

PONIES²⁴⁻⁷

VOLUME 12/ISSUE 1/2026
\$2.95 CDN

Evan Sandhu

Building Thoroughbreds From The
Ground Up At Amplify Stables

Todd Pletcher

Hall of Fame Trainer Talks
6,000 Wins

The Racer's Edge

A Handicapping Primer



PONIES 24-7

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AT THE POST



WELCOME BACK!

Welcome back to another great issue of PONIES 24-7 and actually our 40th edition of the magazine itself. It's actually a very special edition of the magazine as not only is it our 40th, it is also our final one going forward. There's so many people to thank, for the past 39 issues, but first off a big thanks to the four radio stations that have helped compliment the magazine through our Saturday morning radio show, 'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE' Show. In case you were unaware, it was our PONIES 24-7 magazine that remained the impetus behind the decision to launch the radio show and also act in a role of assisting in boosting the 'reach' of 'Ponies 24-7 THE RADIO MAGAZINE'. Together, the two became the perfect partner for each other and collectively kept horse racing front and centre over the years. I remember when we launched the magazine and then the radio show, we had our share of naysayers, who you could say were somewhat critical of launching a magazine about horse racing, especially in an era where the magazine industry was going the way of the dodo bird. And to create, 'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE' Show, and an FM radio show, well that too was just plain crazy, as rumour had it that FM radio was dead. And to launch during Covid...well, again that too was even crazier! However, the PONIES 24-7 magazine which became the prelude to 'Ponies 24-7 THE RADIO MAGAZINE SHOW', was instrumental I believe in contributing to the success of the show and helped to enlist new listeners to the tune of, pardon the pun, over 250,00 listeners and I guess you could say that the rest is history. With listeners tuning in either with the live broadcast on Saturday morning at 8 am on FM 102, Bolton, FM 101, Orangeville, FM 101 Milton, and FM 92 South Simcoe, or Live Streaming on demand at ORANGEVILLETODAY.CA, MILTONNOW.CA, SOUTHSIMCOETODAY.CA, BOLTONNOW.CA. And let's not forget the after air podcast format on platforms including Spotify and Apple Music, or

probably any platform that you listen to your podcasts on. In any case, this magazine helped 'set the table' for the radio show and you could say, maybe quieted those same naysayers that preached that FM radio was dead!

On the contrary, we believe that there is something to be said for terrestrial radio which comes with its own advantages-easier accessibility for the listener, there is a nostalgic connection with people, it remains a great medium for advertising and best of all, FM Radio is free for those tuning in! 'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE', continues to introduce the great sport of horse racing to a plethora of new listeners on Saturday morning and now in our fifth season, the show offers 60 minutes of action-packed interviews, handicapping selections and informative content for horse racing fans everywhere. We still remain the only Canadian FM Radio Show, covering the sport of horse racing and one of only a few shows across North America. In the meantime, please continue to listen to 'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE' and don't forget to tell your friends about us-they will be happy you did. Enjoy the 40th edition of our PONIES 24-7 digital magazine and some more, great editorial content, including interviews with Amplify Stables Evan Sandhu and Hall of Fame Trainer Todd Pletcher.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't close with some thank yous, first to our Magazine Designer, Michelle Santo, who has gone that extra mile while putting her own creative touch on the magazine, my wife Kelly for her support over the years, family, friends, advertisers, guests who made themselves available for interviews and the list goes on!

So, until we meet again!

Larry Simpson
theponies247experience@gmail.com



ABOUT THE COVER

We are focused this issue on up and coming horseman, Evan Sandhu.

EDITOR Larry Simpson

Larry Simpson is an avid and passionate writer, horseplayer, handicapper, and marketer for both Thoroughbred and Standardbred racing. He has published and edited several horse racing journals, conducted handicapping seminars for both breeds and is a major proponent for the education of new racing fans through publications like PONIES 24-7, and initiatives that develop 'fresh' demographics for racing, produce cultured bettors and promote the value of the horse racing advertising space!



LIVING THE HORSE RACING LIFESTYLE

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In Conversation with Larry Simpson

EVAN SANDHU

OF AMPLIFY STABLES

Photos provided by Evan Sandhu.



Evan Sandhu has always loved a challenge, so when his father had the idea to buy a horse farm he was excited to start Amplify Stables and go head first into the Thoroughbred breeding and racing industry. Believing mentorship and apprenticeship provide the best foundation for future success, Evan has leaned prominently on the wisdom and knowledge of successful family members and industry titans to build Amplify Stables. Through the usual learning curve of starting any new business Evan has maintained a bullish attitude towards the industry in Canada and spurred on by the recent success of buying the dam of Ascot Stakes winner Nola Soul, he sees a renaissance in Canadian breeding and racing on the horizon. He has set up Amplify Stables as a full service Thoroughbred facility to handle every aspect from the horse's inception to racetrack career, with an emphasis on breeding and developing sound and fit race horses that can excel for their owners. Recently, Evan guested on *'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE' Show* and the following interview took place.

PONIES 24-7: Evan welcome back to the show, we spoke last Fall and I have noticed that some exciting things have happened to you since then, before we get to that for our listeners who are not familiar with you, how did you get involved in the racehorse industry?

