

SUCCESS STORIES

RICK

PORTER

PAUL & HIDDEN
POMPA BROOK

DAVID

HANLEY

CARRIE

BROGDEN

GEORGE & LORI

HALL



These may not be the best of times for the Thoroughbred racing business, but amid the constant drumbeat of gloom and doom, there are beacons of light. You just need to know where to find them. There are people who have done quite well financially over the last few years, whether they have been buying low and selling high at the sales, turning their valuable race horses into very valuable stallions or simply running farms or businesses that seem to get bigger, better and more relevant by the day.

SUCCESS STORIES

The *Thoroughbred Daily News's* Spring magazine features five operations beating the odds amid these difficult times. They are owners, pinhookers, breeders, consignors. They run multi-faceted farms. They form partnerships.

The only criteria for inclusion in this story was that the participants invest their own money in the sport, and have had success based on bottom-line results. How have they done it? That's the primary question we asked each one of them.

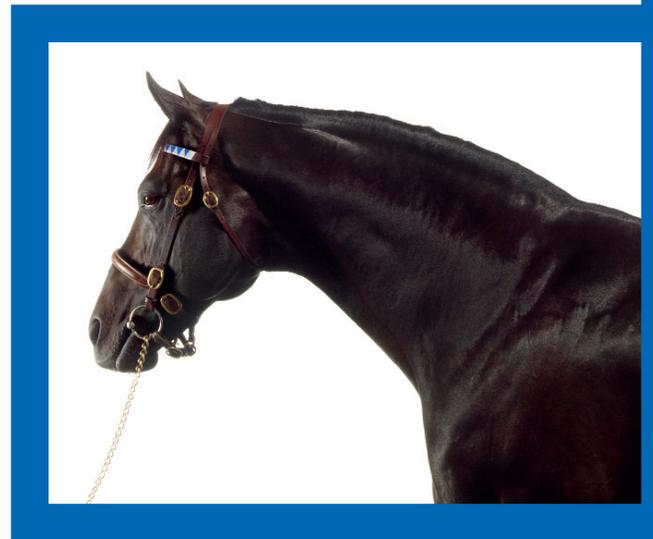
There was no one answer. Some do things on a small scale and don't spend a lot of money. Others aren't afraid to step up and buy a \$650,000 yearling. Some are careful. Some believe in taking risks. There was, however, a recurring theme that ran through their stories: integrity. Every person interviewed for this article was a firm believer in doing things the right way. That means striving for excellence, which is only possible when you are honest and surround yourself with people who share your beliefs. In an industry that has, of late, seemed to produce more bad headlines than good, we are pleased to demonstrate that maybe the good guys do come out ahead in the end.

Meet some of racing's greatest success stories.

Success Stories, sponsored by Medaglia d'Oro. (Talking about success...)

* All photos courtesy of Horsephotos unless otherwise indicated.

**THEY SAY
SUCCESS
BREEDS
SUCCESS.**



**We say: Medaglia d'Oro
breeds success...**

Officially, Hard Spun was 7-for-13 during his career, earned \$2,673,470 and won six stakes races. He finished his career with a second-place finish behind Curlin in the 2007 Breeders' Cup Classic at Monmouth Park. On the surface, he was a good horse who had a successful career and made his owner a nice profit.

Now, for the rest of the story:

Rick Porter, who races under the name of Fox Hill Farm, paid \$400,000 for Hard Spun, who is by Danzig out of the Turkoman mare Turkish Tryst, buying him from Eaton Sales in a private deal after the colt did not meet his \$485,000 reserve at the 2005 Keeneland September Sales. It was

a typical Porter purchase: the horse was expensive but not wildly so, he had an outstanding pedigree and his conformation impressed Porter's key advisor. Porter knew that with some degree of success on the racetrack Hard Spun would go on to be a valuable sire prospect, which was his goal all along.

Hard Spun won a couple of small stakes as a 2-year-old and then won two graded preps for the Kentucky Derby. By then, he was starting to attract the attention of some of the major Kentucky farms, which are always interested in well-bred horses who can run.

Hard Spun showed he belonged with the best of his generation, finishing second in the 2007 Derby and third in the Preakness. With those efforts, Porter began to weigh offers, many of them sizeable. Prior to Hard Spun's start in the Belmont Stakes, Porter sold the breeding rights to the colt to Sheikh Mohammed's Darley Stud for a reported \$20 million. The deal reportedly included a provision that Darley would pay an additional

\$15 million should Hard Spun win a Grade I race. No other farm had much such an offer.

That would mean when he won the King's Bishop at Saratoga, Hard Spun became a \$35-million horse.

"We hit the jackpot," Porter said. "That was our grand slam."

RICK PORTER

Perhaps anyone can get lucky once, even so lucky that they turn a \$400,000 investment into \$35 million. But Porter's success almost can't be a matter of mere luck, not when he keeps coming up with horse after horse that excels on the racetrack and then is snatched up by someone willing to pay a lot of money for a sire or broodmare prospect.

Porter bought Round Pond as a yearling for \$105,000. The filly earned \$1,998,700 on the racetrack, won the 2006 Breeders' Cup Distaff and was sold to Sheikh Mohammed's agent John Ferguson for \$5,750,000 at the 2007 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky November sale.

Rockport Harbor cost Porter \$470,000 at the 2003 Keeneland September sale and won three graded stakes and earned \$324,800 on the racetrack. He was sold to Darley as a stallion prospect for a reported \$5,750,000.

Jostle, the first major stakes winner Porter owned, cost him \$85,000, the price he negotiated with Taylor Made after the filly did not meet her reserve at the 1998 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga sale. While racing for Fox Hill Farm, she made \$1,381,682 and was sold for \$1.7 million to WinStar Farm at Keeneland November in 2001.

How has Porter done it? His formula actually isn't that complicated. He surrounds himself at the sales only with knowledgeable and hon-



Rick Porter after Round Pond's 2006 Breeders' Cup Distaff win.

est advisors like bloodstock agent Tom McGreevy, is willing to spend enough money to buy a horse with an outstanding pedigree and will only give his horses to trainers who have the ability to take a young horse, develop it and make it competitive in the sport's most important races.

Back when Porter got started in the business he didn't have a plan, any particular goals, and never seriously considered whether or not he could make money at this. He just wanted to have some fun.

Porter, 70, always enjoyed going to Delaware Park with his parents when he was growing up, but he gravitated toward the auto business after college. He went on to own a number of car dealerships in the Mid-Atlantic states, but always hoped to get involved in racing some day.

In the mid-nineties, he attended the races at Atlantic City Race Course with the general manager of one of his dealerships, who happened to own horses. Porter's employee introduced him to trainer John Servis. Porter took an immediate liking to Servis and told him to go out and find him a few modestly priced horses.

"I talked to John and told him I always wanted to get into it, but didn't know how to get started," Porter said. "I felt real comfortable with John. I asked him, 'what do I do now?' He said the best thing to do was to start slow, claim a couple of horses, and get a feel for how it all works."

Servis was the first person in racing that Porter hired, but not the last who would fit the same bill. In Servis, Porter was certain he had found someone who was both talented and trustworthy. Everyone he has hired since has had to have those same two assets.

"As I started looking at racing as a business, I tried to go back and see what analogies I could find between the car business and the horse business," he said. "I started thinking what made me successful in the car business were the people I surrounded myself with. That probably works in any business. The biggest thing

"We hit the jackpot. That was our grand slam."

-Rick Porter, on Hard Spun's sale to Darley.



that has helped me is that I have surrounded myself with really good, talented, honest people, like Tom McGreevy, John Servis, Larry Jones, Tony Dutrow, and Victoria Keith."

Still learning the business, Porter had some early success with his racing stock, but soon figured out where the real money was to be made.

"One thing that I have learned is that it's not the hardest thing in the world, if you manage things properly and have a good trainer or trainers, to break even when it comes to purse income versus expenses," he said. "The real problem is how are you going to get this investment back? We'd go to Keeneland and spend \$1 million, then \$2 million and then \$3 million a year. How were we going to get that money back? I started to analyze the business and figured out pretty quickly that the only way you're going to get this money back is to come up with a stallion or an expensive

broodmare."

With that in mind, Porter devised a plan of attack, one from which he has not varied. He would budget \$3 million annually to spend at the sales, would buy only well-bred horses and would lean heavily on McGreevy's expertise.

The process begins with McGreevy, a South Carolina native who has been around horses all his life, studied animal science at Penn State and used to train on the Mid-Atlantic circuit. McGreevy tries not to let anything go unnoticed at the sales, from how a horse handles the pressure of being around crowds to their conformation to the ins and outs of how they walk. He pays particular attention to how the horses he scouts at the sales walk and, in particular, focuses on watching them from the side and not just as they walk toward him

His goal is not necessarily to find a horse with a sparkling pedigree, but a

horse who has all the characteristics of a great athlete. It is the horse, more than the horse's pedigree, that matters to him.

