



Laying the Foundation

Whether you are talking about a sales topper or a bargain yearling you just couldn't pass on or a homebred foal carrying your wildest dreams, they all have to go through the same process of being educated and readied for their racing futures. Also, throughout a Thoroughbred's athletic career, he or she will need a place away from the racetrack to go for rest and rehabilitation. Certain farms and training centers across the country specialize in offering these services that require a set of skills and a level of facilities not found on every Thoroughbred farm. The following profiles highlight some of the top breaking and training enterprises, their facilities, and the people behind these operations.

Asmussen Horse Center

Keith and Marilyn Asmussen are serious when it comes to experience, hard work, dedication, and honesty, and it shows. Their multifaceted operation near Laredo, Texas, has turned out 166 stakes winners including 56 graded or group winners.

The Asmussens, who operate Asmussen Horse Center and El Primero Training Center, as well as a horse transportation firm and a tack shop, count 50 years in the horse business. "We've been doing this for so long everyone knows what type of product we put out," Marilyn said. "This is what we do, and it's all we've ever done. As we say, life is good and horses make it better."

Marilyn feels that Keith's experience and expertise in breaking and training horses are the operation's key selling points. "Keith has one of the best reputations in the country for teaching a young Thoroughbred what to do," she said. "Every (racetrack) starter in the country knows the type of product he puts out."

The Asmussen graduates include Eclipse Award winners Tight Spot and Declan's Moon, as well as last year's Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (gr. I) winner Dakota Phone. Other graduates include millionaires Sea Cadet, a three-time grade I winner; plus Olympio, Real Dandy, Suave, Zanjero, and Pyro.

Tight Spot was voted 1991 champion grass male after winning the Arlington Million Stakes (gr. IT) and the Eddie Read Handicap (gr. IT). Declan's Moon was named 2004 champion 2-year-old male after winning the Hollywood Futurity (gr. I) and two other graded stakes.

Dakota Phone's triumph proved extra special to the Asmussens. Their son Cash, in the name Cashmark Farm, bred Dakota Phone in partnership with Dakota Stables. Cash, who broke Dakota Phone, assists his father at El Primero Training Center. Located on

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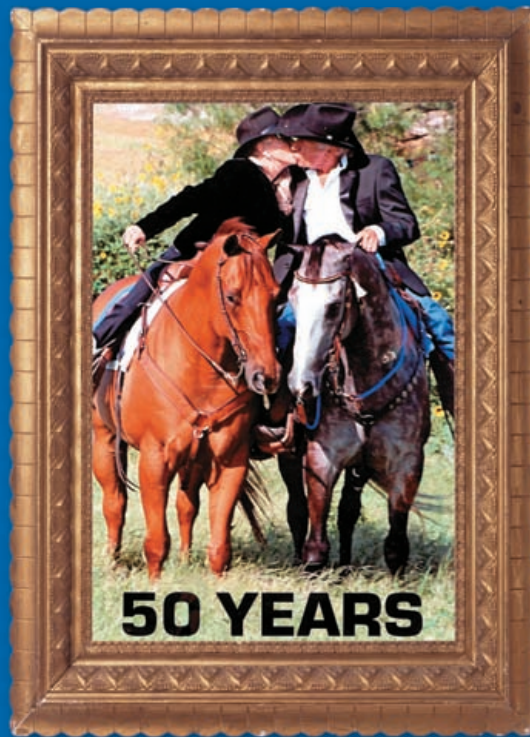
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85 acres, El Primero has 420 stalls, a five-eighths-mile track, and a 10-horse starting gate.

Cash and his brother, Steve, who both learned from their father, are Eclipse Award winners in their own right. Cash was the leading apprentice rider in 1979 before embarking on a successful European career in which he won the 1991 Ciga Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (Fr-I) on subsequent champion Suave Dancer, who received his early training at the Asmussens' farm. Steve is a two-time Eclipse Award-

winning trainer.