EVAN SANDHU: Well Larry thanks for having me on again, as often happens serendipity strikes and things are meant to be before you even realize it. I come from a simple working business and sports oriented family, farming, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, they have been in my family for a long time and the more I go through it the more I realize how prevalent it was. One of my Great Grandfathers, he was into buying horses from Malaysia and bringing them to India to sell to the British and local Royalty. My interest also comes from my grandfather who went to Punjabi Agriculture University and he was also an avid dog breeder and a couple of my



Dad's cousins always had Show Horses in India and they would show them, nothing racing wise but just a lot of Show Horses. When my Dad came to Canada, he started a Trucking business and my brother and myself joined him and we had some success and got lucky you could say and eventually Dad decided that he wanted to buy a farm. Things like hard work and taking risks have never been new to us as a family and we are always trying to do something more challenging. My Uncle has also done very well in business, so the entrepreneurial spirit and farming has always been in the family. Aside from that, my Dad was always a big 'sports guy', he played Field Hockey in India and my brother played Field Hockey for Team Ontario. I played a little bit of Basketball, AU Circuit in the US and some in Canada and I always

thought that at some point I would like to own a sports team, but as I went through business school I realized that it is a very difficult endeavor. At the same time, my Dad had bought the farm, so you could say that I tended to always treat it like a sports team. Amplify Stables is my team, I'm the Manager, General Manager, Coach, whatever role is necessary. We started off buying a couple of racehorses, as I wanted to give myself the best chance with the team I had and my Dad bought Ballycroy Training Centre and gave my brother and I the 'reins' so to speak and that is how Amplify Stables came about. Now, I have the stewardship and responsibility to take the years of lessons from trucking, working and school and put it to the test and hopefully keep Amplify going for the next generation.

PONIES 24-7: Evan I am noticing you really take pride with your family history and place importance on the lessons of the past helping to guide your future. Can you expand on that?

EVAN SANDHU: Sure Larry, I believe the best education you can get is to learn from people who have already been successful in what you want to be a success at. If you can drop your ego for two seconds you realize the fast track to success is to shut up and listen. Being in touch with the past and the lessons it teaches you grounds you, sure you have to know how to modernize and pick up worthwhile new things but most trends die off quickly, while past lessons will usually stay tried and true. Learning from your elders and knowing the difference of who to listen to and

who not to listen to is key. It's not about reinventing the wheel, because why make things more difficult than they are, rather it's better to do the simple things right, day in, day out and you will do well, which is just like Horse Racing and Training. I am extremely lucky that in my family I have some amazing role models, of course I have my own spin on things and I will eventually get my chance to do that with Amplify but believe me you have to get your foundation right and a big part of growing up is realizing the wisdom the past gives you and that foundation that you can build off of. As an example, Jimi Hendrix is considered one of the greatest guitar players of all time with a unique style that cannot be duplicated, but to get to that level he had to learn and practice the basics first before moving on to even have a chance to put a unique



Building Thoroughbreds From the Ground Up

Nutrition, turnout and management from the breeding shed to the training barn — exceptional racehorses are not created by shortcuts, but by thousands of small decisions made correctly every single day.

01 OUR PHILOSOPHY

Every horse is given the strongest possible foundation through nutrition, turnout, careful management and individualized care. From the moment a broodmare arrives until her foal enters training, every stage is guided by experienced horsemen who understand that healthy horses become successful athletes. Homebred or client-owned, every horse receives the same attention, patience and professionalism.

02 NUTRITION BEGINS BEFORE BIRTH

Every broodmare is placed on Brooks Feeds' Genesis program, a premium textured complete feed formulated for broodmares and growing horses — fortified with balanced vitamins, trace minerals, organic mineral sources, probiotics and highly bioavailable calcium to support skeletal development, gastrointestinal health and overall condition. Combined with premium-quality forage from trusted local producers, our mares are supported through breeding, gestation and lactation, producing strong mares capable of giving their foals high-quality colostrum and the healthiest possible start.

03 MONITORING THROUGH THE NURSING PERIOD

Our feeding program promotes steady skeletal and muscular development while avoiding unnecessary growth spurts. Throughout nursing, our team monitors:

- Body weight and growth
- Daily health observations and temperature checks
- Limb development, swelling or abnormalities
- Mare nutritional adjustments through lactation

Every decision has one goal: allowing young horses to mature naturally while minimizing developmental stress.



MARES AND YOUNG STOCK IN MANAGED GROUP TURNOUT



MARES ON PREMIUM-QUALITY LOCAL FORAGE

05 EVERY HORSE IS DIFFERENT

Some thrive outdoors while others benefit from additional time in the barn. Our management adapts to the individual — daily turnout for every horse, on a program designed specifically for its development. That flexibility is only possible with small group sizes, consistent daily observation, and staff who know each horse well enough to notice the day it does something slightly out of character.

The Amplify Difference

Success begins long before a horse ever reaches the racetrack. It starts with exceptional nutrition, thoughtful management, natural development, experienced horsemen and an unwavering commitment to what is best for every individual horse. We don't simply raise Thoroughbreds — we build the foundation that lets them reach their full athletic potential.



RAISING THOROUGHBREDS THE RIGHT WAY

04 NATURAL DEVELOPMENT & TURNOUT

As soon as weather allows, mares and foals enjoy 24-hour turnout. Large paddocks, fresh air, social interaction and natural movement are essential to sound physical and mental development. Round pens, square paddocks and progressively larger fields build balance, coordination, confidence and athleticism, while carefully managed group sizes encourage healthy herd behaviour and rolling pastures strengthen bone, tendons and joints.

Following weaning, colts and fillies are managed separately in compatible groups on individually monitored nutrition, staying outdoors through the winter whenever conditions permit. Beginning in February, yearlings graduate to our hill paddocks, where varied terrain naturally develops muscle, balance and cardiovascular fitness.



FOALS BUILD CONFIDENCE IN COMPATIBLE GROUPS

Settle First, *Then Teach*

Patient riders, a full training facility and a serene setting to bring young horses to the racetrack.

