

OFF TO THE RACES

BUYING A YEARLING IS THE EASIEST PART of acquiring a racing prospect. Next for the young Thoroughbred lies many lessons to be learned, with patience and experience going a long way toward ensuring these lessons are taught well. Aside from merely accepting a bit, a saddle, and a rider, the developing racehorse needs to become accustomed to the routine of the backside, the tight quarters of a starting gate, and how to relax when racing in company. Equally important, the young athlete must be fit and ready to compete when it moves on to the track. In this special section are insights into some of the country's leading training centers and what makes their programs successful year after year. With research, finding a quality training center can be the second-easiest decision an owner can make.

BENCHMARK

Benchmark Training Center has been on quite a roll. Not only have two of their graduates gone on to be victorious in recent stakes, but the training center also sent out the sale-topper at the Texas Thoroughbred Association's sale of 2-year-olds in training at Lone Star Park with a Tale of the Cat colt selling to

Louisiana-based Whispering Oaks Farm for \$120,000.

The recent stakes winners that underwent their schooling at Benchmark, located near Quinlan, Texas, and operated by Gerwyn "Taffy" Jones and his wife, Jane, were One Liz, who triumphed in the June 10 Isaac Murphy Handicap at Arlington International Racecourse,

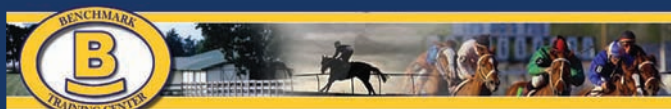
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and Ruby Sioux, who annexed the May 26 Jack Bishop Stakes at Prairie Meadows.

Texas Chrome, another Benchmark grad, continues to be competitive in the stakes ranks, finishing second in three grade 3 stakes this year, having taken the Super Derby (G3) and Oklahoma Derby (G3) last year.

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COADY PHOTOGRAPHY

Graded stakes winner Texas Chrome is a Benchmark graduate

Benchmark is about 40 miles east of Dallas, making it centrally located for horsemen racing not only at Lone Star Park but at Oaklawn Park in Arkansas, Remington Park in Oklahoma, and Harrah's Louisiana Downs near the Texas border in Bossier City, La.

Among the amenities offered by Benchmark is a five-eighths-mile training track. The recent addition of 16 new stalls makes room for 72 head. The facility also has a multi-stall starting gate, a Euorciser, and multiple turn-out paddocks ranging from one to five acres that are ideally suited for layups.

"Our track is a wide racetrack with a dirt surface," the horseman said. "It is a very kind surface and has been very kind to the horses."

After working on the East Coast, Jones, who began honing his

horsemanship more than 35 years ago in his native Wales, has been developing Benchmark over the last 20 years.

Jones estimates that some 80%-90% of the horses that receive early training at Benchmark win at least once after making the move to the racetrack.

Jones attributes the success of Benchmark's trainees to his patient training style, which contrasts to the hurried pace employed by many other facilities.

"I am bringing a little bit of a European technique to the method of training," Jones said. "I am not as aggressive as some Americans get with their young horses by letting the horses grow into themselves and mature to be the athletes they can be."

HIDDEN BROOK FARM

A proven track record is key to the success of any business, particularly when that track record refers to an actual track. When Hidden Brook Farm partners Jack Brothers, Dan Hall, Sergio de Sousa, Kevin Latta, and Mark Roberts purchased the former Scanlon Training Center near Williston, Fla., just outside Ocala, two years ago, they were buying a facility proven beyond any shadow of a doubt. The list of headliners that used the training track for their breaking and training reads like a Who's Who of recent Thoroughbred history: classic winners Rags to Riches, Afleet Alex, Bernardini, and Sarava; along with grade 1 stakes winners Unbridled's Song, Stevie Wonderboy, Lion Heart, War Pass, Stay Thirsty, and grade 2 winner Desert Party.

Now known as Hidden Brook South, the fertile land that once comprised the Scanlon operation continues to churn out top runners. Hidden Brook, in partnership with breeder Hare Forest Farm, are now campaigning Unchained Melody, winner of the Mother Goose Stakes (G2) who has won three of her first four

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CHELSEA DURAND/NYRA

Unchained Melody winning the grade 2 Mother Goose

starts and \$233,400. Unchained Melody and first-out winners Stormy's Song are a product of the Hidden Brook South breaking and training program, which is open to outside clients looking to capture some of the magic that has regularly been produced off this farm.

Hidden Brook, along with longtime trainer Randy Bradshaw, completed the purchase of the 125-acre property in 2015, and Roberts, who has given early lessons to many of the fine runners campaigned by Adena Springs through the years, is in charge of the training operation. Hidden Brook and Bradshaw each have half the property and jointly use the training track. They have employed trackman Ted Malloy, who oversaw the renovation of the Gulfstream Park racing surface along with building the fine Palm Meadows training facility, to renovate

the six-furlong dirt track.

"I feel like we have one of the best tracks in Florida," noted Brothers. "Both historically, going back to the Scanlon years, and now. Unchained Melody is a testament to the program, and that's the kind of start we hoped we'd be getting off to. We concentrate on the fundamentals, we have a lot of great history behind us here, and we feel like we will continue with that success."

Hidden Brook has recently finished construction of a new 32-stall barn, upping its total stalls to 90. Plans are being drawn up to add a turf course in the not-too-distant future.