"With my part of the equation, I put very little into pedigree," he said. "My job is to find the individual, and after that we will get together and discuss the pedigrees. I would just as soon not know the pedigree of the horse when I look at it. When you know, you can get a false impression. I use the catalogue because it's a very convenient way of keeping track of who you are looking at, but I think most people would be better off if they didn't know who the horses were by when they went to evaluate them."

McGreevy learned some of his tricks while at Penn State, where part of his curriculum involved judging livestock shows that included horses and other animals.

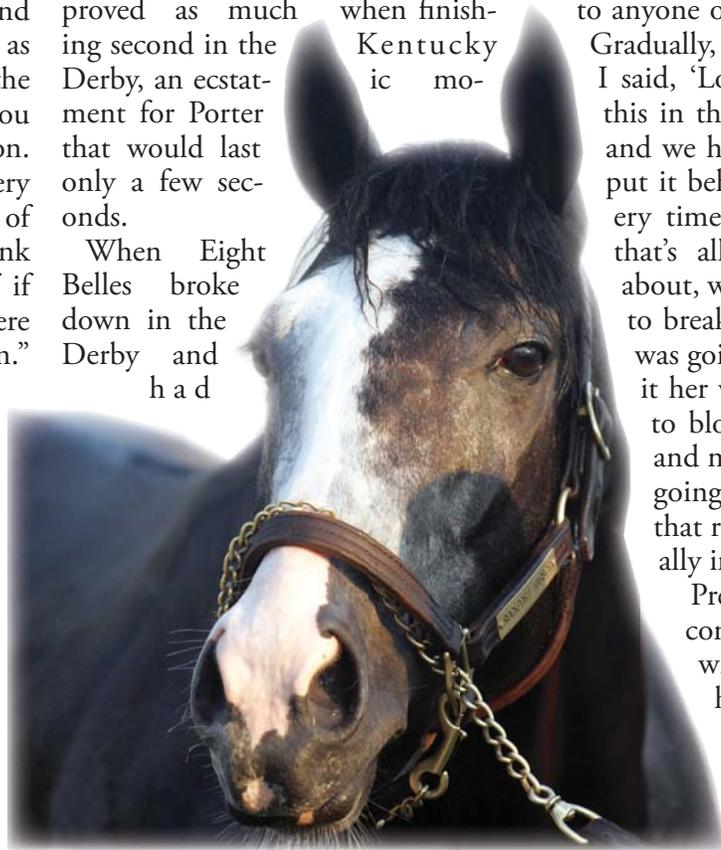
"We judged pigs, sheep, horses, cattle, at these competitions," he said. "It helped you develop your eye. I've talked to a lot of people about how they do things because I like to think I can always learn from them. There are some people who say they really like this horse, but they can't pick it apart and tell you why. When we had to judge in school, you placed the animals one, two, three, four, etc. You would have to explain why you placed them the way you did. You had to look at details and be able to explain them."

For the McGreevy-Porter team, not everything has worked. In 2007, Porter paid \$725,000 at Keeneland September for an Unbridled's Song filly named Christina's World, who has won one race and has earned \$51,000. But enough of Porter's purchases have panned out that he has made a considerable amount of money in the racing business.

His best horse may not have even been Hard Spun or Rockport Harbor. At the 2006 Keeneland September sale Porter paid \$375,000 for an Unbridled's Song filly with whom he would soon fall in love.

Eight Belles was special. After winning just one of five starts as a 2-year-old, she started to turn things around for trainer Larry Jones early in 2008. She won her first four starts of the year and was clearly one of the best 3-year-old fillies in the country. She proved as much when finishing second in the Kentucky Derby, an ecstatic moment for Porter that would last only a few seconds.

When Eight Belles broke down in the Derby and had



Porter sold Rockport Harbor to stand at Darley America.

"I think most people would be better off if they didn't know who the horses were by when they went to evaluate them."

-Tom McGreevy

to be euthanized, Porter was suddenly faced with the sport at its ugliest. Despite all the success he had had, he was no longer sure he had the stomach to go on.

"When we first realized what had happened, the bottom of my heart fell out," he said. "The reality of it

all hit you hard. It really soured me and I started to think maybe this isn't for me. If this is what you have to go through trying to have these glorious moments, maybe it's not worth it.

"The first few days, I was completely sick about it. I didn't want to talk to anyone or take any phone calls. Gradually, I talked to my wife and I said, 'Look, stuff happens like this in this sport. It was a fluke and we have to try somehow to put it behind us.' She said, 'Every time I watch a horse run, that's all I'm going to think about, whether or not it's going to break down.' I told her she was going to have to deal with it her way. I was going to try to block it out of my mind and move forward. I was not going to let a tragedy like that ruin a passion that is really important for me."

Pressing on, Porter has continued to come up with still more good horses. He had an early favorite for the Kentucky Derby last year in Old Fashioned, an \$800,000 yearling purchase who was

hurt after finishing second in the Arkansas Derby. Not satisfied with the offers he was getting for the colt as a sire prospect, Porter has retained ownership in Old Fashioned. Still another offspring of Unbridled's Song, Old Fashioned stands at Taylor Made Stallions, Inc. and his stud fee is \$12,500.

"A lot of people were interested in Old Fashioned," he said. "It's just that they wanted to steal him from me."

Porter owned Kodiak Kowboy in a partnership with Vinery. The colt was named the 2009 sprint champion and is standing at Vinery for a stud fee of \$15,000. The Porter-Vinery partnership also owns Friesan Fire, the 2009 Louisiana Derby winner who remains in training and has earned more than \$650,000.

Porter looked like he had another



2009 early Derby favorite Old Fashioned now stands at Taylor Made.

potential star this year in Winslow Homer, the winner of the Holy Bull Stakes. A son of Unbridled's Song who cost \$310,000 at the 2008 Keeneland September sale, he has been sidelined with a stress fracture in a cannon bone, but is due back before the end of the year.

He has 15 horses currently racing, seven more on the shelf, and 14 2-year-olds gearing up for later in the season.

A few things have changed. With the downturn in the economy, Porter's bankroll for the sales each year remains \$3 million, but he intends to buy more horses than he has in the past, expecting to find more bargains. His primary trainer is now Tony Dutrow, who came aboard after Larry Jones retired. Jones took over for Servis after Porter became disenchanted with some aspects of the Ser-

“A lot of people were interested in Old Fashioned. It’s just that they wanted to steal him from me.” -Rick Porter

vis operation. He said he always had faith in Servis, but feared that he did not have a strong team behind him when it came to assistants and other key personnel.

What hasn't changed is his enthusiasm for the sport and his drive to win. It's not the money that motivates him, but races like the Kentucky Derby, where he has twice fin-

ished second.

“Nobody likes to lose, but, for me, it's not about trying to make money,” he said. “The money we made from horses like Hard Spun are funds that have enabled us to not have to put up more money out of pocket. But it still boils down to that unbelievable challenge of getting a great horse and getting to the big races. When I talk to Tony or Tom, all we talk about is who do we have that might give us that thrill we are all looking for? When we get to the sales, it's all about trying to find that horse that can be a graded stakes winner.”

Porter has found them, many times. The result is he is getting everything he could possibly ask for out of racing—excitement, a challenge, success and a nice added benefit called a profit.

MEDAGLIA D'ORO BREEDS SUCCESS

**DIRT.
TURF.
SYNTH.**



**Medaglia
d'Oro sires
G1 horses for
all courses...**

CARRIE BROGDEN

Carrie Brogden has a theory. If everyone else is doing X, she should do Y. When others see a horse at auction they don't like because of an imperfection or two, she sees a bargain. When others see a sire that has fallen out of favor or that was never popular to begin with, she sees an opportunity. When it comes to raising young horses, she won't do what everyone else does. She will do what works for her.

That might be why Brogden and her partners at Machmer Hall, a Paris, Kentucky-based farm that boards, breeds, raises, races and sells horses, have done so well. The name Machmer Hall comes from a building at the University of Massachusetts named in honor of Carrie Brogden's great-grandfather, a former dean of the university.

Established in 2001 and co-owned by Brogden's husband, Craig, and her mother, Sandy Willwerth, Machmer Hall has been involved with

several success stories, particularly when it comes to pinhooking ventures.

The latest hit came at the OBS March Sale of Selected Two-Year-olds in Training, where a partnership that included Brogden sold a horse to Jess Jackson's Stonestreet Stables for \$225,000. The colt, by Imperialism, has come a long way from its days as a weanling by a \$5,000 Florida-based sire. Brogden bought the colt, out of Certainly Royal, for \$6,000 at the 2009 OBS October sale.

"We're willing to step outside the box with pedigrees," she said. "We try to find big, strong horses who will outrun their pedigrees."