06 YOUNG HORSES LEARN WHEN NOTHING IS RUSHED

Breaking is the part of a racehorse's education that is easiest to hurry and hardest to repair. Our riders are horsemen who have started young stock before, and who understand that the horse sets the timetable. The work happens on a quiet farm rather than a busy backstretch, where a young horse can give its full attention to what is being asked of it.

The first job is not speed. It is teaching a young horse that the world is not a threat: birds lifting out of the grass, fences, tractors, machinery, changing light. A horse that has decided its surroundings are safe has attention left over for its rider; one that has not spends its energy worrying instead of working, and that habit follows it to the racetrack. Only once a horse settles do we build on it.

07 A HALF MILE TO THE TRACK, AND A HALF MILE HOME

Every horse walks a half mile from the barn to the track as its warm-up — exactly as it will at Woodbine — and the same walk cools it out on the way back. Nothing about it is incidental: the walk warms muscles and tendons before any speed is asked, and settles the horse into the work rather than starting it cold. It also builds the routine the horse keeps for the rest of its racing life, so it arrives at Woodbine knowing the shape of the day. Every horse also goes out in open fields daily; turnout is part of the program, not a reward.

08 EVERYTHING A YOUNG HORSE NEEDS, ON ONE FARM

Round pens

FIRST SADDLING AND EARLY CONTROL WORK

Sand ring

MODELLED ON WOODBINE'S

Starting gates

SCHOOLING BEFORE THE HORSE EVER SHIPS

Turf gallops

CONDITIONING ON GRASS

Indoor arena

YEAR-ROUND WORK, WHATEVER THE WEATHER

Six-furlong dirt track

FULL RACING SURFACE ON THE FARM

Trails

HACKING OUT TO BUILD MIND AND WIND

European walker

CONTROLLED WARM-UP AND COOL-OUT

A horse can go from first saddling to gate schooling without leaving the property, moving to the next surface only when it is ready. All horses are overseen by Farm Manager Terry Brooker, whose four-decade career includes galloping Queen's Plate winners and developing **Lapochka** and the graduates below. Riders change from day to day; the standard does not.

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09 STAKES-WINNING GRADUATES SINCE 2022



Fashionably Fab

MULTIPLE GRADED STAKES WINNER · KEVIN ATTARD

Dark bay filly — *Silent Name* (JPN) out of *Flashy's Legacy*, by *Curlin*

Shady Well (2022) · Rondeau Bay, Eternal Search, Ashbridges Bay (2023) · Belle Mahone (G3), Ontario Matron (G3), La Prevoyante (2024)

SOVEREIGN AWARD — CHAMPION OLDER MAIN TRACK FEMALE · FIVE CONSECUTIVE STAKES VICTORIES, 2023-24



Little Teddy

MULTIPLE STAKES WINNER · SANTINO DI PAOLA

Roan filly — *Frac Daddy* out of *Explosive Leap*, by *Silent Name* (JPN)

Georgian Bay (2024) · Zadracarta, Eternal Search (2025). A \$15,000 yearling at the 2022 CTHS Canadian Premier Sale, and a daughter of *Frac Daddy* — sire of our own *Frac Dancer*.

SOVEREIGN AWARD — CHAMPION FEMALE SPRINTER

STANDING AT AMPLIFY

Frac Dancer has covered a book of quality Amplify mares and is primed to be made available to the public for the **2027 breeding season**. **Signature Red** covered double-digit mares in 2026 and remains in action, available to book for the **2027 season**.



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spin on it. You can acquire elite level skills through dedicated practice and learning from people who have already mastered their craft. My father taught me to do a lot of the work yourself, with your own hands, learn from other people and work from the ground up. He also taught me to be hands on. During business school, I would fix and drive trucks for my father and my brother, just to pay for tuition, as there was no such thing as a free handout for me, instead I had to really work hard and prove myself and through all that I learnt the value of hard work. I always thought I would be something like a Desk Jockey, but the more I worked with my hands I really just felt more connected and this has helped me to run Amplify, which is truly a blessing. This is the attitude I brought with me to start off my Thoroughbred journey and I have continued to seek out mentors accordingly. When you are willing to be a Steward of the game and listen to people, I believe that they will teach you on a day to day basis. I am actually following Terry Brooker, who is our Farm Manager and because of him, I'm not a *'deer caught in the headlights'* within the Thoroughbred industry. There's been a few other guys along the way, Glenn Sikura really just hand-held me through the process of the Sales and I would go to his farm on a regular basis and David Anderson is also a guy who has been tremendously helpful, Larry and both of these guys still play at the top of *'the game'*. Thoroughbreds definitely have a steep learning curve and breeding and racing are not simple endeavors by any stretch of the imagination and any success I have had so far is because of mentors in *'the game'*. They have provided an environment with their wealth of knowledge and experience which I

believe only leads to success. Originally, I knew a little about Canadian horse racing history. I knew Secretariat, Northern Dancer, those kind of horses, but I actually didn't know that Northern Dancer was a Canadian product. Then I learned more about E.P. Taylor! The United States and Europe have had the domination of ultimate market share in Canadian horse racing, Thoroughbred horse racing in general, but I think there is a lot here with Canadian roots that people don't know about, but we really need to reinvigorate that.

PONIES 24-7: Evan just to stop you there for one second, I one hundred percent agree with you that you have to get the Canadian roots back, can you expand a little, why do you believe that is necessary?

