Barton Grange Stud, Britain;

Brownstown Stud, Ireland; Claiborne Farm, Kentucky

There is a famous image in Phil Bull's Best Racehorses of 1943 of a bay colt behaving in obstinate fashion. Under it is the caption 'Nasrullah impersonating a mule'.

The Aga Khan's colt possessed a wealth of ability but with racing restricted to Newmarket during wartime Britain, had taken a dislike to running consistently in his





Left: Nasrullah: ornery character whose racing career became a five-time champion sire in North America

Left below: Sunday Silence on the way to winning the 1989 Preakness Stakes.



## 10. SUNDAY SILENCE (1986-2002)

Halo – Wishing Well (Understanding)  
*Stood: Shadai Stallion Station, Japan*

Despite his outstanding race record, Sunday Silence was shunned by American breeders when it came to retire him to Stone Farm in Kentucky. The Halo colt had famously been a \$17,000 yearling, which explained several perceived conformational flaws, and had an underwhelming female line.

Yet all that seemingly meant little to the Yoshida family; already owner of 25% of the horse, they offered owner Arthur Hancock \$250,000 per share and thus Sunday Silence was on his way to Japan where he sired 171 stakes winners and became a 13-time champion sire. So dominant was Sunday Silence that today it is estimated that at least 70% of broodmares based in Japan have him somewhere in their female lines.

In time, he became a catalyst for Japan's rise as a global force, with his stock key in attracting international investors into the country. And that has been a mantle assumed by his best son Deep Impact, to date the sire of almost 60 G1 winners and a ten-time champion sire who now has G1-winning sons at stud in the UK, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia in addition to Japan.

Sunday Silence, a representative the Hail To Reason branch of the Royal Charger/Nearco line, also left behind major sires Heart's Cry, Daiwa Major and Stay Gold. Quite often dark in colour, it's a versatile line which has won respect for its toughness, both physical and mental.

home location. His temperamental behaviour most likely compromised his career – jockey Sir Gordon Richards learned the hard way that Nasrullah stopped in front – but as it is, he still won half his ten starts including the Champion and Coventry Stakes.

Nasrullah first stood in Suffolk before heading to Ireland, where he left behind the Classic winners Musidora, Nearula and Belle Of All as well as the top-flight American runner Noor. In later 1949, he was resold to stand in Kentucky at Claiborne Farm as the property of a high-powered syndicate.

And it was under that management that he became a stallion of real influence, not just as a five-time American champion but as the sire of Never Bend (sire of Mill Reef), Red God (sire of Blushing Groom) and Bold Ruler (eight-time champion stallion, sire of Secretariat and great-grandsire of Seattle Slew). Today, his sire line is at its most powerful through Seattle Slew, notably thanks to his son A.P. Indy. There also remain several remnants descending from Never Bend, Blushing Groom and Grey Sovereign, the latter primarily in France.



# EUROPE'S PREMIER SOURCE OF CLASSIC WINNERS

## DESERT CROWN THE DERBY, Gr. 1

*purchased at OCTOBER BOOK 2  
for 280,000 gns*

## MAGICAL LAGOON IRISH OAKS, Gr. 1

*purchased at OCTOBER BOOK 1  
for 305,000 gns*

## NATIVE TRAIL TATTERSALLS IRISH 2000 GUINEAS, Gr. 1, CHAMPION 2YO

*purchased at OCTOBER BOOK 1  
for 67,000 gns*

## TATTERSALLS OCTOBER YEARLING SALE

**Book 1** Oct 4 – 6, **Book 2** Oct 10 – 12, **Book 3** Oct 13 – 14, **Book 4** Oct 15

**CATALOGUES ONLINE**

Tel: +44 1638 665931 [sales@tattersalls.com](mailto:sales@tattersalls.com) [www.tattersalls.com](http://www.tattersalls.com)



*Tattersalls*

# America's favorite racetrack – but just what is it that makes Saratoga so great?

Steve Dennis | JULY 13, 2022

*Ahead of the annual summer meet at Saratoga, Steve Dennis examines what all the fuss is about when it comes the most beloved venue in US racing*

Horse racing often seems to be a sport built on disagreement, echoing Mark Twain's aphorism about it being the difference of opinion that makes horse races.

It's not just races that provide fertile ground for differing opinions, though, but seemingly everything – funding, whip use, governance, medication, scheduling, a thousand and one areas of contention in a sport and industry that

frequently finds itself embroiled in an uncivil war between its various factions.

Except in one respect. It appears to be a truth universally acknowledged that Saratoga is the finest racetrack in the US, a little piece of nirvana that beguiles the head and the heart, the soul and the spirit, just a racetrack in upstate New York with one 40-day meeting every summer but so much more than that to all those who come under its spell. It even pervades the national consciousness; everyone knows about Carly Simon's so-vain paramour who went up to Saratoga, where his horse naturally won.

What is it about Saratoga that makes it so exalted, so exulted over? The question hangs in the sweet-smelling summer breeze, and the answer comes back like a shout of joy. Everything.

"Over the years it has retained all its charm," says Steve Haskin, garlanded racing writer and former senior correspondent of *The Blood-Horse*. "It's like a world apart, a state of mind that allows us to feel as if time has stood still. As much as Saratoga has changed, it has really changed very little."

Smiles of recognition are exchanged. "Much of the appeal of Saratoga is the old-timey atmosphere, and also the

---

They're off at Saratoga, where 'specialness is renewed on a daily basis by arguably the most concentrated offering of quality sport anywhere in the racing world'. Photo: NYRA / Coglianese







quality of racing is as good as it can be,” adds Jay Privman, award-winning national correspondent of the Daily Racing Form. “And with it being a boutique meeting, only around for a short time, there’s an extra incentive to go there.”

“Yes, the historical significance and the maintained traditions, but also the social aspect. Saratoga feels like a class reunion every summer,” says Donna Barton Brothers, NBC Sports broadcaster and former very successful jockey.

That strikes a chord with Dan De Federicis, founder and publisher of the Saratoga Report news website, evangelist for the manifold delights of his home town. “The track and the town are linked more closely than any other track I know. In the summer there’s a real energy about the place, there’s nothing like it anywhere else.”

Saratoga ticks all the boxes, efficiently, effortlessly. The history of the place, unmistakable to first-time visitors as well as regulars, the annual immersion in that warm bath of nostalgia, is the recurring melody in its siren song. Over to Michael Veitch,

the historian at the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame that stands like a Valhalla just across the street from the racetrack itself.

“It is generally accepted that Saratoga racecourse is one of the oldest extant tracks in the US, with racing starting on its current site in 1864,” he says. “Yet even before this, back in the 1840s, there was trotting racing in Saratoga Springs, and the first recorded thoroughbred Flat race that we know of took place on that trotting circuit on September 16, 1847.

“Many visitors sense that history. And the grounds of the track, for the most part, are undoubtedly beautiful, although some old-time patrons resent some of the commercialism that has become part of the annual meeting.”

