



# Give Me a Break

**N**ow that the yearling sales have gotten into full swing, buyers will be looking to find the right facilities to teach their budding stars the ABCs of racing. Anyone who has ever had novice students of any kind knows the importance of laying a proper foundation, for all other learning skills build on those early-developed habits and discipline.

East to West, North to South, many facilities specialize in services that will provide these youngsters—and perhaps even some non-traditional learners—the proper skills for racing careers. These facilities are also adept at providing Thoroughbred athletes in need of a little R&R, a place to unwind and recuperate.

Many of the topflight breaking and training facilities as well as the people who run them are profiled in the following pages.

## Benchmark Training Center

Gerwyn “Taffy” Jones likes to point out the longevity of Benchmark Training Center, a 110-acre facility about 40 miles east of Dallas near Quinlan, Texas.

“A lot of people with training centers will tell you it’s tough to survive,” Jones remarked. “We’ve been fortunate with how consistent we’ve been.”

Jones, a lifelong horseman with more than 30 years experience, worked as an exercise rider in Europe before coming to the U.S. in his late teens. After a well-rounded tour of training facilities up and down the East Coast, he did stints in Houston and Dallas. That was 20 years ago; he’s been at Benchmark along with wife, Jane, for more than 15 years.

The center’s convenient location in Northeast Texas makes it easy for horsemen to ship to and from tracks and sales pavilions in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. There’s also good access to Kentucky and Chicago, and Jones is frequently found “shipping horses from coast to coast,” as he puts it.

Clients are reassured by the center’s strong relationships with employees and associates. Longtime farm manager Mark Brennan heads up a team of four full-time exercise riders and about 15 other workers; Dr. David Stephens of the esteemed equine veterinary offices of Weems and Stephens in nearby Aubrey, Texas, provides consultation.

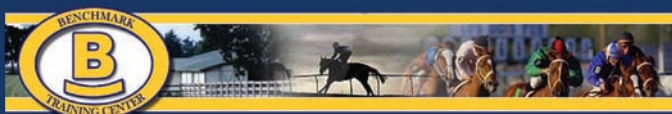
Equipped with a five-eighths-mile track complete with starting gate, along with

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two barns with 70 stalls, several two- to three-acre paddocks and a few 10- to 15-acre paddocks and a Eurociser for their growing rehabilitation and sales prep programs, Benchmark maintains a streamlined all-around program that also includes breaking and training options. This “one-stop-shop” makes the center popular with horsemen, and that four Breeders’ Cup starters began their education there doesn’t hurt.

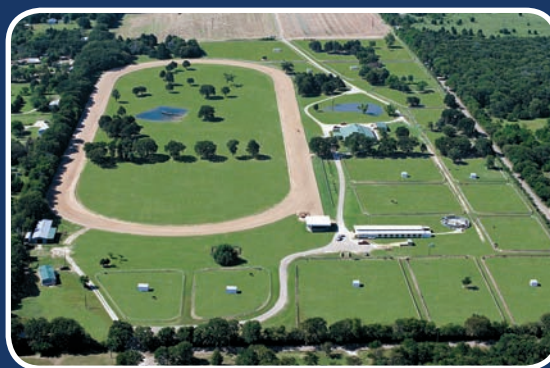
Success stories include Super Derby (gr. II) winner Going Ballistic, who came to Benchmark when he was a yearling and went on to win six stakes for Kindred Thoroughbreds, placing in another 12 added-money races, including the Secre-

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# Evergreen Training Center

CAMDEN, SC

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tariat Stakes (gr. IT) and the Hawthorne Gold Cup (gr. II). Among solid runners to emerge from the center last year were Sierra Racing Stable's Halifax Flyer, winner of the \$100,000 Texas Stallion Stakes; Ed Few's Lil Cherokee, winner of the TTA Sales Futurity; and Nolan Creek Farm's Hearts On Fire, runner-up in the 2011 Iowa Oaks (gr. III).