EVAN SANDHU: You know Larry, I might go on a bit of rant here, but I am not really sure that Canadians really want to *'toot their own horn'*, but we do have to promote ourselves like our friends in the US do, especially if we plan to expand the sport in Canada. You need to know the past to create a future, right? Canadian horse racing is special and I love breeding and pedigrees more than anything, but let's start off with Northern Dancer, the stallion that has shaped the breed more than any other with a global influence. He was a phenomenon never seen before or since for that matter, as far as rewriting all the record books for a stallion on every continent with his sons hitting the highest level everywhere across the globe at every distance and surface. And that influence has continued to this day with grandsons, great grandsons and beyond. In current times the Northern Dancer line stallion has led us to Into Mischief, who will get a record setting eighth-year in a row stallion title in 2026. Into Mischief is already arguably the best North American sire ever and how many people know that without Canadian legend Reade Baker, he would not even exist as Into Mischief's second dam Crystal Lady was bred right here in Ontario by Reade. Then there's Storm Cat who dominated the stallion ranks and stood at his heyday for \$500,000 and was by Canadian bred Storm Bird who was out of the great Canadian broodmare South Ocean. Canadian bred Northern Taste went to Japan, started off there before Sunday Silence. Then there were other great Canadian broodmares like Fanfreluche, Glorious Song, Classy N Smart, Passing Mood and Kamar, these are all Reine-de-Course mares. Then there's other notable, recent successful stallions like Runaway Groom, Deputy Minister, Smart Strike, Langfur, and Awesome Again, Canada produced a lot of great horses. Even in recent times

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Canadian broodmares like Brooklynsway, Lexie Lou and Like A Gem have produced Grade 1 winners of note worldwide. When you then move onto the racehorses themselves there are so many Canadian legends like Awaasif, Dance Smartly, With Approval, Petski, Alydeed, Chief Bearhart, Sky Classic, Alfeet and off course more recent Breeders Cup winners Wavell Avenue, Judy the Beauty and Moira and Grade 1 winners like Channel Maker, Shaman Ghost, Heart To Heart and Marketing Mix. I know I am forgetting to mention many more but the point is Canada has and continues to be a major player within the Thoroughbred scene and we should do more of celebrating and promoting that history with an eye to continued excellence in the future. We have always punched way above our weight and have been successful at the highest level consistently. It is something to be proud of and draw inspiration from, that we can be the best and even do better. It's as simple sometimes as remembering to remember and when times get tough we should remember all the greatness of the past.

You have to think about what kind of future we want for Canadian breeding and racing. What do you picture in your mind matters and when we as a group of horse people in Canada picture all these past successes it will drive us all to new heights. You have to recall your best days when everyone worked together and everything was magic. The Americans came here and they weren't guaranteed to win every race! By eliciting these memories we are finding new ways to celebrate our past and I know we as an industry will get rid of any self imposed limitations and open up the possibilities of success.

PONIES 24-7: Well speaking of other people, tell me about the services you provide at Amplify to the horse people of the province and where you see your niche in the industry going forward?

EVAN SANDHU: Larry we are a full service farm and obviously we are breaking and boarding, foaling and we stand a couple of Stallions. We also can do Sales prep for people, basically anything you can imagine and of course that's with the help of good veterinarians, our feed partners and our staff. Our adage is from Foaling to Starting Gate and we can take care of everything!

First and foremost Amplify Stables is led by, who I mentioned earlier, our farm manager Terry Brooker. He is the constant on the farm and every horse at Amplify is overseen by Terry and that is important to me because it gives our customers the piece of mind

to know their horse is under a program designed by someone with very meaningful experience and ability in all areas of raising a high level racehorse. Terry is so good at starting a young horse and he gives our customers confidence that your horse is starting off their racehorse journey the right way. We have Jesse Korona as our bloodstock agent and he brings a wealth of experience on the breeding end of things and has made a mark as a breeder of some significant horses in the last few years plus already had an immediate success for us picking out Sing Me Home. We are happy to leverage his abilities to our customers and partners on the breeding side. We have a great experienced staff doing the day to day ins and outs. I am there in person and hands-on to oversee the whole process from A to Z making sure everything runs smoothly with a special emphasis on overseeing the farm's stallions. To put it succinctly Larry, Amplify is an omnichannel equine operation that specializes in care of the racehorse from inception to its racetrack career. We are a full service equine facility for what I like to call the 4 B's, bloodstock, breaking, boarding and breeding! We have a laser focus on optimizing and providing our customers with the best experience with their horse and that is why we are omnichannel. We are going to give you the best chance for success whether it is in racing or breeding. Let's face it Larry, everyone wants to be successful and I'm proud of our success in the few short years since starting up and showing proof of concept of what we can do for our clients. Their wins are our wins, and since we started only a few years back, we have broken and put the foundational work before they went to the track on two Sovereign Award winners, Little Teddy and Fashionably Fab and that coupled with the recent success with Nola Soul shows we can bring our customers the success they are expecting, whether it is in the race horse arena or the commercial breeding space of our industry.

We really want to work with clients that would like to do the whole package from picking out the right stock right up until racing the horse. Our team will select a horse for you that combines outstanding genetics, excellent conformation, athletic movement and professional temperament, then break the horse and go on to provide them with expert education and experienced training all done right here at Amplify. We have the experience and know-how but more importantly we have the burning desire to help others be successful in the horse racing industry. We see Amplify as a main cog in the Ontario Thoroughbred industry and more than anything, helping others be successful because the more success we all have the bigger and better racing in Ontario will become.

PONIES 24-7: You also have the trucking business and would you say that there is any correlation between how you run the trucking business and how you run Amplify?

