



BY JIM MULVIHILL

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

G. WATTS HUMPHREY WALKING MORTICIA (TWIRLING CANDY)  
AFTER WINNING THE FRANKLIN COUNTY S. (G3)







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HISA BRINGS HOPE OF REFORM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

or exposing high-profile drug cheats like cyclist Lance Armstrong, who was stripped of seven Tour de France titles, and the numerous athletes, especially from professional baseball and track and field, who purchased performance-enhancing substances like erythropoietin (EPO) and human growth hormone (HGH) from the Bay Area Laboratory Co-operative (BALCO).

“USADA and the Authority will ensure rigorous race-day and out-of-competition testing and modernize the regulation of Thoroughbred racing in the U.S.,” said Jim Gagliano, president and chief operating officer of The Jockey Club, the U.S. breed registry which coordinated and advocated for the legislation.

The unprecedented step of inviting national oversight into the sport had been a controversial and divisive topic for many years. However, the March 2020 indictments of 27 people—including Kentucky Derby-winning trainer Jason Servis and multiple Grade 1-winning trainer Jorge Navarro—on federal charges related to the use of performance-enhancing drugs convinced many prior skeptics that major reform was necessary.

Leaders throughout the industry have hailed the passage of HISA as the dawn of a new day for U.S racing and breeding.

“This marks the single most significant safety and integrity development in the history of Thoroughbred racing,” said Drew Fleming, president and CEO of Breeders’ Cup Ltd.

“This is a pivotal moment for the future of horseracing, a sport that will now be governed by world class, uniform standards across the United States,” said Bill Carstanjen, CEO of Churchill Downs Inc., which oversees tracks in seven states.

Horsemen, however, remain split in their reactions. Groups like the Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Association and the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen’s Association have praised the move toward more uniform rules and enhanced safety measures, while a number of other state horsemen’s groups continue to oppose HISA. In March, the National Horsemen’s Benevolent and Protective Association, together with 11 of its state affiliates, filed a federal civil suit to have HISA declared unconstitutional on grounds that it places legislative authority into the hands of a private entity. The same groups have also raised concerns about the unknown price tags associated with HISA, and who will shoulder that burden.

“The bill was passed without proper vetting and gives to a private authority broad government powers over our industry with little or no oversight,” said Peter Ecabert, the National HBPA’s general counsel. “This legislation was ramrodded through without anyone knowing the costs of creating and maintaining this additional bureaucracy and who would pay for it.”

In a detailed response, Alex Waldrop, president and CEO of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA) and one of the sport’s top legal authorities, outlined several reasons the HBPA’s claims were “baseless” and “meritless.”

“Contrary to HBPA’s hyperbole, HISA is neither unprecedented nor unconstitutional,” Waldrop stated. “It is disappointing that the HBPA—an entity whose mission is supposedly the welfare of horses and horsemen—would seek to undo much needed reforms to protect the industry’s participants.”

Even the groups behind the legal challenges seem to concede that they have little chance of success, but could bring more attention to their concerns as specifics of the Authority are formulated.

Assuming no legal impediments, HISA will go into effect no later than July 1, 2022. Among the critical points still to be determined are who will

be named to the Authority board and, as the HBPA emphasized, how its operations will be funded. The latter issue will be left to each state, as the authors of the bill determined that there was no one-size-fits-all answer. Horse owners and horseplayers are understandably nervous about possibly shouldering this burden, and the Jockey Club and NTRA have proactively urged states to instead have racetracks and horsemen share new costs, if there are any.

While much of the attention has understandably been focused on medication regulation, HISA also requires the new Authority to establish safety standards for racing and training. Among the areas specifically highlighted in the bill are “the humane treatment of horses, a system to maintain track surface quality, programs for injury and fatality analysis, investigation and disciplinary procedures, and an evaluation and accreditation program.”

Most of these initiatives already exist in some form but have been neither standardized nationally nor required. For instance, most tracks voluntarily participate in The Jockey Club’s Equine Injury Database, but some do not. Many tracks maintain accreditation from the NTRA’s Safety & Integrity Alliance, but several do not. Excuses from track operators that opt out of established best practices range from not wanting to foot the bill to fearing the reality of what they might learn.

For most segments of the industry, HISA represents hope for relief from situations that have long seemed unmanageable. Imagine a sport with fewer inexplicable form reversals, fewer catastrophic injuries, and fewer retired horses without aftercare options. The new Authority represents the best hope yet to show meaningful progress on these and other major issues that racing must confront before it can prosper. ■

Jim Mulvihill is a freelance writer based in Denver.



# A Historic Moment

## The past, present, and future of historical horse racing in Kentucky

BY JOE NEVILLS

Practically every corner of Kentucky’s horse racing industry came together in near-unprecedented fashion during the early months of 2021 in support of a bill protecting historical horse racing in the state.

In what can be a highly fractured business, the unity and its urgency with which industry members rallied to ensure that form of gaming would survive was something truly remarkable.

So, what was all the fuss about?

In jurisdictions where standard casino gaming at racetracks is prohibited by law, historical horse racing, also known as Instant Racing or HHR, has become an invaluable source of additional revenue for purses and breed incentive programs. In Kentucky alone, over \$2 billion is wagered annually on historical horse racing.

From the outside, an HHR machine and a standard video slot machine might appear practically identical. The prices and methods of play are similar, while the outer casing and the visuals on the screen look like any video slots one would find at a standard casino.

What makes HHR different is what’s inside the machine.

Where the outcome of a slot machine is randomly generated, HHR machines draw their outcomes from the orders of finish of previously run horse races. Payouts are then determined through a pari-mutuel system among other HHR players, which can vary from system to system.

