

Southeast

ALABAMA FLORIDA GEORGIA MISSISSIPPI
NORTH CAROLINA SOUTH CAROLINA TENNESSEE



CYNTHIA MCFARLAND PHOTOS

Bobby Jones' hands-on approach helps young horses move forward

BY CYNTHIA MCFARLAND

AT THE END of her swimming session, the bay yearling filly splashes out of the water, takes a deep breath, and calmly walks beside the tall man holding her lead shank.

From an anxious yearling whose rearing and striking made her tricky to handle, the filly has made a remarkable turnaround in a very short time. When they reach the barn, the man rubs the filly's neck and turns her into her stall. The filly's story isn't magic, nor is it out of the ordinary. It's consistently good horsemanship, which is exactly what Bobby Jones is known for. The man behind Bobby Jones Equine is a

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2021 LEADING SIRES IN FLORIDA

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2021 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2021 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative		
									Stks	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	KHOZAN (12, Distorted Humor), Journeyman Stallions	\$10,000	59/22	0/0	0/0	(Background, \$53,136)	\$638,948	*148	6	1.72	1.35
2	ADIOS CHARLIE (08, Indian Charlie), Ocala Stud	\$4,000	43/15	1/1	0/1	(R Adios Jersey, \$47,300)	\$357,684	240	8	1.42	1.19
3	FIRST DUDE (07, Stephen Got Even), Double Diamond Farm	\$7,500	58/13	0/0	0/0	(Super Dude, \$37,400)	\$310,582	422	13	1.14	1.18
4	GONE ASTRAY (06, Dixie Union), Northwest Stud	\$4,500	55/17	0/0	0/0	(Town Jak, \$28,840)	\$297,001	*313	9	0.93	1.09
5	BRETHREN (08, Distorted Humor), Arindel Farm	\$7,500	57/11	0/0	0/0	(Sonar, \$29,910)	\$279,397	197	5	1.28	1.50
6	FIELD COMMISSION (05, Service Stripe), Solera Farm	Died, 2020	42/10	0/0	0/0	(Lil Commissioner, \$48,400)	\$253,811	179	2	0.81	0.97
7	JESS'S DREAM (12, Curlin), Ocala Stud	\$4,000	24/5	1/1	0/1	(Chess's Dream, \$71,080)	\$228,244	*104	1	0.77	1.53
8	THE BIG BEAST (11, Yes It's True), Ocala Stud	\$4,000	36/5	1/1	0/1	(Hear My Prayer, \$54,075)	\$216,190	112	3	1.12	1.25
9	SONGANDAPRAYER (98, Unbridled's Song)	Pnsd	48/4	0/0	0/0	(A Song for Arch, \$34,300)	\$203,854	*1062	37	1.06	1.36
10	TREASURE BEACH (GB) (08, Galileo), Pleasant Acres Stallions	\$4,000	51/9	0/0	0/0	(Josefa, \$16,760)	\$182,651	*607	3	1.04	1.39
11	CAJUN BREEZE (08, Congrats), Stonehedge Farm South	Private	15/7	1/1	1/1	(Cajun Brother, \$80,105)	\$182,018	51	4	1.81	1.39
12	BAHAMIAN SQUALL (09, Gone West), Double Diamond Farm	\$3,000	23/6	1/1	0/1	(Special Princess, \$37,500)	\$153,739	67	1	0.75	0.88
13	HANDSOME MIKE (09, Scat Daddy), Pleasant Acres Stallions	\$4,000	43/7	0/0	0/0	(Lalali, \$13,800)	\$152,598	130	0	0.82	0.81
14	AWESOME OF COURSE (00, Awesome Again), Ocala Stud	\$2,000	25/8	0/0	0/0	(Awesome Beach, \$28,100)	\$150,305	*273	12	1.27	1.27
15	RATTLESNAKE BRIDGE (08, Tapit)	N/A	29/5	0/0	0/0	(Seven Lilies, \$42,254)	\$137,990	154	0	0.52	1.00
16	CHITU (11, Henny Hughes), Bridlewood Farm	\$3,500	23/3	0/0	0/0	(La Chica Lateral, \$21,540)	\$121,318	107	0	0.71	0.87
17	OVERDRIVEN (09, Tale of the Cat)	Pnsd	22/6	0/0	0/0	(R Mercedes Boy, \$28,900)	\$115,616	163	3	0.94	1.13
18	GREATNESS (99, Mr. Prospector), Solera Farm	\$3,500	6/2	1/1	0/1	(Lady's Island, \$61,380)	\$102,359	*262	8	1.30	1.00
19	BIG DRAMA (06, Montbrook), Stormborne Stallions	\$5,000	31/4	0/0	0/0	(Grace's Drama, \$13,840)	\$99,589	275	4	0.87	1.22
20	FLASHSTORM (04, Storm Cat), Northwest Stud	\$2,500	17/4	0/0	0/0	(Flashndynamite, \$47,200)	\$98,308	126	3	0.86	0.90

Lexington native who found his niche, not in the Bluegrass Thoroughbred community but in the horse country of the Sunshine State he has called home since 1980.