EVAN SANDHU: There is Larry and it all starts with expectations, goals and communication. In the trucking business people are trusting me with their product that has to be delivered for them to get paid. With the horses, communication is key as again, people are trusting you to look after their horses, no matter what their value is. Many of the horses are ones that people are buying at Woodbine, Keeneland and Saratoga and we need to be able to provide a service at a high level, communicate, whether it's good or bad news and treat our owners with respect. Just like trucking, if something goes missing or we are late delivering, then we better tell the customer who is waiting on it. It's the same with the horses as owners are waiting on us to get their horse ready for the track. So, that is basically what I would say the similarities are between the two companies and of course both come with pressure and there's no getting around that!

PONIES 24-7: Evan, I know one thing that you are a major proponent of getting younger people and perhaps East Indian individuals more involved in horse racing talk about this?

EVAN SANDHU: I think we definitely want a little more diversity, with people coming in from different backgrounds. The biggest, unique position we have compared to any track in the world is E.P. Taylor, Mr. Taylor, who came with a vision and he put a constitution and a charter together to make sure that horse racing stays here forever. Now, you don't have to be a certain color or ethnic background to enjoy horse racing, right, look at Woodbine, the property was only built for the Thoroughbreds and there is a special mandate for that. Looking back at 70 years ago, Mr. Taylor had this vision and he made it come back to life. He built a track that in a lot of ways really has no match in North America, the turf course is beautiful, and you have a lot of options with the Tapeta and the Inner Turf Course which can act as a second world class surface and a back-up option to the E. P. Taylor Course. There's 2,000 stalls on the backside of Woodbine and I remember reading the late D Wayne Lukas bragging about that there was never a better Breeders' Cup experience than 1996 which obviously was at Woodbine. Other people commented too that Woodbine had unbelievable stalls on the property, and it was such a great place to train. Woodbine is



a 'special jewel' and I think people are starting to notice that. Larry, there is so much ability in the horse racing community at Woodbine and we put together such amazing race days and we need to get back to that. Of course I wasn't even around back then, but as I said earlier I love history, I have extensively read about Woodbine and how it is so accommodating and I really have to applaud Woodbine's current 'brass' for continuing to stand true to E.P. Taylor's vision and putting the horse experience first. With a lot of the other tracks closing or selling off, I believe that Woodbine has an opportunity to become the premier location in racing-the foundation has been there since the very beginning and Mr. Taylor gave us the vision and the foundation to work with. Ontario is home to a lot of farms, so it has the facilities and the infrastructure to make it happen and I actually look forward to the future generation racing at Woodbine, as it's such a world class structure and hopefully we can host another Breeders' Cup here!

PONIES 24-7: Evan thanks again for doing this and good luck going forward with Amplify Stables.



TODD PLETCHER

Hall of Fame Trainer Talks 6,000 Wins

IN CONVERSATION WITH LARRY SIMPSON
Photos By Coglianese Photos/NYRA



It was only fitting that Todd Pletcher would win his 6,000th race at Saratoga, a track where he has won 15 training titles, three Travers Stakes, four wins in the Whitney Stakes and six Woodward's. However, I am quite sure though that it is safe to say that as the calendar flipped to August, a win by the colt Versailles Road, who won the 14th race of the Whitney card, probably had some extra special importance. Why you ask? Well, when Versailles Road crossed the finish line first that day, Todd's elusive quest for 6,000 wins in his Hall of Fame training career was finally over. One week after that training achievement, Todd joined *'Ponies 24-7, THE RADIO MAGAZINE'* Show for the first time and the following interview took place.

PONIES 24-7: Well Todd thanks again for doing this and congratulations on winning number 6,000, when you first got into the business, did you ever think that you would be sitting here today and talking about that many winners in your career?

TODD PLETCHER: No honestly I never thought about it at all. When you first get into the business, you are so focused on trying to get going with your career and hoping to get that first win and eventually build up a client base and keep improving. But, I never really ever thought about specific numbers or any goals like that.

PONIES 24-7: But I understand Todd that number 6,000 didn't come that easy, correct?

TODD PLETCHER: No, it's always a challenge and we did have a little bit of a mini slump, I would say for a month or two leading into the win. You just never know though how those things are going to work out and I think you just try to stay focused and keep doing what's been working for most of your career. There's a lot of hard work and dedication from so many different people and obviously the most important thing is the horses that you get the opportunity to train.

PONIES 24-7: Things changed though when you find your *'Happy Place'*, Saratoga, would you agree?

TODD PLETCHER: Well historically we have had good results at Saratoga, however it's actually been a little different though at Saratoga recently with the renovations and new construction at Belmont. This has meant that there's been a lot more racing at Saratoga this year, so you could say that It really hasn't been your traditional Saratoga Summer meet, but it's always a great place to be and race.

PONIES 24-7: I want to talk about the path you took to becoming a successful Thoroughbred Trainer, you originally mentored under the late great Hall of Famer D Wayne Lukas, what was it like working for him and what was the best advice he gave you as a Trainer?

TODD PLETCHER: Well, there were so many things that Wayne taught me through his organization and his team, but I think the most important thing that he instilled on me was to show up on time and be ready to go. With Wayne, there was just no substitute for putting the time and effort into your work. Wayne himself was very detail oriented and always felt like paying attention to all of the details and that the smaller details would lead to bigger results. Those were the main things he tried to instill in all of his staff.

PONIES 24-7: Well D Wayne Lukas certainly had a way in working with future Trainers besides yourself there were Brad Cox, Mike Maker, Kieran McLaughlin, Dallas Stewart, George Weaver and Mark Henning just to name a few, why do you believe D Wayne was such a great mentor for future Trainers including yourself?

