



CTBA Member
PROFILE

OWNER/
BREEDER
ENJOYING
THE LAKE
EFFECT

CLINT ROBERTS

BY EMILY SHIELDS

A childhood spent at the racetrack can often develop into a lifelong passion for the game. That is certainly true of Clint Roberts, whose father gave him a taste of the ownership side of the industry years ago. At first Roberts looked poised to pursue that path, until he bought into California sire Lakerville. Now he is fully entrenched in the breeding business.

Roberts remembers spending a day a month at the races as a kid.

“My dad always wanted to own horses and usually had one on the track,” he said. “It was in my blood.”

Some of the horses that Clint’s father, Tom, campaigned include Speaking of Time, a multiple graded stakes-placed stakes winner of \$394,976, and grade 1 winner Famous Digger, who was claimed for \$40,000 in 1997 and went on to win the Del Mar Oaks (G1T). Barry Abrams, who has a special place in the Clint Roberts sto-

ry, trained both horses.

“My dad’s horses were trained by Roger Stein,” Roberts said. “At the time, Roger’s assistant was Barry Abrams. When I got my driver’s license in high school, I would go to the track and play the last race, then go hang out with Barry. I got really close to him. When Barry went out on his own, I told my dad to give the horses to Barry. I said, ‘He does all the work!’”

Their relationship flourished. When the younger Roberts was in his 20s, he was able to afford his own racehorses for the first time.

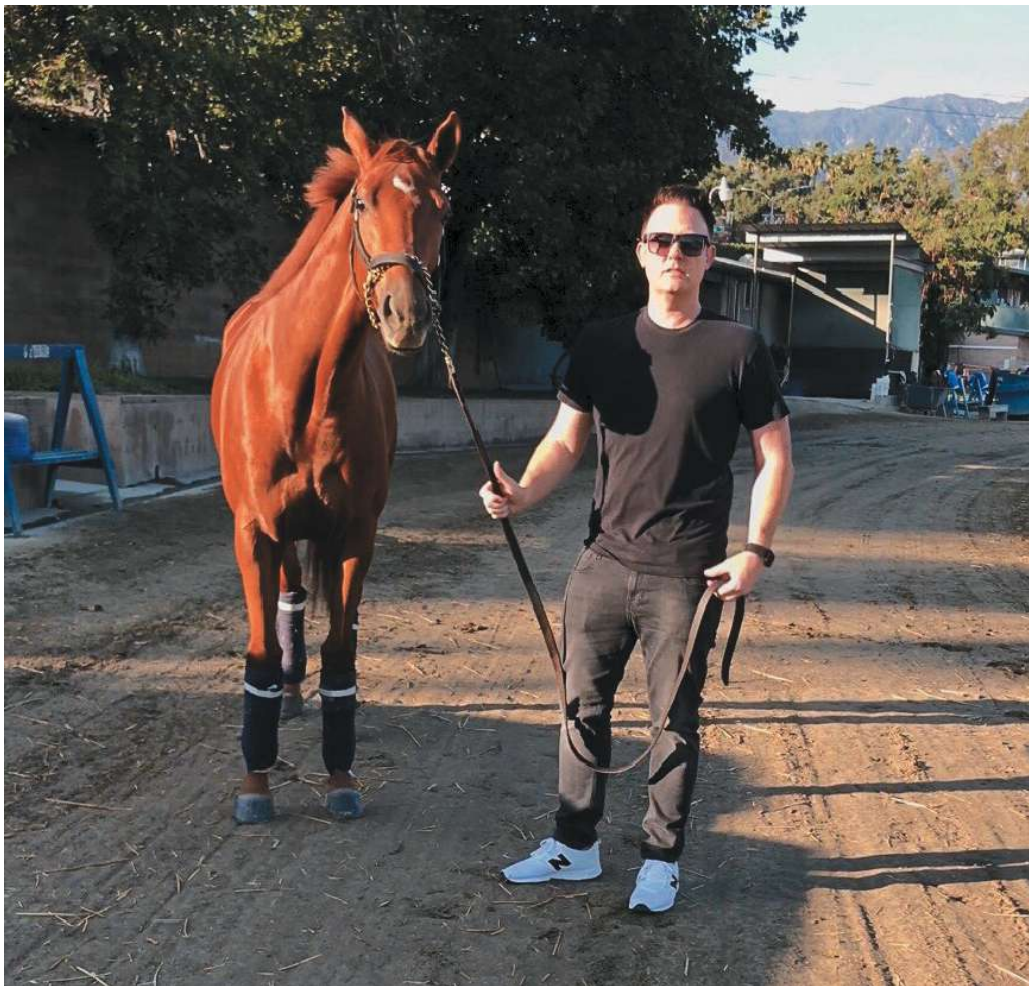
“Barry was behind the Unusual Heat thing,” Roberts said, speaking of California’s six-time leading sire. “If we had six or seven horses in the barn, five would be Unusual Heats. We were breeding our broodmares to Unusual Heat.”