The Asmussens also offer breeding, boarding, lay-ups, sale preparation, and foaling, plus crossing and brokerage arrangements to Mexico.

Benchmark Training Center

The goal of Benchmark Training Center is simple: produce winning racehorses. Benchmark's owner, Gerwyn "Taffy" Jones, has plenty of years of horsemanship under his belt, an experienced staff, and the right facility to help owners meet that

goal. At Benchmark the staff is committed to making sure young horses get a good start with a solid foundation

Benchmark has 110 acres, not only to help give the young Thoroughbred his first lessons but to assist the older horse with the proper place to rest and re-hab and to prep a horse of any age for auction. Conveniently located 40 miles east of Dallas near Quinlan, Texas, the center has easy access to the racetracks and sales pavilions in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. Northeast Texas is an epicenter for horsemen, who also can easily ship their horses to the Chicago-area tracks and Kentucky.

Jones, a career horseman with more than 30 years experience, is from Wales and worked as an exercise rider in Europe before coming to the United States in his late teens. He worked at training facilities up and down the East Coast before heading west to Texas. After working in Houston and Dallas, he purchased Benchmark Training Center about eight years ago along with his wife, Jane.

Jones modified the five-eighths-mile track with a starting gate, making it larger and with more rounded turns to give more of a European feel. He has also built two barns to bring the capacity of the center to 70 stalls. There are plenty of 2-3-acre paddocks and a couple of larger, 10-15-acre paddocks so horses have plenty of room to relax after the stressful life at the racetrack or if they are in need of some rehabilitation following surgery.

Benchmark employs four full-time exercise riders and has about 15 dedicated employees with an abundant wealth of experience under Jones and farm manager Mark Brennan. Another member of the team is Dr. David Stephens, of the respected equine veterinary offices of Weems and Stephens in nearby Aubrey, Texas.

One of Benchmark's success stories is millionaire Going Ballistic. Kindred Thoroughbreds' son of Lite the Fuse came to Benchmark when he was a yearling, and Taffy saw the quality in him from the start. Along the way, Going Ballistic won six stakes including the Super Derby (gr. II) and placed in another 12 added-money races including the grade I Secretariat Stakes at Arlington Park and the Hawthorne Gold Cup (gr. II).

Brett Brinkman Training Center

Brett Brinkman Training Stable has carved out a successful niche in preparing 2-year-olds for the track, with stakes winners Posse, Lady Tak, Fort Hood, Break Up, and Hallway among the graduates of Brinkman's program.

Brinkman, who operates Le Mesa Stallions near Carencro, La., leases two barns at Classic Mile Park near Ocala, Fla., that

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Some training centers use European-style turf tracks with more rounded turns

can accommodate 44 horses and operates year-round. At the 700-acre facility, the trainer has access to a one-mile main track and a seven-furlong turf course.

Among the top trainers who utilize Brinkman's services in getting horses ready to race are Steve Asmussen, Dale Romans, and Tony Dutrow.

"We try to focus on preparing 2-year-olds and bringing horses back after surgery," Brinkman said. "We primarily focus on getting a good mental frame on these 2-year-olds and getting their body to correspond to where they are mentally, then sending them to the racetrack ready to go perform."

Brinkman said one key to the success of Brett Brinkman Training Stables is having

a reliable staff, most of whom have been with him more than 10 years.

"All these guys have been on nice horses and have seen these horses leave our program, go on to the races and do well," Brinkman said. "They know what is expected of them. When I feel like a horse is to the point he needs to make the next step, I need to know the rider feels confident in him to make that next step. The rider is translating to you that what he is seeing is exactly what he's feeling—that when you take that next step it's not going put you back two steps. That's an important aspect to the whole scenario."

Brinkman said his other personnel possess the same professionalism as the riders. "It all transpires from the guys on the

ground, too," he said. "They know the process; they know the sequence."

While consistency and stability among his employees are important elements of his program, Brinkman said the breaking and training regimen is individualized for each horse, depending upon the requirements of the trainer who will have the horse at the track.

