



CTBA Member
PROFILE

DERON PEARSON

BY EMILY SHIELDS

CLIMBING
THE LADDER
OF RACING
SUCCESS
ONE HORSE
AT A TIME

Deron Pearson, CEO of the IT company Nexus IS, has enjoyed a parade of success since he first started buying horses two decades ago. Stakes winners such as Ticker Tape, Prize Exhibit, and Ocho Ocho Ocho made a name for Pearson across the country. But when Continental Divide took the \$101,035 Graduation Stakes at Del Mar, the bay colt brought Pearson his first-ever California-bred stakes win.

Winning a stakes race at Del Mar was only fitting, as Pearson first found an interest in the sport by visiting the seaside oval with his grandfather.

“I started buying small interests in horses about 20 years ago,” said Pearson, “and

built up my stable over time as money allowed.”

Pearson developed a working partnership with trainer James Cassidy, who helped Pearson buy a string of horses from England.

“Jim was doing that already, so that was our angle at the beginning,” Pearson said.

The first standout from this endeavor was English-bred Ticker Tape, whom Pearson called “my best turf filly.” He owned the Royal Applause filly in partnership with Jack Sweesy and Jim Ford.

Together the partners raced Ticker Tape through a 10-race 3-year-old campaign in 2004 that resulted in five stakes wins, including the \$750,000 American Oaks Invitational (GIT) at Hollywood Park, the \$500,000 Queen Elizabeth II

Challenge Cup Stakes (GIT) at Keeneland, and the \$200,000 Pucker Up Stakes (G3T) at Arlington Park. She finished third in Hollywood Park’s Matriarch Stakes (GIT) against older fillies and mares. She also finished second in the voting for Eclipse champion turf female horse that season. After being sold to James Peyton, Ticker Tape eventually earned a total of \$1,452,396.

Around the same time, Pearson owned Katdogawn, another English-bred, in partnership. The daughter of Bahhare earned \$827,553, having broken her maiden first out in England before coming to the United States in 2003 and winning the San Clemente Handicap (G2T) by two lengths. She added the \$150,000 Santa Ana Handicap (G2T) via the disqualification of Megahertz in 2004, and after Pearson had sold his interest in the mare, she won the 2005 WinStar Distaff Handicap (G3T), a \$200,000 race.

More recently, Pearson has seen success with the likes of Yahilwa, Ocho Ocho Ocho, and Prize Exhibit. Yahilwa raced in England 12 times before coming to the United States. She raced well on both the turf and dirt at Santa Anita before breaking through to win the Treasure Chest Stakes at Delta Downs. She added a win in the Sixty Sails Handicap (G3), then ran second and third in the grade 1 Clement L. Hirsch Stakes and the Juddmonte Spinster Stakes, respectively.

Those efforts earned her a trip to the 2015 Longines Breeders’ Cup Distaff (G1), where she finished sixth. After two more graded stakes



Deron Pearson, right, is enjoying his racing success in the spotlight of the Del Mar winner's circle after his 2-year-old Continental Divide won the Graduation Stakes

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Deron Pearson, center right, and his DP Racing crew, including trainer Jim Cassidy, second right

placings in 2016, Yahilwa was retired and bred. She will sell in foal to War Front this fall.

Prize Exhibit broke her maiden at Lingfield, then made her first U.S. start in the 2014 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1T). She finished fourth behind Lady Eli at staggering odds of 71-1. She picked up wins in the \$200,250 San Clemente Handicap (G2T) and the \$201,500 Senorita Stakes (G3T) at 3, then took the \$101,000 Monrovia Stakes (G2T) in her first start at 4. In all, Prize Exhibit has won seven of 36 starts for \$683,630.

Ocho Ocho Ocho, a son of Street Sense, won his first three starts and vaulted to the top of many Kentucky Derby watch lists with a gritty nose victory in the \$1 million Delta Downs Jackpot Stakes (G3). He has never won again, but contested the 2015 Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (G1) on his way to \$852,360 in earnings. Ocho Ocho Ocho returned to training this summer at Del Mar.

Cal-bred Continental Divide might be the one who carries Pearson's banner even further. The son of Animal Kingdom—Bandora, by Dixieland Band, cost

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\$245,000 at this year's Barretts March 2-year-old sale. He finished second in his debut, a five-furlong dash on Del Mar's main track. Not one to be discouraged by a loss, Pearson urged Cassidy to run in the Graduation Stakes against Cal-bred winners.

“We're not afraid to run in stakes races with maiden 2-year-olds if they ran a big race prior,” Pearson explained. “They're basically at the same level.”

Continental Divide sat back in fifth under Victor Espinoza, then rallied at the top of the stretch to take the lead. The colt won by three-quarters of a length, stopping the clock in 1:05.27 for the 5½-furlong distance. Smokem, who had defeated Continental Divide in his

debut, finished second, with favored Drizzy third. Continental Divide has earned \$69,000.

“I think it's great that the Cal-bred race option is there for us,” Pearson said. “They have great purses. We want to experiment to see how he fits with open company, which means we have lots of options for his next race. We could even just give him some time.”

Pearson is also supporting the California breeding program. He stands and raced Golden Balls, a son of Danehill Dancer—Colourful Cast, by Nashwan. The multiple graded stakes-placed stakes winner stands at Paradise Ranch Road.

Pearson also stands Tom's Tribute, who did not race for Pearson's DP Racing but whom he acquired when the son of Lion Heart—Halloween Fun, by El Prado, retired. Tom's Tribute won six of 16 starts, including the \$300,250 Eddie Read Stakes (G1T), and earned \$634,880.

“He will be standing at Rancho San Miguel in 2018,” Pearson noted. The owner has heavily supported both of his California-based stallions in hopes of expanding his foothold in the state.

“I love the Cal-bred program,” Pearson said. “I'm hoping that with 20 mares in foal to Tom's Tribute that I'll see even more success here.”

Pearson has more than 20 mares in California, 12 more in Kentucky, and two in England.

“I get over there from time to time,” Pearson said, “but mostly just for the sales. Buying overseas is different because they are horse in training sales where they've already shown some form. You get an idea of how they've done before, so it's less risky.”

With an expanding Cal-bred program and young horses to look forward to, Pearson could be a force on the circuit for a long time to come. **CTB**