

TRAINER PROFILES



A horse gallops at sunrise over the Oldsmar oval.

TRAINER PROFILES

Ron Allen, Sr.

Born: February 5, 1943
Birthplace: Louisville, KY
Residence: Muskegon, MI
Family: Sons Ronnie, Mike and Kevin; daughter Kimberly; four grandchildren
Started Training: late 1970s
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Mountaineer Park



Ronald Allen, Sr., who first saddled a horse at the Oldsmar oval in 1960, is the third leading trainer at Tampa Bay Downs for the 2007-2008 racing season. He has saddled 23 winners, 14 second-place finishers and 20 third-place finishers from 108 attempts for \$284,020 in purses in 94 days of racing. "We have some pretty nice stock again, and that's what it takes," Allen has said of his 25-horse stable. Much of Allen's success has come with his sons Ron Allen, Jr. and Mike Allen in the irons; last year, Mike Allen booted home his 1,500th winner at Tampa Bay Downs. Son Ronnie Allen, Jr. ended Tampa's 82nd racing season as seventh leading rider overall, despite the fact that his first race over the Oldsmar oval this year was on February 14.

Allen, 65, took 14th place here in the 2006-2007 campaign and 4th place in the 2005-2006 season. Allen is enjoying his recent success, and the Kentucky native said he has no retirement plans; but when he does give up training, he plans to live full-time in his Clearwater home and enjoy the races at Tampa Bay Downs.

Dale Bennett

Born: July 8, 1972
Birthplace: Toronto, Ontario
Residence: Arlington Heights
Family: Wife Denise
Started Training: 1998 in Detroit
First Win: I Want to Go Home, Detroit Race Course (now Great Lakes Downs), 1998
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Arlington Park



Dale Bennett, whose father is Tampa Bay Downs trainer Gerald Bennett, was born in Toronto in 1972 and grew up on a farm in Campbellville, Ontario, Canada. He was raised around horses, and began working with them at a very early age. As time went by, Bennett began to progress through the ranks of the backside, starting out hot-walking for his father, then working as a groom and an exercise rider, all the while finding time to graduate from Geulph Collegiate in 1991.

In 1998, Bennett earned his trainer's license and began his career with three horses in his barn; one of whom, Spirit of Austin, gave him his first win at Detroit Race Course. Since then, Dale Bennett has excelled at any track where he keeps a stable. Bennett says his father has had the biggest influence on his career. He grew up working in his barn, and says that his father taught him the art of communicating with horses, as well as the need to treat and train the horses as individuals. Bennett's most memorable horse is Marley's Revenge, who gave Bennett his first stakes win. Marley's Revenge covered the five and a half furlongs on the turf at Arlington Park in 1:02.44, shattering a twenty-two-year-old stakes record there.

Twelve years ago, Bennett met his wife Denise at Tampa Bay Downs, where she rode in the Gerald Bennett stable. The two got married in 2000, and Denise, who is now a trainer in her own right, laughingly points out that meeting her was Dale Bennett's most memorable event at Tampa Bay Downs. Bennett ended the 2007-2008 Tampa Bay Downs meet as second leading trainer overall.

TRAINER PROFILES

Gerald Bennett

Born: March 12, 1944
Birthplace: Springhill, Nova Scotia
Residence: Tampa, FL
Family: Wife Mary; sons Dale and Jerry; daughter Katharine; two grandchildren
Started Training: 1974
First Win: Greenwood, Canada
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Thistledown Race Course, Mountaineer Park, Great Lakes Downs



Gerald Bennett has a reputation for being able to rehabilitate injured racehorses, and that reputation brought him his biggest horse, Beau Genius. Bennett conditioned Beau Genius to victory in 13 stakes including: The Haskell Invitational (GI), Philip H Iselin Handicap (GI), Deputy Minister Handicap, the Hallandale Handicap, Churchill Downs Handicap and the Olympic Stakes. Among other Bennett trainees are Secret Romeo, winner of the 2002 Super Stakes, Pelican Stakes and second to the excellent sprinter Bonapaw in the \$100,000 Arlington Park Sprint Handicap; and Banker's Jet, winner of seven stakes and over \$670,000.

Bennett has been a mainstay in Michigan racing, having dominated the trainer standings at Hazel Park and Detroit Race Course throughout the 1980s, and continues to do the same at Great Lakes Downs. Gerald Bennett conditioned the filly Down From Heaven to 9 straight wins at Detroit Race Course from 1988 through 1989 after claiming her for \$5000. He was leading trainer in 2005 at Great Lakes Downs with 86 wins and 50% of his entries finished in the money; among his many accomplishments, Bennett has won five races in one day. Adding to his talents, Bennett also trained and rehabbed Standardbreds in Ontario, Canada. Gerald Bennett ended the 2006-2007 Tampa Bay Downs meet as the third leading trainer with 31 wins from 163 starts; on May 5, 2007, Bennett escorted his trainee Bucky's Prayer to the winner's circle after her victory in the Lightning City Stakes. Bennett finished the 2007-2008 Tampa meet as the fifth leading trainer.

