

324

WINNERS BOUGHT,
MANAGED OR OWNED

SEVEN SWs in 2019

including

EONS

1st Grade 3 Kent Stakes

GOTHAM GALA

1st Obeah Stakes

GIBRALFARO

1st \$100,000 Queen's Cup MPC Hurdle Stakes

CITY DREAMER

1st \$100,000 Marcellus Frost Hurdle Stakes

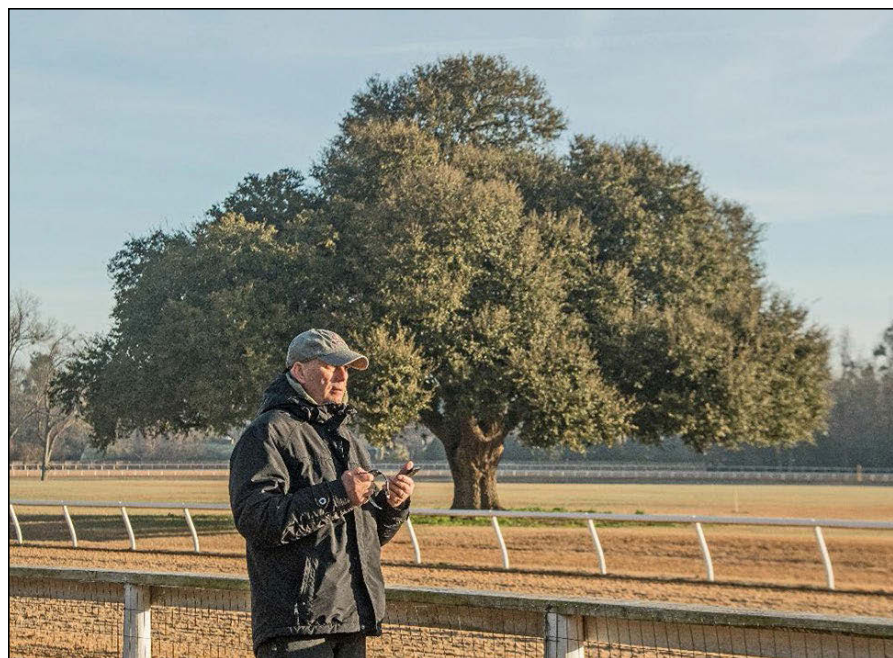


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Barry Bornstein

Trainer Mike Keogh watches horses train at Aiken.

Hanging in There

Keogh enjoys Canadian Hall honor

BY SEAN CLANCY

If Holly Robinson and Tracy Attfield say you're OK, then you're OK. Put it in the drawer, filed, forever. It's that simple. Those stalwarts of character judging (and character) have always said Mike Keogh is OK.

Better than OK. On April 7, the Woodbine-based conditioner was elected to the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame for a stellar career that has produced three-time Grade 1 winner Langfuhr, Canadian Triple Crown winner Wando, Queen's Plate winner Woodcarver, Sovereign Award winner Mobil and countless other stakes winners. Private trainer for fellow Hall of Famer Gustav Schickedanz, Keogh joins several of his runners, his bosses, his friends, in the Hall of Fame. As a bonus, Play The King, will be inducted sometime this summer (the date is pending due to coronavirus restrictions). Keogh, galloped the champion sprinter for Roger Attfield.

"I'm very honored to make it, I trained for Gus Schickedanz for all my training career, he's in there, Langfuhr and Wando are in there, two of my

best horses so it's nice to get in there with them," Keogh said. "Plus Play The King, it's really cool we're both getting in at the same time. He was a beautiful horse, he was unbelievable, one cool dude. He could take a nice hold, he was very competitive, but he was a gentleman."

Sounds like Keogh.

Growing up at the home of the Epsom Derby in England, Keogh fell for racing, rode jump races before visiting his sister and her husband in Canada in the mid-1970s. He was hooked and looking for a way to stay but kept getting turned down for a visa. On one of his visits, he heard that trainer J. C. Meyer had a knack for getting Europeans into Canada. Keogh visited the future Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Famer. The following spring, Keogh was here to stay.

"March the 3rd, 1977, I arrived in Canada," Keogh said.

Keogh galloped horses for Meyer for a few years, worked for Mike Doyle in his first year as a trainer at St. Lucie Training Center (now

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Keogh —

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Payson Park) before hooking up with John Tammaro where he galloped Deputy Minister. Yeah, that Deputy Minister.

Always wanting to become a trainer, Keogh found his way to Hall of Fame trainer Roger Attfield where the likes of Izvestia, With Approval and Play The King taught him everything else he needed to learn.

“I wanted to apprentice under somebody like Roger because I always had great respect for him,” Keogh said. “I knew I couldn’t go out as a public trainer because I just couldn’t afford it. Gus was looking for a private trainer and I applied for the job, luckily, I got it.”

Next stop, Hall of Fame.

Keogh began training for Schickedanz in 1993.

“Great horses,” Keogh said. “Gus was just a wonderful man, a gentleman, a man of his word. And also, our farm manager, Lauri Kenny, just a great guy to work with, I honestly believe if the farm manager and trainer don’t get along, you won’t have any success. Lauri has always been behind me 100 percent.”

Old school, Schickedanz, Kenny and Keogh formed a formidable team, spelling older horses and teaching young horses at the Aiken Training Center and on Schickedanz’s farm in Springfield,

S.C. during the winter and winning big races at Woodbine the rest of the year.

“I trained at the farm for quite a while and I got him convinced to let me take a couple of stalls at the track, like a real smart guy, now I’m working at the farm and working at the track, so much extra work,” Keogh said. “I had the old brick barn next to Buddy Raines’ barn, I had five stalls, I had Langfuhr there when he was 2 turning 3.”

It worked.

Langfuhr, a hombred son of Danzig, made his career debut at 3 in April, 1995. He won that day and another eight times, including Grade 1 triumphs in the Vosburgh, Carter and Met Mile to finish his career and further bolster Schickedanz’s breeding empire.

“He was unbelievable,” Keogh said. “The best I ever trained.”

For 27 years, Keogh and Schickedanz did it their way, choreographing a quality over quantity approach that yielded 330 wins and over \$21 million in earnings. Schickedanz, a self-made man who had escaped the Russians in World War II, died at 90 last summer.

“His family doesn’t have any real interest,” Keogh said. “All the yearlings got sold last year, the

numbers have been going down gradually. It was tough to watch the babies get sold.”

Ever an optimist, Keogh found a way to keep the Schickedanz legacy going.

“I ended up getting a couple of us together and we bought one of them,” Keogh said. “She’s a real nice filly, too. It’s a really good family. She’s by Langfuhr, one of his last crop, out of a mare named Sweet Bama Breeze, a City Zip mare, she’s been a great producer.”

Of course, she has. Recently, Keogh has been battling prostate cancer. I finally stuttered out a question about his health.

“I’m doing pretty good, thanks Sean,” Keogh said. “I was just at the oncologist, everything’s pretty good. Hanging in there.”

“Like all of us,” I said.

Keogh laughed.

By the end of the conversation, the 63-year-old horse trainer was dreaming about a daughter of Langfuhr, his other 14 horses at Woodbine and reminiscing about old friends, former trainer Robinson and tech tycoon, Attfield. Lifers, legends.

“We’ve had a lot of fun over the years,” Keogh said. “They’re special.”

Just like Keogh.

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