So it goes for old-timers everywhere, but despite the fact that Saratoga Springs is in most ways a typical modern city, it retains an old-world small-town charm that complements the sylvan setting of the racetrack – undoubtedly beautiful, as Veitch attests – within walking distance of the city centre.

For most of the year it’s a sleepy old spa town – located around 200 miles north of New York, the city that never

Lawn jockeys depicting Travers Stakes winners on show just inside the gate at Saratoga, a place where history matters. Photo: NYRA / Coglianese

sleeps – but between mid-July and early September it comes alive like an annual Brigadoon. This brio, this snap and crackle, is another vital component of Saratoga’s allure.

“After a day’s racing, unlike at, say, Del Mar, where people disperse to the many towns in the area, in Saratoga everybody goes to the same town to have dinner,” says Barton Brothers.

“I think that’s one of the things that make the fans enjoy it so much, because when they go out for dinner or a drink they are very likely to run into jockeys or trainers that they’ve only ever seen from a distance at the track. It also makes those involved with racing enjoy it more, because you’re sure to run into people you know.

“My husband and I go out for dinner with friends way more often during the Saratoga meet than at any other time of the year. I think it’s that way for so many people.”





Everyone feels welcome, invited guests at an exclusive shindig. “It’s all ages at the track and in the town,” adds De Federicis. “It’s a racetrack children are happy to visit, a town where everyone from 20-something to 60-something feels like they fit in, that they belong in Saratoga.”

The exclusivity, the inclusivity, the garden-party conviviality of Saratoga Springs in summer, the real world kept at arm’s length somewhere beyond the interstate, way down the Hudson river, reinforces the specialness that springs directly from the racetrack. There, that specialness is renewed on a daily basis by arguably the most concentrated offering of quality sport anywhere in the racing world.

“To win a race at Saratoga is even more special now than it was half a century ago, when I first visited the place,” says Haskin. “Here the Thoroughbred still reigns supreme.”

This year there are 77 stakes races across the 40 days of the meeting, with at least one stakes every day and an unrelenting blizzard of G1 races that includes great events such as the centrepiece Travers Stakes, known as the ‘Midsummer Derby’, the Whitney Stakes and now even the Jockey Club Gold Cup, moved last year (not without controversy) to closing weekend from its traditional home at Belmont Park.

Many of the most prestigious races are named after heroes of old, the Forego, the Fourstardave, the Personal Ensign, the Shuvee, the Spinaway, the Sword Dancer, and those horses would all recognise their own private Saratoga because here the march of modernity has been largely resisted. As Privman says: “The track has done a terrific job in recent years of marrying new with the old, but I think the nostalgia factor cannot be overstated.”

Clockwise from top left: Who needs LED lights? Saratoga’s ancient changes board. Photo: Steve Dennis

Candy-striped crowd: enjoying a typical Saratoga dining scene underneath the red and white awnings. Photo: NYRA / Coglianese

Donna Barton Brothers: ‘Even just talking about Saratoga makes me happy.’

Graveyard of Champions: Keen Ice stuns Triple Crown winner American Pharoah in the Travers Stakes of 2015. Photo: NYRA / Coglianese

Saratoga is racing’s Field of Dreams, its aura, its charisma as potent as the Spa water that bubbles out of the ground through a fountain in the picnic area. The main grandstand is wooden-framed and rustic, the red and white candy-striped awnings and banners are pure 1950s Americana, plenty of the fixtures and



fittings have seen many summers come and go, and all the while the horses patrol the tree-lined parade ring through patches of light and shade as Sam The Bugler – Sam Grossman, who will unfortunately be absent this year for the first time since 1993 owing to health issues – clears his throat to play the time-honoured Call To Post.

Some days, of course, the racecourse is dark, and even then Saratoga has plenty to offer. A visit to the National Museum of Racing, where each August the new Hall of Famers take their place in a ceremony that – like Saratoga itself – rewardingly intertwines the past and present, is de rigueur, but the list of other options is a long one.

“Walking down the main drag of Broadway, watching the morning works over on the backstretch, attending the yearling sale, boating on Saratoga Lake, and strolling through historic Congress Park all stir the senses,” says Haskin.

Agreement, as ever on the subject of Saratoga, is easily achieved. “When you add the summer weather to the equation, it’s a great place to spend a day, a week, or the whole meet,” says Privman. Or a lifetime.



“My first date with the woman who became my wife was at Saratoga races,” smiles De Federicis. “It’s the most wonderful place.”

Over at the Oklahoma training track, among the rustic/archaic (take your pick) barns, all part of the considerable and enduring charm, exercise rider Sean Duffy added his voice to the many. “Saratoga’s the best. The best atmosphere, the best racing, it’s top notch, the creme de la creme.”

Saratoga’s wooded backlot hosts a massive daily picnic during the celebrated summer meet. Photo: NYRA / Coglianese

The spirit of Saratoga stays with you, within you, long after the summer is over. “Even just talking about Saratoga makes me happy,” says Barton Brothers. And you won’t find anyone to disagree with that.

# GALLOP

FOR THE LOVE OF HORSE RACING

**A GREAT GIFT  
FOR EQUINE LOVING  
FRIENDS, FAMILY  
OR EVEN YOURSELF.  
SUBSCRIBE TODAY**



**4 ISSUES  
A YEAR  
for  
€30/£25/\$35**

Subscribe at [www.thoroughbredracing.com/gallop](http://www.thoroughbredracing.com/gallop)



# Where the turf meets the surf – but just what makes Del Mar so great?

Rachel Pagones | JULY 18, 2022

*With the hugely popular summer meet only days away, Rachel Pagones examines what makes Del Mar so delightful*

There is something of The Wizard of Oz in a day at Del Mar – fittingly, for a racetrack steeped since the day of its inception in Hollywood lore. Mornings are monochrome, light brown adobe buildings matching the earth, the coastal marine layer keeping a lid on the rising sun.

Come afternoon, the track is pure technicolor: palm trees and tropical flowers are in abundance under a brilliant blue sky, while the grassy parade ring swells with owners in

their summer finest; jockeys sport an extraordinarily creative range of silks as horses shined to a polish stride around them.

“It’s a big social scene – it’s huge,” says jockey Mike Smith, who has seen some scenes in his 40 years of riding, including 27 Breeders’ Cup wins, the US Triple Crown, and an Irish 2,000 Guineas and Dubai World Cup for good measure. “Everyone comes all dressed up to the nines – you see it all here, you see it all, especially on opening day.”

Pure technicolor: paddock scene overlooked by the adobe grandstand at Del Mar, the summer home of the West Coast racing community. Photo: DMTC







Crowded around the ring on descending levels of steps are fans in all kinds of wear, from just-off-the-beach casual to going-out-tonight glittery. They arrive in throngs, some stepping off double-decker buses doing ferry duty from Solana Beach train station a mile up Coast Highway 101. Bustling along the last stretch of pavement leading to the entry gates, you could almost kick up your heels a la Judy Garland and friends.