"We have target points for each horse that's different from trainer to trainer," Brinkman said. "Everybody wants the biggest bang for the buck, and production is the key. You have to produce."

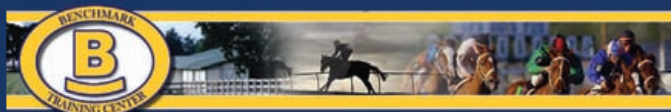
Derby Daze Farm

Derby Daze Farm takes pride in its start-to-finish training program, and it's easy to see why. Located in the northwest section of picturesque Ocala horse country, the 77-acre facility has a stellar record in preparing horses for profitable careers, with homebred grade I winner Hooh Why leading the way.

Owned by the estate of the late Gail Gee and managed by her father, E.B. Gee Jr., Derby Daze is equipped with four barns, an irrigated half-mile training track, an indoor track, free walkers, round pens, and turnout paddocks. Among the services offered to its clients are starting and training young horses, sales preparation, boarding, and lay-ups.

Hooh Why, a homebred Florida champion raced by the estate of Gail Gee in partnership, captured national attention when she won the 2009 Ashland Stakes (gr. I) at Keeneland at odds of 24-1. Hooh Why was a crowning achievement for Gee, a small scale breeder, and the horse symbolized the hard-working attitude that Derby Daze

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continued after the farm owner's untimely death in 2010.

Gail Gee, who started in the Quarter Horse business with her father in Blytheville, Ark., more than two decades ago, purchased Derby Daze in 1998 and gradually made the transition to Thoroughbreds. Following her death, E.B. Gee strives to carry on his daughter's legacy by practicing her same hands-on methods.

“I think our success is tied to our training approach and the fact we treat our customers' horses as if they were ours,” he said.

Other successful graduates of the Derby Daze program include stakes winners Beautician, Sneaking Uponyou, and Rumbling Cloud; grade I-placed Theregoes-jojo; and \$120,000-plus earner Cranberry Cream.

Only a handful of horses owned by Gail Gee's estate still reside on the farm, which boards around 50 horses for outside clients. “Our customers have complimented us on how the horses are not only well-conditioned, but well-schooled and easy to handle,” said E.B. Gee.

Horses at Derby Daze are trained on a simple, four-step approach. First, yearlings are introduced to tack; then they graduate to the round pen for basic training under bit and saddle; and finally, the youngsters are further schooled in the indoor facility before heading to the track.

“My daughter and I had a fairly successful Quarter Horse operation for many years, and that's how we learned to start horses back then—with a slow and easy approach—so we are basically doing the Thoroughbreds the same way,” said E.B. Gee. “We let the horses tell us when they're ready to take the next step.”

DMC Carousel Stables

If you're looking for a training facility with an all-weather training track with a relaxed, healthy environment, then DMC Carousel Racing Stable near Berryville, Va., is your kind of place. Owned by Diana McClure Cooney and her husband, Michael Cooney, DMC Carousel is equipped with a three-quarter-mile synthetic track manufactured by Nick Attwood's Equestrian Surfaces.

“As a training track it works out beautifully,” Diana said. “We rarely lose a day. The track is not affected by the climate or the weather unless there's a major-league snowfall. Even in the blizzard two years ago we were only off about six days. It's a perfectly consistent surface with every foot path being the same, meaning, it's not deep there, or soft there, or whatever. If it pours down rain, we still have the same surface as the day before when the sun was shining.

“It's a forgiving surface, and it's espe-

cially good for older horses. We break babies over the surface and see a lot less risk of bucked shins or other soft tissue injuries. We have found there's not a lot of difference in training over the surface and then switching them to race on the dirt.”

Another attraction is the undulation. When they put in the surface, they were able to keep the hills. There is about a 9% grade on the hills and a 4% grade on the turns.

“The young horses develop a lot more balance,” said Diana. “I've had some flat horses that I was turning into steeplechasers use the course. It helps horses develop their hind ends better rather than if they work over a flat surface.”