When Abrams retired from training for health reasons, the Roberts’ horses were dispersed among other trainers, including Mike Pender. Clint was in the barn one day when he overheard Pender talking about a photo of a foal by Lakerville.

“I forgot about Lakerville, that he’d gone on to be a sire,” Roberts admitted.

Lakerville (Unusual Heat–Foreverinthegame, by Out of Place) won five of 11 starts with four second-place efforts and earned \$318,910.

“He was an absolute beast with an incredible turn of foot,” Roberts said. “I was a big believer, (especially since) Barry trained that many Unusual Heats, and out of all of them Lakerville is the one he wanted to make a stallion.”



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROBERTS FAMILY

Clint Roberts with Lakerzwin, his 3-year-old filly from first crop of Unusual Heat’s son Lakerville



After nearly a month of negotiation with his dear friend, Roberts became a managing partner in Lakerville. The 44-year-old Corona resident has put his marketing background to good use: He gave Lakerville his own logo, a website, and a social media presence, and he started buying some of his foals from other breeders.

“I took it very seriously,” Roberts said. “I’ve created a brand for him, ordered clothing. I’m doing a hard push on him. Breeding isn’t easy, and it takes a lot of time. But I’ve seen a lot of progress.”

The hardest part was waiting for Lakerville’s first foals to run. From there, the stallion took care of the rest. In his first crop, Lakerville has had three winners in nine starters. One of those is multiple stakes winner Lakerball.

Bred by Rancho de Los Aviadores, Lakerball is out of the winning Capsized mare Category Ten. Roberts bought the California-bred sophomore filly, now owned in partnership with Greg Pappas’ Pappas Horse Racing Corp and Janie Buss’ Purple Rein Racing.

Trained by Doug O’Neill, Lakerball broke her maiden second time out by 8½ lengths. But after losing a starter optional claiming event, options were limited.

“We were going to face Cal-breds in a stake, but we found out she wasn’t nominated for the Golden State Series,” Roberts said. “We didn’t want to supplement for the \$25,000 without knowing how good she was, and there was a race against open company on the turf. I said, ‘Let’s give her a shot.’”

Lakerball, 33-1 in the \$100,345 Surfer Girl Stakes at Santa Anita on Oct. 8, took the lead out of the gate and ran gamely to win by a head.

“She proved us right,” Roberts said. “She surprised the whole industry.”

Lakerball then rolled to win the \$75,225 Pike Place Dancer Stakes at Golden Gate Fields on Oct. 27 by five lengths. A long juvenile campaign caught up with her in her graded stakes debut, the Jimmy Durante (G3T) at Del



Clint Roberts, right, works hard to promote the up-and-coming Cal-bred and Cal-based sire Lakerville

Mar, but Lakerball split the field when finishing sixth. She is now pointing for the Feb. 18 California Cup Oaks, which will be her first stakes start against state-bred company. She has won three of six tries and earned \$129,825.

“ We get calls from so many people that think (Lakerville) is really following in the footsteps of Unusual Heat. Obviously, that is the plan. He is really special, and I’m having fun with it.”

— Clint Roberts

In partnership, Roberts also owns Lakerzwin, a chestnut Lakerville filly out of the Five Star Day mare Five O’Clock Toddy who is in training with Gary Sherlock and pointing for a maiden race

on the grass. His gelding King Lebron, trained by O’Neill, was sitting on his debut at the end of January. Another Lakerville runner that Roberts doesn’t own is Angelo’s Pride, a two-time winner at Golden Gate.

“The Lakervilles are doing well on the synthetic surface up there,” Roberts said. “They can run on anything.”

Roberts had already experienced winning, but winning while also owning the stallion is a new dimension.

“There’s no experience like that,” he said. “It seems like every week there is another great story about a Lakerville runner. We get calls from so many people that think he is really following in the footsteps of Unusual Heat. Obviously, that is the plan. He’s really special, and I’m having fun with it.”

None of it would be possible without Barry Abrams, Roberts’ partner and mentor.

“It all goes back to Barry,” Roberts said. “He’s a professional at text messaging now, so we talk every day. It’s a really cool relationship we have. I love that man. He’s been so good to me.” **CTB**