WORK ETHIC

Bobby Jones Equine is a 35-acre farm just north of Ocala that provides mare care and foaling, breaking, lay-up and post-surgical care, aquatic conditioning, along with sales preparation and representation. Jones built the boutique facility from the ground up to his exact specifications.

The enormous live oaks and lush pastures provide a scenic backdrop for an operation strategically designed with the horse in mind.

With Jones and only one employee, Bobby Jones Equine operates practically and efficiently. The small staff is intentional as Jones is extremely hands-on and does most of the horse work himself. A commercial breeder for more than 30 years, Jones owns a handful of broodmares, but most of the horses in the pastures and barn belong to clients.

Now 59, Jones has worked in the horse industry his entire life, except for a brief time during high school when he worked at Cliff Hagan's Ribeye restaurant in Louisville, Ky.

"I learned how to cook steaks, which isn't a bad thing to know how to do," he quipped.

Jones is the first to say there have been an array of people at every level of the industry—from professionals to grooms—who have helped him along the way. His first job in the horse industry was riding cutting horses, breeding and training Quarter Horses for Al McDonald's Cutters Quarters. From 1985-2010, he co-managed Brylynn Farm, a Thoroughbred nursery near Reddick, Fla., which has produced stakes winners such as Aikenite, Jeranimo, and Teaks North, to mention only a few.

"The education I gained through 25 years with Brylynn Farm gave me the opportunity to pursue my endeavors, work on many horses, and meet professionals in the business," Jones said. "Working the sales for Taylor Made (Sales Agency) during the late 1980s and into the '90s gave me the chance to study how they operate. Their organizational skills are the best in the equine world, and I learned so much from them."

YEARLING FOCUS

"It's not what you achieve in life that matters, it's what you overcome." That is Jones' motto, and as he puts it, "this sums up the horse business because you're overcoming something almost daily."

Jones specializes in yearlings and through the years he's learned that things aren't always what they first appear to be. He's found that being proactive can prevent problems down the road.



Live oaks and lush pastures are key elements to Bobby Jones Equine

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'There's nothing like swimming to change a horse's whole world'

It's not uncommon for people to reach out to him when they have a challenging horse, like the rearing filly. Fortunately, Jones is a problem solver. It's something that sets him apart, and he's improved over the years. Unraveling a problem and finding the solution are challenges he enjoys.

Most of the time he finds the answer, and the horse comes out on the winning end. For example, when a horse is "acting out" or being resistant, some people might call the animal "stupid" or "stubborn," and try to force compliance. In Jones' mind, that's the easy way out and it sells the horse short.

"I like to look behind the initial idea of what's going on," Jones said. "Whenever I have a behavioral problem, I want to know why the horse is acting that way and seek out if there's an underlying physical issue. A lot of times, it's pain causing a behavioral problem, and once you sort out that physical issue, the behavioral problem goes away.

"For example, I've found when a horse doesn't like to be bridled, it's usually because of pain in the neck," added Jones, who frequently uses treatments such as equine chiropractic and acupuncture, in addition to western veterinary medicine, to address such physical problems.

"There are no shortcuts in this game.

You can't pretend you know what you're doing in this business because horses don't care," he observed. "You need knowledge, and you need a great support team of veterinarians, farriers, and equine therapists."

Early in his career Jones learned to handle tough horses, but he admits some of his best lessons came through watching people do things the wrong way. Horses can learn manners without being "man-handled," he notes. Through time and experience, he's learned to understand horse psychology and has realized the importance of trust.

For years he has used a practical natural horsemanship technique from Monty Roberts, teaching every young horse to lead by looping a lariat rope over its hindquarters. This gives more control, puts pressure on the hindquarters instead of the neck and quickly teaches the young horse to move forward without pulling on him.

"I use this old trick every day," Jones said. "After a couple of sessions with the rope, they walk on."

The goal when prepping and selling yearlings is always for them to become successful racehorses, and Jones constantly evaluates horses with that goal in mind.

"From when I started to where I am

now, it's made me be a better horseman. I look at horses differently now than ever before," said Jones. "It's really about learning to build a better mousetrap; for example, like changing your nutrition and farrier programs to get better results on radiographs in the long run when selling yearlings."

Jones emphasizes the importance of staying vigilant when foals are growing as changes can markedly affect their conformation as adults.

