

Scouting several directions

Juggling variety of roles, Feld keeps finding winners

BY JEFF LOWE

STEEPED IN a real world job as a machine tool salesman in his early 20s, Bob Feld remembers listening to his peers and feeling completely out of place.

"I'd go to trade shows and these guys would be talking about drills and taps and reamers and would be so excited about that stuff, and I just didn't get it," said Feld, who had taken a break from his real passion, Thoroughbred racing, after three years as a groom on the Southern California circuit for his brother, trainer Jude Feld. "I remember thinking, 'Man, if only I could talk about horses at the trade shows.'"

Emboldened with a "life is too short" mentality, Feld left his job and succeeded in carving out a platform in the racing industry, combining his passion and knowledge with his knack as a communicator.

Over the last 20 years, both in organizing partnerships and as a bloodstock adviser, Feld has been involved with a long list of elite horses, including two champions and three Breeders' Cup winners. He is currently working with Kevin Plank, who founded the athletic apparel company Under Armour, in imple-

menting high ambitions for a breeding and racing operation.

Feld's big break came when he got out of machine tools and started selling what he really knew as a representative of Barry Irwin's and Jeff Siegel's Clover Racing Stables. Feld sold partnership shares for three years. He also struck up an important acquaintance with John and Jerry Amerman, who were involved in partnerships at the time for Clover Racing and its successor, Team Valor International.

After Feld returned to the racetrack to oversee a string of horses for his good friend, trainer Ron Ellis, he came across John Amerman one day in the stable area at Hollywood Park.

"Mr. Amerman said, 'My wife, Jerry, and I are thinking about getting our own racing stable together. We're kind of done with the partnership thing, and we were wondering if you would help with that,'" Feld said. "'Of course,' I said, 'Absolutely.'"

String of success

Feld and the Amermans have worked together for 15 years. The bulk of that time, Feld has been their primary adviser at the Keeneland September yearling sale, where the

couple acquires most of their racing stock. Feld and the Amermans walk the sales grounds as a team and scout prospects. In 2004, they snagged a Thunder Gulch filly out of, at the time, an undistinguished Kris S. broodmare named Vertigineux for \$260,000.

The Amermans named the filly Balance, and she racked up three Grade 1 victories for trainer David Hofmans and earned \$1,048,491. One month after Balance retired in the fall of 2007, her half sister, eventual two-time champion older female Zenyatta, made her racing debut for owners Jerry and Ann Moss.

"What really got me with Balance was the way she acted around the barn," Feld said. "She was one of those horses that always had her ears pricked and was taking things in. Smart horses generally are good horses, too. She had that look to her. Then looking her over, she fit with what we like to see. I'm pretty strict on conformation."

Feld and the Amermans found Siphonic at Keeneland September in 2000 and watched him start off his career with jaw-dropping wins in the '01 Lane's End Breeders' Futurity (G2) and Hollywood Futurity (G1) and a third-place finish in the Bessemer Trust Breeders' Cup Juvenile (G1).

Feld also has demonstrated a sharp eye for horses in training. After seeing Adoration score by eight lengths in a maiden special weight race at Santa Anita Park in 2002, he quickly got hold of John Amerman and recommended her as a private purchase. Feld worked out a deal, and Adoration carried the Amermans' royal blue and white silks to an upset victory in the 2003 Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1).

Four years later, the Amermans sold Adoration in foal to Smart Strike for \$3.1-million to Demi O'Byrne at the 2007 Keeneland November breeding stock sale.

The first Breeders' Cup winner Feld was associated with also derived from a runaway maiden win at Santa Anita. He and a former colleague arranged a partnership to buy Reraise out of a fast victory in a \$62,500 maiden claiming race in October 1997. A little more than a year later, Reraise rocketed to a two-length triumph in the Breeders' Cup



California-based bloodstock agent Bob Feld (second from right) celebrates in the winner's circle after Shared Account secures All Along Stakes victory for his client, Under Armour founder Kevin Plank

Sprint (G1). The injury-plagued gelding finished his career with eight wins in nine starts.

"Being so close to him, I've always felt sad for the horse that he never gets mentioned when people talk about the great sprinters," Feld said. "He was unbelievable. He never lost going six furlongs, and he never would have lost going six furlongs. I've never seen a sprinter that was as fast as he was early and still had kick at the end. You either have one or the other, but he had them both."

Feld and Ellis worked the sales together for owner B. Wayne Hughes in the early 2000s and secured Action This Day, the 2003 champion two-year-old male and Breeders' Cup Juvenile winner, and Del Mar Futurity (G2) winner Siphonizer from the same yearling crop.

Latest success

On June 19, Feld was on hand to witness a major indicator that Plank is on the right path in reviving the historic Sagamore Farm operation in Glyndon, Maryland.

Shared Account, a filly Feld purchased for Plank at the 2007 Keeneland September sale, became a multiple graded stakes winner with her victory in the All Along Stakes (G3) at Colonial Downs.

Feld met Plank through Sagamore manager Tom Mullikin, and the trio has built up a roster of 16 horses in training and ten broodmares in the midst of extensive renovations to Alfred G. Vanderbilt II's former property.

"I knew Bob on a personal level and knew his integrity and that he has a good eye for horses, with a track record, and I also knew that he's a lot of fun," said Mullikin, who previously worked at Carrie and Craig Brogden's Machmer Hall

in Paris, Kentucky. "He's easygoing and humble, and with the good horses that he's bought, it all made sense."

"The first year we went out and picked out four horses, just getting started, and one is a graded stakes winner, Shared Account, and another is a restricted stakes winner in Pennsylvania named Winning Drive. That's a pretty good strike rate."

Shared Account also won the 2009 Lake Placid Stakes (G2) at Saratoga Race Course and finished second in two Grade 1 races.

"I'm proud of what we've done with the numbers we have," Feld said. "Kevin's not patient as far as being successful. He's very driven, a very inspiring person. He did want to start off with slow growth. He oversees the whole operation, and he's on top of it, but he obviously can't do the day-to-day stuff."

Feld grew up going to Santa Anita and still lives close to the track in Monrovia, California. He has his own partnership, Bongo Racing, that is focused on Southern California racing. The group struck for graded stakes wins with former claimers Symphony Sid in 2006 and Sun Boat (GB) in '07.

"We bought a couple of nice babies for Bongo at Keeneland last year that are in training with Ron Ellis," Feld said. "One is a Rock Hard Ten who was \$150,000 and the other is a Smarty Jones who was \$90,000. We still want to race in California. We think this is the best racing still, and it proves every year in the Kentucky Derby (G1) trail that we probably have the best competition out here." *

Jeff Lowe is a THOROUGHBRED TIMES staff writer.

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