

NORTHEAST/MID-ATLANTIC

No Laughing Matter

Trainer Charlton Baker climbs to the grade I rung with Joking

BY KAREN M. JOHNSON



SUSIE RAISCHER

A native of Jamaica, trainer Charlton Baker is having a lot of fun with his first grade I winner, Joking

AS CHARLTON “CHARLIE” BAKER made his way out of the winner’s circle following the Vosburgh Stakes (gr. I) at Belmont Park Oct. 1, a non-informed observer could have easily believed the trainer was a rock star, so numerous were the shout-outs flying his way.

Baker, 50, had just won the first grade I of his 19-year training career with former claimer Joking, a horse he also owns. The handshakes and high-fives came from fans, several of whom were from Baker’s native island country of Jamaica, as well as scores of horsemen.

Among the well-wishers was Chad Brown assistant Cherie DeVaux, who locked Baker in a bear hug.

“We all come out here and work really, really hard, but for someone with a smaller stable like Charlie’s, you see them have to (work) maybe a little bit more,” DeVaux later remarked. “He claimed that horse and owns him, and he developed him, so it’s nice to see people who really put a lot into it enjoy something so personal to them. I think we all can relate to that.”

When Baker reflects on the popularity of his Vosburgh victory, he notes his position as a newbie in the graded stakes arena certainly played a role.

“I guess some underdogs have people rooting for them,” he
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2016 LEADING SIRES IN NEW YORK