Jane Cibelli

Born: July 7, 1961
Birthplace: Leicester, United Kingdom
Residence: Oldsmar, FL
Family: Mother Barbara, sister Leslie, brother Trevor
Started Training: 1999; used to assist Lynne Scace
First Win: As of Now, Rockingham Park
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Monmouth Park, Meadowlands



Trainer Jane Cibelli has had an outstanding Tampa Bay Downs 2007 – 2008 season, racking up 16 wins, 20 second-place finishes and 16 thirds from 101 attempts for a total of \$222,763 in purses.

Jane Cibelli moved to the United States in 1983 after working with horses in her native United Kingdom. Cibelli is a very hands-on trainer who gets started in her barn at 4:30 A.M. most days, and has said she believes that consistent hard work with horses has been the key to her success. After the close of the Tampa Bay Downs meet, Cibelli heads to Monmouth Park for the summer. Her current favorite horse is A Different Tune, and she says that her proudest racing moment was last year when her trainee Whiskey Lit captured the Dayton Andrews Dodge Sophomore Sprint Stakes on Florida Cup Day. When she's not on the backstretch, Cibelli keeps an interest in personal fitness.

TRAINER PROFILES

Charles Fontana

Born: March 9, 1946
Birthplace: New York, NY
Residence: Miami, FL
Family: Six children, thirteen grandchildren
Started Training: 1978
First Win: Tomahawk Princess, Tampa Bay Downs, 1978
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Suffolk Downs, Calder Race Course



Charlie Fontana began his career with racehorses at an early age. “As a youngster, my next door neighbor had racehorses. I was fascinated by them, so I started working with them. Then I trained them, and then started owning them.” Fontana says that his favorite horse is He’s My Man, with whom he won four races here in the 2005-2006 Tampa meet. The horse is special to him because Fontana saved He’s My Man from being put down due to injury. “I rehabbed him, and gave him a lot of time and patience. And he’s still running now! Not very often, but when I pick a spot for him, he still wins.” Fontana adds, “I’ll never part with him. He’s a great horse.”

Fontana, a New York native and a 33-year Florida resident, had his first win with Tomahawk Princess here at the Oldsmar oval. “The track’s improved so much in so many ways, and now this is where I want to spend my winters. I just bought a house in Tampa,” says Fontana, adding, “I think Tampa Bay Downs is a really great track. I have a ball here.” Fontana ended the 2007-2008 Tampa Bay Downs season as the seventeenth leading trainer overall, escorting 13 of his trainees to the winner’s circle.

Greg Griffith

Born: November 11, 1949
Birthplace: Redford Township, MI
Residence: Michigan
Family: Sons Jason and Jeremy, daughter Lisa and seven granddaughters
Started Training: Started training standardreds before switching to thoroughbreds in the early 1990’s
First Win: Dusty Red Kettle at Turfway Park
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Indiana Downs, Ellis Park, Hoosier Park



Greg Griffith finished the 2007-2008 Tampa Bay Downs meet as the ninth leading trainer overall. He has been conditioning Thoroughbreds since the early 1980s, and the New York native gained an interest in horse racing through his family. “My grandfather galloped horses, my father was a NYRA (New York Racing Association) official, my brother and three cousins rode races,” laughs Griffith. “It was always in my blood.”

Griffith began training at Tampa Bay Downs, and says that his favorite horse that he’s ever trained is Dirtymoposse, who until 2007 held two track records at Tampa Bay Downs. Dirtymoposse is a homebred of Griffith’s who, among his other feats, captured the Reappeal Stakes at Calder Race Course on May 13, 2006. Griffith and his wife Donna are longtime fans of NASCAR, and Dirtymoposse was called after famed NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt, Jr.’s nickname for his friends and admirers. Griffith says that his favorite moment at the Oldsmar oval came on February 24th of this year when his charge Son of Greatness won the seventh race in a dead heat for owner George Steinbrenner’s Kinsman Farm. “That was a very important moment for Kinsman because it was the first win for their homebred stallion (Crown Delite). Even though he won it in a dead heat, it was a great, important moment for both Kinsman and me.” Griffith is quick to give credit to everyone involved in his training operation. “Everyone, from the grooms to the blacksmith to the exercise riders and my son Dennis and especially my wife are the keys to my success. Especially my wife, Donna—she’s the main reason we do well.” Griffith says that he used to be a NASCAR enthusiast in his spare time, but nowadays he has few free moments. “It’s all horses all the time.”

