



Mike Earl Smith

Born: Aug. 10, 1965 in Roswell, N.M.
Resident: Westbury, N.Y.
Family: Single

Mike Smith's record at Keeneland
Total wins: 131
Stakes Wins (24)

- Inducted into the Racing Hall of Fame in 2003.
- Two-time Eclipse Award winner as the nation's outstanding jockey—1993 and 1994 and finalist in 2002.
- Won his first Kentucky Derby in 2005 aboard Giacomo.
- Won the 1993 Preakness Stakes with Prairie Bayou.
- Leading rider by money won in 1993 (\$14 million) and 1994 (nearly \$16 million).
- Broke the record for number of stakes wins in a year in 1993 with 62, then broke his own record the following year with 68 victories (which included 20 Grade 1 wins).
- Won the 4,000th race of his career at Hollywood Park on June 17, 2001, with Lift Off.
- Has won 10 Breeders' Cup races—1992 Mile, Lure; 1993 Mile, Lure; 1994 Turf, Tikkanen, and Sprint, Cherokee Run; 1995 Distaff, Inside Information, and Juvenile, Unbridled's Song; 1997 Classic, Skip Away, and Distaff, Ajina; 2002 Juvenile, Vindication, and Distaff, Azeri.
- Won three straight Florida Derbys, 1994-1996.
- Recipient of the 2000 George Woolf Memorial Jockey Award.
- Winner of the 1994 Mike Venezia Award.
- Leading rider on the New York Racing Association circuit, 1991-1993.
- Topped the Keeneland standings in the spring of 1994.
- Leading rider at Gulfstream Park in 1994, Turfway in the fall of 1986, and Canterbury Downs in 1985.
- Has won the Blue Grass Stakes twice—Holy Bull, 1994; and Prairie Bayou, 1993.
- Won the 1991 Irish Two Thousand Guineas with Fourstars Allstar.
- Elected to the Jockeys' Guild Senate last year.

Without a doubt, Mike Smith is one of racing's most accomplished riders. Inducted into Racing's Hall of Fame in 2003, the two-time Eclipse Award winner has won 10 Breeders' Cup races, two classics and has snagged riding titles in New York, Kentucky, Minnesota and Florida. He also was voted the George Woolf Award for 2000.

"That certainly is a big honor," he said. "The voting is strictly from your peers."

It all started while Smith was growing up in New Mexico. His uncle trained a few horses and his father, George, rode for a while in Arizona. Both of his grandfathers also owned horses. At 11, he began riding races in New Mexico and took out his first jockey's license when he was 16. He won his first race at Santa Fe Downs on Forever Man on June 12, 1982.

He then moved to Louisiana Downs where he exercised horses and tagged along with some of the older riders, like future father-in-law John Lively, to watch them ride in the afternoons.

He returned to New Mexico where he became one of the leading riders on the quarter horse/Thoroughbred circuit.

"I was raised around racing," he said. "I always wanted to be a jockey. It's all I ever wanted to do, to tell you the truth."

Smith began trying other circuits and won the riding titles at Canterbury Downs in 1985 and at Turfway Park in the fall of 1986.

"You realize very early that you have to work every day to get better," he said. "You

just learn that your job is to do the very best you can for the horse. If you do that, you're doing the best you can for yourself, too."

He moved his tack to New York in 1989, and reigned as the leading rider on the New York Racing Association circuit from 1991-1993. He won five of the six NYRA meets in 1991 and even went overseas, to win the Irish Two Thousand Guineas on Fourstars Allstar for trainer Leo O'Brien.

Smith's ascension to the top continued rapidly. He won his first Breeders' Cup race in 1992 with Lure in the Mile. In '93, he set a record for stakes victories in a year of 62, breaking Pat Day's former mark. He added another Breeders' Cup Mile with Lure, won his first classic, the Preakness, with Prairie Bayou, swept NYRA's Triple Tiara with Sky Beauty and received his first Eclipse Award.

He broke his own record for stakes wins the following year with 68 when his regular mounts included Holy Bull, Sky Beauty and Paradise Creek. Among his victories were the Breeders' Cup Turf with Tikkanen and Sprint with Cherokee Run, the Blue Grass with Holy Bull and the Ashland with Inside Information. He earned his second Eclipse Award and the Mike Venezia Award for sportsmanship.

Smith won his fifth and sixth Breeders' Cup events in 1995—the Juvenile with Unbridled's Song and the Distaff with Inside Information, on whom he also won his first Spinster. In 1997, for the third time, he won

two Breeders' Cup races, this time the Classic on Skip Away and the Distaff on Ajina.

Serious injuries sidelined him for much of 1998, including a broken back in August, which sidelined him until February 1999. His time off allowed him to do some television commentating for ESPN, ABC and NBC.

After his return, he has finished among the Top 20 riders by earnings in 1999-2000 and 2002-2003. He ranked 21st with \$7,863,942 in 2004.

Smith relocated to the West Coast after the 2001 Keeneland spring meet, a move that paid big dividends in 2002 with 112 races won and earnings of \$10.8 million. In addition to his Breeders' Cup victories astride Vindication (Juvenile) and Azeri (Distaff), he also won Grade 1 races on Snow Ridge, Came Home and The Tin Man.

In 2003, he won three more Grade 1 races with Azeri—the Apple Blossom, Vanity and Milady Breeders' Cup—plus the Hollywood Futurity with Lion Heart. In 2004, he won Grade 1 races aboard Adoration (Santa Margarita), Total Impact (Hollywood Gold Cup), and Alphabet Kisses (La Brea) and finished second in the Kentucky Derby with Lion Heart.

Several years ago he termed his biggest thrills "winning the first Breeders' Cup with Lure and winning the Preakness on Prairie Bayou. I still want to win the Kentucky Derby. If not that, then I'd like to finish up and be known as a good rider. At my age, I've been giving some thought to where to live and what to do next. I may want to get into commentating."

In 2005, his wish to win a Kentucky Derby came true aboard 50-1 shot Giacomo. His only other Grade 1 score came on Sing-halese (GB) in the Del Mar Oaks, plus he won graded races on Woke Up Dreamin and Puxa Saco. At year-end, he ranked 24th by earnings with \$6,520,617 to his credit.

In 2006, he relocated to New York and graded victories came on Giacomo (San Diego Handicap), Noble Stelle (Ger) (Glens Falls Handicap), Boca Grande (Demoiselle) and U D Ghetto (Kentucky Cup Juvenile). For the year, his mounts earned \$4,309,865.

In a *Daily Racing Form* column, the late Joe Hirsch quoted Hall of Famer and racing steward Walter Blum as saying of Smith and Jerry Bailey: "They are two of the very best. Both are intelligent, both are aggressive, both have great seats on a horse and both are alert when it comes to staying out of trouble in heavy traffic."

"In a sense, they remind me of Eddie Arcaro and Bill Shoemaker. They used to say that horses ran freely for Shoemaker, while Arcaro made them run. But they both got results. Horses seem to run freely for Smith, while Bailey makes them run, but they both get results."