## Evergreen Training Center

The current video lottery-fueled boom in New York racing is leading horsemen along the East Coast to rediscover opportunities that were once standard practice among the nation's leading stables but have since fallen out of fashion. One rediscovery is the benefits of breaking and training horses in Camden, S.C.

Camden is home to several top-notch facilities that were built for high-quality racing operations, such as those owned by the du Ponts, Phippses, and Farishes. Among the standouts is Evergreen Training Center. Built on 400 wooded acres, Evergreen offers a wide range of facilities suitable for breaking and training, layups or freshening. The trainer center features a one-mile track designed by Joe King, the legendary New York track superintendent, a two-mile European grass gallop that runs around the outside of the dirt track, and a separate seven-furlong turf course. The original barns, with space for 60 horses, were designed by William S. Farish, the owner of Lane's End Farm in Kentucky.

"People came to Camden because of the climate, the soil, and the facilities long before Ocala was on the map," said Dr. Kurt Jaenicke, a Thoroughbred owner and a native of Camden who owns Evergreen. "Now with the growth of racing in New York, these are even more important. The cost is less than shipping to Florida, and the facilities are second-to-none."

Bloodstock agent and consultant Murette Farrell said she likes Evergreen's facilities because they have "an Old World" feel to them.

"It is an excellent facility for horse people. There is no cement anywhere," she said. "It's a good spot. The winters are harsh on horses in New York, and Florida is expensive and the climate very different."

Evergreen was originally built in the 1980s by C.N. "Connie" Ray, the founder of Sea Ray Boats and the owner of Breeders' Cup and grade I winners Lit de Justice (1996, Sprint) and Elmhurst (1997, Sprint). Other good horses to have passed through Evergreen include grade I winner Fastness and graded stakes winner Mister Marti Gras, who finished third in the Arlington Handicap (gr. IIIT) July 14.

Jaenicke bought the training center in 2005 and expanded the stalls from 60 to 90.

"The track that Joe King put in here is fantastic," he said. "You don't even hear the horses going by, the surface is so forgiving. Also I have assembled a team of people I trust implicitly. We have private operations stabled here, but for those who want it, we have horsemen available to handle the breaking, get your horses ready and do it right."

## Longhorn Training Center

A full-service training facility in Vinton, La., the Longhorn Training Center has all the amenities needed by horsemen planning to race in either Texas or Louisiana. Located just off Interstate 10 near the Texas border, Longhorn is about 100 miles from Houston's Sam Houston Park and approximately 100 miles from Evangeline Downs in Opelousas, La.

The training center—part of a much larger entertainment complex that includes a casino, hotel, restaurant, night club, and arena used for weekly rodeos—consists of a five-eighths-mile oval track, a 440-yard straight track, a pool for aquatic exercising, three- and six-horse starting gates, and a new state-of-the-art free-walk hydraulic horse walking machine.

"It's a super facility," said Kenneth Decker, who manages the Longhorn Training Center. "We cater to both Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horses, and we have the ability to accommodate layups. We are trying to be the best in Louisiana. We have some nice equipment, and we are adding more stalls."

Considering its location about five miles from Delta Downs, Longhorn is busiest between September and March, but it is always able to accommodate more horses and is continuing to expand to meet demand.

"One of our biggest assets is that we are pretty centrally located," Decker said. "For horsemen who have to ship and run, it's easy access."

In addition to horsemen who use Longhorn as a base when racing at Sam Houston, Delta Downs, or Evangeline Downs, the facility is also used by vaning companies and trainers who have purchased horses at sales in Florida and are transporting them to the Southwest and West Coast.

Decker said being located in a complex that has dining and entertainment options as well as overnight housing at the on-site hotel and an area for recreational vehicles is an added convenience for the training center's clientele.

"You can drop off your horses and then eat, play the casino, or just rest," he said.

While the weekly rodeos and other activities at Longhorn are popular, the facility recently announced it plans to begin holding one-on-one match races.

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“Join the excitement as horses go head-to-head in practice competition,” Longhorn announced. “Anyone can enter the one-on-one horse race.”