TRAINER PROFILES

Joe McAlister

Born: October 20, 1961
Birthplace: Gallatin, TN
Residence: Ocala, FL
Family: Wife Jolane
Started Training: 1983
First Win: Evening Prospect in Birmingham, AL
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Canterbury Park, Ellis Park



Joe McAlister has risen to the top of the local trainer standings at the Oldsmar oval quickly despite the fact that he has only been training here for three years. The Gallatin, Tennessee native is well known on the backstretch for his training ability, his sense of humor and his red boots. McAlister got his start in the horse racing industry after a ten-year career as a professional bull rider. "It started to hurt too badly when I hit the ground. I heard that Carl Nafzger (Grade III Tampa Bay Derby winner Street Sense's trainer) got his start bull riding. If it worked for him, I thought it could work for me!"

McAlister originally trained Quarter Horses, but found his passion in Thoroughbred racing. His first Thoroughbred winner was Evening Prospect in Birmingham, Alabama. Since then, McAlister has had much success at tracks around the country; his current circuit includes Canterbury Park in Minnesota, Ellis Park in Kentucky, and Tampa Bay Downs.

Additionally, McAlister and his wife have a horse farm in Ocala, Florida, where they breed mares, foal them, work with yearlings, provide early training for young horses as well as prepare horses for sales. Although McAlister does not have a lot of spare time, he says that he likes to golf when he can – "It doesn't matter where!" Joe McAlister finished 17th in the trainer standings for 2007-2008; 13 of his 74 starters won their races.

Barbara McBride

Born: November 11, 1949
Birthplace: Redford Township, MI
Residence: Michigan
Family: Sons Jason and Jeremy, daughter Lisa and seven granddaughters
Started Training: Started training standardreds before switching to thoroughbreds in the early 1990's
First Win: Dusty Red Kettle at Turfway Park
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Indiana Downs, Ellis Park, Hoosier Park



Finishing twelfth in the Tampa Bay Downs trainer standings in 2007, Barbara McBride had 15 wins from 117 starts. Her current Tampa success comes on the heels of a strong Hoosier Park meet where she finished second in the trainer standings for 2007. When asked what accounts for her success, McBride said it starts with knowing what to expect. "It's all knowing the condition book and entering your horses where they belong," McBride said. "I try to pick the right horses to bring with me when I come down here from knowing the competition here for so many years. But that's harder here at Tampa this year. For example, at Great Lakes Downs, you basically know what you're going to run against every two or three weeks. It's harder down here because you think you may be going in with the best horse then see the overnight and go 'Whoa! Here comes someone from Gulfstream or Payson Park.'"

McBride, who is a two-time national female training leader by wins (2001, 2000), according to Daily Racing Form statistics, is one of five women in the final top 20 Tampa trainers for the 2007-2008 season and noted the changing times. "It's amazing," she noted regarding the standings. "It's always been a male-oriented business. While I can't say it's necessarily easier, it's certainly better than it was when I first started." McBride has had success with many Ohio-breds and cites Youdrivemehome, a nine-time stakes winner, according to McBride, and his sister, Terrific Sue, a Champion Ohio-bred Three-Year-Old Filly, as two of her favorite trainees.

TRAINER PROFILES

Jamie Ness

Born: October 29, 1974
Birthplace: Heron, South Dakota
Residence: Shakopee, MN
Family: Single
Started Training: 2000, Canterbury Park
First Win: 2000, Blue Rocket, Canterbury Park
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Canterbury Park



Jamie Ness earned his first training title in the 2006-07 campaign; in the 2007-2008 season, the South Dakota native set a new record at the Oldsmar oval for number of wins in a season with 68 victories to his credit and \$959,710 in purses. The previous record of 44 win was set by Don Rice in the 2001-2002 racing season. Ness's record number of wins includes four stakes victories. Ness has experienced great success not only with the existing horses in his barn but with his recent claims as well. "I make my living out of the claiming box," says Ness of his success with newly acquired horses. "I do my homework and study the horses on and off the track, and I look at the trainers' tendencies. I don't have two-year-olds and I don't have stakes horses. It's a blue-collar barn so I need to know what I've got." His biggest success story is multiple Tampa Bay Downs stakes winner Lookinforthesecret. Ness claimed Lookinforthesecret for \$12,500 at the beginning of the 2006-07 Tampa Bay Downs meet, and within five starts moved the gelding from the claiming ranks to stakes caliber.

Ness gained an interest in horse racing through both his father and grandfather. "My grandfather took me to the track when I was four years old, and I've been hooked ever since," say Ness. He cites his greatest influence in the sport as his father, saying, "My father was a trainer, and I grew up in the summers going to tracks with him to work. Racing got into my blood at an early age. My father is a very good horseman and he showed me how to do it the hard way, without any big owners or big horses." Ness has had great success with his "blue-collar" horses and though he keeps his barn open to many jockeys, he credits Daniel Centeno as his go-to rider. When he's not at the barn – "which isn't often!" he says, he plays basketball at local gyms.

