



CTBA Member
PROFILE

LIVING THE
FANTASY

STEVE PAVICH

BY EMILY SHIELDS

After more than a decade in the game, Steve Pavich has bred his first stakes winner.

Bold Fantasy took the \$100,000 Harris Farms Stakes by a head at the Fresno fair Oct. 6, giving Pavich a moment he will always remember.

“It was super exciting to see him finally win a stake,” Pavich said. “He’s always been a good horse, but at age 7 he seems to be in really good form.”

The win was a long time coming for Pavich, who got his first introduction to the

game as many do, tagging along with his father to the races and morning workouts.

“My father, John, was an owner and breeder in Northern California back in the ’80s,” Pavich said. “I was the son who followed him around, catching the bug at 4 or 5 years old.”

As he aged and went off to school, Pavich “fell out of it,” but he always knew he would return.

“With my dad I saw how hard the game really is, and it doesn’t make common sense or financial sense, but we all do it anyway,” Pavich said. “I bought my first mare in 2007.”

That mare, Glorousexcitement, is a California-bred daughter of Honour and Glory—Excitations, by Jolie’s Halo. Pavich went to \$9,000 to secure her in foal to Ministers Wild Cat. While Excitations was unbeaten in two career starts, and later produced three-time stakes winner Bond James Bond three other winners from four starters, Glorousexcitement never raced but has produced two winners from four starters to date.

Pavich learned a tough aspect of the game from her first foal. That Ministers Wild Cat son, See Zo Go, was meant to race for Pavich.



Steve Pavich with Fantasy Rocks, the dam of stakes winners Bold Fantasy and Fantasy of Luck

“I kept him instead of selling him and raised him,” Pavich said. “We got him to the races and he was training well, so we brought the whole family out to his debut. He was in for \$20,000, and you can guess what happened next. He was claimed. The whole family was devastated. The horse didn’t even win. He did go on to earn \$184,280, and I eventually claimed him back for a time.”

See Zo Go won 13 of 70 starts.

Pavich has dabbled in the racing game, racing claiming-level horses in partnership and a few homebreds that didn’t sell at auction. He still has Glorousexcitement, as well as a second mare, Fantasy Rocks, who is the dam of Bold Fantasy.

“I only had the one mare and decided I needed another,” he said.

Pavich and his wife at the time, Maria, went to Pam and Martin Wygod’s dispersal at Barretts in 2010, where top-class pedigrees were available across the board.

“We had selected a handful of mares we liked, but kept getting outbid,” Pavich said. “Maria noticed that any time a Bertrando was in the ring, they sold well. Fantasy Rocks came in the ring, and she wasn’t getting a lot of bids. Without really asking, Maria puts her hand up, and we get the horse for \$4,000.”

Fantasy Rocks, a Rock Hard Ten mare in foal to Bertrando, brought with her a good pedigree. She is out of the unraced Storm Cat mare Exotic Fantasy, whose dam, Exotic Wood, was a multiple graded stakes winner and earner of \$890,695. Exotic Wood’s grade 1 victories included the Go for Wand Stakes at Saratoga, as well as the Santa Monica and Santa Maria hand-



Bold Fantasy as a foal

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icaps at Santa Anita. She also won the grade 2 La Brea Stakes, which is now a grade 1.

Bold Fantasy was a \$25,000 purchase by Curt and Lila Lanning at the 2012 Barretts October fall yearling sale. He broke his maiden on the grass at Santa Anita and has steadily added several allowance events over the years. He was off from February 2017 until May 2018, and has been even better than before, winning two of five starts and never finishing worse than third. With the win in the Harris Farms Stakes, Bold Fantasy has earnings of \$316,735 and a record of seven wins, four seconds, and eight thirds in 37 starts.

Although Jonathan Wong now trains Bold Fantasy, trainer Ed Moger Jr. selected him from the sale and brought him along even through his layoff.

“I give a lot of the credit to Ed,” Pavich said. “Every time that horse needed a break, Ed gave it to him. He deserves

some of the credit for making it so this horse could run this well at age 7.”

Fantasy Rocks’ third foal, Fantasy of Luck is also a stakes winner. The Lucky Pulpit mare finished third in the Fleet Treat Stakes at Del Mar in 2016 and won the Budweiser Stakes at Sun Ray Park this past April. Fantasy Rock’s fourth foal, Mariana Grace, is a two-time winner. The mare has a juvenile Paddy O’Prado filly and a weanling filly by Kentucky sire Flashback.

Pavich’s mares live at his small farm in Wilton outside Elk Grove in Northern California. He is enjoying a renewed sense of vigor for the game since Bold Fantasy’s win.

“I haven’t gotten many breeders awards because the horses I bred weren’t racing,” he said. “But when a horse like Bold Fantasy comes

back to the track, it’s really exciting. It puts the fire back in.”

Although neither mare is in foal for 2019, Pavich looks forward to selecting stallions for the coming year.

“It’s just a gut feeling you get when choosing a sire,” he said. “I’m not a pedigree expert by any stretch, but I do the nicking and ask for advice on conformation. I’ve done fairly well selling yearlings. It’s all about doing your research, then going with your gut.”

The online aspect of the game gave Pavich an added bonus after Bold Fantasy’s win.

“I’ve never met Jonathan Wong before,” he said, “but in today’s age with social media I said, ‘You know what? I’m going to just reach out on Twitter.’ I introduced myself, let him know that I’m the breeder, and he got back to me right away. Everyone in this game is connected.” **CTB**