Past, present, and future, Hidden Brook South is the place for horses to get the right kind of early education.

MARGAUX FARM

Margaux Farm is well known for its first class facilities and top-notch care. A full service operation found on 640 acres of rolling land in Central Kentucky, Margaux boasts three separate training tracks, newly converted tobacco barns, Eurocisers and an abundance of turnout space in lush paddocks. The three tracks include a five-furlong all weather European style gallop that undulates over hills; a straight 1 $\frac{1}{6}$ -miles all-weather track; and a 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile turf course that has an uphill finish. Each track was designed with the horse's well being in mind, and provides the option for greater variety in day-to-day training. The Tru-Stride all weather surface that is used holds up well in any weather, meaning horses rarely miss a day of training due to excessive rain or freezing during the winter.

What is lesser known perhaps is Margaux's dedication to providing clients with the best experience possible.

"Margaux is very client-centric. We try to be very transparent in everything that we do here and we're easily accessible," said Amanda Motz, who is head of sales and marketing for the



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SARATOGA TRIFECTA

3 GRADED STAKES OPENING WEEKEND!



Undefeated 2YO filly **DREAM IT IS** shown winning the **G3 Schuylerville Stakes** at Saratoga 7.21.17 by 9 lengths. Purchased by WCTC as a yearling.



Undefeated 2YO colt **FIRENZE FIRE** shown winning the **G3 Sanford Stakes** at Saratoga 7.22.17.



Multiple G1 winner **ABEL TASMAN** shown winning the **G1 CCA OAKS** at Saratoga 7.23.17.

Congratulations to the connections of these graded stakes winning graduates!

A job well done, a name you can rely on.



WEBB CARROLL TRAINING CENTER

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SHOOTIT PHOTOGRAPHY

On the Tru-Stride surface at Margaux Farm

farm owned by Jim and Susan Hill.

In keeping with the demands of the day, Margaux offers a special portal on its website where clients can access photos, videos, pedigree updates, and vet reports, among other things, at the click of the mouse.

“People want to be able to physically see what is going on, and they want to be kept in the loop, especially if they live out of state. This helps provide another level of interaction that they might not get elsewhere, in addition to regular phone calls and emails.”

Led by general manager Michael Hardy, and farm trainer Dermot Littlefield, Margaux graduates include 2017 grade 1 winner Divisidero, grade 2 winner Hillhouse High, and promising 2-year-old Psychoanalyze who finished third in the grade 3 Sanford Stakes July 22 at Saratoga.

A native of Wicklow County, Ireland, Littlefield is known for his individual approach when it comes to training.

“Dermot takes his time with each horse, and he is very adept at managing their specific needs and quirks,” Motz said. “It’s not a cookie-cutter operation and we find that the horses really benefit from it both mentally and physically.

“We have a great team in place here, and we feel that the on track results of our graduates clearly show that our approach develops winners.”

WEBB CARROLL TRAINING CENTER

That graduates from the Webb Carroll Training Center are having “another good year,” is an annual statement. The proof so far in 2017 comes with the results from the first half of the season with the likes of top 3-year-olds Irish War Cry and Abel Tasman. Irish War Cry was a sharp winner of Gulfstream Park’s Lambholm South Holy Bull Stakes (G2) and Aqueduct’s Wood Memorial Stakes presented by NYRA Bets (G2) prior to a runner-up effort in the classic Belmont Stakes presented by NYRABets (G1). Abel Tasman added the June 10 Acorn Stakes (G1) to her authoritative score in the Longines Kentucky Oaks (G1). Both received their

early lessons from the experienced team at Webb Carroll.

The statement comes from partner Travis Durr, a lifelong horseman who has worked with Carroll for a decade mastering the ins and outs of running a top-level breaking and training facility. And while success with 3-year-olds is what the sport focuses on, the results from the 2-year-old sector of the business show there are plenty of more trips to the winner’s circle in store. Durr is especially proud of the early results from this year’s 2-year-old graduates that include Dream It Is, a nine-length winner of the Schuylerville Stakes (G3) on the opening day of the Saratoga meet. Durr also purchased the filly for Hoolie Racing Stable.

Dream It Is is a daughter of Preakness Stakes (G1) winner Shackleford, who was also a graduate of Carroll’s program.

The day following the Schuylerville, the Webb Carroll graduate Firenze Fire landed Saratoga’s Sanford Stakes (G3), and on July 23 Abel Tasman added the Coaching Club American Oaks (G1) giving the training center three graded wins during the first three days of the meet.

In the business for more than 30 years, Carroll points to the stats from the last decade that can boast of more than 250 graded stakes wins.

All of this success comes from the center’s philosophy of sending horses to the training track in big sets, giving each horse as much as a “race track atmosphere” as possible, with the goal of sending a “sane, sound, fit, educated horse” ready for the track



SUSIE RAISHER/NYRA

Abel Tasman winning the July 23 CCA Oaks at Saratoga

environment when it comes time to perform.

The 50-acre-plus training center just outside St. Matthews, S.C., features state-of-the-art racing surfaces and facilities, including a seven-furlong irrigated dirt oval, six-furlong irrigated turf course, starting gate with an experienced crew, small and large turn-out paddocks, a swim facility, and an eight-horse exerciser. Besides breaking and training, the center provides rehabilitation and therapy services under the watchful eye of Dr. Jamie Carter and Dr. Tom Stinner of Southern Equine Service. [BH](#)