



## Javier Castellano

**Born:** Oct. 23, 1977 in Maracaibo, Venezuela.

**Resident:** Garden City, N.Y.

**Family:** Abby (wife), Kayla Marie (daughter).

**Javier Castellano's record at Keeneland:**

**Total Wins:** 29

**Stakes Wins:** (7)

- Won his first Breeders' Cup race in the 2004 Classic on Ghostzapper in his first Breeders' Cup mount.
- Won his first classic race in 2006 when Bernardini won the Preakness.
- Ranked sixth by earnings in 2005 with \$12.5 million and 27th by victories with 206.
- Won Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1) in 2005 with Saratoga County.
- Won 2005 Wood Memorial (G1) with Bellamy Road.
- Won 2005 Coolmore Lexington Stakes (G2) with Coin Silver.
- Has won riding titles at Aqueduct (2004 spring and 2002-03 inner track), Tropical-at-Calder (1999-'00 and 2000-'01) and Hialeah.
- Won six stakes during the 2005 Gulfstream Park meet and ranked third in the jockey standings.
- Has twice won five races on a card at Saratoga, Sept. 7, 2004, and Sept. 3, 2005 (including the Forego Handicap on Mass Media).
- Ranked sixth among New York riders in 2005 with 124 wins.

Javier Castellano was in elite company when he scored his first Breeders' Cup victory with his first mount in 2004. The fact that it came in the Breeders' Cup Classic on subsequent Horse of the Year Ghostzapper made it doubly impressive.

"You have to appreciate moments like that when they come along," he said. "They don't last long."

His earnings set personal bests each year from 1997 through 2004, his most lucrative year to date when he ranked sixth with earnings of \$13,038,943.

Castellano had been Ghostzapper's regular rider since the beginning of the colt's 3-year-old season in 2003. They teamed to win seven of eight races, including the Woodward (G1) and culminating with the Classic.

His other 2004 victories included the Beldame (G1) aboard Sightseek and the Futurity (G2) on Park Avenue Ball.

He had actually been named to ride a filly in the 2001 Distaff—Exogenous—but she had to be scratched after flipping on her way to the paddock before the race and suffering a fatal injury. He had ridden her to earlier victories in the Beldame (G1) and the Gazelle (G1).

"He's a great kid, a great family person, and a great rider," said Terry Meyocks, his father-in-law and former executive with the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, in *Daily Racing Form* after the Classic. "I couldn't be happier for him, especially what he's been through over the past several years."

Not only was Meyocks referring to the horrible 2001 Breeders' Cup incident but also to the tragic death in 2000 of his father, Abel, who was killed in a robbery attempt.

After winning the Classic, Castellano paid tribute to his father by pointing heavenward.

"I am so excited right now, I don't even remember what I did after the race," he told the *Form*. "But I know I did that for my father."

In 2006, Castellano was the regular rider of Bernardini and won his first classic race, the Preakness, aboard him. They also teamed to win the Travers (G1) and Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) before finishing second in the Breeders' Cup Classic (G1). He was the regular rider of dual Grade 1 winner Pine Island and won graded races with Wanderin Boy, Remarkable News (Ven), Stormy Kiss, Outperformance, Great Intentions, Smokey Glacken and Ozone Bere (Fr). He also became a father for the first time, with daughter Kayla Marie arriving in February. For the year he finished 11th in earnings with nearly \$11.3 million.

Born in Maracaibo, Venezuela, he began riding in 1996, following in the footsteps of his father, and an uncle. By June of 1997, he moved to the U.S. as a teenager who spoke little English to begin riding on the south Florida circuit (he is now fluent). His first winner in the U.S. came on July 31, 1997, at Calder aboard Phone Man.

His brother, Abel Jr., who is also a jockey, plies his trade in Delaware and Maryland. He was the leading rider at Laurel in the fall of 2003.

Castellano won riding crowns at the Tropical-at-Calder meets in 1999-2000 and again in 2000-'01. With the encouragement of then-agent Steve Adika, he moved his tack to New York in 2001. He concluded the year in sixth place among jockeys on the New York circuit. The following year he finished second in the standings and took the riding title at Aqueduct's 2002-'03 inner-track meet.

He also was the leading rider during Aqueduct's 2004 spring meet.

Castellano won his first stakes at Keeneland in 2002—the Stonerside Beaumont (G2) on Proper Gamble, who was trained by Todd Pletcher.

Nick Zito, who has proved to be one of his biggest supporters, gave him winning mounts in two more graded stakes at Keeneland the following year—the Lane's End Breeders' Futurity (G2) on Eurosilver and the Phoenix Breeders' Cup (G3) with Najran. He also won the Clark Handicap (G2) on Quest for Zito at Churchill that fall.

Other stakes wins in 2003 included the Vosburgh on Ghostzapper, the Secretariat Stakes aboard Kicken Kris and the Shuvee on Wild Spirit. He ranked 15th by earnings that year with better than \$9.5 million to his credit.

One of his highlights from 2005 was defeating an international field of sprinters in the Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1) on March 26 at Nad Al Sheba aboard Saratoga County. They had to survive a claim of foul after winning the \$2 million race for trainer George Weaver.

"It was a little tight in the first half of the race," Castellano told *The Blood-Horse*, "but then I got the opportunity to go clear. He responded very well. He's a professional and classy horse."

Unfortunately, Saratoga County had to be euthanized a few months later after he developed laminitis.

Another highlight was the 17 1/2-length triumph aboard the Zito-trained Bellamy Road in the Wood Memorial (G1) in stakes-record time (1:47.16 for nine furlongs). That provided Castellano with his first mount in the Kentucky Derby. Sent off as the favorite, he and Bellamy Road reached the lead briefly before tiring to finish seventh.

His other Grade 1 victories came in the Humana Distaff Handicap on My Trusty Cat, the Metropolitan Handicap with Ghostzapper and the Forego Stakes on Mass Media.

In the spring of 2005, Castellano added victories in two more Keeneland graded stakes—the Coolmore Lexington on Coin Silver for Pletcher and the Fifth Third Elkhorn (G3) on Macaw (Ire) for Angel Penna, Jr.

Though his earnings dipped a bit in 2005, to \$12.5 million, he still ranked sixth by earnings (which did not include the \$1.2 million purse from the Golden Shaheen victory). He won a total of 21 North American graded stakes at nine different racetracks, also including the Stonerside Forward Gal Stakes on Letgomyecho, the Richter Scale Breeders' Cup Sprint Championship Handicap with Sir Shackleton, the W.L. McKnight Handicap with Meteor Storm (GB) and the Westchester Handicap on Gygistar.