



*The 2005/2006 California  
Broodmare Of The Year*

## Miss Soft Sell: More Than Money Can Buy

by LARRY BORTSTEIN

When Miss Soft Sell was foaled on May 11, 1993, her front legs looked like this: “(“

“They were ‘swept,’” recalled Cris Caldwell of the gray/roan filly born at his family’s 200-acre Gavel Ranch in Eagle Point, Oregon, near the shore of the Rogue River. “Crooked-looking, like they would interlock. She was quite incorrect.”

It was instantly clear to auctioneer Tom Caldwell, Cris’ father, and his mother Mary that the filly would never race and, despite being heavily muscled with a great carriage and friendly disposition, her apparent genetic crookedness also precluded breeding her.

That opinion changed one fateful, noisy afternoon.

“We were watching her in the pasture and petting her over the fence,” Cris Caldwell recalled.

“There was this loud noise from the workshop and she wheeled and ran across the pasture, leaving dirt clods hanging in the air. She probably did 21 (seconds) flat across the field and returned for more attention.

“Right then, we decided to breed her. I convinced Dad that she’d laid in the womb of her mother incorrectly and that her crooked front end wasn’t a part of her genetics.”

That conclusion has since been borne out. The 13-year-old mare with the double parentheses for front legs has been voted the 2005/2006 California Broodmare of the Year by the membership of the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association (CTBA).

The daughter of Siyah Kalem, out of the stakes winner Solamente Un Vez, will be honored at the 10th Annual CTBA Harris Seminar on Friday, Sept. 22.

“As her foals came out, we realized that breeding her was the correct decision,” Caldwell said. “Each horse seemed better than the last, culminating, of course, with Brother Derek.”

This year’s Kentucky Derby favorite, by Benchmark, who won, among other races, the grade I Hollywood Futurity and Santa Anita Derby, was the three-year-old star of California racing in the first half of 2006, and gave Miss Soft Sell a perfect record of six winners from her first six foals.

She had a Pirate’s Bounty filly in 1997, and, respectively, both a filly and a gelding by Flying Continental the next two years.

Her 2001 foal, Brother Derek’s big brother, was her first star. He’s Don’tsellmeshort, voted the California Champion Two-Year-Old Male of 2003, when he captured Del Mar’s Graduation Stakes, Fairplex Park’s Barretts Juvenile and Santa Anita’s California Breeders’ Champion Stakes.

Tom Caldwell had died shortly before the colt’s birth and Cris, serving as an auctioneer at the 2002 ATBA (Arizona Thoroughbred Breeders Association) Fall Mixed Sale, at which Don’tsellmeshort was offered as a yearling, bought him back for the family.

He later sold at the Barretts May Sale of Two-Year-Olds-in-Training—after running what Caldwell called “a green second” in his 4 1/2-furlong racing debut—for \$75,000 to Cecil Peacock and trainer, Dan Hendricks, who later became the principal connections of Brother Derek.

In Don’tsellmeshort’s juvenile season, Miss Soft Sell’s next foal, a colt by Swiss Yodeler, sold as a weanling for \$70,000.

“He was very robust and he was shipped to Brookdale Farm in Kentucky for preparation and sale,” Caldwell recalled.

“He didn’t sell as a yearling because the owners waited



**Miss Soft Sell (Siyah Kalem—Solamente Un Vez, by Relaunch)  
2005/2006 California Broodmare of the Year**

***The results of the ballot for the  
2005/2006 California Broodmare of the Year,  
as voted by the CTBA membership  
through July 12, 2006, were:***

- 1st—Miss Soft Sell***
- 2nd—Li’l Ms. Leonard***
- 3rd—Dora’s Tower***
- 4th—Quiet Romance***
- 5th(joint)—Fabulous Ballet  
and Joni U. Bar.***



until the Barretts March sale. That sale was on a webcast and Mom and I watched it on the office computer. She was hoping the owners would make a profit. As the bidding went up, she had to sit down."

That was because Swissle Stick sold for \$600,000!

Miss Soft Sell was again bred to Benchmark at Martin and Pam Wygod's River Edge Farm Inc. in 2003.

"We've always had a great relationship with the horsemen in California," Caldwell pointed out. "It's troublesome to ship down and back, and all the farms and transport people have been very helpful."

The Caldwell's knew the colt who resulted from this mating would be special.

"He was long-backed and flat-hipped and we planned on selling him in Kentucky after he was raised on our good Oregon grass," Caldwell said. "We sent him to Brookdale, where we've had a great relationship for decades."

This colt, of course, was Brother Derek. After selling as a yearling for \$150,000, Peacock and Hendricks acquired him at the 2005 Barretts March Sale of Selected Two-Year-Olds in Training for \$375,000.

"To think that on our 200-acre river ranch in southern Oregon a Kentucky Derby favorite was raised, makes us pinch ourselves daily," Caldwell said.

Miss Soft Sell's streak of winning foals came to a sad end in 2004.

A colt by Swiss Yodeler bounced off a fence in January, 2005, and over a 24-hour period in June of that year turned into a wobbler.

"After extensive diagnostic evaluation, we put him down and buried him down by the Rogue River," Caldwell said.

More sadness followed in 2005. Miss Soft Sell foaled a colt by the 1997 three-year-old Eclipse Award winner Silver Charm, champion of the Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes. But the colt had a difficult birth and died after 30 days.

Happier times may lie ahead for Miss Soft Sell and the Caldwell's, though.

This spring she foaled a filly by Vessels Stallion Farm

LLC's In Excess (Ire). "She is at the farm in Oregon, happy and growing fast," Caldwell reported. "We are hoping she will turn into a dynamic, forceful, expensive yearling."

The most exciting news was still to come after the birth of the In Excess filly, and stemmed "from the biggest decision my mother ever made," Caldwell said.

"It occurred while we all were at the Kentucky Derby to watch Brother Derek," he recalled. "She looked at stallions in Lexington and, after deliberating, she chose Giant's Causeway."

The Storm Cat stallion stands for a stud fee of \$300,000 at Ashford Stud in Versailles, Kentucky. He was one of the best racehorses of his generation, winning six group I events in Europe before finishing second to Cal-bred Tiznow in the 2000 Breeders' Cup Classic at Churchill Downs.

His first crop included the 2005 European classic winners Shamardal (French Derby and Two Thousand Guineas) and Footstepsinthesand (English Two Thousand Guineas), while he also has 28 two-year-old winners last year.

The Caldwell's had no doubts that Giant's Causeway would be an outstanding choice as Miss Soft Sell's next mate. But there were logistics and biology to consider.

"With the mare foaling late, it was imperative that we re-breed her as soon as possible," Caldwell pointed out.

"With help from River Edge Farm, Tex Sutton, Brookdale and Ashford Stud, the mare flew, landed, short-cycled and bred in a hurry. Luckily she took and we're excited about the prospective foal."

Miss Soft Sell's 2007 baby could be one of the most heralded Cal-breds ever born, by one of the world's predominant stallions.

Now back at the ranch in Oregon, the 2005/2006 California Broodmare of the Year seems excited herself.

"She's probably telling all her pasture mates the stories about her trip to the horse capital of the world and her special date in Lexington," Caldwell said. 🐾



*Don'tsellmeshort was an impressive winner of the \$125,000 Graduation Stakes at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club on July 30, 2003, one of four victories in eight starts that resulted in him being voted the California Champion Two-Year-Old Male*



*Brother Derek, the 2005 California Champion Two-Year-Old Male and winner of \$1,302,080 from six wins in 10 career starts to date, was an easy winner of the grade I Santa Anita Derby at Santa Anita Park on April 8, 2006.*