Indeed, Del Mar in the minds of racegoers and racing professionals alike is a respite from the humdrum of daily life – not to mention the heat of summer. “There’s a buzz around Del Mar every day,” says David Jerkens, Del Mar’s racing secretary. “The vibe of people just enjoying themselves at a place that’s literally a par 4 from the beach, is an environment that people want to be part of.”

“It’s just such a joyful place – the restaurants, the beaches, everything’s just a big vacation meet,” affirms trainer Howard Zucker, who first brought horses to Del Mar 40 years ago.

Then there’s the weather. Where else can you expect consistently sunny days with moderate temperatures? “Here’s what we’re spoiled with,” says Jerkens. “The ocean, the ocean breeze, and mid-70s every day.”

Comparison with Saratoga as a high-class, historic, ephemeral summer meeting where people take their

holidays is inevitable. Smith calls the two “apples and oranges, both the two best places to be at this time of year.”

Zucker has this to say. “It’s kind of like the Saratoga of the west [although] I don’t know why they compare it that way, because Saratoga’s been around a little longer. But the weather is so much better in Del Mar. It’s not hot, it’s not humid – the thermometer stays between 68 and 80 the whole meet.”

So Del Mar is not Saratoga and the weather is better. Comparisons being mostly odious anyway, we can move on to what Del Mar is, and what gives it that feeling of levity and anticipation – like the first day of summer vacation, every day.

The racetrack, in San Diego’s North County, was founded in 1937, with Bing Crosby playing host at the gate. Within a handful of years, the Hollywood shimmer increased with star visitors including Ava Gardner, Don Ameche, Dorothy Lamour, Pat O’Brien, and W.C. Fields. Later Desi and Luci, Betty Grable, Mickey Rooney, and Jimmy Durante made appearances, the latter’s so regular that as anyone familiar with Del Mar knows, one of the two main entrances to the track is off Jimmy Durante Boulevard, while grass racing takes place on the Jimmy Durante Turf Course.

The prospect of joy, fun, and fine weather every day at the beach drew crowds then and draws them now.

Left: Mike Smith after winning last year’s Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies at Del Mar on Corniche. Photo: Shamela Hanley/Breeders’ Cup/Eclipse Sportswire/CSM

Right: Where the turf meets the surf: view of the grandstand from the edge of the Pacific. Photo: DMTC

That alone makes Del Mar stand apart in the era of OTBs and racinos. And it acts as a positive feedback loop, drawing more trainers, owners, jockeys and fans who feast on the excitement.

“There’s nothing like a racetrack that’s full to the rafters, the noise that comes out of it,” says Zucker. “I can remember winning the first race of the meet. And the buzz is uncontrollable, the rush you get from winning, especially the first race on opening day. They’re sticking cameras in your face, interviewing you like it was the Kentucky Derby.”

The ocean figures heavily in descriptions of Del Mar. Or no, it figures lightly, an evocative tang on the wind, a cool caress on a sun-warmed shoulder. The ocean is always there, and it’s so close.

“Well if you’ve never seen it you just have to come out and see it,” says Smith. “The ocean’s right there – if you don’t turn left [on the racecourse] you literally run straight into it.”

Even in the heat of a race, the Pacific remains a balmy presence. “Especially when you’re running in a race that’s a lot of ground, with lots of turns,” he adds, “because you warm up back there by the beach – I mean you’re literally looking at the water, a cool breeze is coming off the ocean, and it’s amazing.”

There is one form of intense heat at Del Mar – the fire of competition. “Down there, it is tough to win a race,” says Zucker, who spends most of his year at Santa Anita and has won his share by the seaside.

“People come and they drop their horse into really competitive spots in order to win. The claim box is full of slips – any time there’s a horse that even has a shot, there’ll be 20, 30 claims on several horses in every race. Everybody wants to win a race at Del Mar, the owners especially.”

Bolstering the competition is the track’s Ship and Win program. Now in its 12th year, the incentive offers an appearance bonus as well as enhanced prize money for horses from out of state. While the appearance bonus (\$5,000 for dirt races and \$4,000 for turf races) is for the first race only, a prize-money boost of 50% for overnight dirt races and 40% for turf continues through the entire meeting, leading to a significant uptick in runners. Last summer the program added 160 horses contributing to over 200 starts, which helped produce a robust average field size of 8.5 horses.

Your average Del Mar racegoer arguably does not make much distinction between a claiming race and a stakes race, as long as the race is competitive. Which is not to say the track is bereft of top-class horses and Graded stakes, most notably the \$1m G1 Pacific Classic, the summer meet’s showpiece. For jockeys, owners, and trainers, as Mike Smith says, “it’s just extra-special to win here. You’ve got the best of the best all gathered for this month and a half here at Del Mar, so you know you’ve beaten the best there is around here.”

In Smith’s case, that includes four Pacific Classic victories, beginning with Came Home in 2002, as well as Zenyatta’s historic three-peat in the G1 Clement L. Hirsch Stakes. Zenyatta’s is one of many equine ghosts inhabiting



the Del Mar stretch – indeed she is easy to envision, extending her long forelegs and pointing her hooves exuberantly as she parades to post.

There are so many others, from scrappy Seabiscuit to graceful Tomy Lee to the iron-hard South American-imports Bayakoa, Paseana and Candy Ride, all trained by Ron McAnally.

There is Cigar, his back matching his front, top matching the bottom, in the words of trainer Bill Mott – the end result sublime in its balance – stepping out for his morning workout, the track for once empty as all others have been banned ahead of the Horse of the Year’s exercise en route to a bid for history. (Indelibly, Cigar’s 16-race win streak was broken in the 1996 Pacific Classic before a then-record crowd of 44,181.)

One might also hear the ghost of trainer Charlie Whittingham, beating even the grooms to the barn at 3.30

Top: Del Mar delights: as usual, the stands are packed as runners charge to the finish. Photo: DMTC

Above: Best seat in the house? Trackside fans watch racing on the turf track. Photo: DMTC

am, avowing, “I’ll have plenty of time to sleep when I’m dead.” And that wavery rendition of ‘Where the Turf Meets the Surf’ – could that be Bing Crosby, circa 1945, heralding the re-opening of Del Mar after three years of closure during World War II?

One thing is for sure: the ocean has abided through it all. And when the races are over, the waves will continue to break, susurrating that win or lose, tomorrow is another day, and the sun will drop into the Pacific. “There’s nothing like the sunsets,” says Zucker. “Sunset over Moonlight Beach – I’ll take that over anyplace I’ve ever been.”





# Where Racing History Comes to Life



Find us on Social Media (@nmrhof)



[racingmuseum.org](http://racingmuseum.org)

191 Union Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 • (518) 584-0400

*Open Year-round*





# James and Edward Cummings: brothers living up to the legend of the Cups King

Shane McNally | AUGUST 05, 2022

*Bart Cummings's grandsons are taking different approaches to noteworthy training careers but remain faithful to generations of racing excellence. Shane McNally speaks to the scions of a celebrated dynasty*

**Australia:** To say they have big shoes to fill is one of the greatest understatements in world racing. Grandsons of the immortal Australian trainer Bart Cummings, James and Edward know that anything they achieve will, in the short term at least, be measured against the great man.

