

# READYING RUNNERS

**EVERY STEP IN THE DEVELOPMENT** of successful racehorses is important, but few are as crucial as the education they receive during breaking and early training. With the yearling sales in full swing, buyers are looking for the outfits that can put the best mental and physical foundation under their purchases to transition them into talented runners.

Training centers around the country boast top-notch facilities, not only for turning yearlings into ready-to-run 2-year-olds but also for rehabilitating runners when they come up sore or injured or simply need a freshening from the rigors of the racetrack.

Many of these expert centers and the experienced people who run them are profiled in the following pages.

## BENCHMARK TRAINING

Benchmark Training Center has been on quite a roll. Not only have two of its 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, 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 and the Assault Stakes this year.

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# BENCHMARK TRAINING CENTER



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## BENCHMARK TRAINING CENTER

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COADY PHOTOGRAPHY

**Ruby Sioux winning the May 26 Jack Bishop Stakes**

Situated on 100 acres in North Texas, 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 Eurorciser, and multiple turn-out paddocks ranging from one to five acres that are ideally suited for layouts.

"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."

### 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 many more trips to the winner's circle are 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 Shackelford, 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 of a "racetrack atmosphere" as possible, with the goal of sending a "sane, sound, fit, educated horse" ready for the track 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.



CHELSEA DURAND/NYRA

**Dream It Is winning the July 21 Schuylerville Stakes**

# 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!

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### WEBB CARROLL TRAINING CENTER

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**CUSTOM CARE EQUINE**

Consistency, which is a key to success in raising and racing Thoroughbreds, is one of the hallmarks of Donna Freyer and Custom Care Equine. Custom Care is based at The Camden Training Center, which one client calls, “the Augusta of Training Centers.” Donna has been churning out winners at the 350-acre facility for her loyal clientele for more than 15 years.

“My MO is producing consistent horses year after year,” she said.

“It’s also a great place for older horses,” Freyer said. “My best example is Weekend Hideaway. He’s 7 years old and has won more than \$1 million, and he’s spent every winter with me since he was a baby.”

Red and Black Stable’s Weekend Hideaway is the winner of 12 of 40 starts and has won or placed in 16 stakes, having placed in the grade 1 Vosburgh Stakes in 2016. This year the son of Speightstown won the Commentator Stakes for New York-breds at Belmont Park and was third Aug. 11 in Saratoga’s Tale of the Cat Stakes.

Freyer was introduced to the area in the early 1980s, galloping horses for the Phipps Stable, and went to work for legendary trainer Frank Whiteley. Frank sent her to Maryland with a string of horses and helped her get her first trainer’s license.

She was sold on the Camden, S.C., area, so when she decided



ADAM COGLIANESE/NYRA

**Weekend Hideaway has won or placed in 16 stakes**

to redirect her career and establish a year round breaking and training operation, she knew just where she wanted it to be.

“South Carolina might have gotten off the radar, but it’s the ‘original place to train,’ ” she said. “Great horses were trained here like Hoist the Flag and Ruffian. We have the footing and we have the weather. The weather is good for horses here: They grow a coat, they shed out, but they don’t miss any training because of the footing.”

# The Perfect Fit



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Custom Care Equine provides quality care and training in order to produce an individual ready to meet owner and trainer expectations at the racetrack. Custom Care Equine has established itself as a consistent producer of solid race horses that continue to perform year after year.

Contact Donna Freyer at 803-243-4848 | [tanrackin@aol.com](mailto:tanrackin@aol.com) | [customcareequine.com](http://customcareequine.com)



The Camden Training Center has the look of a farm but is run like a racetrack. It has a one-mile dirt track and a five-eighths mile dirt track. It has plenty of turnout paddocks and what helps set it apart from other facilities is its seven-eighths mile turf course.

“It’s open all the time, and you don’t need a slip to get on it,” Freyer said. “We also have a great crew. The track is harrowed with a break and gets watered every day. They keep everything in top shape.

Another key facet to the operation is its ability to be open year ’round for training, which allows for customized schedules for each individual.

“The facility, my experience, the consistency...it has produced a steady stream of winners,” she said.

Freyer also invested herself in the industry. She serves on the board as vice president of the South Carolina Owners and Breeders Association and helped establish Second Chances, one of the original Thoroughbred retirement farms at the Wateree River Correctional Facility.