Players are able to do some remedial handicapping for a given race, but identifying information is stripped away in regards to the race’s venue, date, and participants, and the information provided is far less direct. First machines were installed at Oaklawn Park and Southland Greyhound Park in 2000, and their success over the past two decades elevated Oaklawn’s purse structure from below-par to one of the most lucrative in the country.

Instant Racing has proven itself to be a game-changer in markets where the racing product is flagging. Colonial Downs in Virginia returned from a hiatus of more than five years after HHR was made into law in 2018, with live racing returning the following year.



PHOTO COURTESY OF RED MILE

In Wyoming, Instant Racing brought in more than \$793 million in 2019, with over \$3 million being put toward breeders’ awards.

While there have been several success stories tied to state racing programs adding HHR, it has not been a smooth ride for many of those jurisdictions, owing to moral objections and their similarities to conventional slot machines.

While Wyoming’s HHR program is bigger than ever today, the machines were pulled in 2005 after just two years of use, and they were ruled un-

lawful by the state’s Supreme Court a year later. The state legislature legalized them again in 2013.

States including Oregon and Idaho have had their machines installed and shut down at varying times, while states like Texas, Nebraska, and Michigan have made sustained pushes for HHR in their legislatures and courtrooms but never got to the point of installing machines before the measures were killed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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EMPLOYEE PROFILE

# An Unexpected Career

## A conversation with longtime Lane’s End Stallion Manager, Billy Sellers

BY MICHELE MACDONALD

Billy Sellers didn’t grow up with a love of horses. He never had a burning desire to work on a farm.

But when he answered an ad placed in a 1977 University of Kentucky campus newspaper, looking for part-time help at a local farm, his life changed forever—and so did the eventual course of Lane’s End Farm.

Today, it’s impossible to think about the globally influential sires that have stood on the Lane’s End stallion roster—and their numerous Champions and stakes-winning sons and daughters—without thinking about Sellers.

Ever since the very first cover during the initial season of the farm’s stallion operation in 1985, Sellers has been a key part of the team as stallion manager. With a hint of wonder in his voice, he can look back on how that simple advertisement turned into a calling, and what it has meant to help develop the branch of the farm that quickly became the hallmark for Lane’s End excellence.

“It’s a funny thing,” Sellers reminisced with a chuckle. “I had just started at the University of Kentucky and I needed a part-time job. There was an opening that a farm had advertised, so I had answered it and just kind of bluffed my way through. My sister rode, so she gave me a crash course in how to groom a horse and then I went to work at this farm on a Monday.”

That farm was Stanley Petter’s Hurricane Hall, and the job gave him his first taste of what would become a lifelong passion.

“Of course, they could tell right away that I was green as grass, but, anyway, I liked it,” said Sellers. “I just liked everything about it—I liked working outside and the freedom of it. I liked the horses. I liked the people who were involved in it. It just clicked with me and I stuck with it.”

That first job was a happy accident on the road to what has been a fulfilling career and a cherished way of life for the convivial Sellers.

“When I started working on the farm and doing that type of thing, I thought, ‘This is kind of fun.’” Said Sellers. “It never occurred to me that it was a low-paying job at the time. My parents probably thought I’d gone crazy; neither one of them had any horse background. I am the first one in our family who ever made it a career. But I liked it, and I think if a person likes what they’re doing—whether it’s the horse business or any other business—I think you have a whole lot better chance to succeed in some way or shape.”

From that first position, Sellers opted to leave school, and he went on to work at Calumet Farm and later at Big Sink Farm, where Mike Cline was the manager at the time. That move would become pivotal for Sellers and his future career at Lane’s End.



BILLY SELLERS WITH THE LATE A.P. INDY

“I had been working at Big Sink about six to ten months, and Mike called me into his office one day and said, ‘Have you ever heard of Will Farish? He is building a farm up the road here and I think you’d make me a good foreman and it would be a good opportunity for you.’

“So, I came to Lane’s End in 1982 with Mike [who would serve as Lane’s End farm manager for 40 years prior to his retirement in 2020] and started working in the mare barns,” Sellers said. “In the summer, I would work at the yearling barn and prep the yearlings and then go to the sales. When the farm had grown enough that they wanted to add the stallion division, Mike asked if I would be interested in doing that. So, I told him ‘Sure.’

“I had helped in the breeding shed at Calumet when I was there, but I didn’t have a lot of stallion experience per se. They sent me over to Wal-mac Farm—Mr. Farish owned a part of a lot of those stallions there—and I got my feet wet, so to speak. I worked there for a season and got to know those horses and how they did things.

“We started out with three stallions here at Lane’s End in 1985. It worked out really well because we all kind of grew at the same time—the farm and the stallion roster. It was all kind of a natural progression to standing as many horses as we do now.”

Those first three stallions were multiple Grade 1 winners Fit to Fight, by Chieftain; Hero’s Honor, by Northern Dancer, from Paul Mellon’s Rokeby Stables; and multiple Grade 2 winner Dixieland Band, a Northern Dancer horse bred by Farish’s father-in-law, Bayard Sharp. All three made their mark, with Dixieland Band leaving a still-flourishing Lane’s End legacy with over 100 stakes winners to his credit.

Dixieland Band’s son, multiple Grade 1 winner Dixie Union, proved highly influential as both a sire—with his sons including current Lane’s End

stallion and Belmont Stakes winner Union Rags—and broodmare sire. His descendants in this category include Unified, a son of Candy Ride who also stands at Lane’s End. Unified’s first offspring are juveniles of 2021. In turn, Union Rags is the sire of second-year Lane’s End stallion Catalina Cruiser.

Both Dixieland Band and Fit to Fight still rank high as favorites among all the horses Sellers has worked with—partially because, as he noted, they launched their careers together, with both the horses and the man learning to thrive in the unique rhythms of the commercial breeding business.