Updates on the offerings at Longhorn Training Center and Entertainment Complex are available at the website <http://www.thetexaslonghorn.com>.

**Palm Beach Downs Training Center**

The goal at Palm Beach Downs Training Center is as simple now as it was when it started 15 years ago: provide horsemen a quality base to get the most out of their horses in a healthy environment under ideal weather conditions. Owned by Steve Wolf and Richard Siemens, Palm Beach Downs is located near Delray Beach, Fla., in Palm Beach County on Florida’s east coast. The 85-acre breaking and training center has a one-mile dirt track, 65 feet wide with a quarter-mile starting chute and a seven-furlong turf course.

One of Palm Beach Downs’ attractions is its bucolic setting. “It is in a very secluded area,” said general manager Michael Blann. “We don’t have any housing developments around us, so it’s quiet and tranquil. All of that is good for horses. The barns are spread out instead of being on top of each other, and there are some open areas to ride in so a horse doesn’t always have to go to the track.”

Palm Beach Downs caters to the needs of individual horsemen. “The way it’s set up, we do not break and train the horses,” Blann said. “We lease the barns to the trainers, and they’re the ones in charge of the breaking and training. We have a dormitory on the grounds to house the trainer’s workers. Plus, a horse can get starting gate-certified here.”

“We feel because it’s a private facility, the tranquility of the place goes a long way, especially for some of the younger horses trying to get a head start. We’ve also had some horses come for rehab because it’s a nice place to stay.”

Palm Beach Downs can house 192 horses. Each barn has four offices/tack rooms.

Horses that have spent time at the training center include Kentucky Derby (gr. I) winners Fusaichi Pegasus and Monarchs.

Palm Beach Downs is conveniently located to both Gulfstream Park and Calder Casino & Race Course, being within an hour to each track. Palm Beach Downs is about a three-hour drive to Ocala and 3½ hours to Tampa Bay Downs.

Blann also oversees nearby Sunshine Meadows Equestrian Village and Delray Equestrian Center. Owned by Wolf and Siemens, Sunshine Meadows caters to Standardbreds, pleasure horses, dressage horses, and retired Thoroughbreds. The 170-acre farm has 18 barns and is able to house 678 horses.

Palm Beach Downs and Sunshine Meadows offer special protection from hurricanes as the barns are concrete.

Delray Equestrian, owned by Wolf in partnership with Richard Bowman and Skip Olmstead, offers such services as training, boarding, and leasing horses.

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Adam Coglianese photos

2011 Horse of the Year **Havre de Grace** (left) and classic-winning multi-millionaire **Shackleford** both received their early educations at Webb Carroll Training Center.

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| 2008         | 205            | 11 (2 graded)       | 21 (26 wins)       |
| 2009         | 268            | 19 (4 graded)       | 24 (27 wins)       |
| 2010         | 262            | 15 (6 graded)       | 32 (38 wins)       |
| 2011         | 325            | 25 (10 graded)      | 50 (54 wins)       |
| <b>2012*</b> | <b>222</b>     | <b>9 (2 graded)</b> | <b>7 (8 wins)</b>  |

\*As of 7/10/2012

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## Webb Carroll

### TRAINING CENTER

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Delray also conducts summer camps and horse shows.

**Palmetto Training Center**

For those looking to take advantage of the year-round climate and the “horse comes first” environment, the Palmetto Thoroughbred Training Center just six miles from downtown Aiken, S.C., is the ideal spot.

Owner Doris Tummillo opened the 500-acre horse heaven just last year where owners and trainers can bring their young horses, rent stalls for a reasonable rate, and

have access to facilities such as a one-mile dirt training track, numerous sand and grass gallops, trail rides through woods, Eurociser, and spacious paddocks.

Tummillo got the idea to build a private training facility when the nearby Aiken Training Track in town got so popular it was turning horses away. And Tummillo points out that being outside of town makes Palmetto a considerably more quiet environment for weanlings, yearlings, and older horses to learn their first lessons or enjoy some R&R while laying up. Getting young horses safely to the

racetrack is a priority for Tummillo, herself a horse owner.