For all that expectation, though, the brothers are achieving remarkable



---

*“I learned so much from my grandfather. He was forced to tell me everything he knew because he spent a lot of the time in a hospital bed in declining health when he was my boss.”*

---

success early in their training careers. They are ensuring generations young and old recognise them as their own men and not simply the descendants of the man who won 12 Melbourne Cups, 13 Australian Cups, five Cox Plates and a total of 33 Derbies among his 246 G1 wins.

James and Edward are fourth-generation horse trainers – fifth generation if you consider great-great-uncle James, who famously won the Alice Springs Cup in 1910 with Myrtle, the little mare after whom Edward’s company is now named.

### History on their side

Either way, history is certainly on their side. Before Bart created Australian racing folklore, his father Jim – who rode Myrtle – was a major trainer in his own right, preparing champion galloper Comic Court to defy the odds and the seemingly unattainable two-mile distance to win the 1950 Melbourne

Cup. Bart’s son, the young men’s father Anthony, has trained 22 G1 winners and is considered one of Australia’s best judges of a yearling.

Be that as it may, James and Edward are taking different paths in their training careers. But in their own individual ways, commensurate with the relative sizes of their stables, they are both achieving outstanding results.

After becoming foreman at his grandfather’s Leilani Lodge establishment in Sydney in 2009, James went into training partnership with the legendary conditioner in 2013. He landed his first G1 in partnership with Bart when Hallowed Crown took out the 2014 Golden Rose at Rosehill.

James remembers those years with his grandfather as a time of great scholarship, building on what he had already learned working around father Anthony’s prominent Randwick stables as a kid and earning pocket money saddling up runners on the weekend.

“When I was at boarding school, I remember walking along the corridor with a coffee I wasn’t supposed to have and the maths teacher asking me who was going to win the (Melbourne) Cup on Tuesday. I thought he was somehow having a dig at me about the coffee but he was genuinely after a tip and I was entirely oblivious that the race was only days away!”

### ‘I learned so much from my grandfather’

“I learned so much from my grandfather,” he recalls. “He was forced to tell me everything he knew because he spent a lot of the time in a hospital bed in declining health when he was my boss and I was foreman. The business was beginning to decline because it’s not easy to sell shares in yearlings from a hospital bed. He showed me both sides of the business.”

---

Bart Cummings: a true legend of the sport. Photo: Racing NSW



---

James Cummings: thriving as Godolphin’s head trainer in Australia. Photo: Godolphin



---

Edward Cummings: ‘Everything I know in racing has been learned from my father and grandfather’





James says he also learned plenty from his father but remembers his mother doing her best to shield him and brother Edward from the constant presence of horse racing. It worked for a while but was ultimately a futile exercise. “It was hard getting away from racing growing up, but not impossible,” James recalls.

That removal from racing didn’t last long, however, and after a few short years as a trainer, James was right at the coalface of one of the world’s great racing precincts. Bart’s death in 2015 forced him into taking over the entire role earlier than anticipated and just two years after that he became Godolphin’s head Australian trainer.

### Things were only going to get bigger

Moving to Godolphin’s 126-acre Osborne Park property in Sydney’s north-west, James had access to state-of-the-art facilities including three grass tracks and an all-weather circuit. He had immediate success,

winning the G1 Flight Stakes at Randwick with Alizee just three months after taking over the stable.

Things were only going to get bigger. Just 18 months later, James and Godolphin nailed the quinella in the world’s richest two-year-old race, the Golden Slipper at Rosehill, when outsider Kiamichi downed the heavily backed Microphone.

The stable continued to grow over the next couple of seasons before James says they “streamlined” numbers down to 257 horses. That’s right: 257 is the number achieved after cutting back.

“We had too many at the start,” he says. “It’s about getting the right balance. We’re not playing the numbers game; we’re always looking for a champion.

“We’ve got a pretty good horse in Anamoe and we will see if he stamps himself a genuine champion,” he goes on. “There was speculation he’d be retired after the Queen Elizabeth but we weighed everything up and kept him going. For us it was a

Duais: Melbourne Cup hope took form to new level last term for Edward Cummings with victories in Australian Cup and Tancred Stakes. Photo: Bradley Photographers

commercial decision and he can add further to his already very strong racing record in the spring.”

If Anamoe can be described as only a “pretty good horse”, then it’s clear that James has very high expectations. This is the Sires Produce and dual Guineas winner that was broadly considered a good thing beaten in last year’s Cox Plate, when he was edged out by globetrotter State Of Rest before an unsuccessful protest against the winner. Earlier this year, before failing on a bog track in the blowout Queen Elizabeth Stakes, he was ranked equal 12th-best horse in the world.

Spend 10 minutes with James Cummings and it becomes evident very quickly that the young man has a proactive approach to everything in racing. He is not prepared to just tread



---

*“It’s an important principle that despite the occasion of a race becoming greater, there’s no need to put an extra pressure on the horse.”*

---

water and wait for opportunities to arrive; he would rather make the opportunities happen. For all of that, though, he rigidly commits to process, whether the horse is restricted class or a G1 galloper.

### **‘I just love training horses’**

“My training philosophy is, why do tomorrow what you can do today?” he says. “I just love training horses and working them in the morning, seeing the development they’ve been able to show. It’s wonderful to have a good team around you and there are some pretty good judges in the stable.

“It’s an important principle that despite the occasion of a race becoming greater, there’s no need to put an extra pressure on the horse. The system that they follow is the system that we adhere to.”

James Cummings finished the 2021-22 Australian racing season a clear second behind the all-conquering Chris Waller stable on the Sydney trainers’ premiership – with the best strike-rate of any Top 20 trainer, Waller included. Cummings won his 30th G1 earlier this year and raced past the 1,000-win career mark.

Older brother Edward is more low-key on the Australian racing landscape, with fewer than 50 career wins to his name as last season concluded at the end of July. Yet despite the much smaller stable, he has already nailed three G1 races with his exceptional mare Duais, who is an early favourite to catapult him into the international spotlight in this year’s Melbourne Cup.

Edward trains at regional Hawkesbury but don’t let that fool you. Until 2017, he trained in the pressure cooker of Sydney with father

Anthony, who learned his trade from the master himself.

When Edward felt it was time to put into action what had been handed down from his famous father and grandfather, he moved 120 km north-west in early 2019, where he could establish a stand-alone property in a thriving racing district.

“Moving to Hawkesbury was a combination of things,” he explains. “It was close enough to Sydney but also provided opportunities the city didn’t always offer.

“I wanted to develop my business instead of clamouring for boxes over time, which would have been the case if I stayed in Sydney. The introduction of the provincial championships and other series have provided genuine incentives for training out of the metropolitan area, while travelling to Sydney only takes an hour and ten minutes. I started with just three horses but that’s grown to 20 and it’s expanding.”

