



Another Man's Treasure

by MARCIE HEACOX

The four-year-old California-bred filly Glorious Dancer didn't know how much was on the line when her Thoroughbred instinct compelled her to a nose victory in an \$8,000 maiden claiming race at Golden Gate Fields on Jan. 28, 2012.

About 500 miles away in Las Vegas, Nev., her triumph gave horseplayer Michael Beychok an equally narrow \$1 win margin and thus the \$1,000,000 grand prize of the *Daily Racing Form*/National Thoroughbred Racing Association National Handicapping Championship (NHC). He and Glorious Dancer's lives were changed forever.

Beychok knew immediately he wanted to claim the daughter of Roman Dancer and City Mouse, by Rahy, but was talked into waiting until her price tag dropped to \$6,250 two starts later, on March 11. "That's really when I said, 'I've got to do this,' because the next step is \$4,000, and then after that you don't know what happens to a horse when they leave the track and can't run," he said.

The bay filly bred by Rod and Lorraine Rodriguez then raced three times for her new owner, with a win and third and second placings and \$8,340 in additional earnings.

When trainer Steve Sherman said Glorious Dancer was sore after her last race, on June 14, Beychok took her out of training and had her shipped to his native Louisiana, where he lives with his family and works as a political consultant.

He wasn't sure of his next step, but eventually decided to rehome her. He gave five-year-old Glorious Dancer and an accompanying donation to the Louisiana Horse Rescue Association (LHRA), a 501 (c)(3) charity that specializes in the rescue, retraining and/or rehoming of racing breeds. "I decided she'd done whatever she needed to do on the track, and she's finished racing," Beychok said.

Sunny Francois, executive director of the LHRA, said

Glorious Dancer: Inspiring Change

Glorious Dancer spent a very short time in their program. "If a horse is healthy and sound, we call people we know and trust will give them a good home," she said. "They'll often come and look at them and take them on the spot."

The trusted individual in this case was Lori Sommers, a neurosurgeon and experienced rider. She adopted Glorious Dancer late last month and will train her in three-day eventing or polo at her new farm in Folsom, La.

Beychok said he plans to visit Glorious Dancer regularly. She's neither the first nor last horse he's owned. He's intermittently had racehorses for a decade, and currently has a share in a three-year-old colt named Xavi.

Beychok said he'll stick to one horse at a time, and has been judicious with his \$1 million windfall. "I guess it makes you sleep a little better at night," he said. "Most of it's put away for college, retirement and stuff like that, and a little bit of it was invested back in racing (through horse ownership)."

Beychok said claiming Glorious Dancer gave him a new perspective on racing, which he spoke about when he accepted the Handicapper of the Year title at the Jan. 19 Eclipse Awards ceremony.

"For the first time, I felt responsible for a horse, and realized that none of us would be here tonight without the horses," Beychok said. He also called for his fellow horseplayers to contribute to horse retirement and aftercare, pledging 10 percent of his 2013 NHC winnings to the cause and challenging his cohorts to do the same.

"I think the industry, and we as horseplayers, have got to do more—should do more—to ensure these horses are taken care of when they leave the track," Beychok said. "I'll just lead by example and hope other folks follow along." ■



Michael Beychok with California-bred Glorious Dancer, who won for him at Golden Gate Fields on April 22 of last year (right), after he had claimed her subsequent to her win at the same Northern California track that secured his \$1 million win in the DRF/NTRA National Handicapping Championship in Las Vegas on January 28, 2012.