

T D N Q & A

Q&A: FASIG-TIPTON'S BOYD BROWNING, JR.

Last month, Fasig-Tipton announced it is moving The Florida Sale, one of the top 2-year-old in training sales in the world, to Gulfstream Park for 2015. It marks the third venue in as many years for the auction, which was held at Adena Springs South in Central Florida in 2014, and at the Palm Meadow Training Center in Boynton Beach in 2013. But it is a homecoming of sorts for the sale, which for years called Calder Race Course home.

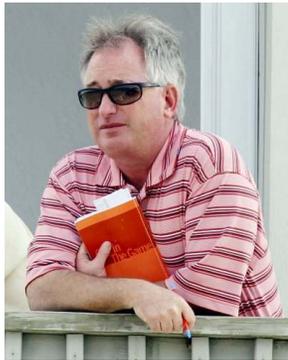
The under-tack preview for the 2015 Florida Sale will be held Monday, Mar. 2. The sale itself will be conducted Wednesday, Mar. 4. That's significantly earlier than in the past few years, when the sale was held in late March. As it stands now, here is the current schedule for the major juvenile sales in 2015:

- Feb. 23 - Barretts Select (Pomona)
- Mar. 4 - Fasig-Tipton Florida (Gulfstream Park)
- Mar. 17-19 - OBS March (Ocala)
- Apr. 6 - Keeneland April (Lexington)
- Apr. 21-24 - OBS April (Ocala)
- May 18-19 - Fasig-Tipton Midlantic (Timonium)
- May 27 - Barretts May (Del Mar)
- June 16-19 - OBS June (Ocala)

Yesterday, the *TDN's* Lucas Marquardt talked to Fasig-Tipton President Boyd Browning Jr. on the sale company's decision to return to South Florida, the track surface at Gulfstream and why Miami is a "sexy" place for participants.

Fasig-Tipton is returning to the Miami area for 2015. Why did you decide to make the move?

"There were a variety of reasons. First and foremost, Gulfstream Park is a premier location. It's a great facility in a great location. It has a trainer and owner colony that makes it the epicenter of the industry at that time of the year. And we've had great success selling quality horses in South Florida for many, many years. So it seems like a great marriage with Fasig-Tipton and Gulfstream. They're trying to create a year-round racing circuit and year-round activities, and this was a chance for us to go back to our roots."



Boyd Browning Jr.
Horsephotos

Is this an indefinite move?

"Yes, there is a long-term contract in place between the parties, and we view this as our home going forward, which is a nice thing to have."

Talk, if you would, about the surface at Gulfstream.

"One of the great selling points is that this is a racetrack that people are used to training on and racing over, and it's a dirt track. There's familiarity, and that gives people a level of comfort and confidence. They'll be able to watch horses breeze and interpret information with a high level of confidence."

Is there a sense of excitement generated by holding a sale near a major metropolitan center like Miami?

"There's no question. I don't know a human being in the world who doesn't enjoy being in South Florida, particularly at that time of the year. There are fantastic hotels and restaurants, and there are great attractions for our buyers and participants. It's something I, and we, underestimated. Palm Meadows is a great facility, but what we found is that there's a little difference between Boynton Beach and Miami [laughs]. As good as the facility, track and amenities at Palm Meadows, it just didn't have the pizzazz and excitement. Miami is cool and sexy and jazzy. People are comfortable there. They know where to stay, they know where to have dinner."

What's been the response from consignors?

"Naturally, we got a lot of feedback from the sellers before making this decision, and there was near virtual consent and support for us going back to South Florida. I think you'll see them support the sale with a lot of quality horses."

The sale will be held about three weeks earlier than it has been in recent years. Can you comment on that?

"I think the window isn't all that different, really, and it fit much better with Gulfstream Park's schedule. Later in March gets complicated with the GI Florida Derby, and it's important for them, like it is for us, that this sale be a signature event. It also seemed better for the marketplace time-wise, and if a horse needs more time, horsemen have the option of our Timonium sale 60-70 days later."

The 2014 sale has already turned out some top horses. Competitive Edge (Super Saver) won the GI Hopeful S. I Spent It (Super Saver) won the GI Saratoga Special S. Blofeld (Quality Road) won the GI Futurity S. The success of grads always attracts buyers. Does it also help attract horses to the sale?

"There's no better advertisement or validation for a sale than to have successful graduates. To have three of the top 2-year-olds in the United States gives everyone confidence. I guarantee you that the connections of those horses, somewhere in the back of their minds, are thinking about the 2015 Kentucky Derby."

And when people arrive on the sales grounds of the 2015 Florida Sale, we want them thinking that they can find the types of horses that can bring them to the Derby, the [Kentucky] Oaks and Breeders' Cup. And it's because consignors are bringing horses that can."

Dwindling catalog size has been a concern for every boutique sale in the U.S. Is there still a place in the market for a boutique 2-year-old sale?

"We all have a tendency in the world at large to put simple labels on things. There's no question there is, was, and will always be, a market for quality. In any economy or marketplace, the safest place to be is always in the quality segment. So we'll try to attract a broad cross-section of quality horses. We won't be trying to sell just million-dollar horses at Gulfstream next year. We hope we have a few, but it won't be dominated by them. You want the person with \$100,000 to spend to know that they can come down and get a quality athlete that can take them to a high level of success.

You also want the people with a whole lot of money to spend to feel comfortable and confident in the venue, and to have it so that there's not a huge number of horses to go through. It's a balance."

Has that been a focus, to attract middle-market buyers to The Florida Sale?

"We work our tails off to recruit all kinds of buyers, and I know other sale companies do, too. The thing is that you try to educate buyers on the opportunities out there. You may have a greater opportunity to buy quality at a value at Saratoga or September Book 1, because the sheer number of buyers might not be that high. But every market is constantly evolving."

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