

THOROFAN VOICE

Vol. XI

Aug 22, 2008

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Fans,

The good old-days are here. Its picture perfect summer weather, there is a full field of competitive colts in the Travers and reigning Horse of the year Curlin is training like a monster for next week's Woodward Stakes. Hopefully a great number of you are here to catch as much of the action as possible.

We have a few backside passes so if some of our members have never experienced the track on that side during training hours, we will do our best to escort you through that experience. Come see us at the Thorofan sign-up table in the Carousel any afternoon and if it's at all possible we will serve up that special treat for you on a scheduled morning.

This Sunday we are adding a twist to our educational program. NYRA's head starter, Roy Robert Williamson is going to speak at our educational forum. Here's an opportunity to learn about one of the most important facets of a race. Many a race is either won or lost in the gate. There is nothing quick about teaching a horse to accept this iron monster and to learn about the steps involved is fascinating. This program will be held in the "B" section of the Carousel and commences at 11:00 AM. This is just the start of myriad interesting additions we will bring to fans. We know that the more you know about the racing game the more you will enjoy attending the races. We are eager to share our knowledge and love of this great sport.

Our signature photo which you see on our banners was taken by our member and great supporter Barry Bornstein. Barry has given Thorofan the framed original of this beautiful photo. You'll find it on display at the sign-up table. One of you lucky members will own this photo at the end of the meet. We are not sure how we are going to do it yet, but every member will have an equal shot at winning this beautiful prize.

We are still working through a lot of processes to make our organization stronger. It's not easy work but our energy remains high and our vision clear. The future of racing is only as good as its popularity with fans. Our goals remain consistent with the reason we started Thorofan. We are here to give the fan "a voice". We welcome suggestions from all of you. When our membership becomes large enough we will make the "voice" heard. We take great pride in this organization; we know its good for every aspect of racing and will at some point serve every entity within the sport well.

We tip our hats to the volunteers that have helped to bring us to this point and look forward to working with more of you as we race along to our goals.

See you at the races,

Marilyn Lane
Editor



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THE OTHER HORSE

By Marilyn Lane



Curlin & Pancho

Around the track lead-ponies and pretty much all non-race horses are called pony horses. It has nothing to do with their size or breeding, its all about their jobs.

At Saratoga, Barclay Tagg has the most famous “pony horse.” Funny Cide has a résumé befitting a more prestigious role but no where would this horse be happier than where he is. Everyone recognizes the red horse and seldom is he spotted that flashes of his illustrious past do not appear simultaneously. He is the quintessential poster boy for, “Been There, Done That.” Under different tutelage, his not too distant past might send him off at a hard to catch pace. Barclay and his assistant Robin know this so they avoid putting him in competitive situations. Funny Cide is happy to accompany horses to the track, stand there and watch others go through their drills. He’s the only classic winner I have ever seen tied to



Funny Cide's Second Career

a telephone pole. However, you only have to go so far as the Oklahoma Training track to find another Grade 1 winner employed as a pony. Tom Voss’s John’s Call, winner of the Sword Dancer at age 9 now occasionally assumes the role of stable pony. I understand that he stands tied to a tree.

Funny Cide and John’s Call tell a larger story. Behind the obvious is the devotion their connections have to their horses and the consummate horsemanship it requires to convert horses to a role which requires a completely different discipline from their earlier careers.

Pony horses are an essential part of a training program. Their jobs require for them to be tolerant, strong, manageable and smart. They have to learn to stand tied to a tree, the clothes line or anything else that's handy. If a trainer has to step off his horse to give a rider a leg-up, it's good to have a horse that will be there when you get ready to remount. They are a safety valve to protect their racing brethren. Outriders use them to catch loose ones or to help stabilize injured ones. Some trainers use them to pony horses. That is to lead rider-less horses at a gallop on the track. This is a practice employed to give horses exercise without the taxation of weight on their backs. Some trainers love to do this; others disdain it, but if you're going to do it you had better be properly mounted. To control two horses on a racetrack is not a feat for the inexperienced.

Many horses are accompanied to and from their training exercises with lead-ponies and in America most of the horses are led to the post by them. The calming influence a good pony can have on a racehorse is an immeasurable asset. When Curlin shipped to Dubai, Steve Asmussen was able to stay behind. What Curlin needed to thrive was Steve's faithful and talented assistant, Scott Blasi who doubled as his groom, his exercise rider and his loyal companion, Pancho. When Curlin retires Pancho will be retired too. They will both be missed.

I once knew an old cowboy with two Thoroughbreds and no pony horse. This was not a problem for G.W. Cox; he simply used which ever one was not running as the pony. That's not all, he had one of those horses which he could ride to the racing secretary's office, get off and leave ground-tied while he went inside to enter him.

The levels of horsemanship found in the Thoroughbred business could fill volumes. There is so much more to this game than the races.



Funny Cide, Still a Hero
photo courtesy of DGH Equine Photography



Mosaic Stable's Vicarious Loves Her Pony