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2016 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2016 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	FREUD (98, Storm Cat), Sequel Stallions New York	\$10,000	184/91	3/4	2/3	(Fourstar Crook, \$255,000)	\$4,455,751	*1054	43	1.59	1.27
2	POSSE (00, Silver Deputy), Rockridge Stud	\$5,000	161/85	6/9	4/6	(Royal Posse, \$459,000)	\$4,189,984	*688	32	1.35	1.34
3	BELLAMY ROAD (02, Concerto), Dutchess Views Farm	\$7,500	203/102	6/6	1/6	(Land Over Sea, \$598,500)	\$4,132,886	*501	26	1.18	1.29
4	BIG BROWN (05, Boundary), Dutchess Views Farm	\$10,000	157/71	4/4	0/4	(Dortmund, \$270,000)	\$3,208,529	*538	16	1.23	1.68
5	HOLD ME BACK (06, Giant's Causeway), Irish Hill Century Farm	\$5,000	120/61	5/5	3/5	(Voluntario, \$171,340)	\$2,616,940	198	6	1.15	1.22
6	BUSTIN STONES (04, City Zip), Waldorf Farm	\$2,500	69/45	2/2	2/2	(Bust Another, \$245,647)	\$2,022,702	146	4	1.35	1.44
7	FROST GIANT (03, Giant's Causeway), Keane Stud Operations	\$7,500	95/44	2/2	2/2	(Frosty Margarita, \$124,084)	\$1,857,834	*265	7	1.39	1.20
8	DESERT PARTY (06, Street Cry), Sequel Stallions New York	\$4,000	82/38	0/0	0/0	(Saharan, \$136,260)	\$1,697,496	144	3	1.02	1.45
9	DUBLIN (07, Afleet Alex), Keane Stud Operations	\$2,500	61/21	0/0	0/0	(Dr Blarney, \$157,100)	\$1,197,702	112	0	0.94	1.22
10	DISCO RICO (97, Citidancer)	Died, 2014	45/20	1/1	0/1	(Disco Partner, \$178,500)	\$892,214	262	12	1.36	1.21
11	COSMONAUT (02, Lemon Drop Kid), Keane Stud Operations	\$5,000	37/16	1/1	0/1	(Wonderment, \$138,310)	\$871,495	80	2	1.13	1.03
12	NOBLE CAUSEWAY (02, Giant's Causeway)	Died, 2014	66/26	0/0	0/0	(Samraat, \$165,100)	\$852,467	234	7	0.81	1.08
13	D' FUNNYBONE (07, D'wildcat), Rockridge Stud	\$2,500	29/18	2/2	2/2	(Nobody Move, \$109,224)	\$847,452	*45	2	1.11	1.25
14	HERE'S ZEALOUS (97, Dehere), Kaz Hill Farm	\$1,000	40/24	1/1	0/1	(Green Gratto, \$119,024)	\$801,760	190	1	0.99	0.99
15	COURAGEOUS CAT (06, Storm Cat), Questroyal North	\$6,000	35/15	1/1	1/1	(School Board Prez, \$141,000)	\$735,427	71	1	1.04	1.18
16	GIANT SURPRISE (09, Giant's Causeway), Rockridge Stud	\$5,000	20/13	2/2	2/2	(Super Surprise, \$165,000)	\$647,517	34	2	1.31	1.22
17	MR. SEKIGUCHI (03, Storm Cat), Irish Hill Century Farm	\$2,500	21/16	1/2	0/1	(Yourdreamsormine, \$172,835)	\$599,942	*90	2	2.01	1.23
18	MISSION IMPAZIBLE (07, Unbridled's Song), Sequel Stallions New York	\$7,500	19/5	1/1	0/1	(Silver Mission, \$179,102)	\$493,713	42	1	1.33	1.17
19	HERE COMES BEN (06, Street Cry), McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds	\$7,500	32/11	0/0	0/0	(Benevolence, \$72,050)	\$395,016	62	0	0.63	1.15
20	TUEFLESBERG (04, Johannesburg), McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	24/14	0/0	0/0	(Good Bye Greg, \$57,500)	\$349,870	83	4	1.50	1.16
21	GOLDEN MISSILE (95, A.P. Indy), Milfer Farm	\$3,500	38/13	0/0	0/0	(Estrada's Girl, \$83,295)	\$314,250	*641	13	1.02	1.49
22	MIRACLE MAN (02, Yankee Victor), Pucker Ridge Farm	Died, 2015	6/4	0/0	0/0	(Jc's Shooting Star, \$102,941)	\$283,472	8	1	2.07	1.56
23	THE CLIFF'S EDGE (01, Gulch), McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds	Pnsd	30/13	0/0	0/0	(Frazil, \$74,136)	\$281,249	244	4	0.80	1.16
24	BANK HEIST (07, Maria's Mon), Kaz Hill Farm	\$10,000	12/6	1/1	1/1	(Won Dozen Banks, \$96,280)	\$253,208	17	1	1.27	1.41
25	CONGRESSIONALHONOR (01, Forestry), Sandy Way Farm	\$1,500	14/6	0/0	0/0	(Superling, \$75,388)	\$249,827	161	1	0.72	0.94
26	ALEX'S PAL (99, Valid Expectations)	Died, 2015	15/7	0/0	0/0	(Will, \$71,305)	\$247,495	106	2	1.23	0.92
27	MARSH SIDE (03, Gone West), Dutchess Views Farm	\$2,500	21/5	0/0	0/0	(Dr Luber's Kiss, \$64,400)	\$183,991	*131	0	0.30	1.23
28	GRIFFINITE (98, Unbridled's Song), Monhill Farm @ Silvernails Farm	\$2,000	8/4	1/1	1/1	(Ribbonite, \$95,316)	\$156,228	68	1	0.61	0.88
29	DR LARGE (06, A.P. Indy), Oriskany Creek Farm	\$2,500	10/5	0/0	0/0	(Dr Smooth, \$36,360)	\$126,622	22	1	0.73	0.71
30	RELATO DEL GATO (01, Tale of the Cat)	Died, 2014	3/2	0/0	0/0	(Down Town Kitty, \$49,134)	\$91,053	14	0	1.11	0.73
31	SAY FLORIDA SANDY (94, Personal Flag)	Pnsd	8/3	0/0	0/0	(Sandy Strikes, \$44,925)	\$89,356	*189	1	0.77	1.09
32	SIR WHIMSEY (04, Jump Start), Mill Creek Farm	\$2,500	5/1	0/0	0/0	(Organic Gemini, \$33,228)	\$80,936	10	1	1.18	0.93
33	UNCLE CAMIE (00, Abaginone)	Died, 2012	3/1	0/0	0/0	(Uncle Southern, \$64,920)	\$66,955	27	1	0.91	0.77
34	WICKED RICH (06, Yes It's True), Green Acres Thoroughbreds	\$1,000	7/3	0/0	0/0	(Combee, \$41,820)	\$66,690	10	0	0.45	1.45
35	SOARING EMPIRE (07, Empire Maker), Rockridge Stud	\$3,500	5/2	0/0	0/0	(D'yer Mak'er, \$41,849)	\$62,131	19	0	0.63	1.09