Kathleen O'Connell

Born: September 28, 1951
Birthplace: Detroit, MI
Residence: Davie, FL
Family: Single
Started training: early 1980s
First Win:
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Calder Race Course



Kathleen O'Connell is the daughter of a retired Detroit policeman. She rode show horses as a youth but had no racetrack experience when she took a howalker's job in 1970 at age 19 at the now-defunct Detroit Racecourse. A National Honor Society member in high school, O'Connell began working at the track "until I decided what I wanted to do with my life," she said. After having been turned down for veterinary school, O'Connell began her training career in her native Michigan, but has been competing in Florida since 1985. She established herself as one of the hardest working conditioners on the backstretch, and won the training title here in the 1998-1999 season. O'Connell counts millionaire Blazing Sword among her trainees; Blazing Sword captured two divisions of the 1996 Florida Stallion Stakes, the Grade II Washington Handicap and the Calder Derby. Besides Blazing Sword, O'Connell has trained such stakes performers as Shananie's Beat, Lindsay Lane, Shan's Ready, Shananie's Finale, Sheer Bliss and Bettarun Fast. 2002 juvenile filly Ivanavinalot won two Florida Stallion Stakes series races, including a record-setting 13 3/4-length win in the My Dear Girl Stakes. O'Connell saddled her 1,000th winner May 6, 2007 at Calder Race Course. She finished the 2007-2008 Tampa Bay Downs season as eighth leading conditioner with 18 victories to her credit.

TRAINER PROFILES

Thomas Proctor

Born: April 21, 1956
Birthplace: Gilmer, TX
Residence: Louisville, KY
Family: Wife, Laura; son, Will; daughter Heather
Started training: 1978, Hollywood Park
First Win: 1978, I'm Smokin, Hollywood Park
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Churchill Downs, Del Mar, Fairgrounds

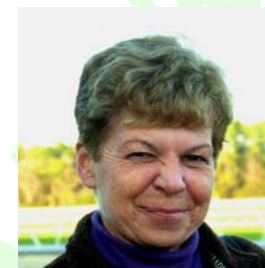


Thomas Proctor's barn has been a model of consistency since he began his training career. Tampa Bay Downs's 82 season found Proctor as the fourth leading trainer overall with 22 victories to his credit. He conditioned Glen Hill Farm's homebred One Dreamer, the 47-1 long shot winner of the 1994 \$1 million Breeders' Cup Distaff (Grade I); One Dreamer won 12 of 25 career starts and earned \$1,265,967. She scored six other stakes wins in addition to the BC Distaff. Proctor has trained two Eclipse Award winners: Sky Beauty (1994 Champion Older Female) and Hollywood Wildcat ('93 Champion Three-Year-Old Filly). He considers I'm Smokin one of his best horses: the California-bred won 14 of 44 career starts, including three stakes and earned \$326,395. Del Mar named a \$100,000 stakes test after the swift sprinter in 1991.

Proctor says that his favorite horse at Tampa Bay Downs is House Account, a horse he trained in the 1980s who won his first race here; after breaking his maiden, House Account went on to win the Tampa Bay Juvenile as well as the Sam F. Davis Stakes. Proctor says, "He won going a quarter of a mile as a two year old and kept running until he was eleven or twelve years old." When asked if he could pinpoint a favorite moment at Tampa Bay Downs, Proctor says, "I've had so many of them, I can't pick one!"

Lynne Scace

Born: July 20, 1950
Birthplace: Pittsfield, MA
Residence: Ocala, FL
Family: Son, David; granddaughters Katherine and Rebecca; grandson William
Started training: Pocono Downs, late 1960s
First Win: Falls Church, Narragansett Park
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Delaware Park



Trainer Lynne M. Scace is no stranger to Tampa Bay Downs or its winners circle, having conditioned horses here for eleven years. Scace didn't always know she was going to be a top Thoroughbred trainer: before she started her life at the track, Scace worked as a hair dresser. It was a twist of fate that a needy friend brought her to the backside. Her friend, who worked as a hot-walker at Green Mountain in Pownal, Vermont, needed a ride to work after her car had broken down. Scace agreed and made the 30-mile trip with her friend only to be told to "sit in the car and wait." When her friend needed another ride a few days later, Scace, who owned saddle horses and competed in gymkhanas while growing up, agreed but arrived at the track with a different attitude.

"I saw there was no sense in just sitting there," stated Scace. "So, I started walking hots and mucking out stalls. I never liked being inside all day as a hairdresser anyway."