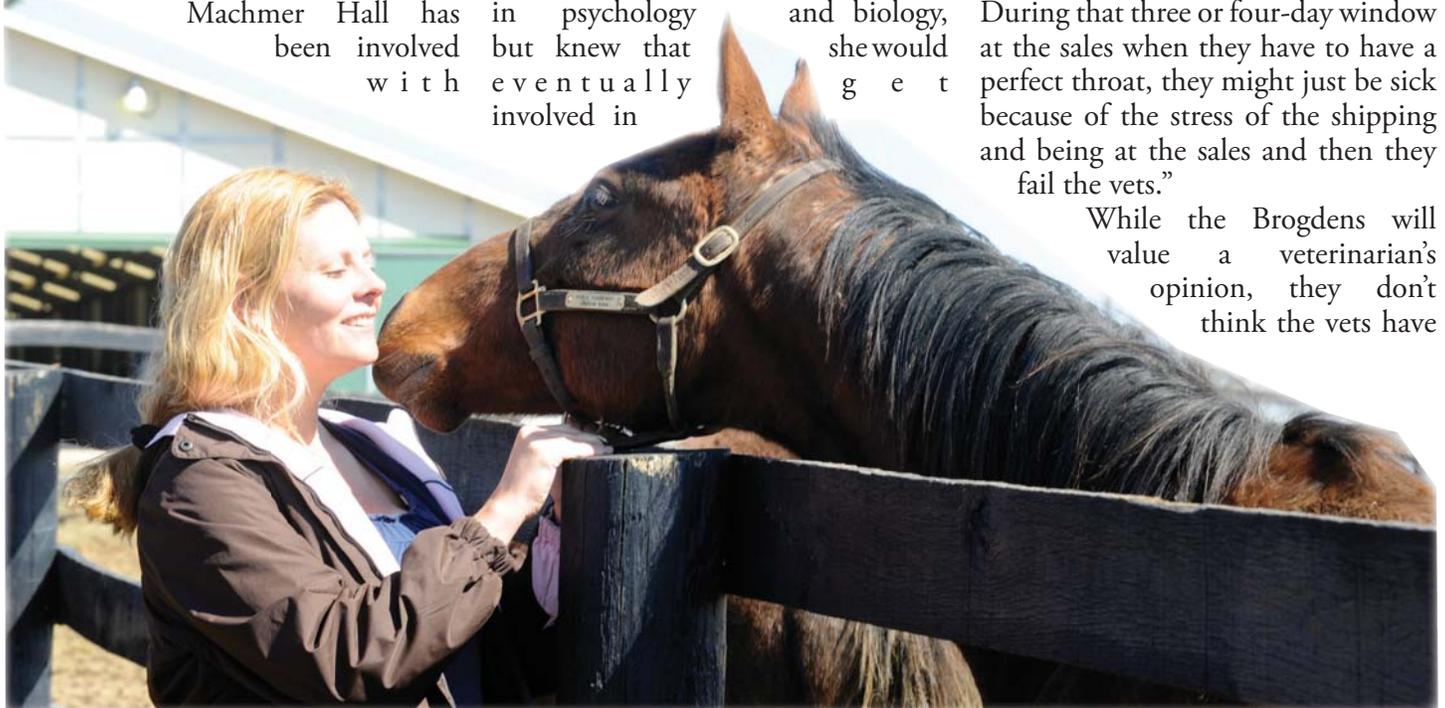
That takes a good eye. Brogden began to develop hers while very young. The daughter of two veterinarians, she's been around horses most of her life and started riding at a young age. Brogden went to James Madison University, where she got a degree in psychology and biology, but knew that she would eventually get involved in

Thoroughbred racing. Everything started to click when she met and then married Craig, an Australian native. He had worked at Three Chimneys, and also under the tutelage of the late Dr. Phil McCarthy. In 2001, the two, along with Willwerth, opened Machmer Hall, then only 105 acres.

Just starting out and undercapitalized at the time, the Brogdens knew they probably weren't going to be involved with too many horses with fashionable pedigrees. Instead, they looked for horses they thought might benefit from their care and attention, ones that no one else wanted to take a chance on. The problem that kept the big spenders away from a horse at the sales might just be something they could easily fix.

"We will buy the horse that has a defect we can deal with, improve on and correct," Craig Brogden said. "If we do our jobs right, then we can sell the horse at a significant profit. A lot of horses have been discounted because of vetting issues that aren't necessarily long-term vetting issues. They are developmental. An example is the weanling that has a throat problem. Young horses get sick and when they get sick, it's like a person in that their throat kind of tightens up and things don't work right for them. During that three or four-day window at the sales when they have to have a perfect throat, they might just be sick because of the stress of the shipping and being at the sales and then they fail the vets."

While the Brogdens will value a veterinarian's opinion, they don't think the vets have



Brogden gets up close and personal with her boarders.

all the answers. They will listen to what a consignor or seller has to say, as long as it is someone they trust.

"It's about having a relationship with the seller and trusting the seller and what the seller is telling you," Craig Brogden said. "They can tell you what the horse was like before the sale, before something minor went wrong. You can make a good decision based on that information and not just based on what you see that one instant while at the sales."

The Brogdens, who involve partners in virtually all the horses they breed, buy and sell, have had a number of

then turned around and sold the foal for \$270,000 at Keeneland November in 2009. They bought a Maria's Mon colt for \$50,000 at Keeneland November in 2006, and resold it for \$220,000 at Keeneland September the following year.

But nothing compares to the home run they hit with a Medaglia d'Oro colt out of I'll Do It My Way they purchased for just \$10,000 at Fasig-Tipton February in 2008. They resold him just five months later for \$260,000 at Fasig Tipton July. Of course, it helped that in between the dates of the two sales, Medaglia

by him. I thought he had it all: beauty, brains, brawn, finesse, speed. I thought he was going to break through as a stallion."

With any pinhooking deal, it's vital that the horse looks its very best when it returns to the sales. For some, that means being very protective of the horses during their stay at the farm. Carrie Brogden doesn't believe in that. She wants her horses to be horses--to learn, grow, play and even roughhouse in a natural setting that takes mankind out of the equation as much as possible. That philosophy grew out of a situation when Brogden came across a horse raised in virtual seclusion.

"He was raised in California and he had a lot of talent, but had never been raised with other horses and he was so afraid," she said. "He couldn't run. He's a great show hunter now because his best friends are humans. But he was terrified of other horses."

That's not going to happen with a Machmer Hall production.

"The biggest thing for us is that we do not 'hot house' anything," she said. "They are out and I mean out. The yearlings will come in Monday through Friday for about an hour in the mornings to get fed and so we can take a look at them, but that's it. I want them out there beating the hell out of each other and being used to close quarters."

When it's time to prep the horses for the sales, the tactics change and the emphasis is put on making the young horse look as good as possible. But Carrie Brogden believes a foundation has already been built that will help down the road when the horses get to the track.

"If it gets to the point where they are actually hurting one another, we will separate them, but 99.99 percent of the time they will not get separated until we get into sales-prep mode," Carrie Brogden said. "Are we going to have less-than-perfect vetting sometimes? Possibly. But I want people to keep coming back to us."

According to records supplied to the



Carrie Brogden and Andrew Cary at the 2009 Fasig-Tipton July sale.

success stories as pinhookers. They always buy low. They try to never spend more than \$60,000 for a horse. Oftentimes, they sell high.

They purchased Pulsion, who ran second in the Grade I Norfolk last year, for \$60,000 as a weanling at OBS October in 2007, and sold him for nine months later for \$200,000 at the Fasig-Tipton July sale. The Machmer Hall team bought a mare named Excellentadventure in foal to Dixie Union privately for \$60,000 from Gainesway after she RNA'd for \$70,000 at Keeneland November and

“The biggest thing for us is that we do not ‘hot house’ anything. They are out, and I mean out.”

- Carrie Brogden

d'Oro's daughter Rachel Alexandra broke her maiden and finished second in a stakes race.

"He was kind of a weaker horse with a big giant walk that was a little flat in the knees," Carrie Brogden said. "He strengthened up a lot after we got him. I noticed that the stallions that were making it, like Pollard's Vision and Lemon Drop Kid, were absolute warriors with speed. That seemed to be what was working. People weren't that high on Medaglia d'Oro at the start because he doesn't have the most commercial pedigree. I loved the fact that he was an absolute warrior on the racetrack. I had to have something

TDN by Carrie Brogden, Machmer Hall returned a 99 percent net profit on its pinhooking ventures in 2006. With their profits, they expanded the farm, which now consists of 360 acres.

Their net profit was 44 percent in 2007, and 42 percent in 2008. Their net was down to 15 percent in 2009 as Machmer Hall, like virtually everyone else selling horses last year, was hit by the downturn in the market.

The Brogdens are reassessing their strategies, again trying to stay ahead of the pack, ever more important during a poor economy. They have decided to take on less risk, which means concentrating on proven stallions and first- or second-year stallions that still might be a bargain.

“We bought a Borrego in February with Hunter Valley Farms as our partner that I loved,” Carrie Brogden said. “He’s a big, strong gorgeous colt we got for just \$7,000. People are scared right now, and that helps us find horses like this. Is Borrego going to make it? I am willing to bet that he will. He’s a son of El Prado and he was a serious race horse.”

