



Bill Straus

You can own a racehorse

The best place to learn how is The Racing Game's website

By Ken Snyder

Admit it. You've looked into the paddock before a race at Keeneland or the winner's circle after a race and thought, "I'd like to be there with my own horse." A unique program called The Racing Game with a website at www.theracinggame.com can put you there at less cost and more important, with the facts, research and assistance to make racehorse ownership easier than you ever imagined.

The website provides the proverbial A-to-Z on Thoroughbred ownership, covering business issues like insurance and tax concerns all the way through the retirement of the horse. The heart of the website, however, may be a literal A-to-W list of advisors (no advisors with names beginning with "X," "Y" and "Z" are currently listed) who can assist you with every aspect of ownership and direct you, ideally, to the right horse.

"What we recommend is that new

or potential owners download and fill out an Advisor Request Form on the website," said Erin Halliwell, director of marketing and communications for the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association (TOBA). TOBA, *The Blood-Horse* magazine and Keeneland together market Thoroughbred ownership through The Racing Game program and sponsor the website.

Interest, objective

The Advisor Request Form asks for the type of ownership interest—partnership or sole ownership—geographic region and basic demographics. Most important, the form asks about a prospective owner's objectives. These objectives, according to Halliwell, are critical in determining the list of potential advisors to be sent to a prospective owner. The owner can then research those advisors, make contacts and select a mentor.

Advisors will typically consist of bloodstock agents who represent buyers or sellers of Thoroughbreds at

public auction. A few insurance agents, legal experts on Thoroughbred ownership and racing and a few trainers also are included. All have been carefully screened by a panel of racing industry experts before appearing on the website.

So, is there a classic profile for a prospective Thoroughbred owner who will download and complete a form? The answer, according to Keeneland sales and marketing associate Chauncey Morris, is both yes and no.

"Individuals who own racehorses possess driven personalities, and are very competitive," said Morris, who is not surprised that a number of people who own professional sports franchises also own Thoroughbreds. The kind of wealth needed to own both a sports franchise and a Thoroughbred is not, however, an automatic prerequisite to horse ownership.

"At the Keeneland sales, we'll have horses that sell in excess of \$1 million to smaller amounts," Morris said. (Keeneland's next sale is the Sep-

tember Yearling Sale, which will offer more than 4,000 horses at a wide range of prices. The sale is September 8-21.)

Stories of reasonably priced horses who became stars on the racetrack abound. Reigning Horse of the Year Curlin was sold at Keeneland September in 2005 for \$57,000. English Channel, last year's champion turf male, was sold at the same sale in 2003 for \$50,000. And there is multiple Grade 1 winner Jambalaya, who was sold at Keeneland September in 2003 for just \$2,500. To date, Jambalaya has earned nearly \$1.6 million.

Homework time

While the odds of owning a horse like Curlin, English Channel or Jambalaya are daunting, Halliwell and Morris say the chances of success can be maximized no matter the level of racing. Halliwell encourages a prospective owner to use the same business savvy in approaching racehorse own-



Photo by Z

Owning a racehorse can provide numerous thrills and reasons to celebrate.

ership that he or she has employed professionally.

"Do your homework," said Halliwell, "don't just jump in. Use the list of advisors that we provide; talk to people; network; go to the races; go to the sales."

Halliwell also advises putting together a business plan that outlines objectives. The Racing Game's website provides many of the tools to put together such a plan, acquainting prospective owners with specifics like tax-related issues connected to horse

ownership, the types of purchase options and guidelines to selecting a trainer—a relationship that Halliwell says is analogous to marriage. The website also points prospective owners to other resources for learning "the game" such as industry-sponsored events and educational programs like TOBA seminars and clinics.

Essentially, The Racing Game is what Halliwell calls a "one-stop shop" for an education about racing. Of course, whether the program leads to several friends owning an inexpensive horse in partnership or to an owner pursuing a seven-figure foal with a pedigree that predicts Grade 1 success, the ultimate "stop" is the same for both: the winner's circle. 🐾

Ken Snyder is a Louisville-based freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Keeneland* magazine, the *Kentucky Derby* magazine and the *Breeders' Cup* magazine.

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