



Garrett Gomez

Born: Jan. 1, 1972 in Tucson, Ariz.

Residence: Duarte, Calif.

Family: Pam (wife), Amanda (daughter), Jared (son) and daughter Shelby and son Collin from a previous marriage.

Garrett Gomez's record at Keeneland

Total wins: 22

Stakes Wins (10)

- North America's leading money-winning rider in 2006.
- Eclipse Award finalist in 2006 for top jockey.
- Won two Breeders' Cup races in 2005—the Juvenile on Stevie Wonderboy and the Mile on Artie Schiller.
- Won the 2,000th race of his career at Del Mar in 2002 aboard Adalgisa.
- Won three races on Jan. 1, 2007, two of which were Grade 3s—the Monrovia Handicap (Society Hostess) and the El Conejo Handicap (Harvard Avenue).
- Won six stakes at Keeneland in 2006, including the Grade 1 Toyota Blue Grass on Sinister Minister and Shadwell Turf Mile on Aussie Rules.
- Won '06 Wood Memorial (G1) with Bob and John.
- Won the 2000 Spinster (G1) on Plenty of Light.
- Won four races at Santa Anita on Dec. 26, 2006, including the California Breeders Champion Stakes on Pirates Deputy.
- Won the 1997 Mid-America Triple with Honor Glide.
- Won his first riding title at Hollywood Park in the fall of 1998; also won '05 spring/summer meet and the '06 fall meet titles.
- Won 2005 Oak Tree title.
- Finished second at Saratoga in 2006.

When jockey John Velazquez was sidelined by injury last spring, trainer Todd Pletcher tapped Garrett Gomez to become his first-call rider.

It may have been just what Gomez needed to finally reach the potential he has flashed for a decade or more. By the end of the year, he was the nation's leading rider by earnings with a career-best \$20,122,592. He ranked 15th in victories with 261 and was among the three Eclipse finalists for leading rider.

Adding in earnings from Dubai last year, he reached \$21,922,592. Though he didn't win a race there, he did finish third on Wilko in the Dubai World Cup (G1) behind Electrocutionist and Brass Hat.

Simply put, Gomez, had a sensational year as he won 58 stakes races, 36 of which were graded and 12 of which were at the Grade 1 level. He won 16 stakes on Pletcher-trained horses, including the Woodford Reserve Turf Classic (on English Channel), American Oaks Invitational and Yellow Ribbon (on Eclipse winner Wait a While), the Hopeful (Circular Quay) and the Garden City Breeders' Cup (Magnificent Song), all Grade 1 races.

Even after Velazquez successfully returned to riding, Gomez retained the mount on several of the top Pletcher horses.

At Keeneland, he added six stakes victories to four earlier triumphs. They included the Blue Grass with Sinister Minister by 12 3/4 lengths and the Shadwell Turf Mile on Aussie Rules. He finished fourth in the fall meet jockey standings with 11 wins.

Gomez had trailed Edgar Prado in the earnings race for much of the year but managed to catch him in December. It was a fairly tight finish with Prado being only about \$350,000 behind him. Gomez won with 21 percent of his mounts.

In addition to the Blue Grass and Wood Memorial wins, he also won several other big races for trainer Bob Baffert, including the Humana Distaff (G1) on Pussycat Doll. And he teamed with Godolphin stable for victories aboard Discreet Cat in the Hill 'n' Dale Cigar Mile Handicap (G1) and Ashkal Way (Ire) in the Citation Handicap (G1). For trainer Richard Mandella, he guided Boboman to victory in the Hollywood Turf Cup (G1).

The previous year had also been a good one for Gomez, with 245 victories, which ranked him 13th, and \$14,221,321 in earnings to rank fifth. Highlights included the two Breeders' Cup victories, in the Juvenile and the Mile, as well as the Jockey Club Gold Cup (G1) and Pacific Classic (G1), both on Borrego, and the Vosburgh (G1) on Taste of Paradise. He won a total of 15 graded races during the year.

After winning his first Breeders' Cup race, the Juvenile on Stevie Wonderboy, Gomez said: "When I hit the wire, I never had a feeling like it and it was, you know, I couldn't believe I actually won my first Breeders' Cup race. I was so thrilled and when I talked to Donna Barton after the race, she said, what's it fell like? I said, I feel like I need to cry. It means that much."

Gomez, who is now represented by agent Ron Anderson, won his first race at Santa Fe Downs in New Mexico, on Aug. 19, 1988. His father, Louie, was also a jockey for many years in the Southwest, moving his family from place to place, "like gypsies," according to his mother, Sandy.

He dropped out of high school in the 10th grade to start riding.

"You're at a very young age, being given a lot of money," he told Patrick Finley of the

Arizona Daily Star. "You're expected to grow up really fast, and a lot of us don't grow up."

"Before, it was all about me," he said. "My world isn't all about me today."

Gomez was the nation's second-leading apprentice of 1989 with 182 victories. He and his father actually rode against each other in at least four races. He rode California's fair circuit before moving to Nebraska's Fonner Park and Ak-Sar-Ben.

He won back-to-back runnings of the Arkansas Derby, in 1994 with Concern and with Dazzling Falls the next year. He swept the Mid-America Triple—the Secretariat, American Derby and Arlington Classic—on Honor Glide in 1997. And he won his first meet title at Hollywood Park in the fall of 1998.

Though his career had several interruptions from 1994 through 1996, things seemed to be going well by 1997. In 1999, his mounts earned more than \$9 million.

In September 2004, Gomez returned to riding from a 21-month absence while he sought help for problems that included substance abuse. He won just 36 races that year for earnings of \$1.3 million.

He had been arrested in July of 2003 after having been out of racing for six months and was charged with, among other things, possession of a controlled substance. He served 40 days in jail and was ordered to enter a drug rehabilitation program that would last six months.

He's been on a roll since he returned to riding. He won the Hollywood title for the 2005 spring/summer meet. He later told Jay Privman of *Daily Racing Form*: "I'm ecstatic with how things are going. I've always known I've had the ability and the talent. I just had to put my mind to it, rely on a power greater than me, and realize I could put my hand out and ask for help. I always felt that was a downfall. Now, I'm not afraid to ask for help. Before, I couldn't ask for help, because I thought I knew everything."

In late 2006, Gomez donated \$10,000 to the Winners Foundation, an organization dedicated to helping racetrackers with substance and alcohol abuse.

"My agent, Ron Anderson, has done a great job, and we worked our butts off this year," he said at the time. "I wouldn't be here today, and all this wouldn't be possible if it weren't for the Winners Foundation, so the money is just a small way of saying thanks for what they've done for me."

Anderson had handled Jerry Bailey's book before he retired.

"I was greeted with open arms back there," Gomez said once he returned to California about riding on the East Coast last year. "I was given the opportunity to ride some really good horses and we had a really good time and I'm excited about doing it again maybe next year."

"But I'm happy to be home. This is home. My kids are in school here and it's nice to be back. But business is good and it was worth making the move."