Both Diana and Michael offer years of experience in working with horses. Diana competed on a hunter/jumper circuit for 10 years and was both a riding instructor and a trainer. Part of her current involvement at the farm is turning racehorses into show horses, such as hunter jumpers.

Michael was a leading apprentice jockey in his native Ireland. After arriving in the United States, he worked for prominent Florida horseman Tony Everard in breaking 2-year-olds and preparing them for the sales. Michael currently competes as a rider on the mid-Atlantic steeplechase circuit.

DMC Carousel offers what it calls the “Spa Treatment” for lay-ups. “An owner said his horse came off the farm in such great shape that he referred to the place as being as relaxing as a health spa,” Diana said.

Graduates of the farm include multiple stakes winners Abbondanza, P. Kerney, and grade II winner Romano Gucci.

DMC Carousel, located in northwestern Virginia, is 20 minutes from Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races and within three hours of several other tracks in the mid-Atlantic region.

Evergreen Training Center

During the golden age of Thoroughbred racing, the traditional spot for breaking young horses and giving older horses the rejuvenating break they needed was South Carolina. Thoroughbred owner and South Carolina native Dr. Kurt Jaenicke had that in mind when the Evergreen Training Center near his hometown of Camden came up for sale a few years ago.

“When racing was at its peak, horses went to South Carolina,” said Jaenicke, a surgeon based in Ashland, Ky. “I think it is the temperate climate, and I think it's the soil. South Carolina is the place you want to be.”

Owner C.N. “Connie” Ray had the horse in mind when he developed Evergreen Training Center in the late 1980s. With barns designed by William S. Farish and



Owner Kurt Jaenicke
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a one-mile track designed and built by the legendary New York track superintendent Joe King, the 60-stall center was originally designed to be a private training center. The stalls are 12x12, which is larger than the industry norm.

Ray, who founded Sea Ray Boats, raced such stars as Breeders' Cup Sprint (gr. I) winners Elmhurst and Lit de Justice. Both got their early lessons over the one-mile training track.

"The track has an aluminum rail on the inside and the outside that you don't see too often at a training center," said Don Orlando, once King's assistant and retired track super himself from NYRA. "The way Joe built things, it's first class."

Orlando praises the track and its cushion as one of the best in the country.

With the construction of a new barn in 2007, the training center now has room for 90 horses and also has a seven-eighths of a mile turf course and a two-mile European-style turf gallop.

"There are so many things you can do there," Orlando said. "You can do something different a couple of days a week with a horse so it can just get its mind off racing and get him rested and ready to go again."

In all, Evergreen Training Center has a spread of 400 gorgeous acres, ideal for horses needing an easy let down for a while or for young horses that are ready to be broken and put into training. For either



Experienced employees are key in teaching young Thoroughbreds

type horse, the experienced horsemen at Evergreen want to make sure horses get the time they need.

"We don't push the babies," Jaenicke said. "If you rush them, you are going to pay for it in vet bills for a long time, or you're not even going to get the horse to the races."

Gayle Woods Training Center

Gayle Woods has been working with Thoroughbreds for 25 years, and the lifelong horsewoman has used that experience to shape her Gayle Woods Thoroughbred Sales and Training Center at Nelson Jones Farm in the heart of Ocala's horse country into a premier full-service facility.

The native of England was successful early on, riding and training hunters, point-to-point runners, and show horses in Europe before moving to Florida. There, she began breaking, training, and prepar-

ing for the racetrack notable horses such as Fourstardave, Fourstars Allstar, Irish Actress, and Irish Linnett at Another Episode Farm. In 1994 Gayle and then-husband Eddie Woods went out on their own training and consigning, with success stories such as Antespend, Mari's Sheba, Colcon, and Halory Hunter. In 2000 they sold grade I winner Harmony Lodge for \$1.65 million.

Today, Gayle Woods Thoroughbred Sales and Training offers full-service breaking and training for young horses and rehabilitation and lay-up programs for horses of all ages.