The pace in the stallion complex dramatically increased in 1990 when Lane’s End added a courtyard and three new barns to the original 20-stall stallion barn. The farm’s quick rise to prominence surged further as the roster expanded. During all these years and through today, Sellers was evaluating and learning, putting together a program that would give the best care to the horses and the best service to clients.

Breeding season, from mid-February through June, is obviously the most demanding time for the horses and those who care for them.

“It’s very busy,” Sellers said. “When we get here in the mornings, the horses are all out—the horses go out at night pretty much year-round here. So, when I come to work in the mornings, all the stallions are being brought in; we go through them and make sure everybody is okay and then we get our breeding list together and see which horses are going to breed and get them ready.

“The breeding shed starts at 8 a.m., and a typical number for us is probably 12 to 14 in a morning session. We’ll breed those and after that, the rest of the morning is used to show visitors and clients the stallions or

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



PHOTO BY ANNE EBERHARDT KEOGH



# “A feeling like no other.”

## Jockey Mike Smith reflects on a Hall of Fame career—and why he’s not done yet

BY AMANDA DUCKWORTH

Some of champion jockey Mike Smith’s best-known rides happened well after he was inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. That fact alone is a pretty clear indication of his level of talent. Smith’s partnerships with the likes of Zenyatta—perhaps Lane’s End Farm’s most famous resident—and Triple Crown winner Justify, among others, keep him wanting more.

“I feel blessed that I was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2003 and since then have gone on to basically have another Hall of Fame career,” said Smith. “To get the opportunities I have been given—to ride for the people I’ve been blessed to ride for and continue to ride for, and to ride the horses I’ve been able to—they are all certainly keeping me in this game. They are keeping me young.”

Throughout his career, Smith, who is now 55, has had great success in America’s Classic races. In addition to winning the Triple Crown on Justify in 2018, he also won the Kentucky Derby in 2005 on Giacomo, the 1993 Preakness Stakes on Prairie Bayou, and the Belmont Stakes in 2010 and 2013 aboard Drosselmeyer and Palace Malice, respectively.

“In any sport, there is the pinnacle, the one place you want to reach,” said Smith. “The Triple Crown, when you can pull off all three of them, you have won the ultimate championship, but winning even one of the Classics is so special. If you can win the Kentucky Derby, it’s America’s horse race. You can’t deny that and you can’t take it away.

“The first question people will ask, even if they don’t really know our sport, is ‘Have you won or competed in the Kentucky Derby?’ It just puts you up on a different pedestal. I will never feel that feeling again unless I can do it again, and believe me, I want to feel it again.”

Smith’s two Derby victories were complete opposites of each other. Giacomo’s win, which came two years after Smith had been inducted into the Hall of Fame, stunned much of the racing world, while Justify was sent off as the favorite.

“I guess I would be lying if I said it wasn’t different, just because certainly when you are on one of the favorites you are supposed to have a better chance at it,” Smith. “In saying that though, going into the Derby with Giacomo, even at 50-1, I was really confident he was going to run well. The Kentucky Derby is extremely difficult to win, and that’s what makes it the Derby, but I knew he was going to run well.

“I just thought the big, long stretch at Churchill Downs would really suit him, and all the favorites were pretty fast, speedy type horses. I thought it could be a hot pace earlier on and that would really set up for him to run big, and that’s exactly what happened. When you get blessed to win a Kentucky Derby, especially your first one, man, it’s just unbelievable. It’s just all of these different emotions and feelings and a sense of completion.”

Thirteen years later, Justify would give Smith those feelings again. Becoming the sport’s thirteenth Triple Crown winner only amplified them.

“Going back into the Derby with Justify was different,” Smith said. “Here was a horse who was undefeated. He hadn’t raced very much, but the things he had done were extraordinary. He just stood over everybody. In that Derby, the weather was different, it was raining, and I just hoped for a good clean break out of there. I wantewd to get him in a good, comfortable rhythm. I knew he would be on the lead or close to it, and sure enough, he left the gate with running on his mind.



MIKE SMITH ABOARD ZENYATTA AFTER WINNING THE 2009 BREEDERS’ CUP CLASSIC (G1)

“He put me in the right spot, did what I thought he could do, and then of course the rest is history and he went on to win the Triple Crown. It was amazing. Talk about a feeling like no other—when you get all three of them, especially in the same year, it is truly the most humbling feeling I have ever felt. I just wanted to stop and talk to everybody and tell them all about it. It’s a feeling that will never go away. Any time I am feeling down and out, I just think about that and can’t help but smile again.”

Of course, one of the other major highlights of Smith’s career came not in the Triple Crown, but in the autumn of 2009 aboard Zenyatta, who raced for the same connections as Giacomo. She remains the only filly or mare to ever win the Breeders’ Cup Classic, and the champion mare has called Lane’s End home since her retirement in 2010.

“To be honest, she could probably head to any farm and be the most famous resident there, at least fan-wise,” said Smith. “I don’t think I have ever seen a fanbase quite like hers, still to this day. What she was able to do and beat the boys in the Classic, will go down as one of the greatest Breeders’ Cup races of all time.

“That race, that day, to have it in California—that was the day the ground shook and there was no earthquake. The ground was literally shaking. You could feel the vibrations because people were going crazy, jumping up and down, and screaming. I will never forget it, and John Shirreffs telling me to ride down to the end of the grandstand and let everyone see her was just icing on the cake. It was incredible.”

Now, as Triple Crown season rolls around, Smith has his eye on winning America’s most famous race again, while acknowledging he views things a bit differently than he did at the start of his career.