Scace applied for and received her trainer's license while still a teenager and saddled her first winner in the late 1960s at Narragansett Park. As her career took off, she expanded her interests to include the sixty acre Double-S Farm in Ocala, which she operates with Ray Stifano. While Scace is hesitant to pick a favorite horse in her barn, she names her most memorable event at Tampa Bay Downs as a tie between her win with homebred Roman Candles in the 2007 rendition of the Pelican Stakes, and her win in the 2006 Minaret Stakes with Platinum Perfect, a horse she had sold. Scace ended the 2007-2008 Tampa race meeting tied as the fifth leading trainer with 20 wins to her credit.

TRAINER PROFILES

Lori Smock

Born: July 1, 1960
Birthplace: Andover, OH
Residence: Palm Harbor, FL
Family: Brother
Started Training: 1987, Penn National
First Win: 1987, Kehoe's Ribot, Penn National
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Indiana Downs, Ellis Park, Hoosier Park



From never having a horse growing up to running an efficient stable of 23 to 40 horses, Smock owes her success to a willing attitude to learn. She depends on strong, honest relationships with owners. With no one in her family involved in racing, Smock was introduced to Thoroughbred racing through a jockey. She owned her first horses at Thistledown in Ohio; she won with the first horse she ever sent to the paddock, Kehoe's Ribot. Smock spent time at the Institute of Computer Management in Cleveland, Ohio and also studied Pharmacy before leaving school for the track; although it was difficult for her parents to adjust to her change of career, they are now her biggest supporters. She splits her year between four different tracks: Tampa Bay Downs, Indiana Downs, Hoosier Park, and Ellis Park.

Smock finished the 2007-2008 Tampa Bay Downs season having escorted 14 horses to the winner's circle for \$226,885 in purse earnings.

Peter Wasiluk

Born: November 12, 1959
Birthplace: Camden, NJ
Residence: Oldsmar, FL
Family: Wife Sharyn, Daughter Jaclyn
Started Training: 1982
First Win: 1982, Chance Reason, Philadelphia Park
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Delaware Park



Peter Wasiluk, Jr. has had an exceptional 2007-2008 Tampa Bay Downs meeting, and on January 26 he saddled three winners and one second-place finisher from four starters. One of Wasiluk's winners took home the filly and mare division of the first leg of the Tampa Turf Test series; his second-place finisher on that afternoon was in the male division of the Turf Test. Peter Wasiluk, Jr. began his love affair with horses at an early age, when his father, Peter Wasiluk, Sr., would take him to the races. "My father used to take me to Delaware Park when I was a kid, because that was the only track that would let kids in," says Wasiluk about his early memories of the races. Wasiluk first took out a trainer's license in Keystone Racetrack (now Philadelphia Park) in 1982; it was in that year at Keystone that Wasiluk saddled his first career winner, Chance Reason. Wasiluk says that his favorite horse that he's trained in his career is Dinner in Odem because, "he runs very well, and he has a unique personality. He's done well at Delaware and Tampa, and he's just a fun horse to be around. He won a 1 1/2 mile grass stake at Delaware this summer, and it was quite a thrill."

Wasiluk lives in Oldsmar, and his entire family is involved in their twenty-five horse barn on the Tampa Bay Downs backside. His wife Sharyn helps with training in the morning, as does his daughter Jaclyn; his son Philip helps Wasiluk in his stable and is also an owner of Thoroughbreds. When he's not training horses, Peter Wasiluk says that he enjoys playing cards in the Silks Poker Room.

TRAINER PROFILES

Kirk Ziadie

Born: August 22, 1968
Birthplace: Jamaica
Residence: Hallandale, FL
Family: Son Justin; daughter, Tatiana; Father, Ralph Ziadie.
Started training: 2003, Calder
First Win: Scottish Bubbly
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Calder Race Course



Ziadie took out his training license in 2003 after serving as his father's (So. Fla. training legend Ralph Ziadie) assistant. Ziadie left school at 14 to work at the track and had his first win as trainer with Scottish Bubbly, a \$10,000 claim who went on to win more than \$150,000 for Ziadie and owner Gregory Kaufman. Ziadie completed the 2007-2008 Tampa Bay Downs meet as seventh leading trainer; the conditioner amassed 20 wins from 68 starters. In 2006-2007, Kirk Ziadie earned numerous successes on the Oldsmar oval, including a stakes win with Dartagnan'sspirit for owners Richard Averill and Stephen White on February 10 in the Super Stakes. Ziadie achieved back-to-back wins in the Lightning City Stakes in 2004 and 2005, and also won the Holiday Inn Express Turf Sprint. That year, Ziadie also conditioned R Lady Joy to a nine-length win in the 2005 Florida Oaks and joins Gerald Bennett and Ron Allen, Sr. as the only trainers in Tampa's top ten to make the top 100 trainers by wins in the nation by achieving 68 wins.

Ziadie took the trainer's title for the Calder summer 2007 meet; he is also currently the meet leader (as of June 11) for the 2008 Calder summer meet with sixteen wins and \$240,170 in purse earnings.

