



Staff photo by Ben Baugh

Trainer Mike Keogh has conditioned a number of prominent horses during his career, including the 2003 Canadian Triple Crown winner Wando.

Horse trainer finds success in many areas

By BEN BAUGH
Staff writer

You might say Mike Keogh was literally born into thoroughbred racing.

"I was born in Epsom, where they run the English Derby," said Keogh. "My father was a horseman and tried to dissuade me from becoming involved with the game. I exercised my first horse when I was 11 years old."

A five-year career as a jump jockey, Keogh rode over fences until the age of 20, before emigrating to Canada.

"When I first came to Canada, I worked for J.C. Meyer, who was one of the more successful trainers in North America."

It was while working for Kinghaven Farm, Keogh had the chance to gallop the 1981 Two-Year-Old Champion in the U.S. and Canada, and Horse of the Year in Canada, Deputy Minister for John Tammaro, and would stay on with the legendary operation as the traveling assistant trainer when Roger Attfield took the reins. He would eventually succeed David Bell as Kinghaven's primary assistant trainer, and had the opportunity to work with consecutive Canadian Triple Crown winners, With Approval in 1989 and Izvestia in 1990.

Keogh would venture out on his own in the summer of 1993, succeeding George Bankuti as the private trainer for Gustav Shickedanz. Keogh was the conditioner of the 1999 Queens Plate winner Woodcarver and 2003 Canadian Triple Crown winner Wando. Woodcarver's win over a field of 16 entries in the Queens Plate, the first leg of the Canadian triple Crown was very special for Keogh.

"I won the race on my mother's birthday, and she passed away the following year from cancer," said Keogh. "I won the Nearctic the same day with Clever Response."

It was while in Buddy Raines old barn in Aiken, Keogh would condition Langfuhr, a son of the legendary sire Danzig, who would go onto win three grade one races and the Sovereign Award as Canada's top Sprinter in 1996. Langfuhr, won the Vosburgh, Metropolitan Mile and Carter Handicap, en route to earning \$698,574.

"Under high weight, Langfuhr ran the second fastest Metropolitan Mile at that time (1997)," said Keogh.

He would also condition the 1997 Sovereign Award winning Sprinter Glanmire. But winning the 2003 Triple Crown with Wando, a son of Langfuhr, an eight time stakes winner and an Aiken trainee, is indescribable for Keogh. Wando earned \$2,563,038.

"It's hard to explain in words," said Keogh. "Winning the Triple Crown isn't an easy task to accomplish. The last leg is a race on the grass at a mile and a-half. You never really know if you're going to get the trip."

Keogh also trained Mobil, another champion and a recently retired son of Langfuhr, who earned \$1,877,136 and stakes winners, Six Sexy Sisters, a full sister to Wando and Hour of Justice, a daughter of the 1996 Sprint Champion Lit De Justice for the powerful Stronach Stables.

"Hour of Justice was the second best filly I've ever trained," said Keogh.

Keogh has been based at Palm Meadows in Boynton Beach, Fla., the past two years.

"I've been far more successful wintering in Aiken," said Keogh. "I've had a Met Mile winner, two Queens Plate winners and a Triple Crown winner."

Keogh has 42 horses in his charge, and the conditioner trains for a number of owners.

"Most of my owners are breeders, and I'm fortunate to have a number of good two-year-olds," said Keogh.