TODD PLETCHER: Well I just think the organization that he had was attractive to people who wanted to learn more and advance their careers and it was also a great place to learn and be in an environment where you had some added responsibilities. A lot of times some of those guys that you mentioned were in charge of a division, whether it was at Gulfstream, Churchill, Arlington, maybe even California. It gave an Assistant Trainer an opportunity to have some time to learn under someone who was a great mentor and also to be on your own and in a situation where you have to make some decisions and take on some added responsibilities. I think overall it was a great environment to work in, for people that wanted to grow their careers more.

PONIES 24-7: And I believe Todd that it shows a lot about D Wayne Lukas as well, as there was so many good Trainers that he mentored, right, I really don't think you are going to see that happen again, too many more times, agree?

TODD PLETCHER: Probably not, he was a *'Coach'* by nature and I believe that kind of lended itself to him wanting to coach a lot of younger Trainers, so no I don't think that there will ever be another Wayne Lukas.

PONIES 24-7: So Todd, when you went out on your own, did you still reach out to him?

TODD PLETCHER: Oh, yeah, we remained good friends and I would seek advice from him on occasion. Even now I still find myself saying, 'What would Wayne do in this situation', but he was always very generous with his time. If you had questions for him he was very easy to talk to.

PONIES 24-7: And your father was a Trainer as well, so was there ever any doubt that you wouldn't follow in his footsteps?

TODD PLETCHER: I pretty much decided at an early age, in fact I don't think that I was 10 or 11 years-old and I was pretty confident that training horses was what I wanted to do for a living. So, when I talked to my parents about that, they thought that it would be great and when I went into High School, I started working for some trainers like Henry Moreno and Charlie Whittingham in California one summer and Wayne



Lukas a couple of summers. I not only learned from being around my father of how he trained and what he did, but he also wanted me to work for some other trainers and get some additional experience.

PONIES 24-7: What advice did your father give you when you decided that you wanted to become a Trainer?

TODD PLETCHER: Both of my parents were very supportive, especially early on in my career and a real key for me was when my Dad was operating a Training Centre in Ocala, Florida. He was able to prepare some of the two-year-olds and do some of the layups and was also part of the team that helped to select the Yearlings. He had a great eye with young horses and was instrumental in buying some of our better horses like More Than Ready and Scat Daddy.

PONIES 24-7: Where did you win your first race Todd and do you remember the horse?

TODD PLETCHER: Yes, we had Majestic Number, she ran in a Maiden 75 at Gulfstream, I believe that was our first win and actually she might have been our second win as well, as she came back about three weeks later and won an Allowance race also at Gulfstream.

PONIES 24-7: How long did it take you to win a Stakes race?

TODD PLETCHER: We got our first horses in December and our first runners in January and I think it was a horse by the name of Stew's Choice during the Summer meet at Monmouth, so I'm going to say that it probably took us six months. The following year we were able to win a Grade 1 with Jersey Girl, then

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got on a roll with More Than Ready and I always credit those horses for being responsible for getting the ball rolling for us!

PONIES 24-7: Well we mentioned earlier about Saratoga being such a *'Happy Space'* for you, why do you think you have been so successful at the Spa?

TODD PLETCHER: I think that the program for Saratoga is largely decisive for two-year-olds and that compliments what we do. We buy at the Yearling Sales and the Two-Year-Old Sales and this is the time of the year, July, August and September that a lot of the *'babies'* are starting to get ready to make their debuts. I believe that this works out well for our stable, trying to develop horses and hopefully getting horses on the Triple Crown Trail next year.

PONIES 24-7: How many horses do you have now?

TODD PLETCHER: We currently have 150 ,we are a little smaller than what we were at one point, but it is kind of a comfortable number for us now!

PONIES 24-7: And they are all at Saratoga?

TODD PLETCHER: They are split between Saratoga and Belmont.

PONIES 24-7: Todd, are you a goal setter, like at the beginning of the season do you set some goals for your stable, like how many wins you would like to get, money earned, Graded Stakes wins or all of the above?

TODD PLETCHER: No, actually we don't do that, this is a very difficult *'game'* to set those kinds of specific goals and you would probably only disappoint yourself anyway. What we try to do and I guess you could say it could be our goal, is to do the very best that we can with every horse that we get the opportunity to train. If that means developing that horse to be a Grade 1 winner, fantastic, if it means winning a Maiden Claimer, because that is where the horse's talent level is, then again we feel like we have accomplished our goal.

PONIES 24-7: Now ,when you were on the trail to get the 6,000th win, did you find that there was a little more



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right, where you seem to make every correct move and other times it doesn't and you feel like you are doing the same thing but it just doesn't fall into place.

PONIES 24-7: Well Todd you certainly have won your share of Graded Stakes races, is there one race that you haven't won as yet that you would still like to win and why?

TODD PLETCHER: I would love to win the Dubai World Cup, we won the Dubai Mile once and I think there is a little bit of International competition about it, almost like an Olympic feel. We have tried and finished second before and we just haven't been able to get it done but I would like to check that box at some point in my career.

PONIES 24-7: Well last question for you Todd, if you were able to go back in time, is there a horse that you wish that you could have had the opportunity to train and if so, who would that horse be and why?

TODD PLETCHER: I think one of my favorite horses when I was a child was Ruffian and unfortunately it was pretty sad what happened to her, but she seemed like a super special filly. That's one that comes to mind, but of course there's other great horses in history, like who knows what it would be like to be around a horse like Man O War, or a horse like that from a different era obviously. Most trainers would probably say Secretariat, so those horses come to mind!

PONIES 24-7: Well Todd thanks again for doing this and here's to the next 6,000 wins going forward for you.