“You learn to appreciate things a lot more as you grow older,” he said. “It’s a different kind of excitement heading into the Kentucky Derby now than my first time. You really start to appreciate everything that goes into getting a horse there. From the time they are born, to when they are weaned from their mother, to when they go into training—to be able to have a horse good enough to even compete in the Derby is a pretty special thing. I will go down saying it’s the greatest horse race in the world.” ■





# Ambassadors for the Sport

## Retired Classic winners meet the public at the Kentucky Horse Park

BY AMANDA DUCKWORTH



PHOTO BY EHRLIF / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

A.P. Indy’s presence was so powerful at Lane’s End Farm that even during his pensioned years, meeting the champion was usually the highlight for guests visiting during a Horse Country tour. With his passing last year at the grand age of 31, the baton of “oldest living Triple Crown race winner” was handed to Go For Gin, the 1994 Kentucky Derby victor.

Much like A.P. Indy, Go For Gin is spending his golden years as an ambassador for the sport. Foaled 30 years ago on April 18, 1991, the bay stallion still has a spark in his eye and a compelling personality, which has helped make him a star in the Hall of Champions at the Kentucky Horse Park.

“The majority of people come to the Kentucky Horse Park to learn, and they get excited when they learn they are interacting with the oldest living Kentucky Derby winner,” said Rob Willis, the manager of the Hall of Champions. “Even a non-horse person can appreciate how great he looks for his age. Hitting 30 is special, and he is still very well-muscled, still very active, and still thoroughly enjoys his daily routine.

“He also loves his public. Any other 30-year-old horse would probably be on very special schedule, be fully retired, and not do much besides be appreciated out in his field. We use him as the main attraction though because he enjoys the attention so much.”

Located in Lexington, the Kentucky Horse Park opened in 1978 as the world’s first park dedicated to man’s relationship with the horse. To this day, the park’s mission is to celebrate that relationship through education, exhibition, engagement and competition. In addition to the Hall of Champions, it is home to attractions such as the Parade of Breeds, carriage rides, horse back rides, world class museums, and renowned competition venues.

“I call the Hall of Champions our Living Museum because these guys are all ambassadors to their separate breeds and sports,” said Willis. “A lot of people who come here are not familiar with horse racing. They understand key words like ‘Kentucky Derby’ and ‘millions of dollars,’ but I jokingly explain that Gin is technically the ‘worst’ horse in the barn because most of the horses in the Hall of Champions have a lot more accolades than he does.”

In addition to Go For Gin, the current Thoroughbred residents in the Hall of Champions are two-time Breeders’ Cup winner Da Hoss and Eclipse Award winners Funny Cide and Point Given. They are joined by Standard-breds Mr. Muscleman, Western Dreamer, and Won The West.

Previous Thoroughbreds to reside in the Hall of Champions include Al-ysheba, Bold Forbes, Cigar, Forego, John Henry, and Kona Gold. Their graves are still often visited by fans.

“A lot of the horses in our barn develop fanbases, and people then get interested in racing because of their connection to the horse,” said Willis.

“It’s the horses’ personalities that draw the general public to them, and then they walk away more invested in racing.

“During our regular shows, our videos of their successes really tie it together for our visitors. It’s one thing to see them standing in a paddock or in the show pavilion, but then also seeing them in their racing prime brings it all home.”

The staff who work with the Hall of Champions roster take great pride in keeping them happy and healthy as well as explaining to the public why they are elite equines.

“The horses are all so good at being ambassadors that we joke they are on the payroll,” said Willis. “Our staff is very invested in them, and they not only like them as a job, they like them for their personalities. We love getting to tell their stories and educating people.” In addition to inspiring visitors, the horses also help to teach the next generation of horsemen and women. The park has internship and volun-

teer opportunities, including working with the residents in the Hall of Champions. Go For Gin and Point Given especially provide unique hands-on experience.

“They are stallions, but both are kind, so they are a good bridge for people who come here to work,” said Willis. “We have interns, younger students, and volunteers who have backyard horses, but they don’t have experience with handling stallions. Gin and Point Given both have a presence and can be intimidating, but they are never mean about it. Then you can graduate to a tougher horse who demands more skills, like Funny Cide.”

The Kentucky Horse Park, which is closed to the public on Mondays and Tuesdays, offers a seasonal schedule of events. The summer schedule, which is the most robust, begins May 5, and among its other events features two Hall of Champions shows at 10:30 and 1:15.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



PHOTO BY ACESHOT1 / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



A HISTORIC MOMENT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Kentucky’s backstory with HHR lies somewhere in the middle of it all.

The Kentucky Horse Racing Commission adjusted its definition of pari-mutuel wagering to allow HHR in 2010. After the language was initially approved by the courts—and subjected to appeals by anti-gambling interests—it was installed at Kentucky Downs on the Tennessee border in 2011.

Instant Racing was an instant smash at the small track. With no legal forms of casino gambling in Tennessee, Kentucky Downs drew in a large number of patrons from nearby Nashville, becoming the closest destination for gaming. The impact on purses was immediate, and the track consistently hosts full fields for astronomical purses during its short September meet.

Ellis Park, in the western part of the state, installed Instant Racing on its property a year later, and the track’s status as a necessary summer meet has improved dramatically. In 2015, Keeneland and The Red Mile partnered on a facility on the harness track’s property in Lexington, while Churchill Downs opened Derby City Gaming in Louisville, on a separate property from the track, in 2018.

Kentucky currently has six sites for Instant Racing: Derby City Gaming in Louisville, Ellis Park in Henderson, Kentucky Downs in Franklin, The Red Mile in Lexington, Newport Racing and Gaming in Newport, and Oak Grove Racing and Gaming in Oak Grove.

Turfway Park plans to have HHR facilities once construction is finished on its new plant. Churchill Downs also intended to build a combined hotel and HHR facility on its property, but the plan was put on hold last year due to the economic uncertainties surrounding COVID-19. However, the company indicated in February that work might resume on the project in the near future.