"I really focus on the knees as we're raising these babies. I'm always looking at knees to make sure they stay correct and aren't getting offset as the foal is growing. I've found that corrective trimming of the feet helps with this," he noted. "Every once in a while we'll have to do screws and wires (surgery), but hardly ever now because of how we're trimming. We watch as they develop, and trim accordingly to keep them growing right."

In addition to practices that impact how young horses grow and develop physically, Jones has found that the horse's mental and emotional condition is also crucial.

"In real estate they say, 'Location, location, location.' In horses, it's trust, trust, trust," Jones said. "Once a horse learns trust, he'll go anywhere for you. There's a kinder, gentler way to approach any problem other than taking a dominant, forceful approach. It all comes back to trust."

This is a main reason Jones uses his swimming facility, not just on rehab cases but on every sales yearling.

"There's nothing like swimming to change a horse's whole world; it really builds their confidence and trust. It erases so many bad habits when you can get them to trust you. When a horse doesn't have solid ground under his feet and swims for the first time, not only does it provide physical benefits but it's a huge thing for building trust," explained Jones.

He designed his swimming facility to make the task easier on both horse and handler. The entry to the water includes an enclosed area with rubber mats for se-

Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in the selected region (stallions that have died or been exported prior to the 2016 breeding season are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available Northern Hemisphere statistics through February 28, 2021. As supplied to *The Blood-Horse* by The Jockey Club Information Systems, Inc., earnings 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 2019 is \$25,300 or 53% of the 2019 average purse in Japan. To put earnings on par, all Japanese progeny earnings are multiplied by 53% before being credited to a sire's progeny earnings. Hong Kong earnings are adjusted by 17%; Singapore by 85%. Current year stakes winners include all N.H.-foaled black-type stakes winners worldwide. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners include all countries. (A ¶ indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race).

cure footing and gates that can swing both ways.

Jones is also a fan of ground driving young horses, which he does in the well-shaded 50-foot round pen beyond the barn and swimming hole.

“I like to spend several days ground-driving a horse, which in reality saves you a lot of time in the long run,” Jones said. “The more preparation I do, the more trust that horse will develop. Consistency and repetition are so important because horses thrive off both.”

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Jones has been active with the Florida Thoroughbred Farm Managers for some 25 years and was president of the organization for more than a decade. He also serves on the board of directors for the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association.

Jones has one son, Dalyn, 24, who is active in both the equine and cattle industries, and will graduate from the University of Florida this spring. Jones has been involved in Dalyn's baseball pursuits from elementary school through college.

Hands-on involvement is Jones' forte, so he was intrigued when a local school approached him several years ago about working with agriculture students. Lori Albritton, the animal science and agriculture teacher at North Marion High School outside Ocala hoped Jones would help them launch North Marion Equine, a program that would give students first-hand



Jones is a mentor to agricultural students at North Marion High School

experience in the equine industry.

In 2017 the students obtained a \$5,000 grant from the Public Education Foundation of Marion County, allowing them to build a paddock and shelter on the rural school's property. In 2018 Jones donated a pregnant mare to the program. Donations of stud fees, feed, veterinary and farrier services followed, thanks to Jones and Albritton's efforts.

“The best people in the world are in agriculture,” said Jones of the horse community's willingness to share in the program through donations.

Students are eventually invited to Jones' farm to learn more about horse care, including grooming, foal watching, and observing veterinary and therapeutic treatments. Nutrition, reproduction, nicking, and reading pedigrees make more sense when they're learning those things first-hand.

“There are things they can't learn in a classroom, and this program gives them

real-world opportunities,” said Albritton, who is also the FFA adviser for North Marion High School. “Most of these kids haven't experienced the Thoroughbred industry until this opportunity. A lot of them are FFA participants who show cattle and hogs but aren't used to horses.”

Several of the youth in the program worked the recent Ocala Breeders' Sales' January auction, learning from Jones' seasoned sales help the proper way to show and stand a horse for prospective buyers.

“The kids have been wonderful, but Bobby's done most of the work,” Albritton said.

To date, the program has sold three yearlings (which are consigned by Bobby Jones Equine) for a total of \$30,000. All seasons were donated by Ocala area stud farms. Money from the sale of yearlings goes back into the equine program account to be used for necessary equipment and any expenses not covered by donations.

“I don't expect everyone to come out of this program doing what I do, but there are a lot of equine services in the industry, from accounting to therapeutics and much more. This program is a great way to get youth involved,” Jones said. “This program has turned into a big thing, but the recognition is not why I'm doing it. It's given me a platform to help others.

“To me, the coolest part of the horse business is the ability to help other people,” he added. “The horse business is a lot of work, but it's a wonderful life. At the end of the day, I can't see myself doing anything else.” **BH**

Cynthia McFarland is a freelance writer based in central Florida.



The Bobby Jones Equine operation was built with the horse in mind