“We built Palmetto to control injury,” she said. “Most of the horses are out bare-foot until they start to breeze. No one has been injured on the track, whose surface is as similar to the one at Churchill Downs as we can make it. Our priority is to get them to the races. We know how much ownership can cost, and we know how hard it is just to get them there.”

Palmetto boasts 74 stalls and there are plans to build another barn. There are at least 25 paddocks of different sizes and smaller turnout areas. Catering to the young clientele, some stalls have extra space between them with windows to help horses adjust. Others face each other to create a more open atmosphere, with horses able to keep one another company.

“We like to have the yearlings here,” said Tummillo. “Most of the work done here is getting horses well-behaved; making them into normal animals. The ones that are outside I feed each day and they’re handled every day. The ones that are inside are in the care of their trainers. James Layden Jr. does a lot of his training here.”

The property features many different kinds of courses to keep the horses fit and interested. The emphasis is on giving the horse plenty of time outside and to let it grow up in a natural environment as it goes through the training process. And the cost is just \$10/day, with everything included.

“It’s all about the horse out here,” Tummillo said. “We get the job done and it’s fun. We have a passion for the horses.”

**Pike Racing**

Al and Salley Pike, who have been married for 30 years, moved their Pike Racing operation to Classic Mile Park near Ocala, Fla., late last year, and they couldn’t be happier.

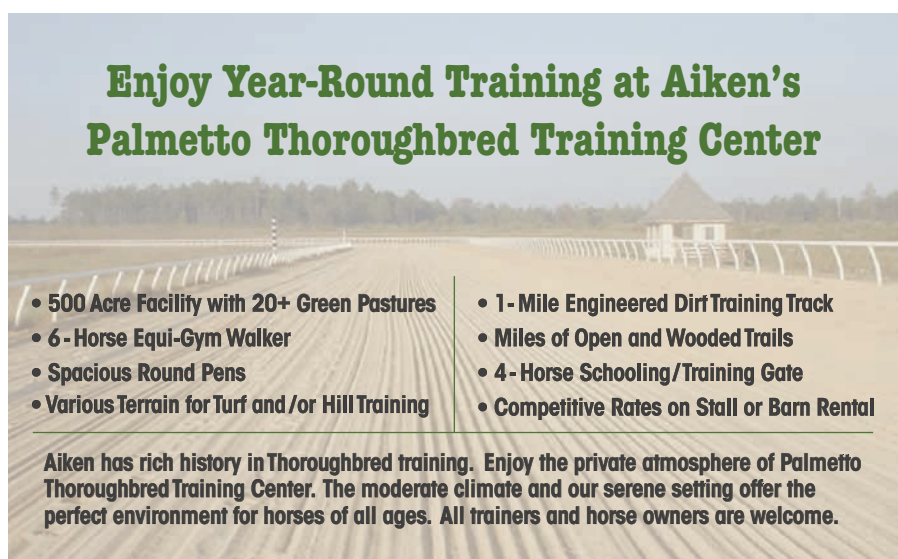
“There is a one-mile track that is big, wide, and beautifully maintained, and it has a great surface,” said Al Pike of the 700-acre facility. “There are also beautiful riding trails and a seven-furlong turf course. It’s just a great place to train a horse.”

In addition, Pike Racing has access to more than 40 stalls and approximately 15 large paddocks.

“We’re trying to take our business to the next level,” said Salley Pike, who serves as Pike Racing’s chief financial officer.

Al Pike, who has been a trainer for more than 30 years, especially enjoys breaking young horses and preparing them for racing.

“That’s my primary business and I take a lot of pride in it,” he said. “I like watching them develop from inexperienced babies into racehorses that are ready to run. It’s all about patience and repetition, and it’s also important to go at a horse’s own



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speed. You need to know your animal.”

Pike also runs a yearling-to-juvenile pinhooking operation and gets racehorses ready to run again after layoffs.