Stable star Duais took her form to a new level in the Australian autumn with wins in the Australian Cup over 2,000 metres at Flemington and Tancred Stakes over 2,400m at Newcastle (relocated after the Rosehill meeting was washed out).

“I’m setting her for what I hope will be a big spring,” Edward says. “She’s eligible for all the best races like the Caulfield Cup, Cox Plate and Melbourne Cup and time will tell which path she takes. She won the Tancred like a horse who will have no trouble running two miles.”

If Edward has remained faithful to one particular Bart Cummings trait, it’s the need for time and patience. He is confident the growth of the stable and the success of his horses will

benefit from the practice Bart turned into a trademark.

“Everything I know in racing has been learned from my father and grandfather, it’s as simple as that,” he says. “There’s no hiding that fact. Horses will often push back if you push too hard; they’ll tell you to show patience.

### **‘There’s no rush to get numbers’**

“All in good time ...” he goes on. “If my father, grandfather and even great-grandfather are anything to go by, there’s no rush to get to particular stable numbers by a certain date. I started with three horses so I’m fairly happy with the way things are tracking.”

Both Cummings brothers have exciting times ahead: Edward with an exceptional stayer with a legitimate chance of claiming Australia’s greatest prize, and James with a massive team headed by a potential champion.

Just as the brothers have taken different paths, they also have differing immediate ambitions. While older brother Edward simply doesn’t have the numbers to aim for premierships, he can aim to win the right races with the right horses.

On the other hand, the younger Cummings definitely has the Sydney trainers’ premiership firmly in his sights and is positioned to do something about it. He has great respect for the racing juggernaut that is Chris Waller Racing but also a friendly yet serious warning for the expat New Zealander who put the polish on the legendary Winx and has won the past 12 Sydney trainers’ premierships.

“We’re coming for him,” says James. Don’t say you weren’t warned.

# Speaking in (horsey) tongues: an everyday language lesson in equine etymology

Isabelle Taylor | AUGUST 02, 2022

*A multitude of idiomatic racing phrases have long since entered common usage – as Isabelle Taylor illustrates*

Hidden in plain sight, horse racing expressions populate our everyday language. ‘Neck and neck’, ‘in the frame’, ‘home straight’, ‘a run for your money’ – quite simply, they’re everywhere, to the extent that we’ve forgotten that these idioms, phrases and adages owe their origins to the Turf.

Sometimes the sporting link is clear, other times it is abstruse. Today we rummage through English idioms to explore how horse racing imagery has come to enrich our daily speech.

## On your tod

American jockey Tod Sloan became one of the most controversial figures of the British turf when he thundered onto the racing scene in the closing days of the 19th Century. Sloan flouted many of British racing’s long-held convictions. He brought with him the so-called American seat – riding with short stirrups and crouched low over the horse’s withers – and the American racing tactic of racing from the front in contrast to the traditional waiting game played by British jockeys.



On your tod: a Vanity Fair caricature of Tod Sloan, entitled ‘An American Jockey’ (1899) by GDG (Godfrey Douglas Giles) illustrating his distinctive riding style, initially derided for resembling a ‘monkey up a stick’

He was famous enough to inspire the Cockney rhyming slang, ‘on one’s Tod Sloan’, contracted to ‘on your tod’ to mean on your own. There are two possible explanations behind its origins.

It may refer to Sloan’s maverick attitude – he rode when it pleased him, accepting mounts only when it suited him, and he did not want to be tied down to a contract employer. Or, it may instead have been inspired by his trailblazing tactic of winning races from the front, when ‘all alone’ leading the field.

## Starting from scratch

For much of racing’s history, race starts were a haphazard affair – jockeys vying for a spot on the starting line, false starts contrived to throw out the favourite, lengthy delays to reposition horses for a fresh attempt. The starting point was nothing more than a line scratched into the turf. If the runner’s hooves were correctly positioned behind the line, they were ‘starting from scratch’ – hence our modern meaning of doing something from the very beginning.



## Give and take

In everyday usage to mean making mutual concessions and compromises, the phrase ‘give and take’ owes its origins to the 18th Century and races in which entrants were handicapped in the name of fairness.

The ‘give and take plate’ was the prize in races in which carried weight according to their height: seven pounds were taken from the weight for every inch below the standard height of 14 hands; seven pounds were added for every inch above that. We know such races today as handicaps.

The term was used metaphorically by 1778, where Fanny Burney wrote in her novel *Evelina*, “give and take is fair in all nations”.

## Big Apple

New York in the 1920s was the epicentre of North American racing. The state had the most racetracks, attracted the biggest crowds and drew the largest handle. It was the place jockeys and trainers most coveted. To win in New York was, quite literally, to get the ‘big apple’.

The phrase was popularised by racing journalist John J. Fitzgerald in 1924, writing for the *New York Morning Telegraph*. After overhearing the term amongst stable hands at New Orleans, he wrote: “The Big Apple. The dream of every lad that ever threw a leg over a thoroughbred and the goal of all horsemen. There’s only one Big Apple. That’s New York.”

## Across the board

‘Across the board’ is used in countless contexts to mean applying to all, but it derives from a US betting term to denote three wagers placed on the same horse to finish first, second or third – or win, place and show in US parlance. If the horse wins, the person placing the bet collects the total of all three tickets. The board in question is the blackboard on which bookmakers used to write the odds before a race.

## Hands down

Cruising to an easy victory in any contest, you are said to win ‘hands down’. The saying derives from the mid-19th Century to refer to the manner in which jockeys, when realising they had a clear stretch and victory was certain, let the reins loosen and dropped their hands to coast to a comfortable finish.

## Get your goat

The connection of our next expression with horse racing is far from obvious. It refers to a practice used by trainers to pacify their highly strung Thoroughbreds. Goats were found to have a calming effect upon nervous horses and so were placed in their stables to alleviate anxiety and thus, the theory went, improve performance on racedays. Opponents wishing to upset this performance would steal the companion goat to ruffle the horse’s nerves (and no doubt the owner’s as well). Hence, the phrase ‘get your goat’ to denote annoyance or irritation.

## Free for all

Today suggesting chaos and confusion, ‘free for all’ was originally coined to refer to a contest that was open to all. A Turf-goer in mid-18th Century England would recognise it as a race free to all those who wished to enter. Such races were, though, rarely without some restrictions: they may be free only to subscribers to a course or free so long as the horse had not won a large purse recently, or free only to entrants of a certain age.

The terminology migrated to the US in the 19th Century, and it was likely here in the latter years of the century that its meaning morphed to acquire its negative connotations. By 1881, for example, journalists were describing street brawls as ‘free for all’ fights.

