



From the Executive Corner

A Stellar Group

by DOUG BURGE

The latest inductees into the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA) Hall of Fame include: 1) a long-time California breeder and CTBA Past President; 2) a pioneer in the sales business who introduced juvenile sales to the state; 3) one of the leading sires in the history of California; and 4) a champion three-year-old who was the last California-bred to win a Triple Crown race. There is no doubt that this group of inductees has been instrumental in advancing breeding and racing in the Golden State.

Keith Card has been a long-time supporter of the California Thoroughbred industry with his Hi Card Ranch producing many stakes horses and top runners over the years. Although his homebred Linda Card won one of the inaugural California Cup races, his biggest moment was the victory by California Flag in the \$1 million Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint in 2009. What I remember most regarding California Flag was the 2008 grade III Morvich Handicap during the Oak Tree Racing Association meeting. The morning prior to the race, Keith wanted every CTBA employee to have a \$5 win ticket and a miniature flag of the state of California to root home his charge. At 22-1, California Flag stormed home by three lengths with the CTBA staff screaming loudly. That was the beginning of a journey in which "Flag" took Keith, and his wife Barbara, all over the world for top races.

As a board member, Keith has always given of his time and continues to attend all association functions. It was his encouragement, less than a decade ago, that initiated the reinstatement of the Hall of Fame. It is only fitting that he is included in this prestigious class.

Although I had little interaction with Brian Sweeney, his reputation and success during his 14 years as the CTBA's General Manager are well documented. Brian was extremely active with the state legislature crafting and successfully lobbying for legislation that would further advance the California-Bred Incentive Program.

Not only is he credited for the advancement of the Stallion Awards Program, but under his leadership the breed-back rule was implemented. This allowed for Cal-breds to be conceived out of state as long as the mare was bred back in state.

But one of the most notable accomplishments of Brian Sweeney was the introduction of two-year-old sales in California under his guidance. The juvenile sales were widely supported and became the blueprint for the auctions that exist today. His accomplishments are worthy of his placement in the Hall of Fame.

Pirate's Bounty was one of the perennial leading sires in California for two decades. Owned by Marty and Pam Wygod, and standing at their River Edge Farm in Buellton, Pirate's Bounty was the state's leading sire three different years in the early to mid-1990s, siring three California champions and more than 60 stakes winners in all.

After 19 crops of foals and progeny earnings of nearly \$32 million, Pirate's Bounty passed away in 2006. But his legacy remains as one of the best to ever stand in California.

The final inductee into this year's Hall of Fame class is Snow Chief. The 1986 Eclipse Champion Three-Year-Old Male, and three-time California Horse of the Year (1985-1987), is the last Cal-bred to win a Triple Crown race. Although several have finished second since his victory in the 1986 Preakness Stakes (grade I), Snow Chief still has the honor.

As a dual grade I-winning two-year-old, the son of Reflected Glory was the beaten Kentucky Derby favorite after winning the grade I Florida and Santa Anita Derbies. The pride of California bounced back and also went on to win one more grade I as a four-year-old, retiring with \$3,383,210 million in earnings.

The Snow Chief Stakes for Cal-bred three-year-olds is offered each spring at Hollywood Park on California Gold Rush Day. One of the highlights of the event was in 2007, when Snow Chief himself led the post parade at the age of 24. Now he heads into the CTBA Hall of Fame. 🐾