Boarding and sales prep make the operation valuable for all aspects of Thoroughbred breeding, selling, and racing.

The facility is second to none. Gayle Woods' operation boasts a one-mile dirt track and seven-eighths turf course with state-of-the-art lighting; two barns containing 64 stalls for year-round use; 70-foot round pens plus hot walkers and turnout paddocks, and the latest in therapeutic facilities.

"Besides all the training facilities," noted Woods, "we have a swimming pool for the horses; full-body vibrator; Magnawave machine, Laser machine, Equissage machine, and Thermotex blankets and boots. We pretty much have everything you need for every rehab case and for horses of all ages."

Woods' operation prides itself in the personal attention and sophisticated care given to each equine athlete, which includes a daily professional assessment

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of each sale and racing prospect, gearing them to reach their highest potential. Another foundation of the facility is close communication with clients, including making progress reports of their horses available online.

The proof, as they say, is in the pudding, and Woods has an impressive record with graduates. Game On Dude, winner of the Santa Anita Handicap (gr. I), was most recently second by a nose in the grade I Hollywood Gold Cup. Kiss the Kid won the grade III Appleton Stakes and the grade III Cliff Hanger Stakes, while Slew's Tizzy set a track record in taking the Native Diver Handicap, also a grade III event. Azul Leon wowed them in California, winning the Best Pal Stakes (gr. II) and the Hollywood Juvenile (gr. III). Raw Silk won the grade II Sands Point in New York, while Tricks Pic scored at Santa Anita in the grade III Tuzla Handicap. Juvenile graduate Subtle Aly won the Schuylerville Stakes (gr. III) at prestigious Saratoga.

First-rate facilities and sterling track record make Gayle Woods a top choice for Thoroughbred horsemen.

Quillin Leather & Tack

"Made in Paris" connotes style and high quality, and so it is with the halters and other leather goods crafted by Quillin Leather & Tack. The Paris, Ky., store hand makes more than 17,000 halters each year, and they adorn the heads of leading stallions, million-dollar yearlings, and other valuable equines around the world. Its volume of business makes Quillin the country's largest custom leather and halter shop. Founder Ralph Quillin is a self-taught craftsman who started making fine leather goods in the early 1970s and gradually migrated to halters when his family bought a Bourbon County farm. He opened a store on Main Street in 1982 and produced the company's first mail order catalog in 1986.

Today Quillin produces nearly all of its merchandise on the premises and specializes in rush and custom orders. Mail and website orders account for most of the business. However, Quillin gets a boost in store traffic during the sales and Keeland race meets.

Personalized service—"Call in and you'll talk to me or one of our knowledgeable staff"—and old fashioned craftsmanship generate loyal customers.

"We have had people tell us our halters are an exceptional value and last far longer than the competitions'. Our fair price is because our halters go directly from the makers hands to the customer," he said. Because so many of the halters require custom features, the store does not maintain a huge inventory. "We find we can keep quality up with the small-

batch approach," Quillin said.

Tri-Tronics

Like humans, horses can sometimes develop bad habits that can prevent them from reaching their full potential. ViceBreaker, a remote-controlled electronic collar endorsed by several top horsemen since 2002, is an effective way to stop these previously unmanageable behaviors.

ViceBreaker is manufactured in Tucson, Ariz., by Tri-Tronics, which has been engineering sophisticated electronic equip-

ment for dogs since 1968. The concept of ViceBreaker is similar to electronic dog collars, except they are specifically designed for horses.

"The level of correction is different for horses and dogs," said Pi Polletta, a consultant for ViceBreaker. "Horses are much more sensitive than dogs. People have used dog collars on horses for a long time, but it's too strong. The correction levels start much lower on ViceBreaker, although it does have higher levels if you need it."

Depending on the situation, ViceBreak-

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Hands on, Gayle Woods is credited with the training and preparation of more than 35 Graded stakes winners including

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er allows you to adjust the level of stimulation safely and immediately by utilizing its 20 levels of correction. Other features included in the rechargeable device are a remote on/off switch, a radio signal that penetrates metal barns and horse trailers, a leather collar with breakaway strap, and elastic insert to ensure contact. ViceBreaker operates up to a half-mile in range.