## Wild goose chase

The horse-racing roots of our final idiom have long been consigned to the history books. Alluding to a hopeless undertaking, ‘wild goose chase’ is one of the many phrases popularised by William Shakespeare

that we still use today: “Nay, if our wits run the wild-goose chase, I am done, for thou hast more of the wild-goose in one of thy wits than, I am sure, I have in my whole five,” complained Mercutio to Romeo. Mercutio was lamenting Romeo getting the better of him in a battle of wits, unable to keep pace with Romeo’s erratic play of words.

Elizabethan contemporaries would have recognised in the duo’s badinage a reference to a type of horse race called a ‘wild goose chase’. One rider would gallop out across an open field, pursued by other riders following his course at set distances. The leader would twist and turn wildly, looking to throw off the pack. Not only were they expected to trace his path, but they were required to do so in formation, just as a skein of geese neatly trace a V-shape in the sky.

The horse-riding sense of the phrase continued in use until the late 17th Century, but thereafter passed out of memory.

---

## REFERENCES

- J. Chetwynd (2016), *The Field Guide to Sports Metaphors: A Compendium of Competitive Words and Idioms*, New York: Ten Speed Press
- J. Dizikes (2000), *Yankee Doodle Dandy: the life and times of Tod Sloan*, New Haven: Yale University Press
- C. McNairn (2017), *Sports Talk*, Altona: FriesenPress
- J. Kroessler (2009), *The Greater New York Sports Chronology*, New York: Columbia University Press
- R. G. Alvey (1992), *Kentucky Bluegrass Country*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi

# ‘Frankel might be the equivalent’ - focus on Flightline, the ‘once-in-a-generation’ horse

Steve Dennis | SEPTEMBER 02, 2022

*In a major interview, trainer John Sadler tells Steve Dennis about the spectacular unbeaten four-year-old, set to run in the Pacific Classic at Del Mar before heading to the Breeders’ Cup*

Out on his own: Flightline (Flavien Prat) cruises home to take his unbeaten record to four in the Metropolitan Handicap on the Belmont Stakes card. Photo: NYRA / Coglianese

There’s a saying in racing that goes along the lines of only knowing how good a horse is when it’s beaten, as though we only know what it can do when we know what it can’t do.

It doesn’t apply in every case, because we can be fairly certain that Personal Ensign was pretty good, that Black Caviar wasn’t so bad, that Frankel was all right. The exceptions prove the rule, the exceptional ones prove the rule. So, then, how good is Flightline?

People have been wondering about that ever since the big, sleek son of Tapit started to run, but if anyone should have a clue it’s John Sadler, trainer of the latest candidate to be ‘one of the ones’, trainer of a catalogue of high-class horses including the champion Accelerate, winner of five G1s including a Breeders’ Cup Classic. Sadler waits patiently for the obvious question.







"Oh, Flightline is a lot better than Accelerate. He's a once-in-a-generation type of horse," he says, as matter-of-factly as if he'd been asked the time, with all the certainty of a man who has four aces in his hand and knows there's another up his sleeve.

"You're from England, right?" It's true. Sadler runs a hand over that fifth ace, just to know it's there. "Well, Frankel might be the equivalent."

### **Audible intake of breath**

Frankel? The intake of breath must have been audible, Ma Bell relaying the scale of the surprise all the way to California. Sadler chuckles.

"People who know me will say there's no braggadocio about me, that's not my style. But that's just the way it is. He's the kind of horse who comes along every 20, 30 years. The numbers he runs are unbelievable. I don't think there are many people who've ever had a horse this good."

There's the echo of Allen Paulson's old line about Arazi, that he wasn't just the best horse he'd ever owned, but the best horse anyone had ever owned.

Paulson was wrong, but going on what we've seen so far, Sadler could be right.

Flightline was unraced as a two-year-old, has run four times, has won four times, each time advertising his uncommon, unearthly brilliance. He demolished his rivals in his maiden at Santa Anita, destroyed them in an allowance at Del Mar, dismantled them in the G1 Malibu Stakes back at Santa Anita, devoured them in the G1 Metropolitan Handicap (famously known as the Met Mile) at Belmont Park. He's a thesaurus kind of horse, sending us scurrying in search of new superlatives.

Numbers help. Flightline's aggregate winning distance is 43½ lengths; when he won the Malibu he ran a 118 Beyer speed figure, the highest of 2021.

### **Million-dollar workout**

Visuals, too. Photographs of him in the closing stages of the Met Mile show him cruising with one ear back and one forward, nowhere near top gear, Flavien Prat motionless in the saddle, his whip an unused accessory, a million-dollar race little more than a well-paid workout.

Flightline (Flavien Prat): Breeders' Cup Classic favourite will be looking for third G1 triumph in Pacific Classic. Photo: Benoit

And audio. "What a racehorse!" howled Belmont race-caller John Imbriale. "He's flawless and he's freakishly fast. That's as good as it gets."

It was ever thus. "He's been a 'wow' horse from day one," says Sadler. "April Mayberry, who broke him in at her farm in Ocala, said the first time she saw him breeze she knew he was special.

"He's a very strong, powerful horse. He hasn't been easy to train, he used to pull too hard, always wanting to go faster, always on the bit. My assistant Juan Leyva has done a beautiful job with him, and Flavien says that he's finally beginning to pay attention - but he's still tough to train."

Despite his lavish talent, Flightline's progress towards the top has never been wholly straightforward, four starts by the summer of his four-year-old campaign a silent witness to tribulations



Top: John Sadler: 'Flightline is a lot better than Accelerate'. Photo: Benoit

Above: Flightline: won his four starts by a cumulative 43½ lengths. Photo: NYRA / Susie Raisher (Coglianese)

behind the scenes. The million-dollar Saratoga purchase is accident-prone, a racecar engine concealed within a dinged-up chassis.

"Nothing too big, but a series of small things," says Sadler. "He has a significant scar on his right hip near his tail, he caught his back end on a door latch down in Ocala and it was quite a deep wound. That was part of the reason he didn't run at two.

"He picked up a crack in his foot that meant we had to wait out last summer, and he strained a hock this February, hence he didn't run until June. I like to say he only loses to inanimate objects, a door latch, a wall."

Sadler, 66, has seen it all before in a training career that stretches back to 1978, the second act of his life with horses after he tried out for the Olympic show-jumping team as a teenager but didn't make the cut.

### 'I can really appreciate it'

His parents owned an ear of a horse with Eddie Gregson, and the 22-year-old Sadler got his chance when Gregson asked him to take a few horses up to northern California and see how things went. He's still there.

"I paid my dues, worked my way up, and in the last ten years or so I've been getting better horses, winning bigger races. Now, when a horse such as Flightline comes along, I can really appreciate it for what it is.

"He's arrived at a good time in my career. But even though I've been training for more than 40 years, I still get sleepless nights about him. Good horses will do that to you."

There have been lots of good ones aside from Flightline and Accelerate, notably champion three-year-old filly Stellar Wind and multiple G1 winners Switch and Lady Of Shamrock, who was the first good horse he trained for brothers Kosta and Pete Hronis, the fruit magnates whose dark green and white silks are borne along by the mighty Flightline. Their connection with Sadler came by pure chance, blind racing luck.