But should their next round of pinhooking ventures not go well, Machmer Hall has plenty to fall back on. It is a diversified operation that has its hand in a number of different facets on the game.

Along with Andrew Cary, Tom Ryan, and Sandy Willwerth, Carrie Brogden has started Select Sales, a consignment agency. They debuted at the sales in 2009 and were the seventh-leading weanling consignor in North America, selling 32 weanlings for a combined \$1,470,700.

As breeders, the Machmer Hall team also has had success and will continue to breed horses on a relatively small scale. In partnership with Will Farish, they bred Premium Tap, the winner of the 2006 Grade I Woodward and a \$2.5 million earner on the racetrack.

They also race a handful of horses and do so with an eye on letting them prove themselves on the racetrack before selling them. That’s what



Brogden at her Machmer Hall in Paris, KY., where she boards, breeds, raises, and sells horses.

happened with Join in The Dance. Machmer Hall bred the son of Sky Mesa in a partnership, but it soon became apparent that a problem with Equine OCD in the colt’s front ankle was going to be a serious impediment to selling him. The Brogdens suspected the horse would be just fine, and he proved as much when he broke his maiden at Arlington Park in his second career start. Afterward, Join in The Dance was sold privately for \$250,000. He would go on to finish second in the Tampa Bay and Pennsylvania Derbies and seventh in the Kentucky Derby.

And sometimes Brogden will buy a horse right off the track. Pay close enough attention to what is going on, and sooner or later a bargain will turn up. In 2004, in partnership with Breerton Jones, she bought a cheap claimer named Be Happy My Love as part of a package deal, estimating the cost of the filly at around \$55,000. She was willing to pay that much for a filly who had only recently lost a \$6,500 claiming race by 34 ½ lengths because she had noticed the filly was a half-sister to an up-and-coming horse named Smarty Jones. When Smarty Jones won the Kentucky Derby and Preakness, Brogden had in her possession a valuable broodmare prospect. In foal to Proud Citizen,

Be Happy My Love was sold for \$360,000 at the 2004 Keeneland November Sale.

They also continue to board other people’s mares. Tampa Bay Derby winner Odysseus was born and raised at Machmer Hall.

To do so many things at once is not easy. Craig Brogden likes to kid his wife that she spends the majority of her life on her cell phone. She has three young children to look after, plus the 60 or so yearlings currently on the farm. She works hard, which is what you have to do when you’re in a tough business and trying to make money. But it’s also her enthusiasm that keeps her going in so many directions at once.

“I can’t believe I get to do what I do,” she said. “It’s an absolute labor of love. I wish that everybody could feel about their work the way I do.”

Like many, she worries about racing’s future. She believes the sport must find a way to organize under a commissioner, get rid of the drugs and downsize when it comes to breeding and racing. Some claim those things will never happen, that there are too many obstacles in the way to topple the status quo. Brogden hates that. It’s conventional thinking. That’s something she doesn’t believe in.

MEDAGLIA D'ORO BREEDS SUCCESS

**\$1.6 MILLION
TWO-YEAR-OLD,**



**\$1.5 MILLION
YEARLING,**

**\$1.3 MILLION
YEARLING,**

**\$1.1 MILLION
YEARLING.**

Well, they say gold is the
safest bet in troubled times...

David Hanley has always done a little bit of this and a little bit of that. He's trained horses and bred horses, including Eclipse Award winner Golden Apples. He designed an uphill gallop at the Hurricane Hall stallion and training operation. He is an accomplished equestrian. Yet, he always seems to come back to pinhooking. There's a reason for that: he's good at it.

Modest and careful not to come across as a know-it-all, Hanley won't say that. But he doesn't have to. The numbers speak for themselves.

DAVID HANLEY

Perhaps no pinhooker had a better year in 2009 than Hanley did. The Irish transplant, who, along with his wife, Ann, operates a Lexington-based farm called Whitechurch, sold a Medaglia d'Oro colt out of Kendall Hill for \$875,000 and a Tiznow filly out of Positive Energy for \$725,000 at Fasig-Tipton Saratoga. Some nine months earlier, Hanley bought the two for a combined \$405,000 at Keeneland November. In 2009, at Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July, Whitechurch sold still another Medaglia d'Oro filly for \$425,000, or \$340,000 more than it paid for the yearling six months earlier at Keeneland January.

A year earlier at Fasig-Tipton July, Hanley sold a daughter of Exchange Rate for \$375,000 after purchasing the filly for \$100,000 at Keeneland November in 2007. Both the Exchange Rate and Medaglia d'Oro fillies were the sales toppers at their respective Fasig-Tipton July sales.

He bought an Indian Charlie colt for \$75,000 at Keeneland November 2008 and turned around and sold it for \$150,000 at Keeneland September 2009. He must have been on to

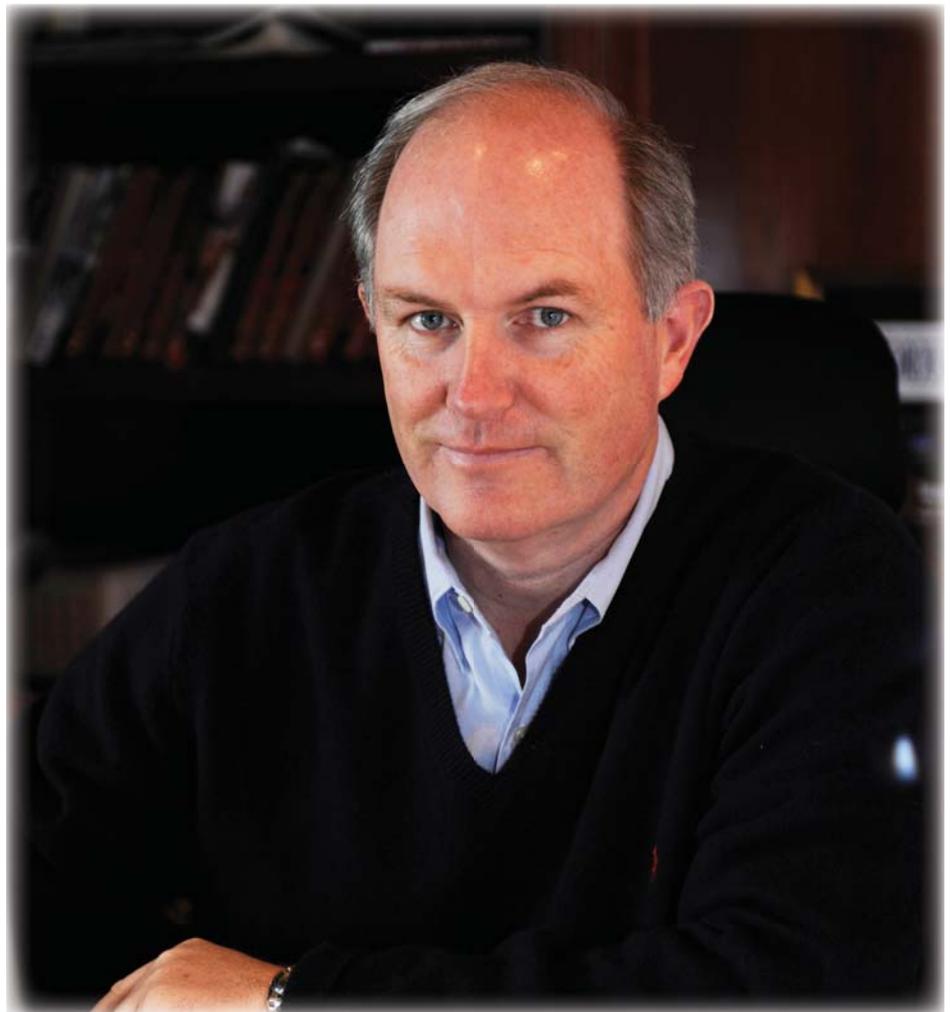
something: the colt was subsequently sold for \$675,000 at the 2010 Fasig-Tipton February sale.

Hanley, 51, didn't think he'd be immersed in the buying and selling of horses when he moved to Kentucky in 2002. Based in Ireland at the time and primarily working as a trainer, he decided he wanted to get more involved in the bloodstock side of the racing business and figured he needed to relocate to Kentucky to maximize his potential. He came here in 2001 and wanted to train, breed, and buy and sell at the sales. Initially, he part-

nered with Needham Betz Thoroughbreds before joining Hurricane Hall as a co-owner of that operation along with Ben P. Walden Jr., Patrick Madden and Brad Kelley.

Hanley was brought in to be the trainer for the Hurricane Hall racing operation and did win nine races with Hurricane Hall runners in 2006 and 2007, but the partnership was eventually dissolved. That left Hanley with time on his hands and looking for a way to pay the bills. It was back to pinhooking. It was something he had always been successful at during his many years in Ireland, where he partnered with James Egan of Corduff Stud on several successful ventures.