Michael Zwiesler

Born: January 15, 1958
Birthplace: Dayton, OH
Residence: Middletown, DE
Family: Wife Susan, daughter Katherine
Started Training: 1999 Delaware Park
First Winner: Steel Guitar, Delaware Park
Circuit: Tampa Bay Downs, Delaware Park



Michael Zwiesler got his love of Thoroughbreds from his father, who owned horses in the 1970s. "I always went to the races with him," he recalls. Zwiesler acted as assistant trainer to Neil Howard for twenty years, and took out his own trainer's license in 1999. His major clients were Bayard Sharp and William S. Farish, and Zwiesler still trains for Mr. Farish today. He had his first winner with a horse called Steel Guitar at Delaware Park, and later had his first career stakes win there with a filly called Shag. "The girls all used to laugh at the filly's name," Zwiesler says.

Zwiesler currently trains Summer Cruise, the three-year-old filly who captured both the Minaret Stakes on January 6 and the Manatee Stakes on February 3 for owners William S. Farish and Gasparilla Stables. "The horse broke her maiden at Tampa Bay Downs by seven lengths, and came back two weeks later and won by eight. Now she won by 1 ¾ lengths." Summer Cruise's recent stakes wins here are some of Zwiesler's favorite moments at Tampa Bay Downs; another favorite moment was the 2002 renewal of the Gasparilla Stakes, which he won with Afnan.

Zwiesler now spends his time between Tampa Bay Downs and Delaware Park. His family includes wife Susan, whom Zwiesler describes as, "My backbone. I move around a lot, and she's always been so understanding and supportive." His daughter Katherine has inherited her father's love of horses, and is currently competing in horse shows with jumpers.

OWNER PROFILES



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Al Alesso

Born: 1942
Birthplace: Rochester, NY
Residence: Brooksville, FL
Family: Wife, four daughters, including twins
First Winner: TNT's Wish
Tampa Trainer: Carl J. Cooper



Al Alesso's interest in horses stemmed from his daughters, who showed Arabians as children. One of his daughters became a racehorse trainer at Finger Lakes, and as a result Alesso began his career with Thoroughbreds. His first horse, named TNT's Wish, went on to become Alesso's first winner. Alesso says that he doesn't have a stand-out favorite moment from Tampa Bay Downs: "My favorite moment is winning any race! That's always important." He says that horse racing is, "a rewarding hobby for me. I really enjoy the hard work that comes with it, and I've had a successful year this year."

Aurora Springs Stable (Jose Acero)

Born: Dominican Republic
Residence: Dominican Republic
Family: Wife, four children (2 girls, 2 boys)
First Winner: Miss Tex Chum
Started Ownership: Age 14
Tampa Bay Downs Trainer: Rafael Ramos



Jose Acero's father has owned horses since 1966, and Acero had his first horse when he was just five years old. Acero's first racehorse was Miss Tex Chum, a filly who he kept in training in the Dominican Republic with his current conditioner Rafael Ramos. The horse won on her first attempt, and Acero has kept his horses with Ramos ever since. Acero says of Ramos, "he's the best trainer an owner could ask for. He does so well with the horses, and he's better with them than anyone I know. We rode and raced together as children, and the way he trains and works with horses is incredible." Acero's filly Awesome Chic captured the 2008 Grade III Florida Oaks, later going on to compete in the Grade I Kentucky Oaks.

Joscar is Jose Acero's favorite horse of all time; the horse's name is a combination of both Acero's first name and that of his brother, Carlos. Joscar won twenty-seven races in one year, still a record in the Dominican Republic. Acero currently lives in the Dominican Republic and is married with four children. He has two daughters and two sons.

OWNER PROFILES

Richard Averill

Born: October 24, 1975
Birthplace: Bradenton, FL
Residence: Bradenton, FL
Family: Son, Richie
First Win: Fun 'N' Gun
Started Ownership: 2002
Tampa Trainer: Kirk Ziadie



In just a short time, Richard Averill has experienced success that many owners only dream about. In only his third season at Tampa Bay Downs, Averill finished 3rd in the owner rankings with a stunning 61.9 win percentage and 80.9% in-the-money finishes. His best horse thus far is the accomplished filly R Lady Joy, winner of the \$500,000 Grade II Delaware Oaks and the 2005 Florida Oaks. Averill also owns (in partnership) the promising filly Rgirldoesn'tbluff. Averill's interest in racing stemmed from visiting the track as a fan; and since then, racehorses have become his hobby. An involved and hands-on owner, Averill can be found at the Oldsmar oval nearly every day. His stable has grown from his first acquisition, Fun 'N' Gun, to nearly twenty horses including broodmares and foals. A Florida native, Averill grew up helping with his father's business. Although he was unsure about what he wanted to do after a short stint in college, he now owns his own construction company in the booming Bradenton market. The masonry executive compares racehorse ownership to having his own mini sports franchise. Averill cites his 6-year-old son, Richie, as his passion.