"They were at Santa Anita one day and asked one of the ushers if he could introduce them to a trainer," says Sadler. "And he mentioned my name.

That was it, that was all it was.

"We clicked right away, we're both from Pasadena, they started slow as owners and reinvested astutely, building up a solid string of racehorses. You couldn't ask for nicer people to be involved with, and now they have a really good horse."

The conversation inevitably, irresistibly circles back to Flightline, who is already worth his burly weight in gold as a stallion prospect, the usual expectation being that financial imperatives will hurry him off to stud and, as in the mantra of every great performer, leave us forever wanting more. Sadler fields the notion, pauses for a moment.

"We'll see where we are with him at the end of the year," he says. "Yes, stallion values are very important, but Flightline is such an exciting horse, he's captured the public's attention, their imagination. Some things, sometimes, are about more than the money."

It's a sentiment almost unknown at the top level, but if any horse can buck the trend it may be this one. Flightline's next date with destiny will be in the G1 Pacific Classic at Del Mar on September 3, his first test beyond a mile.

### Stamina question

The question of his stamina is the last unknown, the only inanimate object standing between the colt and the Breeders' Cup Classic at Keeneland, and from that question Sadler plucks an answer that may lie at the root of Flightline's almost supernatural ability.

"From just four races, six furlongs, seven furlongs, a mile, I really don't know what his optimum distance is," he says. "A horse that fast ... usually the further they go, the more their speed decreases, but he's different.

"He has an incredible cruising speed and I'm confident he will carry it for a mile and a quarter; Flavien feels the same way. He has a great engine, he does what he does so fast, so effortlessly. He may have no limitations."

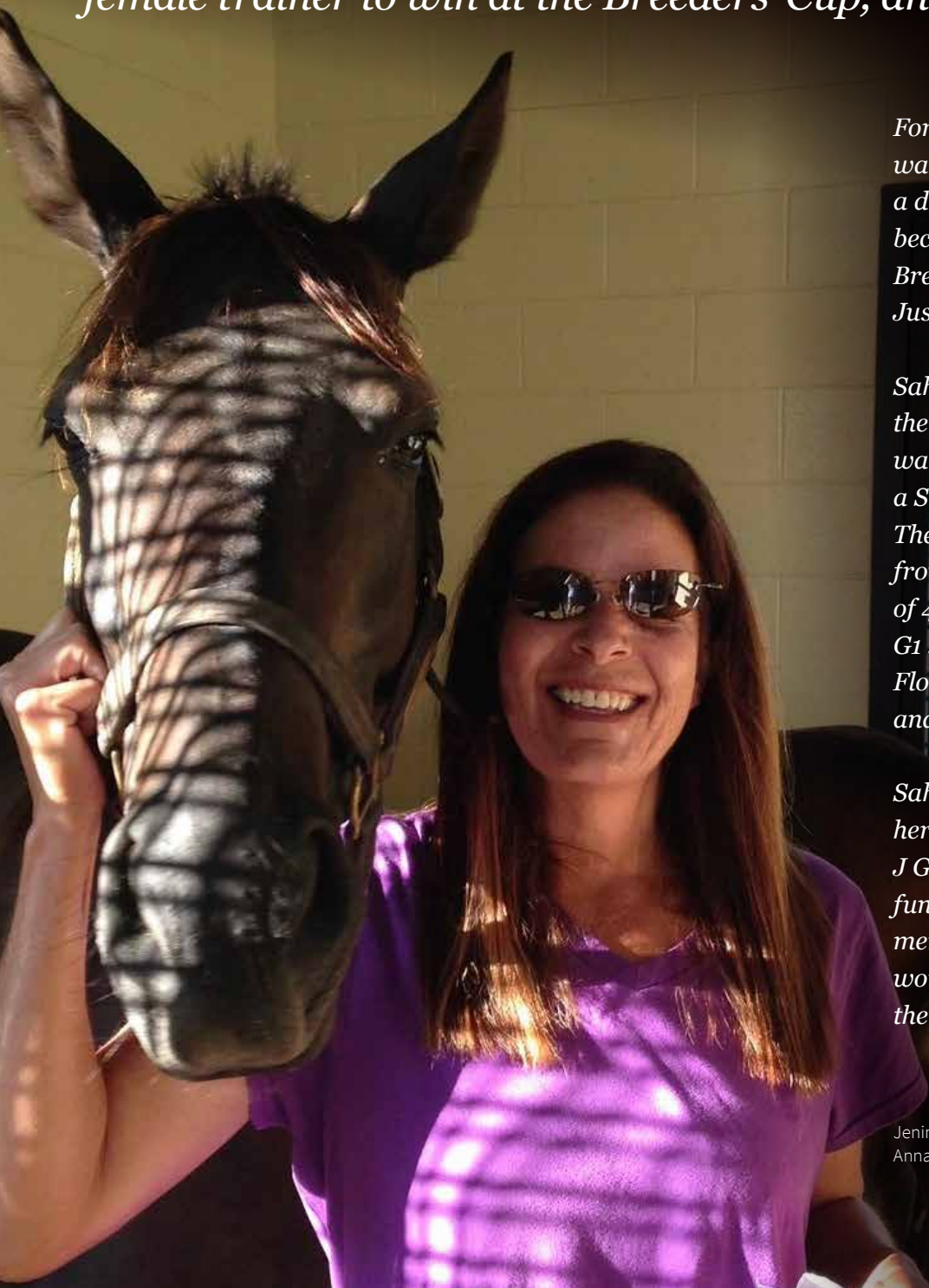
That may be the closest we can come to answering the question 'exactly how good is Flightline?' For if he's the horse Sadler thinks he is, and the old saying holds true, we may never find out.



# *What They're Thinking* **Jenine Sahadi: We need to stop with the lying and the hypocrisy**

TRC | July 10, 2022

*Former trainer Jenine Sahadi, who made history as the first female trainer to win at the Breeders' Cup, answers the questions*



*Former trainer Jenine Sahadi was a pioneering figure during a distinguished 18-year career, becoming the first woman to train a Breeders' Cup winner when Lit De Justice landed the Sprint in 1996.*

*Sahadi followed up a year later in the same race with Elmhurst; she was also the first woman to train a Santa Anita Derby winner with The Deputy in 2000. She retired from training in 2011 with a total of 441 winners, including further G1 successes with the likes of Grand Flotilla, Fastness, Rainbow Dancer and Golden Ballet.*

*Sahadi, 59, now devotes her time to her role as president of the Edwin J Gregson Foundation, which funds college scholarships to help members of California's backstretch workers and their families achieve their educational goals.*

Jenine Sahadi with her favorite horse Annabelly. Photo supplied



Lit De Justice (Corey Nakatani) becomes first Breeders' Cup winner trained by a woman in 1996 Sprint at Woodbine. Photo: © Breeders' Cup



### Which racing figure past or present do you most admire?

There are three from my past who made the biggest contributions to my life: Charlie Whittingham, who trained horses for my family, veterinarian Dr Jack Robbins and Ron McAnally, who still trains.