“When they go to the racetrack and aren’t in our hands anymore, we take pride in watching their careers,” Salley Pike said.

Pike Racing graduates include 2012 Sixty Sails Handicap (gr. III) winner She’s All In, 2011 Hollywood Prevue Stakes (gr. III) winner So Brilliant, eight-time stakes winner Tin Top Cat, 2012 Ohio Derby (gr. III) third-place finisher Z Rockstar, and Soonerette, who captured the 2012 Northbound Pride Oaks at Canterbury Park and the 2011 Happy Ticket Stakes at Harrah’s Louisiana Downs.

Pike Racing purchased So Brilliant as a yearling for \$200,000 and resold him for \$300,000 at the 2011 Fasig-Tipton Florida March select sale of 2-year-olds in training. This year, Pike Racing resold Ennobled Friend for \$725,000 and Delhomme for \$440,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Florida auction after buying them as yearlings for \$140,000 and \$230,000 respectively.

### Webb Carroll Training Center

There must be an underlying reason why such prominent horses as United States champions War Emblem and Havre de Grace, and Preakness (gr. I) winner Shackelford are all graduates of Webb Carroll Training Center near St. Matthews, S.C.

Perhaps its success rate stems from the mild, South Carolina climate, or maybe it’s the farm’s philosophy of simulating a racetrack environment for its young horses. Major clients attest the biggest factor contributing to the facility’s success,

however, is the knowledgeable Webb Carroll himself.

A third generation horseman, Carroll, 66, was given an early introduction to the Thoroughbred world working with the broodmares and foals at his father William’s farm.

Combining the patient tactics of his early days in the industry with a modernized approach of individually tailored, all-day conditioning, Carroll makes sure the job gets done at his training center, which has been in operation for nearly three decades.

“I don’t get on the track at 6 a.m. and get through at 10,” said Carroll. “I (train) all day long, and I do it the right way. It’s very time consuming, but it’s productive and beneficial for the horses to go through a program such as this.”

While the facility offers therapy and rehabilitation for injured horses, Carroll mainly focuses on the breaking and training of 2-year-olds.

Amenities include a seven-eighth-mile irrigated track; three-quarter-mile irrigated turf track course; starting gate with an experienced gate crew; small, shaded turn-out paddocks; a swim facility; and an eight-horse exerciser.

When asked about his training philosophies, Carroll explained, “We go out in large sets and spend a great deal of time with each set working them through the gate and with the pony and creating all sorts of maneuvers and drills for these horses that enhance their opportunities to adapt to the racetrack and run early.”

Carroll said one of the other essential ingredients to Webb Carroll’s success is assistant trainer Travis Durr. Like Carroll, Durr grew up working on his father’s

equine operation, and his life has revolved around horses ever since.

“He’s a wonderful horseman...he’s on the pony with every set that goes out on the track, and he’s got a great repete with the vet,” said Carroll. “I’m hands-on, but I’m not a one-man band. You can’t have success that way...you’ve got to have structure and key people.”

Prominent trainer Graham Motion, a longtime client of Webb Carroll, said he sends horses to the training center due to its reputable conditioning approach and plentiful amenities.

“(Carroll) has done a remarkable amount of work to the place in the last 15 years since I’ve been sending horses there, and it’s really become a top-notch training facility,” said Motion. ☐

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### RECENT GRADUATES

of the Pike Racing breaking and training program:

**Z Rock Star** – 3rd Ohio Derby-G3 – 7/7/12

**She’s All In** – 2012 Graded SW of \$610,622

**So Brilliant** – Graded SW and undefeated at 2 (2011)

**Soonerette** – 2011/2012 SW at 2 and 3 – SW on 7/7/12

**Tin Top Cat** – Multiple SW of \$384,774

**Fastation** – Won 5 stakes in a row at 2 – the last was 12/18/11

**Peach Brew** - Arlington Oaks-G3; SW of \$320,322

**Frisco Bay** – SP at 2 in Japan (2011)



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