TODD PLETCHER: Thank you so much for having me!



pressure that was maybe weighing on you, especially when you went through that light spell in early Summer?

TODD PLETCHER: I don't know if I would really call it pressure, sure you want it to happen and you hope that it will happen soon and honestly I was really hoping that it would happen at Saratoga. I did think though that it was kind of ironic that as you are approaching your 6,000th victory that you are going through a bit of a slump. So, I thought about that and said that it is all going to be ok, but as I said earlier, you never dream that we would be able to accomplish that and get up to that many wins, but there's many people who deserve a large amount of credit for helping to make it happen.

PONIES 24-7: Well I guess Todd, you could compare it to a hockey player, who is trying to score the 50th goal of the season and he keeps hitting the post and can't seem to make it happen, there's probably some hidden pressure as horse racing is a sport just like hockey, right?

TODD PLETCHER: Yes, sometimes things just go

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KINGS PLATE WRAP UP

Chris Lomon, Woodbine

Luster, ridden by John Velazquez and trained by Josie Carroll, reigned over her rivals in the 167th edition of The King's Plate, on Aug. 15 at Woodbine.

After a head-turning 5 ½-length triumph in the Woodbine Oaks on July 19, pundits wondered what Luster would have in store for an encore.

The gallant-looking roan had an emphatic answer in front of a packed house.

Breaking from post one, Luster broke cleanly and eventually settled into fourth as 61-1 outsider Fire and Wine led past the wire for the first time. Dixie Law was also among the early group.

Fire and Wine was a half-length clear of Very Special after an opening quarter in :22.78, with Luster settling comfortably just inside Dixie Law.

Still running confidently on the lead through a half in :46.46, Fire and Wine, last year's Coronation Futurity winner, came under increasing pressure from a host of rivals, including 1-5 favourite Luster, who glided into position with a patient and near-motionless Velazquez soon set to ask the filly for her best run.

That moment came straightening for home, as Luster unleashed a powerful turn of foot, quickly dashing away from her pursuers and widening her advantage at will.

Ahead by two lengths at Robert Geller's stretch call, the roan filly went on to record a 7 ¼-length victory. Military Time was second, three lengths ahead of a game Fire and Wine. Dixie Law was fourth.

The final time was 2:02.01, not far off the track record of 2:01.48, set by fellow filly Moira in the 2022 King's Plate.

It was the first King's Plate win for owners Gainesway Stable (Antony Beck) and Andrew Rosen, as well as breeders Ravi Sugrim and Joannie Dass; the second

for Velazquez, who won the 2018 Plate aboard Wonder Gadot; and the fourth for Carroll, whose previous Plate victories came with Edenwold (2006), Inglorious (2011) and Mighty Heart (2020). Carroll was inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in 2019.

"I've been very lucky and very blessed with the fillies, running against the colts and coming here to Canada and winning [the Plate] for a second time," said Velazquez. "I'm very blessed. She broke so well, so I didn't want to be in her mouth right away. I wanted to give her a sixteenth of a mile. I knew the horse next to me (Fire and Wine) is going to go to the lead, but he was not fast enough to get in front of me. Right before the wire, I got her back behind the other horse, she relaxed, and then I was really comfortable where I was.

"I didn't want to be behind the horse that was on the lead, obviously," he continued. "And so, once I put myself in that position, I had a horse right on my outside, and I made sure I pushed him out. And then I sat again. She was perfect, sitting where I was. Coming to the quarter-pole, I asked her to go, and she responded really nice. I'm very, very blessed to have a horse like that. I want to thank the partnership for letting me ride her. I'm very, very happy that I'm part of the team."

Carroll lauded the trip engineered by Velazquez.

"Every moment's anxious until they cross the wire," admitted Carroll. "That's horse racing. But you know, [Luster] was in masterful hands. It's a game of patience. You watch Johnny take her through the trip. He sat. You could see he was confident at any point in the race and just waiting to find the right spot to move her. That, in turn, gave me a lot of confidence, just watching the way he was sitting on her."

Rosen was thrilled to hoist Canadian racing's most coveted trophy.

"It's amazing. I've been in the business over 40 years, and winning a race like this is just fantastic. It's what

it's all about. Last year, Josie [Carroll] told me that we were going to be standing here. So, she's quite special, Luster. I think Josie knew that right from the get-go, and Josie's done an amazing job with her. We're just so happy to have her as our trainer, and Johnny, of course, did a great job."

Brandon Duchaine is Luster's groom.

A daughter of Knicks Go out of The Factor mare Ruby Frost, Luster debuted with a 6 ¼-length score at seven furlongs over a yielding E.P. Taylor turf course on Aug. 17, 2025.

She is now 5-0-1 from six starts, which includes her first stakes victory, the Grade 3 Selene Stakes on June 27.

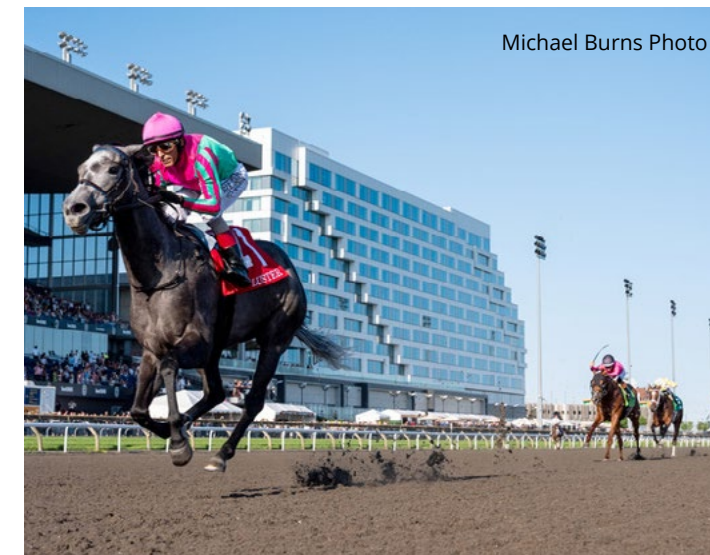
Luster was an \$80,000 purchase (Hip No. 2196) at the 2024 Keeneland Association September Yearling Sale.