"It wasn't the plan to do this," he said. "I am a horseman, a trainer and a rider; I have spent my whole life riding horses. But I had a lot of success in Ireland buying yearlings cheaply and running them as 2-year-olds and



Hanley, 51, didn't think he'd be immersed in the buying and selling of horses when he moved to Kentucky in 2002



Hanley keeps just about 11 horses at a time on his 52 acres in Kentucky.

winning and then selling them. The experience of training 2-year-olds and training the group winners I did certainly allows you to appreciate what people are looking for in a good horse.”

All pinhookers have the same goal, to buy low and sell high. It’s figuring how to get that done on a consistent basis that is the tricky part.

Part of the equation involves finding a weanling that looks like it is going to grow and develop into an athlete. For Hanley to be successful, the horses he buys have to look better at the sale he sells them at than they did at the sale he bought them at. If forced to choose, he said that Keeneland November would be his preferred weanling sale, just for sheer volume, which leads to opportunity. He feels most comfortable buying in the \$50,000 to \$250,000 range.

“What changes from year to year as far as the value? What you are trying to see is if the horse can improve from where he’s at right now,” he said. “A

“When you have your own money down and it’s your investment, it certainly motivates the mind to be creative and to take care of your business and pay particular attention to details.” -David Hanley

lot of times when you are buying foals, they are far from the finished product. If they have the physical structure where you know they’re going to grow, they’re going to be movers, and they have the balance and the skeletal structure to develop the physique you are looking for when you go to sell them, then you’ve probably landed on something good. It’s a matter of beauty being in the eye of the beholder.”

But Hanley is just one of many

when it comes to having a good eye for a horse. His ability to produce so many yearlings that prove to be attractive has a lot to do with how he handles the horses during the brief time they are in his care. He prefers to keep his numbers small, handling about 11 horses at a time. That way, no detail is overlooked.

“He’s a perfectionist and when prepping horses he goes through more detail than anyone I know,” said bloodstock agent Mike Ryan. “Because this is his complete focus--raising, prepping and developing those yearlings for sale--he brings them there in absolute mint condition. With the amount of time he spends with those horses, he gets to know them like you know your children. In a large operation, you might not get to know your horses as well because you may not have the time to be that hands-on with so many horses. David has a small, boutique operation and his numbers are very manageable.”

To come up with those 11, he

whittles down from literally 1,000 or more. “I look at nearly all the yearlings in the sale, except sires and pedigrees that have no shot. From the first four books, for example, I’d look at nearly all of them. I go through the catalogue and try to make lists, but in the first three or four books, nearly everything qualifies.”

The selection process also relies heavily on trusted veterinarians like Scott Pierce and Daryl Easley. “We X-ray and scope,” Hanley said. “We vet every horse we’re interested in, and I am very much led by my vet. If he’s comfortable, we’re comfortable. We’ll put up with some little things on the X-ray he feels may improve. On the scope, the horse has to scope good. It’s very hard to overcome a bad scope.”

As Hanley describes his methodology once the prospects are in hand, it becomes obvious that he focuses on his horses virtually every waking hour. He comes to know them as individuals and devises different programs for each horse. Some may do a lot of swimming. Others may spend more of their time jogging. Still others may do a lot of walking. Hanley is constantly tweaking things like what he feeds his horses. He is constantly monitoring the weight of each horse. He is careful about the surface over which they jog and walk, constantly cultivating it so that it provides the optimal cushion for a young, growing horse.

“We only have 52 acres, so we can only have about 11 horses a year,” he said. “That allows us to really focus on those horses.

I wouldn’t want to speak negatively about anyone else or how they do things and I

know there are other operations that do every bit as good a job as we do, but what makes us different is our size. With a big farm where a guy might have 50 or 100 yearlings, they have to rely on managers and barn foremen. When you have your own money down and it’s your investment, it certainly motivates the mind to be creative and to take care of your business and pay particular attention to details.”

Once he has the horses ready for sale, he has to decide where the best place to sell them is and in what part of that particular sale. He doesn’t have to have his horses in the most prestigious sales, especially if that means they might be overshadowed by better-bred horses.

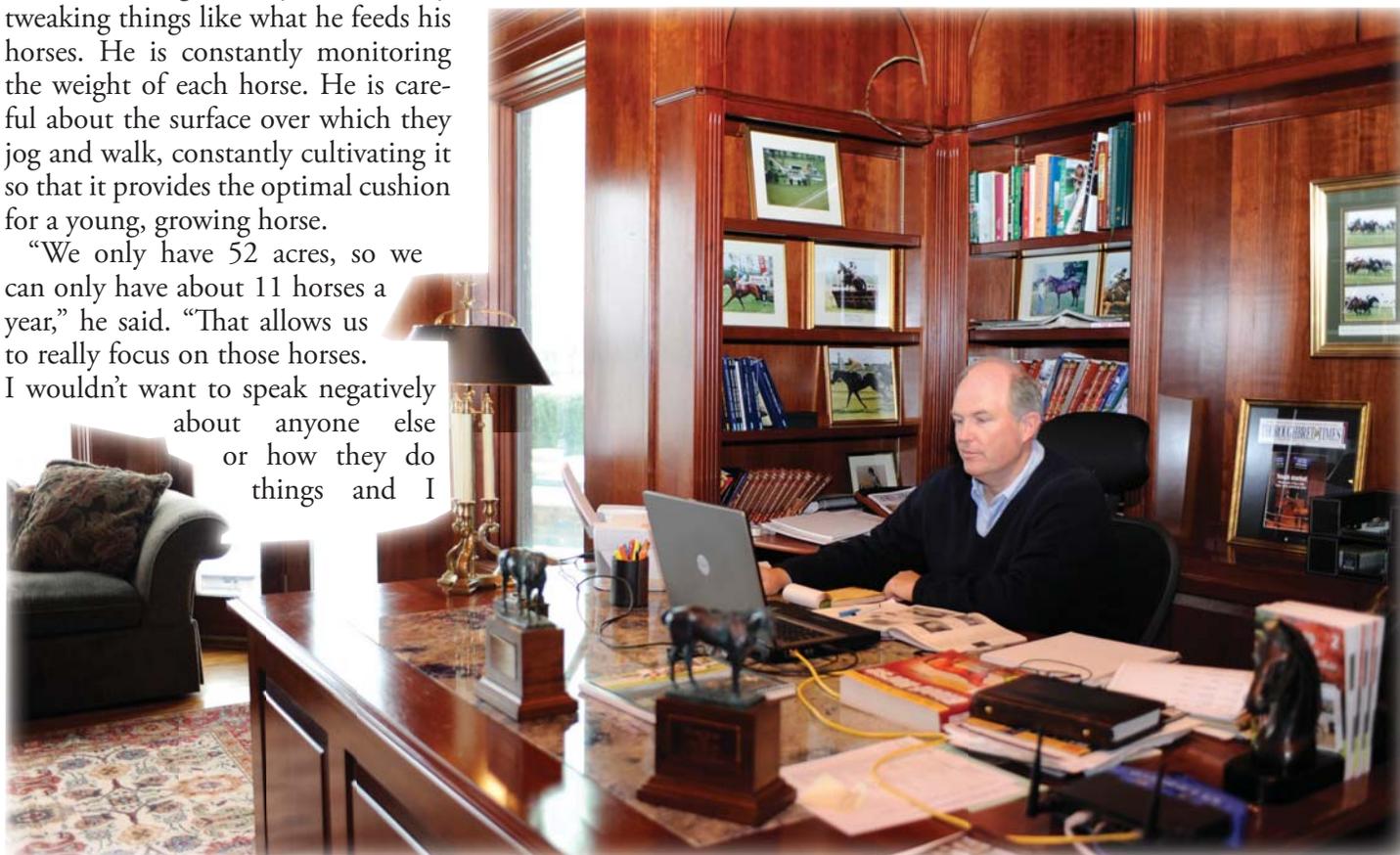
“You don’t want to put a horse in Book 1 or in a select sale if it isn’t good enough,” Hanley said. “You want to put your horse where he’s going to be one of the better horses offered in that sale, whether it’s Book 1, 2, 3, 4, whether it’s July or whether it’s in Saratoga. The one thing you don’t want to be is in a select sale with a horse that doesn’t make the cut. Then

you’re dead.”

The other part of the equation is picking sires on the rise before everyone else realizes they are sires on the rise. That, Hanley admits, sometimes involves a little luck. That two of his biggest successes came with offspring of Medaglia d’Oro had as much to do with Rachel Alexandra’s historic campaign as anything else. When he bought the weanlings, Hanley had no idea a daughter of Medaglia d’Oro would soon emerge as one of racing’s all-time greats.

“Last year, we were very lucky to have two Medaglio d’Oros and find ourselves in a situation where a stallion takes a big jump like he did,” he said.

The final piece to the puzzle is finding horses who will not only increase in value at a subsequent sale, but who will go on to be good race horses. If Hanley sold nothing but horses who never panned out on the racetrack, most people would be unwilling to take a chance on the yearlings he brought to the sales. In that area, he also has an impressive record. As a trainer, breeder, buyer or seller, he has



Before he even gets to a sale, Hanley has done hours of research

“You cannot be judged on one or two years’ performance. If you are at this for 10 years and you’re still doing it and doing well at it, that’s when you have proven something.” - David Hanley



Medaglia d'Oro was responsible for two of Hanley's 2009 home runs.

been involved with many top horses.