## HIDDEN BROOK

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 have 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; grade 1 stakes winners Unbridled’s Song, Stevie Wonderboy, Lion Heart, War Pass,



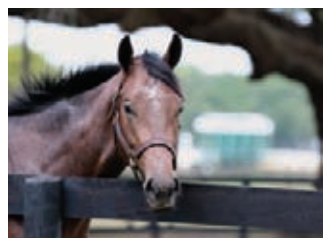
VIOLA JASKO/NYRA

**Unchained Melody winning Belmont’s grade 2 Mother Goose**

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 starts and \$233,400. Unchained Melody and first-out winners Stormy’s Song are products 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



## From Conception to Starting Gate

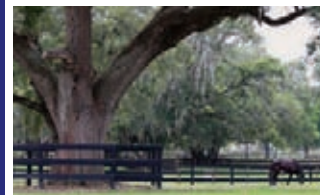
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employed trackman Ted Malloy, who oversaw the renovation of the Gulfstream Park racing surface and the construction of the fine Palm Meadows training facility, to renovate the six-furlong dirt track.

"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



SKIP DICKSTEIN

Divisidero, outside, in the grade 1 Woodford Reserve

style gallop that undulates over hills; a straight 1 $\frac{1}{16}$ -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 during the winter.

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Its convenient location is a short distance from the Keeneland and Fasig-Tipton sale grounds and is easily accessible for bloodstock agents, with some of the best veterinary clinics in the country nearby.

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 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," Motz said. "We do our best to provide our clients a very unique, individualized experience."

Led by general manager Michael Hardy and by 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 County Wicklow, 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."

### WOODFORD THOROUGHBREDS


Thoroughbred racing is a numbers game, and based on the percentages, the numbers certainly add up at Woodford Thoroughbreds. The Central Florida training facility prides itself on not only the high percentage of winners it delivers on the racetrack but also the high percentage of first-out winners.

"An important thing to consider when

selecting a place to send your horses is our strike rate of horses coming off the farm to win first time out," said vice president Matt Lyons.

A model for success in the industry, Woodford Thoroughbreds takes a unique approach with its youngsters that combine swimming along with under-tack work.

"The swimming facility is a very important part of our training," Lyons said. "It gets a horse fit and helps put a better foundation on it. After their morning routine on-track, the horses swim



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several times a week. It's really helped gallop-out times at the 2-year-old sales as well."

Spanning more than 1,000 acres near Ocala, Fla., Woodford Thoroughbreds prides itself on the amount of turnout paddocks it offers as well as the surface of its five-eighths-mile training track. It also boasts one of North America's only 1½-mile and half-mile turf gallops, which are carved into the surrounding woods.

"It is a great place to start out young horses," Lyons said, referring not only to the facility, but also the veteran team on hand.

The Florida division general manager is Scott Kintz, a former trainer and former general farm manager for Taylor Made Farm in Kentucky.

Farm trainer John Gleason, who has been with Woodford for more than four years, has a wealth of experience, having previously worked for Bryan and Holly Rice's Woodside Ranch where he had his hands on horses for such major owners as Robert and Beverly Lewis, W.T. Young's Overbrook Farm, and JMS Stable. Gleason's team includes assistant Cody Hoppel, a fifth-generation horseman.

The number of winners to come from Woodford Thoroughbred is impressive. Some of the recent success stories include multiple grade 1 winner Stopchargingmaria, a Woodford Thoroughbred pinhook, the quick grade 3 winner Dearest, and Fast



LESLIE MARTIN/COGLIANESE PHOTOS

**Woodford Thoroughbreds pinhook Dearest taking the grade 3 Sugar Swirl at Gulfstream Park**

and Accurate who made his way to this year's Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (G1).

A full service outfit, Woodford Thoroughbreds stands several stallions and works with its partners to get their offspring off to the winner's circle. As a sales facility they pride themselves on a successful 2017 juvenile selling season in which they sold every Woodford-owned 2-year-old.

"That's not easy to do," Lyons said. "That was a great achievement." **BH**

# WOODFORD THOROUGHBREDS



## Start Your Yearling the WOODFORD WAY . . .

The world-class Woodford training center is located near Ocala on 1,000 acres of the county's richest soil and boasts one of North America's only one and a half-mile turf gallops. The facility offers every amenity required to safely develop and maintain the highest level of performance including Eclipse Award winners and many Grade 1 horses.

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