(continued from page 126)

said in his soft voice that carries a distinctive West Indian accent, a product of having lived in Jamaica until he was 19. "And no doubt about it, I'm an underdog and so is Joking. That is definitely OK, though, as long as we can get the job done."

There is no question that Baker and Joking, whom he claimed for \$20,000 in 2014, are getting the job done. The \$350,000 Vosburgh was a "Win and You're In" for the \$1.5 million TwinSpires Breeders' Cup Sprint (gr. I) at Santa Anita Nov. 5, and represented the 7-year-old son of Distorted Humor's fourth consecutive visit to the winner's circle this year. However, an illness knocked Joking out of contention for the Sprint.

Joking also provided Baker with his first graded victory, the True North Stakes (gr. II) in June at Belmont. The Vosburgh win was made all the more impressive by the fact Joking had not run since the True North, in part to a sore splint, and a previously planned vacation during the Sara-



Making his fourth consecutive trip to the winner's circle, Vosburgh winner Joking has been a profitable claim for Baker

toga Race Course meet.

Baker's name has long been associated with Finger Lakes Gaming & Racetrack in Farmington, N.Y., where he has been a mainstay since launching his career there in the late 1990s. But in the last several years Baker, who has saddled more than 1,400 career winners, has upped the quality of his stock and added a division of horses to compete successfully on the New York Racing Association circuit.

Baker's stable is largely constituted with New York-breds and claimers, and he owns approximately a dozen of the 50 horses currently in his stable. The trainer's New York-bred stakes winners include Moonlight Song, Runaway Tiger, Top Shoter, and Johnnie Bye Night, who won three consecutive runnings of the George W. Barker Handicap at Finger Lakes.

One of Baker's recent stakes winners at Finger Lakes is Gold for the King, the winner of the \$219,613 New York Breeders' Futurity, which was run the same afternoon that Joking won the Vosburgh. Gold for

2016 LEADING SIRES IN PENNSYLVANIA



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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2016 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2016 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative		
									Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	JUMP START (99, A.P. Indy), Northview PA	\$10,000	177/91	3/5	1/3	(Disco Chick, \$260,500)	\$4,543,184	*1264	40	1.48	1.33
2	ROCKPORT HARBOR (02, Unbridled's Song)	Died, 2013	150/83	3/5	1/3	(Majestic Harbor, \$391,060)	\$3,418,814	470	24	1.33	1.42
3	SILVER TRAIN (02, Old Trieste)	Died, 2013	107/58	1/1	1/1	(Lucabunny, \$120,308)	\$2,144,355	*502	11	0.98	1.27
4	FAIRBANKS (03, Giant's Causeway), Northview PA	\$2,500	101/41	0/0	0/0	(Cosmic Destiny, \$165,180)	\$1,961,631	213	3	1.09	1.27
5	LORD SHANAKILL (06, Speightstown), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$5,000	68/29	1/2	0/1	(My Dream Boat, \$792,890)	\$1,387,393	129	1	1.22	0.93
6	CORINTHIAN (03, Pulpit), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$4,000	122/53	0/0	0/0	(Pancake, \$71,695)	\$1,202,335	*478	11	0.75	1.42
7	WEIGELIA (01, Safely's Mark), WynOaks Farm	\$3,500	35/15	1/1	1/1	(No More Strippers, \$120,577)	\$1,099,278	*74	4	1.36	1.01
8	TALENT SEARCH (03, Catienus), Diamond B Farm	\$2,500	55/19	1/1	1/1	(Rolin With Olin, \$99,425)	\$872,959	*107	2	0.97	1.25
9	MEDALLIST (01, Touch Gold), Northview PA	\$2,000	40/15	2/2	1/2	(Flashy Kyem, \$109,354)	\$753,136	193	7	1.26	1.40
10	RIMROD (00, Danzig), Castle Rock Farm	\$1,500	27/18	0/0	0/0	(Candid Cathy, \$105,520)	\$714,798	101	2	1.35	1.16
11	BULLSBAY (04, Tiznow), Northview PA	\$3,000	29/12	2/3	1/2	(Greatbullsoffire, \$122,140)	\$649,477	46	3	1.60	1.29
12	ALBERT THE GREAT (97, Go for Gin), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$2,500	33/13	0/0	0/0	(She's Chubs, \$99,012)	\$521,405	*379	8	1.13	1.13
13	LOVE OF MONEY (01, Not For Love)	Died, 2012	37/12	0/0	0/0	(Money for Maria, \$64,854)	\$447,511	124	1	0.96	1.28
14	PARTNER'S HERO (94, Danzig), Castle Rock Farm	\$1,500	22/7	0/0	0/0	(Two Notch Road, \$126,138)	\$428,182	451	15	1.19	1.32
15	CITY SHARPSTER (99, Carson City), Woodvale Farm	\$1,000	23/8	0/0	0/0	(Poderosa, \$101,640)	\$423,752	59	0	0.71	0.70