Golden Apples leads the list. She earned \$1.6 million on the track and won five graded stakes races, three of them Grade I events. Hanley and partner James Egan bought Golden Apples' dam, Loon, at the 1997 Tattersalls December sale for 13,000 guineas. She was in foal at the time and was carrying Golden Apples, who is by Pivotal.

The list of horses Hanley and his partners have bred, raised or pinhooked is an impressive one. It includes Acorn winner Forest Secrets; Rebelline, a Group 1 winner in Ireland; and Chief Seattle, the

runner-up in the 1999 Breeders' Cup Juvenile.

“He has an exceptional eye and he’s a very skilled horseman,” Ryan said of Hanley. “A lot of people can look at horses and pick the obvious ones. But when you’re buying weanlings—and there are five or six guys who do it very well—not only do they buy nice horses that turn out to be nice yearlings, they buy horses who turn out to be nice race horses.”

Hanley believes anyone can get lucky once, maybe even twice. That’s why he’s so reluctant to pat himself on the back.

“You cannot be judged on one or

two years’ performance,” he said. “If you are at this for 10 years and you’re still doing it and doing well at it, that’s when you have proven something.”

Hanley knows that 2010 may not be as good to him as 2009 was, but he is optimistic that it will be another profitable year. To him, consistency is important; to be truly successful in the pinhooking business, you must get results year after year.

He has 11 horses to sell this year and will spread them out among Keeneland September and Fasig-Tipton’s July and Saratoga sales. Combined, the 11 yearlings cost him about \$1.1 million, and the list includes offspring of Tapit, Tiznow, Hard Spun, Indian Charlie and, yes, another Medaglia d’Oro filly.

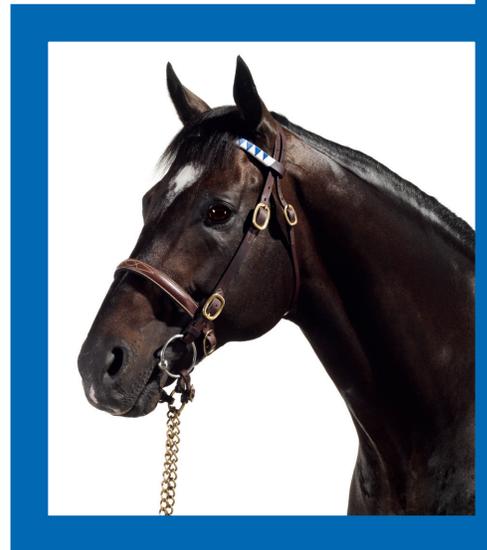
Like most everyone else, Hanley is worried about the current economic climate in racing and at the sales and knows he will be selling this year in what is sure to be a buyers’ market. So far as the pinhooking business goes, he wants to stay in only as long as it makes sense to stay in. If changing economics make pinhooking a losing proposition, he will look for something else to do.

“I will keep pinhooking as long as the opportunities are still there and I am confident I can buy the right horses,” he said. “You always have to keep moving. You can’t sit still. It’s a changing game, so you have to be really careful about your approach to it. It’s really hard right now to see where this business is going.”

He hasn’t lost his desire to train. He’s also interested in breeding more. Because of the size limitations of his farm, he has only two broodmares, but says he could always look for a bigger place and expand that part of his operation. What’s his future? He can better answer that question after the major 2010 yearling sales. Most likely, he’s not going anywhere.

MEDAGLIA D'ORO BREEDS SUCCESS

**WE THOUGHT
WE COULD
LIST ALL THE
TOP MARES
VISITING
HIM THIS
YEAR...**



**But we've nothing like
enough space so we've put
them all on our website:
www.darleyamerica.com**

George and Lori Hall are major players in Thoroughbred racing. They just don't spend like ones.

Few in the sport have done more with less. Though their racing stable has existed only since the summer of 2005, the Halls have won 19 stakes with 12 different horses. They have had two horses start in the Kentucky Derby and have won three graded races. They have done so while buying yearlings largely out of Book 3 of the Keeneland September Sale and spending less than \$100,000 per horse on average.

Their first stakes winner, Keeneland Kat, a filly by Hennessy, cost \$77,000. She won the listed Sorority Stakes, finished third in the Grade I Frizette and is now a broodmare who has produced foals by Ghostzapper, Empire Maker, Fusaichi Pegasus and Mr. Greeley.

Their first graded stakes winner, West Side Bernie, who is by Bernstein, cost \$50,000. He won the Grade III Kentucky Cup Juvenile, finished second in the Grade I Wood Memorial, started in the Kentucky Derby and was sold privately to Godolphin Racing for what was no doubt a considerable profit.

Their most productive runner, Bold Union, was purchased for \$75,000. By Dixie Union, she has won five stakes races and has earned more than \$350,000.

"Ultimately, it's an investment choice," George Hall said. "We see the most value there. I am trained to look at everything so far as return on capital and there's an argument to be made for buying more high-priced horses because of the overhead. The costs to care for an expensive horse and a cheaper horse are the same. But we've found you're more likely to have a \$100,000 horse that's worth \$1 million than a \$600,000 horse that turns out to be worth \$6 million. It seems that the return on capital and the value you can get on these horses is better in that regard."

That wasn't necessarily the idea

GEORGE & LORI HALL

when the Halls got into the business in 2004. George Hall, 49, grew up on Long Island and had a doting grandfather who loved to take Hall and his brother to Aqueduct, Belmont and Saratoga. He grew up as a racing fan and always wanted to get involved as an owner.

After he graduated from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Hall would become the founder, president and majority shareholder of Clinton Group, Inc., an investment company that manages more than \$6 billion in capital.

Shortly after the Halls settled in Middletown, N.J., about eight miles from Monmouth Park, a mutual friend introduced the couple to trainer Kelly Breen. Liking Breen and sensing it was a good time to get started as an owner, he told the young trainer he would let him buy some horses for him. As far as plans go, that was the extent of it.

"I never discussed the economics of horse racing with anybody," George

Hall said. "I met him at the track and he invited us to go back to his barn and see his horses. I took a liking to Kelly and thought maybe I'd buy a few horses. It was as simple as that. We just decided to go for it. I wasn't thinking of it as a business. We invested strictly as a hobby."

Breen suggested they begin by buying yearlings at Keeneland September. The Halls decided to buy four, coming up with that number because they figured that, statistically, at least one was likely to make it to the races.

The original four cost a combined \$182,000 and included Keeneland Kat and Fagan's Legacy, who won the listed Pilgrim Stakes. The Halls won their very first race, a maiden special weight at Monmouth with Keeneland Kat, and won the Sorority with Keeneland Kat in their third start as owners.

"Yes, we started to think it was easy...really easy," Lori Hall admits.

Of course, nothing comes that easily in Thoroughbred racing, at least



George and Lori spend a day at Monmouth Park with the family.

EQUIPHOTO

over an extended period of time. But the early success allowed the Halls to settle on a formula that worked for them and encouraged them to invest more in the business.

They bought eight yearlings in their second trip to Keeneland September, paying a combined \$552,000 for the group. The list includes their first six-figure purchase, a Yonaguska filly that cost them \$155,000.

When you're spending \$552,000 for eight horses, someone better have a good eye for a horse and for a bargain. With the Halls, that person is Breen.

Breen, 40, was an assistant to Ben Perkins Jr. before going out on his own in 2000. He was just what the Halls were looking for, someone with ability, a good reputation and who wasn't so immersed with another major stable that he couldn't devote his full attention to helping build the Halls' operation.

"Kelly's got the heart, the drive and the ambition," Lori Hall said. "And he was very successful with a barn that consisted of 75-percent claimers. We thought that if we gave him better tools to work with he would really shine. I think Kelly can compete with any trainer."

Breen begins his assault on the sales about two weeks before they begin, studying the catalogues and looking for horses he thinks might be available for what the Halls are willing to spend.

He will not buy 2-year-olds because he believes some horses available at those sales have been put through too much to get them there.

"We primarily want something that isn't tainted, which is why we haven't bought any 2-year-olds in training," he said. "When you go to a 2-year-old-in-training sale, those horses have been stressed. They've gone an eighth of a mile, they've been in training. We want horses that have gone through as little stress as possible. It's hard to

keep horses sound as it is. We want to know everything that has been done to the horses we might buy and know that they haven't been stressed yet."

Once Breen has put together a list of prospective horses to buy, he, the Halls and Dale Holly, who runs a farm the couple recently purchased in Kentucky, go from barn to barn and check out each individual.

Breen knows that it's all but impossible for him to buy a horse with a great pedigree that looks next to per-

"We just don't focus on the breeding end. We buy strictly based on what we think their ability to run well will be." -George Hall



fect. The Halls won't spend the money it takes to get that kind of horse.