For the most recently completed fiscal year—July 2019 to June 2020—Kentucky handled over \$2.25 billion through HHR, marking an 11.3 percent gain from the previous fiscal year’s handle of more than \$2.02 billion. That result is made even more impressive considering so many months of the recent fiscal year involved the first stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, when business practically ground to a halt, and customer capacity was severely limited after the parlors were allowed to re-open.

Year-to-date revenues for the current fiscal year through its first seven months, all of which have operated under some form of COVID-19 restrictions, tracked 38 percent ahead of the same point in the previous fiscal year.

During the 2019 - 2020 fiscal year, more than \$15.5 million in HHR revenue was contributed to Kentucky’s Thoroughbred Development Fund, further bolstering a program already helped by the contributions the machines make to the purse structures at their host tracks.

While historical horse racing had become an integral part of Kentucky’s racing ecosystem, a battle was still being fought in the courts over its legality. The initial machines and facilities were installed on the first approval from the courts, but the appeal from HHR opponents, primarily the Family Foundation, climbed the ladder to the Kentucky Supreme Court.

Though the Supreme Court decided the KHRC could continue licensing wagering on HHR, it also remanded the case back to trial court to determine whether this form of gambling truly met the definition of pari-mutuel wagering.

That issue was addressed in September 2020, when the state Supreme Court ruled unanimously that at least one brand of Instant Racing ma-

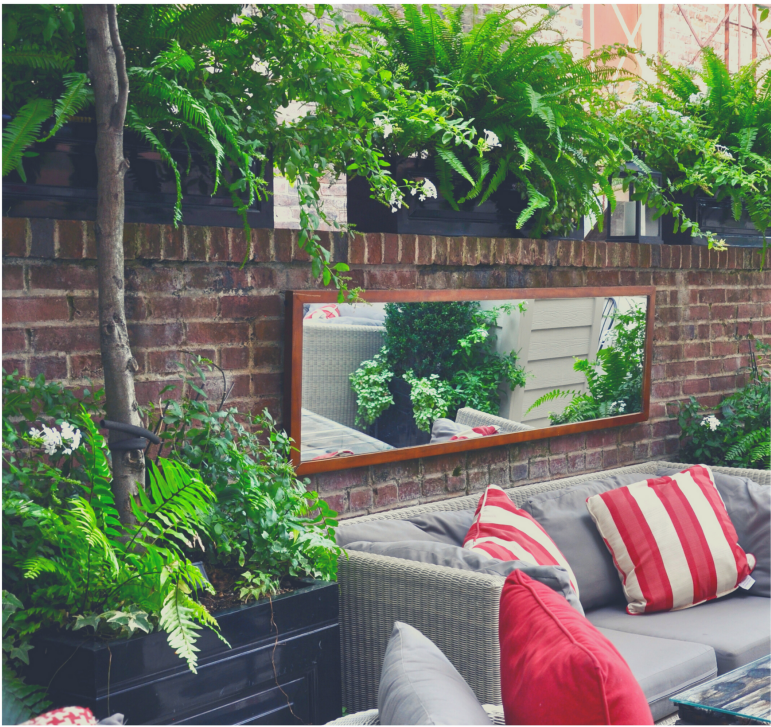
chines too closely resembled conventional slot machines and deemed them illegal. The court then confirmed it would not re-hear the case in January 2021.

This led to a heated legislative battle within the chambers of the Kentucky Capitol to write and pass a bill to protect HHR in the state. That came in the form of Senate Bill 120, which passed through the Senate by a 22-15 vote, then was approved in the House of Representatives by a 55-38 margin.

Gov. Andy Beshear signed the bill into law on Feb. 22, giving historical horse racing firmer legal standing in Kentucky, and ensuring the continued growth of the state’s program will remain uninterrupted. ■



PHOTO BY EDDIE J. RODRIGUEZ / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



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AMBASSADORS FOR THE SPORT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Of course, major race days are celebrated, too. Because of their respective resumes, Go For Gin is usually the focus on Derby day, Funny Cide take- the limelight on Preakness day, Point Given is the main attraction on Belmont day, and Da Hoss takes center stage on Breeders’ Cup weekend.

Additionally, the year-round and ever-popular Derby Winner Nightcap, which involves Go For Gin and Funny Cide being turned out, occurs daily at 3:30.

“When I started working here, they used to tell me how Cigar would put on a show for everybody when he was turned out,” said Willis. “Gin usually does, too, and he is so dependable about it that we started putting it on the published schedule. He usually bolts out, runs a bit, and does typical stallion things like surveying his land. Then he casually comes over and greets the crowd.

“We also turn out Funny Cide, whose paddock is next to his. It makes for a nice comparison since they are both Kentucky Derby winners but are polar opposites in every way. It’s supposed to be a 20-minute presentation, but it can turn into an hour because people are so enamored with the horses and asking questions. There are very few places in the world where you can stand between two living Derby winners, and this is one of them.” ■



PHOTO BY ACESHOT1 / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

G. WATTS HUMPHREY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

prominent Thoroughbred owner, as well as being Secretary of the Treasury during the first term of President Dwight Eisenhower. This family’s relationship with the highest office in the land led to one of Humphrey’s first “tell the grandkids” memories.

“He’d have Eisenhower down to shoot, and Eisenhower wanted to play golf,” Humphrey said, recalling the interactions between his grandfather and the president. “My grandfather disliked golf immensely, so I would play golf with Eisenhower. I was between eight and 12. He just wanted somebody to play with.

“The fourth year I was playing with him, thereabouts, we were walking down the first fairway, and I’d always called him ‘General Eisenhower,’” Humphrey continued. “He turned around, put his arm around me, and said, ‘Until we get to the 18th fairway, I want you to call me Ike.’ It took me until about the 14th hole to call him Ike.”