2016 LEADING SIRES IN VIRGINIA

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2016 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2016 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative		
									Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	REBELLION (GB) (03, Mozart), Hickory Tree Farm	\$3,500	27/13	0/0	0/0	(Blurrricane, \$100,443)	\$503,737	*42	1	1.14	1.27
2	 FRIEND OR FOE (07, Friends Lake), Smallwood Farm	\$500	2/2	0/0	0/0	(Code Red, \$76,429)	\$127,119	4	0	3.24	2.18
3	COSA VERA (05, Dynaformer), North Cliff Farms	Private	15/3	0/0	0/0	(Max Crown, \$35,300)	\$107,500	25	0	0.46	1.46
4	UP PERISCOPE (00, Unbridled's Song)	N/A	7/2	0/0	0/0	(Scented Up, \$14,440)	\$46,728	26	0	0.24	0.58
5	XENODON (98, Northern Baby)	N/A	1/0	0/0	0/0	(Balistes, \$5,626)	\$5,626	11	0	0.10	1.38

2016 LEADING SIRES IN WEST VIRGINIA

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2016 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2016 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative		
									Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	LIMEHOUSE (01, Grand Slam), O'Sullivan Farm	\$2,500	97/58	3/3	3/3	(Recount, \$134,022)	\$2,206,486	*390	21	1.22	1.18
2	WINDSOR CASTLE (98, Lord Carson), Taylor Mountain Farm	\$3,500	88/46	0/0	0/0	(Ellie's Lil Man, \$69,903)	\$1,398,585	295	10	1.04	1.01
3	CHARITABLE MAN (06, Lemon Drop Kid)	Died, 2016	61/37	0/0	0/0	(Charitable Annuity, \$212,750)	\$1,331,507	116	2	1.12	1.13
4	BROTHER DEREK (03, Benchmark), Naylee Farm	\$3,500	61/34	2/2	1/2	(Copingaway, \$178,316)	\$1,189,766	*130	6	1.18	1.20
5	BOP (97, Rahy)	Died, 2012	53/28	0/0	0/0	(Summer Frock, \$65,530)	\$859,982	*192	4	0.92	0.86
6	SWISS YODELER (94, Eastern Echo), O'Sullivan Farms	\$2,000	46/28	0/0	0/0	(Swissarella, \$92,502)	\$735,339	758	15	1.00	1.04
7	FIBER SONDE (05, Unbridled's Song), Beau Ridge Farm	\$1,000	36/16	2/3	2/2	(Bullets Fever, \$138,999)	\$708,821	120	7	1.33	0.85
8	DENIS OF CORK (05, Harlan's Holiday), Taylor Mountain Farm	\$500	41/19	3/3	3/3	(Return to Denis, \$92,867)	\$683,090	88	3	0.72	1.13
9	PEAK DANCER (97, Mt. Livermore)	N/A	29/18	0/0	0/0	(Set'em Up Joe, \$47,546)	\$424,572	90	4	0.91	0.85
10	DURING (00, Cherokee Run), O'Sullivan Farms	\$1,500	21/7	1/2	0/1	(Lucy N Ethel, \$242,094)	\$342,106	195	4	0.84	1.08