"A lot depends on whether or not I can live with the horse," Breen said. "Some times we won't get the pristine horse when it comes to their legs. Picking them out and having to train them, I know what I can live with, and that's a big factor. If the legs are perfect, they're probably horses we can't afford."

Just before the horses go through the ring, the Halls and their team will

re-evaluate their list and put a price on what they think each horse is worth. The Halls are adamant about not bidding above the price they have established for each horse.

"We try to be as disciplined as we can," George Hall said. "We set a certain number and we try to never to go above that number. It's easy to get into a heated battle when you are competing for a horse, but if you don't have the discipline to stop at a certain level, you're eventually going to pay the price."

If the Halls, Breen and Holly believe a horse has the athleticism to become a quality racehorse and will not be overvalued in the sales ring, they will target it. The idea is not necessarily to find future sires, something that is all but impossible to do when you are buying a lot of \$60,000 yearlings. They want good racehorses.

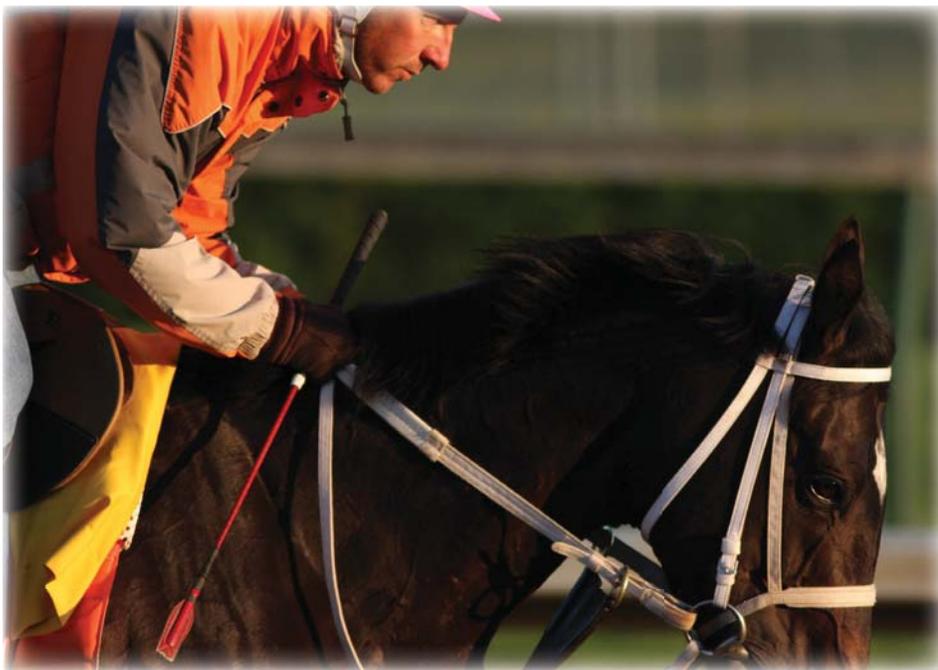
"When we buy, we strictly buy for racing," George Hall said. "If we develop a good broodmare, we will breed them. If we were ever fortunate enough to find one that can go on to be a good sire, of course, we'd love for that to happen. We just don't focus on the breeding end. We buy strictly based on what we think their ability to run well will be."

Sometimes, finding a good runner is enough.

After the \$50,000 yearling purchase West Side Bernie finished second in last year's Wood Memorial, he caught the eye of someone involved

with the Godolphin team. The Halls agreed to sell him in a deal that included a provision whereby the colt would run in their name in the Kentucky Derby and they would keep any purse money earned in that race. West Side Bernie finished ninth in the Derby and was soon thereafter turned over to Godolphin's American-based stable.

Goldolphin would soon strike again. With West Side Bernie gone, Atomic Rain became the leading



The Halls sold West Side Bernie to Godolphin prior to the 2009 Derby.

3-year-old colt in the Halls' barn. After he finished 16th in the Kentucky Derby, he won an allowance race at Monmouth Park and then the Long Branch, a prep for the Haskell. After the Long Branch, Godolphin swooped in and bought him from the Halls. A son of Smart Strike, Atomic Rain costs \$170,000 at the sales.

The Halls signed a non-disclosure agreement with Godolphin and they cannot reveal how much they were paid for either horse. There's no doubt, though, that their profit was substantial.

The sale of the two colts to Godolphin meant the best year yet for the Halls, at least when it comes to their bottom line. The revenue from the sales prompted the Halls to spend more lavishly at the 2009 Keeneland September sale. They bought 24 horses for a combined \$2,435,000. With a rare foray into Book One, they bought an A.P. Indy filly for \$325,000, the most they have ever spent on a horse.

"What hasn't changed is the philosophy," Breen said. "We still insist on value. With an A.P. Indy filly, we believe that even if she doesn't do much on the racetrack, she's still going to be worth maybe \$300,000 as a broodmare."

The size of their operation has

grown over the years. They do not go to the sales with any set numbers in mind, but look to buy enough horses so that they can be reasonably certain that Breen will have about 35 runners at his disposal come the beginning of the subsequent Monmouth meet.

The number will include holdovers

"I would imagine some of the larger commercial stables look at us like we're from the peanut gallery."

- Lori Hall

from the prior year plus a handful of homebreds. The Halls have developed enough quality fillies in their short time as owners that they have been able to expand the breeding end of their operation. They have purchased a farm in Versailles, Kentucky, and in 2009 had their first major success as breeders with a filly named Truth and Justice. She won three Listed stakes, including the Sorority, and earned \$238,500. It was, however, a bitter-sweet story. She broke down in the

Grade III Delta Downs Princess and had to be euthanized.

The Halls are already off to a good start in 2010. Bickersons, a Silver Deputy filly that cost them \$80,000, won the Grade II Forward Gal at Gulfstream. In The Rough, a Stormy Atlantic filly they purchased for \$40,000, won Gulfstream's Coconut Grove Stakes. Nacho Friend finished third in the Grade III Gotham. He is by Friends Lake and cost \$30,000.

They'll be among the horses that the Halls will have bedded down this summer at Monmouth, a track to which they have been loyal since their start in the business and well before that track instituted a purse structure where \$1 million a day will be paid out. But their horses will be racing throughout the country, with blue-collar pedigrees and inexpensive price tags that will often make them seem out of place in the sport's biggest races.

"I would imagine some of the larger commercial stables look at us like we're from the peanut gallery," Lori Hall said. "They probably think, 'Oh, they're going to run a \$40,000 horse against our \$500,000 horse.' That makes it more satisfying for us. I don't care if we come in with a 30-1 shot. That's okay. I don't care about the odds. I believe in the heart of our horses."

For the Halls, racing remains more a sport than a business. George Hall rides a lead pony during training hours at Monmouth on the week-ends. Lori Hall falls in love with all of her horses. Their entire family likes nothing more than to spend a summer afternoon at beautiful Monmouth Park. That's why they got involved in racing.

But the Halls also know something about investing wisely, making prudent decisions and surrounding yourself with good people. Do that in any business and you're bound to be successful. You don't have to be a big spender. Just smart.

MEDAGLIA D'ORO BREEDS SUCCESS

**HEY! AND
WE DIDN'T
EVEN
MENTION
RACHEL
ALEXANDRA!**



Darley

At the 2007 Keeneland April Two-Year-Olds in Training Sale, a lot of people looked at a particular youngster by Boundary and, apparently, didn't like what they saw. There's no other way to explain how the colt who would go on to be named Big Brown was bought for just \$190,000. A lot of people thought they saw something rather ordinary. Paul Pompa Jr. and his advisors looked at the same horse and saw something exceptional.

"This sounds like a cliché when you're talking about a Derby horse, but he was an athletic horse, a beautiful moving horse," said Dan Hall, a partner in Hidden Brook Farm, which advises Pompa and was instrumental in the purchase of Big Brown. "With him, it wasn't a matter of going out of your way to buy a pedigree. It may not be by a sire that's the flavor of the month at that particular time. The key is that they are athletic, which he was. He had a great mind, and all the parts came together."

Hidden Brook liked the colt and so did Pompa's veterinarian, Dr. Michael Chovanes. The rest was up to Pompa. He wasn't a hard sell. Earlier that

year, he had claimed a horse named Snake River Canyon for \$62,500 out of a maiden race and was rewarded with a win at the \$75,000 level seven weeks later. He thought that colt had a lot of potential and was disappointed when the horse was claimed away from him. That the 2-year-old in the Keeneland sale happened to be a half-brother to Snake River Canyon was, to him, a big plus.

The result was the purchase of Big

Backseat Rhythm, This Ones For Phil and Franny Freud. He has also had some major successes in his pinhooking ventures, most notably with Desert Party. Pompa bought the son of Street Cry for \$425,000 at the 2007 Keeneland September sale and then turned around and sold him for \$2.1 million at the 2008 Fasig-Tipton 2-year-old sale the following February.