After his time in Washington, Humphrey’s grandfather put more focus into his Thoroughbred operation, moving his racing stable to New York and buying a breeding farm in Kentucky. Already in Kentucky was Humphrey’s aunt, Elizabeth “Pansy” Ireland Poe, the owner of Shawnee Farm in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. While Poe primarily raised show horses, she also brought up a handful of racehorses, which were campaigned in Ireland. Humphrey began visiting his aunt at Shawnee Farm as a preteen, and would one day go on to own the property himself, making it the home base of his own Thoroughbred interests.

Before he went down that path, Humphrey attended Yale University, where he became the starting quarterback of the school’s football team. He was joined for two of those seasons by his older brother, team captain George Humphrey, who protected Watts from opposing defenders as a member of the offensive line.

The mid-1960s were a harrowing time to be a young man in his early 20s, with the specter of the Vietnam War hovering over anyone within draft age, but Humphrey beat it to the punch. After graduating from Yale in 1966, he and a group of friends enlisted for the Marine Corps.

He quickly climbed the ranks in service, and earned a number of medals during his time overseas, including a trio of Purple Hearts. The injuries he sustained in combat led him to be hospitalized for two months, rehabilitating at Camp Pendleton in California before receiving a medical discharge.

When Humphrey returned to civilian life, he went in two directions. First, he went to Harvard Business School to earn his Master of Business Administration degree. Next, he returned to Kentucky, where he planted the seeds of his broodmare band with another aunt, Pamela Firman.

Humphrey met his wife, Sally, at Yale, and they were married before he shipped off to Vietnam. She shared in his growing interest in the Thoroughbreds, and turned out to have a sharp eye for picking out a good broodmare.

“She’d been going to the sales with all of us all the time, following us around, and she turned to me and said, ‘I’d like to have my own mare,’” Humphrey said. “I said, ‘Okay, I’ll give you one for your 30th birthday. You have \$30,000 to spend, but you have to go out and find the horse, you have to bid on it, and you have to sign the ticket.

“She got in and started to bid, and got to \$30,000 and stopped,” he continued. “The bidding got to \$31,000, \$32,000, and then I bid to \$33,000, and that was the mare, and the mare turned out to be Virtuous.”

Virtuous, a French stakes-placed daughter of Gallant Man, would one day become the dam of Genuine Risk—one of the greatest mares of the twentieth century.

The mares would become a key part of Humphrey’s Thoroughbred business. He typically sells the colts and half the fillies produced from his breeding program, while keeping the other half to race. He takes care not to flood his broodmare band with a single bloodline to maintain diversity in his program—a lesson taught to him by breeder Paul Mellon.

But whether Humphrey is keeping the foals or selling them, his goal for his matings remains the same.

“The old timers would say you breed speed to speed and pray for the best, so I think speed is very important,” he said. “I don’t think it has to be three-quarter [mile] speed. It has to be very good, strong turn of foot, not a plodder. Horses that go a mile and a quarter and win big races have a real turn of foot.”

Having been on the team that produced a winner in North America’s most visible race is yet another defining moment, but it wouldn’t be the last time Humphrey associated with a champion in a professional sport.

Humphrey is a partner in Major League Baseball’s St. Louis Cardinals, and he put a World Series title on his resume after the team’s unlikely victory in 2011. A day after the title was clinched, he earned another major honor as the leading owner of Keeneland’s fall meet. He celebrated the occasion with a special name for a Street Cry filly out of his Grade 1 winner Victory Ride: Miracle Run.

“In 2011, [the Cardinals] had to win a playoff game to get in the playoffs,” he said. “Then, we had to win the playoffs, then we won the World Series, so it was dubbed in St. Louis the ‘Miracle Run,’ so we named the horse after it.”

Humphrey’s own life has itself been something of a “miracle run.” Like any run of its kind, some if it falls to being in the right place at the right time, and some of it is having the good fortune to survive where others don’t. Most of all, Humphrey has been able to sustain his miracle run in and out of the Thoroughbred business because of his ability to take advantage of the opportunities before him. Impactful moments in life stem from impactful actions—and Humphrey has seen plenty of both. ■

Quotes for this story were obtained via “Humphrey, G. Watts, Jr., interview by Chris McGrath. July 12, 2019, Life’s Work: Reflections on Life in the Equine Industry Oral History Project, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries.”



PHOTO BY ANNE EBERHARDT KEOGH



AN UNEXPECTED CAREER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

do our house-keeping chore. Then, we'll breed again at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Then after the afternoon shed time, we'll turn out the stallions. Most nights, we'll have a night shed session at 7 o'clock, but it's usually just a couple or three horses that will breed at that time and it usually takes an hour or so. Then we go home, get a quick bite to eat, go to bed and come back and do it again."

Working with Sellers are ten grooms and two night watchmen, all with significant experience. Most have spent many years at Lane's End alongside Sellers.

"I'm very fortunate—I've got guys that have worked almost 30 years with me," Sellers said. "I think one of the newest guys we've hired has been here seven, eight, nine years by now. That just makes it so much easier—I've got guys I can trust and I can depend on. I know if there is a problem brewing, they are going to tell me about it as soon as they pick up on it."

When breeding season is over, staff members typically try to take some time off in the summer to relax prior to welcoming owners and breeders to the farm during the peaks of yearling and breeding stock sale season. In late autumn, the staff typically greets an incoming group of new stallions following the conclusion of their racing careers.

"We let those horses acclimate—we get them used to being turned out and get them used to the farm routine. After about a month or so, we'll introduce them to a mare. December is kind of used as our month to do our test breeding, just to get those new horses breeding and comfortable with their new job," Sellers said.

With experienced stallions, another part of the off-season routine involves exercise with walking machines to maintain a healthy weight. "We keep them a little toned and fit so it's not too hard on them when they have to go back to work," Sellers said. "Then, in January, we do all our fertility analysis. We'll collect all our stallions and get their fertility numbers and make sure everything is good in that way, and then we'll just kind of bide our time until February rolls around and then we start the season again."