the King was bred and is owned by one of Baker's first clients, Francis J. Paolangel, a prominent breeder of New York-breds since 1982. Paolangel, a 72-year-old contractor whose work includes construction jobs at New York's Cornell University campus, uses Baker exclusively, and has about 12 horses currently with the trainer.

Their partnership dates back to when Baker was working as an assistant trainer for the Finger Lakes-based Norbert Gerber in the mid-1990s. Paolangel, who had horses with Gerber, would visit the barn and was struck by Baker's work ethic in the shed row.

"I really liked the way Charlie took care of things," recalled Paolangel. "He was very conscientious with all the things he

did with the horses. When he went out on his own, I went to him to see if he would train my horses. Ever since then it has been a great relationship.

"When you have good results and you have a good trainer, you don't leave them," Paolangel added. "Charlie is just getting better and better and better. He is a very good caretaker, and he communicates with me very well. We probably talk four or five times a week. I know what is going on with the horses. He's always courteous and tells you what you need to know. He works with you—that's the part I like.

"With a lot of trainers, the communication is sometimes not that great. Charlie is a fantastic trainer, and I'm so glad that I made the decision to go talk to him and

have him take my horses. I was fortunate he did."

Becoming a horse trainer was an easy decision for Baker, as his father, Carl, was a trainer at Caymanas Park, Jamaica's only racetrack, and then later at Finger Lakes. Baker has fond memories of Caymanas Park, located in the island's capital of Kingston and situated a stone's throw from the house he grew up in. As a kid, Baker used the 196-acre facility as his playground, routinely scaling the water truck to secure free rides around the racetrack. As he grew older and was finishing high school, Baker became a serious student of racing and set his sights upon coming to the United States to become a trainer. When he was 19, he followed his

2016 LEADING SIRES IN MARYLAND

For daily updated sire lists visit BloodHorse.com

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2016 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2016 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative		
									Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	NOT FOR LOVE (90, Mr. Prospector)	Died, 2016	97/48	4/5	4/4	(Lovable Lady, \$193,899)	\$2,551,062	955	80	1.69	1.45
2	GREAT NOTION (00, Elusive Quality), Northview Stallion Station	\$3,500	57/33	2/2	1/2	(Just Jack, \$159,853)	\$1,732,695	241	13	1.53	1.24
3	FRIESAN FIRE (06, A.P. Indy), Country Life Farm	\$4,000	61/31	1/2	0/1	(Morning Fire, \$123,675)	\$1,491,568	98	1	1.11	1.28
4	LION HEARTED (96, Storm Cat)	Died, 2015	74/35	0/0	0/0	(Worthy Lion, \$105,629)	\$1,397,023	*607	18	1.20	1.28
5	ORIENTATE (98, Mt. Livermore), Northview Stallion Station	\$5,000	85/42	1/1	1/1	(Woodland Walk, \$97,011)	\$1,259,160	*784	32	1.26	1.65
6	PETIONVILLE (92, Seeking the Gold), Murmur Farm	\$5,000	68/26	1/1	1/1	(Trace of Grace, \$137,963)	\$1,011,923	*712	42	1.29	1.27
7	LOUIS QUATORZE (93, Sovereign Dancer), Murmur Farm	\$2,500	57/22	0/0	0/0	(Daniel Le Deux, \$80,353)	\$858,484	*976	21	1.14	1.31
8	STREET MAGICIAN (04, Street Cry), Heritage Stallions	\$3,000	42/18	1/1	1/1	(Rockin Jojo, \$105,560)	\$817,442	81	2	1.08	1.30
9	SCIPION (02, A.P. Indy), Murmur Farm	\$2,500	43/22	0/0	0/0	(Grandiflora, \$85,140)	\$801,678	123	3	1.08	1.06
10	ROCK SLIDE (98, A.P. Indy), Shamrock Farm	\$2,000	35/17	1/1	1/1	(Nicaradalic Rocks, \$110,892)	\$760,694	275	9	1.03	1.18
11	OUTFLANKER (94, Danzig), Shamrock Farm	\$3,000	41/19	0/0	0/0	(Outwithbigdaddy, \$84,794)	\$757,256	*531	21	1.36	1.14
12	CHEROKEE'S BOY (00, Citidancer)	Pnsd	25/9	0/0	0/0	(Cherokee Colours, \$48,828)	\$294,269	98	1	1.07	1.01
13	ETCHED (05, Forestry), Bonita Farm	\$3,500	18/4	0/0	0/0	(Chapel of Chimes, \$163,215)	\$264,045	27	0	0.56	1.04
14	M EIGHTY (99, Lite the Fuse), Shamrock Farm	Private	5/2	0/0	0/0	(Star Eighty, \$94,784)	\$142,698	14	0	1.40	0.91
15	GATORS N BEARS (00, Stormy Atlantic)	Died, 2012	13/6	0/0	0/0	(Grey Gator, \$19,671)	\$115,147	151	5	1.02	1.18