Mike Buccina

Born: September 6, 1955
Birthplace: Pittsburgh, PA
Residence: Tarpon Springs, FL
Family: Wife, Kathy; daughter, Lacey; son, Nicholas
First Winner: Sky Junior
Started Ownership: Early 1970s, Waterford Park (now Mountaineer Park)
Tampa Trainer: Javier Contreras



Mike Buccina has been a formidable force amid the Tampa owner colony ever since arriving on the Oldsmar oval scene in the mid-1990s. Like many Thoroughbred owners, Mike Buccina's horse hobby grew from his love of racing as a fan. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Buccina first ventured to the track at Waterford Park (now Mountaineer Park). Notable claims in the past include Single File, a \$7,500 claim that moved up to midlevel allowance horse; Malo, a stakes-running mare that Buccina claimed for \$15,000; and Spirit of Flag, a \$7,500 Tampa claim that went on to win a stakes race at Mountaineer Park. Buccina's other business endeavors include starting Revenue Systems, Inc (RSI), an accounts receivable management company that specializes in corporate debt recovery departments. Buccina has been involved in the collection industry since 1985 and in insurance-related debt since relocating to Florida in 1985. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, one of Mike Buccina's fellow classmates is former Miami Dolphins quarterback Dan Marino.

OWNER PROFILES

Frank C. Calabrese

Born: Nov. 4, 1928
Birthplace: Chicago, IL
Residence: Chicago, IL
Family: Sons Frank, Carmen and Lewis
First Winner: Appealing Ring
Started Ownership: 1981
Tampa Bay Downs Trainer: Rick Slomkowski



Frank C. Calabrese's first bet, 50 cents at a bookie joint, paid \$21 and provided him with what was then a week's pay. Calabrese raced Standardbreds for 14 years before switching to Thoroughbreds about 27 years ago. His first Thoroughbred, Appealing Ring, won her first race for him, but his luck cooled after that; Calabrese says that he once paid \$190,000 for a horse, and "he turned out to be a real pig."

Calabrese has been in the business for about a quarter of a century and ranks as a true character at the track. He has experienced great success, and among the top horses currently in his stable is Dreaming of Anna, who is named after his late sister; the filly defeated males in Woodbine's Summer Stakes and won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies. Dreaming of Anna raced against eventual Florida Oaks winner Cotton Blossom in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies; the pair later rematched in the 2007 Kentucky Oaks. In the 2008 racing season, the filly swept both the Grade III Endeavour Breeders' Cup and the Grade III Hillsborough Stakes.

Glen Hill Farm

Owner: Leonard H. Lavin
Born: October 29, 1919
Birthplace: Chicago, IL
Residence: Glencoe, IL
Family: Wife, Bernice; daughters, Carol and Karen; son, Scott (now deceased)
Farm Location: Ocala, FL
Tampa Trainer: Tom Proctor



Leonard H. Lavin has won awards and honors for his philanthropic, civic, and business endeavors. Lavin received the 1994 Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association's Florida Breeder of the Year award and is the author of a book entitled Winners Make It Happen: Reflections of a Self-Made Man. During World War II, he served four years of sea duty and participated in nine invasions.

In the late 1960s, Lavin purchased the former Greentree Stud property near Ocala, FL to serve as Glen Hill's 325 acre breeding operation. Lavin's horses include Relaunch, who is probably the best-remembered horse who raced under the Glen Hill silks. After a distinguished racing career, Relaunch went on to become a prominent sire, often passing on his striking roan coat to his offspring; he has sired numerous stakes winners. Other horses campaigned by Lavin include Potentiality, Carload, Media Plan and One Dreamer. Lavin won the 1994 Breeders' Cup Distaff with homebred One Dreamer, a 47-1 long shot, for his first victory in a Breeders' Cup race. One Dreamer was retired after the Distaff and now resides at Glen Hill Farm.

OWNER PROFILES

Kinsman Stable

Owner: George M. Steinbrenner, III
Born: July 4, 1930
Birthplace: Rocky River, OH
Residence: Tampa, FL
Family: Wife, Joan; four children
Farm Location: Ocala, FL
Tampa Trainer: Greg Griffith