As was the case with Big Brown,

PAUL & HIDDEN POMPA BROOK

Brown for a relative pittance, a smart move on the owner's part and the result of a team effort. If there's a secret to Pompa's success, it's that he's smart enough to surround himself with smart people. There has perhaps been no smarter alliance than Pompa's partnership with Hidden Brook.

"You have to be focused all the time and you have to find people to advise you who really care about you versus people that just want to make money off of you," Pompa said. "You have to have a trusting relationship with people, and that only comes with time."

Pompa, the president of a trucking company based in Brooklyn and an owner since 2000, may be best known for his ownership of Big Brown, but there's a lot more to his story. In full or in partnerships, he has owned several other top horses, like stakes winners D'Funnybone,

Hidden Brook Farm was one of the guiding forces behind the decision to buy Desert Party as a yearling.

If two heads are better than one, then five heads must be the stuff of genius. That was the general idea when Hall, Jack Brothers, Sergio de Sousa, Mark Roberts and Dan Vella came together in 2002 and formed Hidden Brook Farm. All five had years of experience, much of it with the Adena Springs operation, and solid reputations in the Thoroughbred business. They had always done well working for other people and decided their combined knowledge could form an unbeatable and profitable team that did a lot of things and tried to do all of them well. Hidden Brook boards mares, preps horses for the sales, consigns horses, advises clients at the sales, raises foals, breeds and races.

"There are the five of us and we each bring different things to the table, and that's been part of the key to our success, being able to branch out in a lot of different directions," Hall said. "We're not just a boarding operation, we're not just a sales consignor; our business isn't based strictly on private transactions and it isn't based strictly on purchasing and public sales. But we tend to bring all of that together."

"You don't have one person with them. You have several people who



Pompa and Edgar Prado accept the trophy after D'Funnybone's Saratoga Special win.

have a wealth of experience and a wealth of knowledge,” Pompa said of the Hidden Brook team. “By the time they come to me, I have a lot of knowledge behind the advice I’m given. You get a general consensus so far as what they present to you when it comes to breeding, yearlings, 2-year-olds, what sales we should buy at. It really works.”

Hidden Brook opened as a modestly sized farm with 180 developed acres that concentrated on boarding mares. Among the first horses to take up residence at the Paris, Kentucky, farm was the broodmare Pretty Discreet, who was in foal at the time to Forestry. The foal turned out to be Discreet Cat, an electrifying maiden winner at Saratoga who was sold by owner Joyce Robsham to Godolphin Racing. After two starts in Dubai, Discreet Cat returned to the U.S. and won the Grade I Cigar Mile at Aqueduct in 2006.

Pretty Discreet has also produced Discreetly Mine, who was foaled and raised at Hidden Brook before he won the Grade II Risen Star Stakes earlier this year at the Fair Grounds. Hidden Brook also raised Grade I winner Dixie Chatter and Grade II winners Awesome Maria and Amen Hallelujah.

Boarding mares and raising horses is only so lucrative, no matter how good you are at it. With that in mind, the Hidden Brook team was soon branching out, looking for new ventures and new clients, like Pompa.

Musket Man, recently second by a nose in the Grade I Carter, is a Hidden Brook product. He was bred by de Sousa in partnership with Jim Nelson. At the sales, they do more than advise buyers. Hidden Brook is now fully immersed in the consignment side of the sales. By 2007, it ranked No. 8 in the world in total sales. Occasionally, Hidden Brook will get into the racing side of the business. The star of their racing ventures has been Knights Templar. Hidden Brook bought the filly at the 2005 Keeneland September Sale for \$80,000,



After Big Brown broke his maiden, Paul Pompa sold 75 percent of the colt to IEAH Stables in a deal that put the colt’s value at \$3 million.

raced her in a partnership and collected the 2007 Canadian Juvenile Filly Championship after she won two stakes that year at Woodbine.

“That’s what I enjoy the most, racing the horses,” de Sousa said. “That’s what we do; we raise these horses to become good race horses. There’s nothing like the feeling of seeing your horse win in your colors. The

When it comes to raising and foaling horses, there are no secrets to Hidden Brook’s success. It’s more a matter of making sure every need of a young, growing horse is taken care of and no detail is overlooked.

- Sergio de Sousa

first horse we bred that raced in our colors is a horse called Maccarib Pass. He won a \$40,000 maiden claimer at Gulfstream. The feeling wouldn’t

have been any different had he won the Breeders’ Cup.”

De Sousa is the hands-on guy. He runs the farm, deals with the needs of the clients’ horses and gets his hands dirty. Hall is the businessman. He has a background in accounting and his primary role is to help grow the business. He’s always recruiting new clients and looking for more horses to sell. Brothers specializes in arranging matings and has years of experience in bloodstock. He was a long-time bloodstock advisor to Frank Stronach and still does work for Adena Springs. He’s also the people guy, the type that knows just about everyone in the business and is well-liked, important assets in any growing business.

Vella and Roberts are not involved in the day-to-day operation of the business and neither lives in Kentucky. Vella is a trainer based at Woodbine and Roberts is the farm manger of Adena Springs South in Florida.

The Hidden Brook staff includes Mike Recio, who has worked at Taylor Made and Mill Ridge Farm. He handles bloodstock services and client relations. Alan Fahey is Hidden Brook’s broodmare manager. They complete a team that was built with

the idea of bringing in people with a wealth of knowledge and experience in a wide variety of areas.

But simply knowing what you're doing isn't enough. The Hidden Brook team knows that they can only prosper if their clients are happy and their clients can only be happy if the Hidden Brook team is always straightforward with them. The cornerstone of the Hidden Brook philosophy is integrity, something that is sometimes in short supply in the businesses they deal in.

"That's something that is very important to us," Hall said. "That's a commonality you will find with the five of us, and that's why we were close friends before we became business partners. Our relationships were built on honesty and integrity and that's the way it's always been. It has been our approach from Day One. Does it hurt us going in the door with somebody? Maybe? Possibly? That's the kind of thing that people will appreciate down the road after you've been with them for a while. That's the way our business plan was built and it will not change. Eventually people see the value in that."

Hidden Brook has reinvested its profits back into its business. From a physical standpoint, the farm has expanded significantly since it opened some eight years ago and now consists of about 600 acres. Brothers, de Sousa and Hall are always thinking about what they are going to do next and in which direction to take the business. Their books tell them that their work at the sales, whether as consignors or advising buyers, has been the most profitable part of their business, so that is an area that will remain a priority. But Hidden Brook has never been about any one thing, and that doesn't figure to change.

As for Pompa, he currently campaigns about 40 horses and is active at the sales as both a buyer and a seller. That is another part of his strategy. He doesn't want to focus solely on any one area, believing that's an unnecessary risk because any one part of his operation could always have an



Brothers is the people guy, the type that knows just about everyone in the business and is well-liked--important assets in any growing business.

off year.

"You have to be diversified," he said. "I still claim horses on occasion. I'll buy horses privately. I buy yearlings and 2-year-olds in training and I breed."

He's also always looking to sell, even when he develops a star, which was the case with Big Brown. After Big Brown broke his maiden in a 2-year-old grass race at Saratoga, Pompa sold 75 percent of the colt to IEAH Stables in a deal that put the colt's value at \$3 million. Big Brown went on to win the Florida Derby, the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness, the Haskell and the Monmouth Stakes before retiring with career earnings of \$3,614,500. Big Brown is currently standing at stud at Three Chimneys, which acquired his breeding rights just before the Preakness in a deal NBC reported

was worth \$50 million.

"You can't be afraid to sell good horses because in any business the only time you can make real money is when you're selling," Pompa said. "It's the same in the trucking business, the clothing business, the restaurant business. A lot of people don't want to sell because they're afraid that the horse might do better for the next guy. But if a guy pays \$400,000 for a horse, isn't he entitled to win some races? People, even some prominent people, don't want to sell just because they're afraid of the possibility that they might look bad."

Since Big Brown, Pompa has done a good job proving that he's more than just lucky. Much of his recent success has come on the racing side. His primary advisors in that aspect of the business are Nick Sallusto and Donald Brauer. They've helped Pompa find a number of underrated horses who have prospered once turned over to the Pompa stable. This Ones For Phil was bought privately after a modest 2-year-old campaign in Florida. He's since won two stakes in the Sunshine Millions series and has career earnings of nearly \$500,000. D'Funnybone also came out of Florida and has, since being bought privately by Pompa, won four graded stakes races. Pompa bought Zakocity off John Franks and, after the horse won the 2004 Discovery Handicap at Aqueduct, sold him to Saudi Arabian royalty for a hefty profit.

Whether it's Pompa or Hidden Brook, the goal is always the same, to find the next big horse, the one that puts a sizeable amount of money into the pockets of everyone involved.

"In this business, you're only as good as your last deal," Hall said. "We're not going to live off Big Brown forever. People are always looking at what you do next."

With Hidden Brook, Pompa just paid \$300,000 for a Smart Strike colt at the same Keeneland sale where they found Big Brown three years earlier. Will this be his next big thing? Considering the track record, you shouldn't bet against it.