Of them, Charlie probably had the most influence. I loved everything about him, the way he behaved, the way he treated his horses. He had an innate way with horses, like a kind of horse whisperer, which he never bragged about. I guess when it comes down to who you have the most respect for, the 'Bald Eagle' was my guy.

### Which is your favorite venue and race anywhere in the world?

Chantilly would be my favorite venue, I can't think of a more spectacular venue than the racecourse with its chateau. It's not only the track; the surrounding area is stunning. There are plenty of places where horses reside that I

haven't been to, but to be in the forest in Jenine Sahadi with her favorite horse Annabelly. Photo supplied Jenine Sahadi with her favorite horse Annabelly. Photo supplied Chantilly watching horses train is amazing. I love the European racing and training scene. In Chantilly I love the forest, the coffee shops, the baguette shops early in the morning.

My favorite race is the Arc. It is the most fascinating of races. I grew up loving to watch that race and have been lucky enough to have visited several times.

### Who is your favorite racehorse and why?

That is a mare named Annabelly. Nobody would know her, although she was a really nice horse by Royal Academy, my favorite sire, who won four of her seven starts. I trained her – I also trained her mother Crissy Aya – for some of my favorite people who were longtime clients.

She had a horrible breakdown one morning in work. It was devastating. I don't know how she is alive; she was a miracle horse. She was like a pet to me who would eat Oreos and follow me around like a dog. My clients said: 'Do what you need to do to save her.'

Dr Rick Arthur and my vets somehow put her together. She stayed with me for a year at the track until she was well enough to travel to Kentucky where she has been ever since. She had a few foals but she's 22 and is now pensioned. Whenever I am in Kentucky I stay in a guest house right next to her paddock and I'm able to give her treats. She even knows my voice. She is my forever horse.

### What is your fondest memory in racing?

I have to say winning the Breeders' Cup at Hollywood Park in 1997 with Elmhurst. I had worked for Hollywood Park in the marketing and publicity departments so I knew everybody there, having spent so much time there after college.

Fastness, who won the Shoemaker Mile, was the best horse I ever trained but Elmhurst was an interesting horse because I gelded him at five and a half years old. There was a lot of ability there. We bought him out of France and I called up my clients to say, 'You're going to think I'm nuts but I can't take this horse anymore. He's common, he's cheating. I need to geld him'. And it worked.

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

At this point in Thoroughbred racing in 2022, particularly in the United States, we need to stop with the lying and the hypocrisy and start defending this industry and the millions of people who participate in it. There has been a real push, particularly since 2019.

I know there are bad actors in racing; there are bad actors in every aspect of life. But we need to start defending the industry, that is from the sport's leadership down through the media. I'm so sick of comparisons with Lance Armstrong and doping. In some instances hateful, spiteful rhetoric is presented as fact and it's infuriating that people believe it.

Racing has a good story to tell too and it is so unfortunate what we tend to hear more of is that trainers with drug positives are dopers and cheaters. This game has pivoted a lot, particularly in California, since 2019.

*Jenine Sahadi was speaking to Jon Lees*



# TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS

The Thoroughbred Racing Industry's  
ranking system

**Available at [thoroughbredracing.com](http://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.

After two years in development, Thoroughbred Racing Commentary (TRC) filled that void with the creation of TRC Global Rankings. Updated weekly, this is the only system in the world that assesses the accomplishments of every jockey, trainer, owner and sire.

## Advertise in TRC Monthly Roundup

**[A look at the top stories from thoroughbredracing.com](http://thoroughbredracing.com)**



**Full page, half page and quarter page formats available.  
Contact: [george@thoroughbredracing.com](mailto:george@thoroughbredracing.com)**



Thoroughbred Racing  
Commentary

---

## Sign up for our free newsletter

*Make sure you never miss the inside track on the international thoroughbred racing industry direct to your inbox three times a week.*

**And also receive  
TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS weekly updates**

Sign up at [www.thoroughbredracing.com](http://www.thoroughbredracing.com)

---

Join the conversation on social media...

 /ThoroughbredRacingCommentary

 @TRCommentary



# TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS



4 September 2022

## Horses

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Baaeed GBR	GBR	2381
2	Flightline USA	USA	2287
3	Life Is Good USA	USA	2074
4	Nature Strip AUS	AUS	2044
5	Golden Sixty AUS	HK	1925
6	Epicenter USA	USA	1923
7	Jackie's Warrior USA	USA	1918
8	Jack Christopher USA	USA	1913
9	Zaaki GBR	AUS	1886
10	Titleholder JPN	JPN	1858
11	Olympiad USA	USA	1828
12	Alpinista GBR	GBR	1822
13	Anamoe AUS	AUS	1817
14	Torquator Tasso GER	GER	1788
15	Eduardo AUS	AUS	1779

## Jockeys

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	James McDonald	AUS	2086
2	William Buick	GBR	2031
3	Joel Rosario	USA	2010
4	Flavien Prat	USA	1983
5	Irad Ortiz Jr	USA	1978
6	Ryan Moore	GBR	1829
7	Christophe Lemaire	JPN	1706
8	Frankie Dettori	GBR	1695
9	Jim Crowley	GBR	1614
10	Luis Saez	USA	1613
11	Florent Geroux	USA	1605
12	Jose L Ortiz	USA	1574
13	Yuga Kawada	JPN	1483
14	Vincent Ho	HK	1456
15	Christophe Soumillon	FRA	1429

## Trainers

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Charlie Appleby	GBR	2840
2	Chad C Brown	USA	2795
3	Brad H Cox	USA	2515
4	Bob Baffert	USA	2376
5	Aidan O'Brien	IRE	2365
6	John & Thady Gosden	GBR	2213
7	Chris Waller	AUS	2023
8	Todd Pletcher	USA	2021
9	William Haggas	GBR	2018
10	Steven Asmussen	USA	1868

## Owners

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Godolphin	AUS	3340
2	Coolmore Partners	IRE	2703
3	Shadwell Estate Company	GBR	2307
4	White Birch Farm / Peter Brant Et Al	USA	1748
5	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	JPN	1722
6	Klaravich Stables Et Al	USA	1666
7	Juddmonte	USA	1656
8	Michael Dubb Et Al	USA	1547
9	WinStar Farm Et Al	USA	1542
10	Silk Racing Co Ltd	JPN	1542

## Sires

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Dubawi IRE	GBR	2162
2	Frankel GBR	GBR	2110
3	Galileo IRE	IRE	2090
4	Deep Impact JPN	JPN	2039
5	Sea The Stars IRE	GBR	1902
6	Kingman GBR	GBR	1895
7	Into Mischief USA	USA	1838
8	Curlin USA	USA	1668
9	Lord Kanaloa JPN	JPN	1522
10	Uncle Mo USA	USA	1520