She paid \$2.50 for the win.

The \$500,000 Prince of Wales Stakes, a 1 3/16-mile race over Fort Erie's dirt oval on Sept. 7, is the next

race in the tri-surface OLG Canadian Triple Crown series, which concludes with the \$500,000 Breeders' Stakes at 1 ½ miles over Woodbine's E.P. Taylor turf on Sept. 27.

Wando, in 2003, was the last horse to sweep the series.



Michael Burns Photo



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The Racer's Edge

A Handicapping Primer

By Larry Simpson

Photo by Michael Burns

A Question of Saving Your Investment! When Is An Opinion, An Opinion?

Picture this, you are *'alive'* on three longshots after the first two legs of a Pick 3 wager! Should you be lucky enough and win the final leg, your initial investment of \$48.00 may seem a little paltry, compared to what the Pick 3 probables are indicating what you could collect should you *'hit'* the Pick 3-\$250.00, \$740.00 or \$880.00. However, what if none of your selections doesn't win the third leg? Have you perhaps wasted an opportunity that maybe could have been prevented through some insurance or what back in the day we referred to as *'saver'* bets on the remaining six horses in the field- or maybe you just take a stand and *'roll the dice'* so to speak and let the chips fall where they may!

There is no easy answer or hard fast rule when it comes to the concept of *'saving'*, as money management experts will tell you that it is not a good idea to spread the remainder of the field with insurance bets. Instead,

they are under the belief that when it comes to selecting horses, an opinion is, well just that, an opinion, no matter how many actual races it takes for the outcome to be known. If you have played the wager with the understanding that you have a strong opinion on the race, then the actual outcome of the bet and in this case the result of the third leg, should be allowed to play itself out, without having to increase your overall investment and cutting into your profit margins. With that being said though, let it be known that there are still many handicappers who can't resist the temptation to protect what could be a major *'score'*, by purchasing what could be considered a form of *'wagering insurance'*. In addition, it should also go on record, that all wagering scenarios are different and all *'players'* very different, however, one may consider asking themselves the following questions before actually making the final decision about whether to invest in some *'saver'* bets or not.

#1: How strong do you really feel about your wager?

Look at your selections and honestly try to estimate what you believe would be your chances of winning, as you go into the third leg of your Pick 3 wager. If you feel that your winning chances are better than 66 per cent, then maybe some *'saving action'* is not necessary as your betting position can be considered to be somewhat strong. On the other hand, if you feel that perhaps your chances of winning fall between the 33 per cent and 66 percent range, you are actually in what could be considered a moderate position and *'saving'* maybe should be taken under advisement. Mind you, if your chances of winning are less than 33 per cent, then no question about it, some *'saving'* action should not be considered! In the latter case scenario, your actual investment position was weak to begin with and putting up more cash will only increase your vulnerability on the down side.

#2: How large of an investment did you make initially?

If your investment was only small to start with, there really is no reason to even consider a *'saver'* bet. If it's moderate, again you may wish to consider a *'saver wager'*, but if it was a larger investment to start, then playing a *'saving'* bet becomes the absolute!

#3: Will further investment put you in a profitable position?

Keep in mind though, that you are not making *'saving bets'* for the sake of breaking even and also, it is not a good financial practice to invest more money on your *'saver bets'*, than on your original investment.

#4: and a very important one, just how strong do the race favorites look in the last leg?

If you consider them to be *'live'* and you already have them on your Pick 3 ticket, then don't even consider making a *'saver bet'*, however, if you believe that they



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are false or vulnerable favorites and for this reason you bet against them in the first place, then stand by your original opinion and don't play a 'saver.' But if you played against them for the sake of hitting a 'big score', then playing an insurance bet is not really a bad option to consider. Perhaps locking the favorites up in an exactor box with your 'pricey' selections may be the route to go, especially in the case if one of your horses races well, but ends up finishing second behind a 'well meant' favorite. Trust me, we all have been the victim of the latter case scenario, when the difference of a nose or a neck, has made all of the difference in the world between cashing a healthy Pick 3 ticket, or leaving the racetrack muttering to ourselves!

#5: Are there some longshots in the field that you originally thought were live, but you had to leave off of your ticket?

Remember, in our lead paragraph, it was mentioned that a total of \$48 had already been invested in our Pick 3 ticket and if we added more longshots to the ticket, it would have only increased our initial wager to an amount that we really couldn't afford to spend. If you answered no to Question 5, where in your opinion there weren't any other contenders, then making some 'insurance wagers' makes no sense at all. But, if the favorite does look weak on paper and you simply couldn't use all of the longer priced horses on your

ticket that you thought were contenders, then maybe you should consider placing 'saver' win bets on these longshots, providing that you are receiving 'good value' on the win end. Again, don't be placing 'saver bets' just to break even, rather, you want to retain some profitability at the end of the final leg of the Pick 3.

Some added words of advice on placing 'saving' wagers – don't even consider playing a 'saver' bet until you have reached the final leg of a multiple-race play.

Editor's Note- This installment of the Racer's Edge will be of interest to both Thoroughbred and Standardbred Handicappers.



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