Kinsman Stable has become a powerhouse, much like the other holdings of “The Boss” George Steinbrenner III. Kinsman Farm, a 750-acre property near Ocala, FL, is home to about 35 broodmares that produce runners for the stable’s racing operation, Kinsman Stable. Kinsman Stable maintains approximately 25 horses in training with such quality conditioners as Bill Mott, John Servis, Kirk Ziadie, and Nick Zito. Among the stable’s most notable runners is Wood Memorial winner Bellamy Road, who became the sixth Kentucky Derby starter for Kinsman Stable. Other Kinsman homebreds that have enjoyed success are Sweet Symphony (winner of the Grade I Alabama Stakes), Beacon Shine (Flash Stakes, which was a Grade III at the time of Beacon Shine’s victory), and Diligence (winner of the ’97 rendition of the Grade II Tom Fool Handicap). Kinsman Stable has also had a presence at the Breeders’ Cup with 1996 Juvenile runner-up Acceptable. Other notable runners include Bellamy Road’s sire Concerto, who won the 1997 Jim Beam and Whirlaway Stakes and earned over \$1.3 million; and Tampa dominator Ebony Breeze, who won three stakes at the Oldsmar oval in 2003. Steinbrenner is best known as the Managing General Partner of the New York Yankees and he was named Tampa’s Citizen of the Year in 1998. No stranger to Florida racing, Steinbrenner owned Florida Downs (the current Tampa Bay Downs) from 1980 through 1986. In the course of the 2007-2008 Tampa season, Steinbrenner campaigned the filly Unfolding Wish, winner of the Sandpiper Stakes.

L and D Farm

Owner: Larry Vaughn
Born: September 18, 1947
Birthplace: Gaston, AL
Residence: Tampa, FL
Family: Wife, son, daughter, four grandchildren
Farm Location: Odessa, FL
Tampa Trainer: Juan Camillo



Larry Vaughn, owner of L and D Farm, has enjoyed much success at the Oldsmar oval: in the 2006-2007 season, 12 horses under the L and D silks took trips to the winner’s circle. Vaughn became hooked on the horse racing business when, eighteen years ago, he claimed a horse called Grey Anna for three thousand dollars at Tampa Bay Downs. The colt went on to become Vaughn’s first winner, and he later lost the horse for \$6,250 in another claiming race. “I just love to see them race,” says Vaughn. “Breeding is where the money is, but I love racing. I don’t care if it’s a claiming or stakes race; it’s always a thrill to watch them cross the wire in front.”

In addition to his racing string, Vaughn also keeps broodmares, including the notable filly Magnificent Song. He has a farm in Odessa, FL that includes 36 stalls and a 1/2 mile training track on 60 acres.

OWNER PROFILES

Montesano Racing

Born: April 3, 1965
Birthplace: New York City, NY
Residence: Walnut, IL
Family: Wife, four sons
First Winner: Ituna
Started Ownership: 2005
Tampa Trainers: Dale Bennett, Tom Proctor and David Hinsley



James Montesano gained an interest in horses through the clientele of his institutional money management firm. Says Montesano of Thoroughbred ownership, "I liked betting on them, and thought I might like owning them more!" Ituna, his first horse, was also his first winner. Montesano counts the six-year-old bay mare among his favorites in his 45-horse barn. He claimed Ituna on August 31, 2005, and since then, she has won five races for Montesano, including three victories in a row the 2006-2007 Tampa Bay Downs season. The mare has earned \$181,475 in her 38 career starts, finishing in the money sixteen times from those attempts; seven of those in-the-money finishes have been for Montesano.

James Montesano has a wife and four sons – "Future horsemen!" he laughs - and his favorite moment in racing came when his family was with him for Ituna's first victory in the Montesano racing silks. "We pulled the kids out of school for the race, and they had a great time." Montesano says of his experiences in horse racing, "It's a great family experience. We love it; the kids, my wife, we all enjoy it very much." He, his wife and sons go to the track often together, and have recently been spending Montesano's birthday at Tampa Bay Downs.

Balkrisna Sukharan

Born: October 29, 1974
Birthplace: Guyana
Residence: Blaine, MN
Family: Wife, children
First Winner: Lookinforthesecret
Started Ownership: 2007
Tampa Trainer: Jamie Ness



Sukharan started riding horses in Guyana when he was 12 and has owned and raced horses in the South American country, but when he moved to the United States in 1995 he was talked out of buying Thoroughbreds. "I've always loved horses, but the trainers I talked to said it was too expensive and they really discouraged me, but I always kept thinking about it and then I met Jamie. Probably three weeks later I bought 'Secret,'" he said. He came into the sport ready to spend \$40,000, win or lose. Since the initial investment of \$12,500 he hasn't had to spend any money out of his own pocket. He now has a string of 10 horses and is living his dream. Balkrisna Sukharan is not your typical owner of stakes-winning Thoroughbreds; he drives a truck and delivers snacks to convenience stores in Blaine, Minnesota. The native of Guyana took a chance on a horse last January and changed his life when he purchased Florida-bred Lookinforthesecret from then owner/trainer Jamie Ness. A year later the son of Cimarron Secret has earned more than \$330,000 and won six stakes races, and at the 2007-08 Tampa Bay Downs meet, the Florida-bred went undefeated for five starts. Sukharan finished the 2007-2008 Tampa Bay Downs racing season as the track's leading owner.