Some of the unwanted behaviors that ViceBreaker can prevent are aggression, weaving, and cribbing, all of which can lead to diminished potential and/or ex-

pensive veterinarian bills. Polletta said it is especially effective for cribbing.

“This will stop cribbing,” Polletta said. “The cribbing straps that people use just keep it from happening, they don’t break the habit. We’ve had great success in breaking the habit.

“It also works really well for aggression. People will see immediate results.”

Though similar devices are sometimes referred to as “shock collars,” it’s an inaccurate description for ViceBreaker, which uses the element of surprise and fear of the unknown—not pain—to stop behaviors. The horse associates the discomfort with the bad behavior.

ViceBreaker has been thoroughly tested and approved by veterinarians, trainers, and riders. Hall of Fame jockeys Steve Cauthen and Gary Stevens, as well as Pin Oak Stud farm manager Clifford Barry.

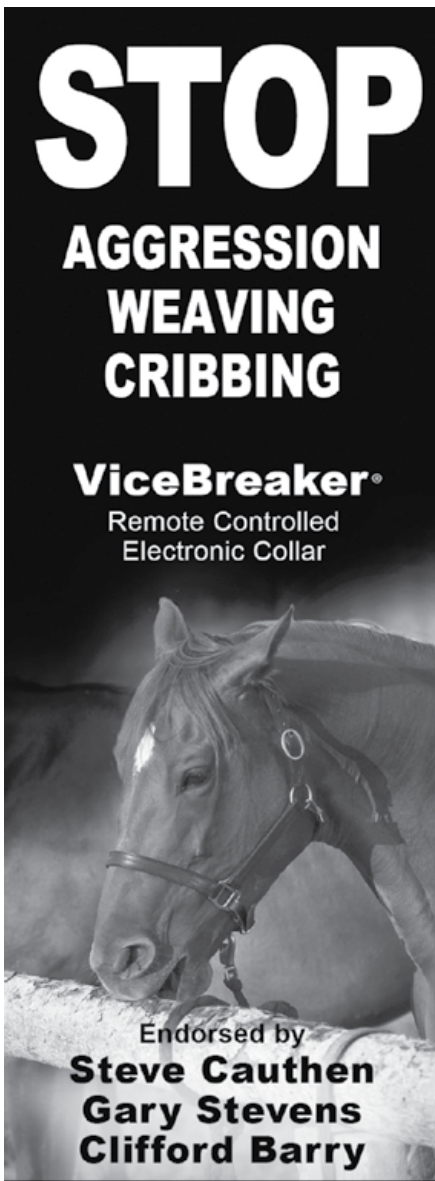
Vetrofen

As equine enthusiasts, we often look for ways to ease discomfort and assist our athletic animals during their grueling training schedules. MediVet America, based in Lexington, Ky., has just introduced a new, safe, and effective way to relieve pain and reduce the strains from training workouts.

All natural Vetrofen acts as an antioxidant agent to reduce the discomforts of soreness, bumps, and bruises that occur from the everyday wear and tear of training. Vetrofen is safe and effective to use in all equine athletes, even on race day. MediVet America is a division of MediVet, an international animal health company, headquartered in Sydney, Australia. Each product must be completely drug-free

when possible; free of harsh and abrasive chemicals; have no harmful or doubtful side effects; and be completely effective.

Vetrofen helps to maintain soundness and mobility using a powerful dual-action formula that possess both anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It works to counteract the trauma associated with heavy pre-race training. This blend of all natural ingredients is able to soothe joints, muscles, ligaments and tendons creating a more healthy horse prior to racing. Vetrofen is a made of botanical plant extracts proven to have quick and lasting effects like nothing before in the industry. The product is an easy-to-use powder that can be mixed into a horses moist feed for quick results.



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