

WINNER'S CIRCLE

Owner

BY LENNY SHULMAN

“Nothing succeeds like excess,” stated Stuart Grant with tongue in cheek as he described his growing stake in the Thoroughbred business. What began 12 years ago with a claim at Delaware Park has mushroomed into owning or co-owning 140 head, a couple of farms, and breeding, racing, and sales divisions. The Wilmington, Del., attorney finds himself in what he describes as “quite a significant business.”

Grant, who races in the name of The Elkstone Group, has enjoyed a tremendous amount of success over the past few racing seasons. He owns 2014 stakes winners Duff, Edge of Reality, and Kawfee Fa Marfa, and in partnership with Michael Dubb and Bethlehem Stables, owns 2014 stakes winners Abraham, Good Luck Gus, Native Bombshell, and Condo Commando. Native Bombshell won the Ontario Fashion Stakes (Can-III) at Woodbine Oct. 19, and Condo Commando earned Grant his first grade I victory when she won Saratoga's Spinaway Stakes Aug. 31.

“It was extremely exciting to win a grade I,” he noted, “and not only a grade I, but at Saratoga. It was extraordinary to be there, an incredible day.”

In 2012 the same partnership raced multiple grade II winner Grace Hall.

Grant didn't start out in life to be a mogul in the Thoroughbred business.

“I grew up with horses, but they all had cops on them because I grew up in Brooklyn,” he said. “We used to go watch the horses in Prospect Park. You could pay for a pony ride and there was a little track

Success with Excess

Stuart Grant takes The Elkstone Group up the ladder

you could go around. But we didn't grow up with a lot of money. My grandfather would put me on his shoulders and go around the track. That was my horse ride.”

Grant began hanging around “a bunch of degenerates” in the high school science department who played the horses every day and taught him how to handicap. So he became a regular at the local OTB parlor. More than 20 years later, after his law firm had taken flight, Delaware Park opened a slots parlor and purses increased dramatically. A co-worker introduced Grant to a trainer and Grant claimed a horse named Mt. Moran in 2002 who won a couple of allowance and claiming races for The Elkstone Group before being claimed away in 2004.

“I figured if I could do that well with one horse, imagine what I could do with three or four,” said Grant of his propensity for excess.

In 2006 he was winning stakes with Phoney Exchange, Daisy for Rubiano, and Hungarian Boatbaby, the latter of whom would win three stakes for him in 2008, joined by added-money winners Lacewell, Not Up for Love, and Officer Ipod that year. There has been a steady stream of stakes victories since, including from multiple stakes winners Candyman E, Comet of Love, Edge of Reality, and Hop the Six.

But Grant would take a further step up when trainer Tony Dutrow introduced him to Dubb and Mike Caruso, who races as Bethlehem Stables. Dubb, a real estate developer in New York, and Caruso, a retired insurance executive and former collegiate wrestling champion, hit it off with Grant, and they clicked with the horses as well. Together they've raced added-money winners Abraham, Condo Commando, Good Luck Gus, Grace Hall, Jealous Girl, Pinch Pie, Firenze Feeling, and Native Bombshell.

“Besides horses, we share other interests,” said Grant. “We're all involved in our communities and in philanthropy, so we've bonded in these other things as well.”

Grant now has breeding operations based in Kentucky at Windham Hill Farm, in which he owns a piece; and in Maryland at C-Dog Farm, which he owns outright. His horses are broken at the Camden Training Center in South Carolina. Next year will mark C-Dog's first season in breeding, so there will be an increased emphasis on homebreds. This year Grant bought seven or eight yearlings on his own and another 19 in partnership. Although he sells as well, the numbers are mounting.

“That's a lot of babies,” he said. “A lot of horses coming on the track every year. It scares me, but so far, so good.”

Although the partners decided against sending Condo Commando out to California for the Breeders' Cup, she will likely show up in the Demoiselle Stakes (gr. II) in late November at Aqueduct before getting time off in anticipation of a big 3-year-old campaign in 2015.

When Grant hopes to enjoy more excess. **BH**



Stuart Grant with son, Sam, at Saratoga

Copyright©2014, *The Blood-Horse*. Reprinted with permission of copyright owner.