2016 LEADING SIRES IN NEW JERSEY

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2016 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2016 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative		
									Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	HEY CHUB (00, Carson City), Joe-Dan Farm	\$2,000	18/13	1/3	0/1	(Chublicious, \$130,734)	\$626,666	28	2	1.75	1.54
2	DON SIX (00, Wild Escapade), Greenfields Farm	Private	16/10	0/0	0/0	(Don's Marsh, \$91,878)	\$470,908	79	3	1.19	1.25
3	DEFRERE (92, Deputy Minister)	N/A	33/13	0/0	0/0	(Maybe Tonight, \$98,408)	\$447,187	*589	22	1.22	1.18
4	CABLE BOY (04, Jump Start), Colonial Farms	\$1,000	5/3	1/2	0/1	(She's Hot Wired, \$211,810)	\$278,161	17	1	1.25	0.90
5	PARK AVENUE BALL (02, Citidancer)	Died, 2015	7/4	0/0	0/0	(Park Avenue Appeal, \$80,180)	\$194,033	34	0	0.79	1.33
6	KING PUMA (06, Forest Wildcat), Sleetor Farm	Private	5/2	0/0	0/0	(Shot Gun Red, \$51,700)	\$107,074	14	0	0.94	1.57

father and mother, Carmen, who immigrated shortly before he did, to New York.

Upon arriving at Finger Lakes, Baker secured a job in the barn



TOM COOLEY/SV PHOTOGRAPHY

Baker with George W. Baker Stakes winner Top Shoter at Finger Lakes, where the trainer has been a mainstay since first taking out his license

of Mike Ferraro Sr., a leading conditioner at the Western New York oval.

“Before I went to Finger Lakes, I was working in Manhattan in a factory,” Baker said. “It was the most boring job. I would try to fool myself and not look at the clock to see how much time would pass. But, no matter what, it was always only 10 minutes.

“So when I got a job with Mike, I thought it was so cool that I was getting paid to do something that didn’t seem to be like work to me. I was learning and getting paid to do it.”

No doubt, the “coolest thing” in Baker’s life right now—besides his three children—is Joking, who has raised the trainer’s profile. When Baker signed the claim slip for the well-bred Joking, whose dam, Spun Silk, is a daughter of A.P. Indy, he did so on his own dime. The trainer had always had Joking on his radar, dating back to when he was running in maiden special weight races for his breeder, Darley Stable. After winning only once in eight starts for Darley, Joking surfaced for a \$35,000 tag in the fall of 2013 at Belmont Park. Trainer David Cannizzo nabbed him that day, and three starts later, Baker swooped in for the \$20,000 claim.