Through all the seasons he has worked, Sellers has been involved with some of the world's greatest horses and horsemen. In that time, the most valuable lesson he said he has learned is to stay keenly aware of even the smallest details.

"I learned early on from Mike Cline how important attention to detail is. Mike is amazing in that regard—he sees things that I don't see, and I've learned to kind of see things through his eyes. The attention to detail is so important, and to take care of all the little things before they become big things," Sellers said. "I kind of watch these people who are successful that I'm around. The Farishes are great people. When you're around people like that and you see how they carry themselves and how they treat others, it can only rub off on you. I think those are probably the biggest things I've taken away from here."

"I really like all of it," Sellers said. "I enjoy the breeding season, even though it is very hectic. I really enjoy seeing the people who bring mares to the shed every year and the variety that the breeding season offers. You never really know what you might see next. I've been doing it a long time but you always run into something that's a little challenging or maybe you haven't seen before—a different set of problems—so I like that challenging part of it. Also, we get a lot of younger kids here who will work a season or so with us, and I enjoy having them here and getting them exposed to the business and having some experience with what it's like."

Sellers can tell stories about the many stallions who have stood at Lane's End over the years. Foremost among those is A.P. Indy. The legendary son of Seattle Slew was foaled at Lane's End in 1989 and went on to become 1992 Horse of the Year and twice leading sire in a spectacular, breed-shaping career.

"When A.P. Indy first came here, he had just won the Breeders' Cup Classic at Gulfstream and he was just so strong and fit, and I looked at him and thought, 'This is the real deal right here.' You could just look at him and tell he was going to be special. And he was a great horse to be around. He was all business—he wasn't a pet in any way, shape or form. But he sure was all class," Sellers said.

The same statement about class could be made, Sellers noted, about multiple Group 1 winner Kingmambo, a son of Mr. Prospector who raced for the late Stavros Niarchos's Flaxman Holdings. Described by Will Farish as "one of the great stallions of all time," Kingmambo also provided Sellers with one of the most demanding situations of his career after the horse developed a debilitating neck condition and required special care.

"When Kingmambo was getting older and having difficulty breeding his mares, that was quite a challenge to get him into a position in which he could still cover his mares and extend his career a little bit," Sellers said.

Other challenges came in the form of difficult-to-handle stallions, like Parade Ground, who Sellers describes as a "fiery-tempered" son of Kingmambo, and Artic Tern, a high-strung son of Sea-Bird who was blind in one eye but reigned as champion sire in France in 1986.

"Most of the stallions we've had here have been pretty straightforward and not overly difficult to handle. But Arctic Tern and Parade Ground, if someone brought those names up to me, immediately I would think, 'Those guys were tough,'" Sellers said.

"We learned to get along with them and manage them. The challenge in that is trying to find out what the key is to co-exist with them. You're not going to change them to a great extent, but if you can get along with them and do what you need to do with them, that's the victory."

Going back to his favorites, Sellers said there have been too many to count, but he did give a special nod to 1988 Horse of the Year and record-setting

earnings leader Alysheba, a son of Alydar who won the 1987 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes and the 1988 Breeders' Cup Classic.

"Alysheba was a horse I really enjoyed, and I met a lot of people through Alysheba that I'm still friends with today," he said. "These kinds of horses just don't come along in people's lives all that often. I always felt lucky that I was in a place where I could be around horses like Alysheba, Kingmambo and A.P. Indy. I enjoyed working with them. And I always had a soft spot for [2003 Horse of the Year and son of A.P. Indy] Mineshaft and [2000 Champion and son of Kingmambo] Lemon Drop Kid—they're homebreds and I always have a soft spot for the homebreds. But there is something really special about all of the stallions."

Sellers has something good to say about every member of the current Lane's End roster, which includes the 22-year-old Mineshaft. Quality Road is "a very easy-going horse, but if he doesn't want to do something, he's not going to do it. Yet he's a sweetheart of a horse." Union Rags has "quite the personality." City of Light, by Quality Road, is "easy to get along with." Newcomer Honor A.P. has "a lot of personality, and I see a lot of similarities between him and his sire, Honor Code." And newcomers like Champions Game Winner, Accelerate and West Coast are "super nice horses."

"Accelerate is 100 percent racehorse and a really nice-looking horse. He's as smart as he can be and goes about his business like a very classy horse. Game Winner is the same way. I think Game Winner probably has a really big future ahead of him. To me, he looks the part," Sellers observed.

Daredevil, sire of champion Swiss Skydiver and Kentucky Oaks winner Shedaresthedevil from his first crop, also has settled in well after arriving at Lane's End to stand the 2021 season under an agreement with The Jockey Club of Turkey. "It's pretty incredible to have him here," Sellers said. "He breeds his mares well and he's easy to handle and he's quiet in the paddock—you'd take a barn full of those at any time."

While the horses are the focus of his working life, Sellers said he makes time for relaxation and enjoys playing golf and fishing in the ponds on the grounds of Lane's End. Family, including a three-year-old granddaughter, is very important to him.

"I'm pretty simple," he declared. "If I can get out and play golf once or twice a week and maybe go fish a little bit in between, that's good for me," he said. And the team at Lane's End, including the colleagues who also have worked there for many years, is a prized bonus in his life.