“Over the years I’ve always owned a lot of the horses I train,” Baker remarked. “I’m always looking for a few for myself. If I see something I like, I will run it by a couple of owners, and if they’re not interested, I will go ahead and get it for myself. I’m not shy about spending money on a horse that I like.”

Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in the states featured in this section (stallions that are dead or exported prior to 2011 are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through November 5, 2016. As supplied to BloodHorse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., include adjusted money from Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Adjusted earnings are put on par with average North American earnings from the previous year. For example, the average North American purse in 2015 is \$21,782 or 50% of the 2015 average purse in Japan. To put earnings on par, all Japanese progeny earnings are multiplied by 50% before being credited to a sire’s progeny earnings. Hong Kong earnings are adjusted by 17%; Singapore by 57%. Current year stakes winners include all N.H.-foaled stakes winners worldwide and any S.H.-foaled horses that won a N.H. stakes. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A ♯) indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race.

*AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX and COMPARABLE INDEX: Lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX indicates how much purse money the progeny of one sire has earned in relation to the average earnings of all runners in the same years; average earnings of all runners in any year is represented by an index of 1.00; COMPARABLE INDEX indicates the average earnings of progeny produced from mares bred to one sire, when these same mares were bred to other sires. Only 32% of all sires have a lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX higher than their mares’ COMPARABLE INDEX.

Joking did well enough for Baker at the start, winning claiming and allowance races, but the diminutive bay gelding came with a host of problems—brittle feet, a finicky appetite, and a nervous disposition. Baker tried several ulcer medications, enlisted the help of renowned blacksmith Ian McKinlay, and was able to turn the corner with Joking.

“He’s a very hard keeper,” Baker said with a wry smile. “Keeping his appetite, keeping his coat in good condition...it was often dull and dry. I’ve tried everything. He gets the whole nine yards in trying to keep him looking good.”

As wonderful as 2016 has been for Baker, whose stable earnings of \$2.47 million through late October has surpassed his previous year-end totals, it also marked the end of the career of Moonlight Song. The 9-year-old, a New York-bred multiple stakes winner, was retired in October when the infirmities that plagued him throughout his career became more pronounced.

Baker nursed and nurtured Albert Fried Jr.’s homebred Moonlight Song, a gelded son of Unbridled’s Song, through myriad physical issues, and he is the ultimate poster horse for the trainer’s acumen in dealing with equines of a delicate nature. A large horse who was a \$900,000 RNA as a yearling, Moonlight Song had fragile legs, a flighty demeanor, and a propensity for hoof abscesses.

Moonlight Song retires to Fried’s New York farm with a record of 9-2-1 in 18 starts and earnings of \$534,294. In what would be his final start Moonlight Song captured this year’s John Morrissey Stakes at Saratoga Race Course for a second consecutive time. Astonishingly, he won those editions of the New York-bred sprint stakes without any starts between. Entering the 2015 Morrissey, Moonlight Song had not run since the previous October.

Preparing a horse to win a stakes following a year layoff garnered Baker plenty of kudos, particularly from astute observers of the game. One of Baker’s fans is former jockey Richard Migliore, who is now a television racing analyst at NYRA.

“This year we saw a different dimension with Charlie in getting horses to come back



Baker joins the winner's circle to celebrate the victory of Moonlight Song in the John Morrissey Stakes at Saratoga

off layoffs,” Migliore said. “He did some amazing work with horses coming off substantial layoffs, like Moonlight Song, and then with Joking in the Vosburgh. That caught people’s attention. I think he is a horsemen’s horseman; a guy who is easy to root for because you know the work he has put into it and the job he does.”

While Joking has yielded Baker bigger financial rewards, Moonlight Song will forever be the horse who holds the most real estate in his heart.

“He’s my favorite horse,” Baker said, just four days before he announced Moonlight Song’s retirement. “I’m more excited about him (than Joking) because Moonlight Song has always been the ‘big horse,’ no matter who is in the barn. He’s just one of those horses you always root for and you want to see do good.”

Not unlike Baker himself. **BH**

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Joking wins the Vosburgh under jockey Manuel Franco