"It all starts from the Farishes and goes on down," Sellers said. "I've worked for them for almost 40 years and it's easy for me to say they are great people—and they really are. They've created this farm and the environment we all work under so that's where it all comes from. Everybody here is just a good person and it's easy to work with people like that and for people like that. I'm fortunate and I know it, and I appreciate it." ■



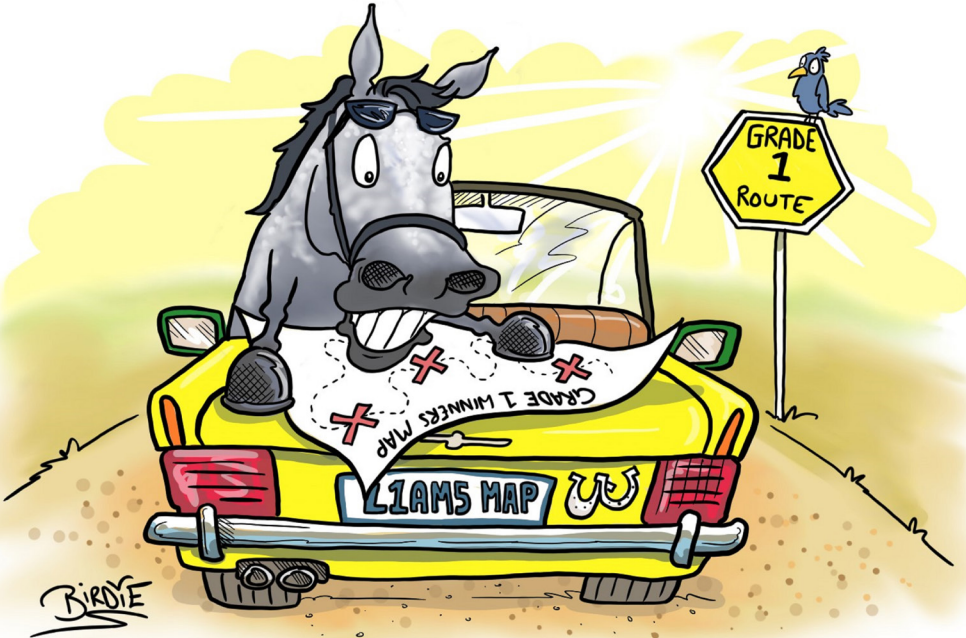
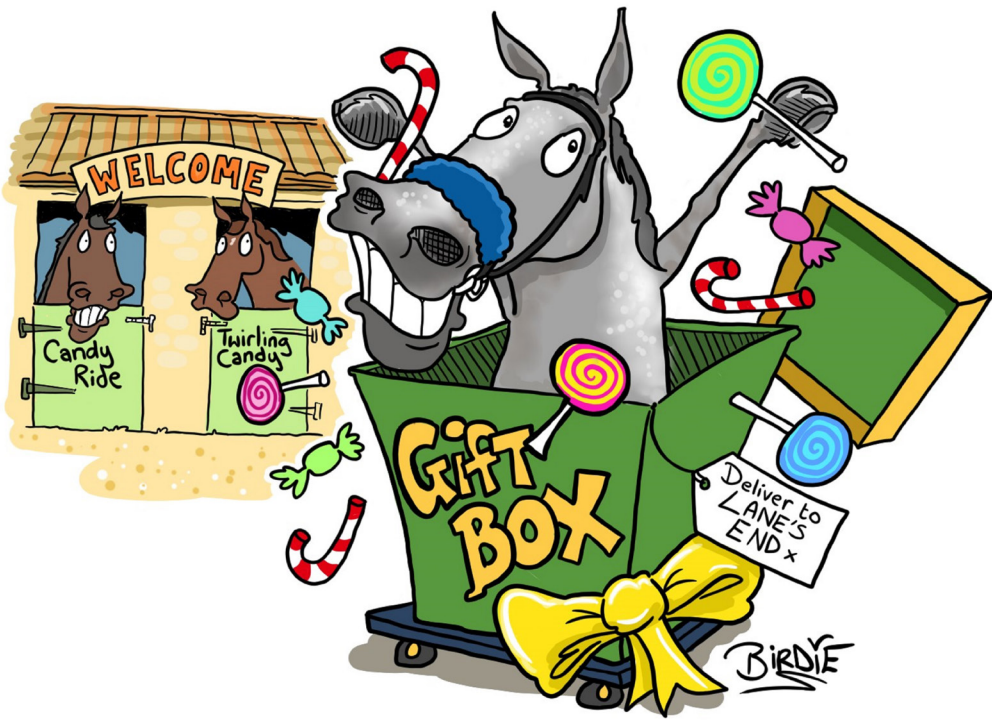
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FROM THE ARCHIVES



A.P. INDY WINNING THE 1992 BELMONT S. (G1)



THE WHITNEY-GRADE I  
Purse \$1,250,000  
August 8, 2015  
Lane's End Racing & Dell Ridge Farm owners  
Claude R. McGaughey III trainer  
Liam's Map 2nd-Presentation by Marylou Whitney-Tonalist 3rd  
**HONOR CODE**  
Javier Castellano up  
1 1/8 miles time 1:47:4



HONOR CODE WINNING THE 2015 WHITNEY S. (G1)



THE JOCKEY CLUB GOLD CUP-GRADE I  
Purse \$1,000,000  
September 27, 2003  
Belmont Park N. Y.  
William S. Farish, James Elkins &  
W. Temple Webber Jr. owner  
Robby Albarado up  
1 1/4 miles time 2:00:1  
**MINESHAFT**  
Quest 2nd-Presentation by Mr. Ogden Mills Phipps-Neil J. Howard trainer-Evening Attire 3rd



MINESHAFT, 2003 JOCKEY CLUB GOLD CUP (G1)



069 Churchill Downs 5/05/00  
RINGS A CHIME.....Second  
CLASSY CARA.....Third  
**SECRET STATUS**  
\*\*126TH KENTUCKY OAKS\*\*  
W S Farish, W TempleWebber Jr &  
James Elkins.....Owner  
Neil J Howard.....Trainer  
Pat Day.....Jockey  
\$500,000 1:50.30  
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SECRET STATUS, 2000 KENTUCKY OAKS (G1)