

Owner Profile

Living The Dream Pablo Suarez

By Mary Forney



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Pablo Suarez, a relative newcomer to race-horse ownership, recently partnered up with his longtime mentor and leading California owner, Bob Bone, and Desperado Stables, to purchase Argentinisima (Arg). With trainer Doug O'Neill, they claimed Argentinisima for \$32,000 at Hollywood Park, ran her back for \$40,000 and – with the magic touch that Suarez seems to bring to all his ventures – won her first race for the new partnership.

Suarez first became an owner in 2001, when he claimed Running Thunder with two partners for \$12,500. The horse ran back five days later, finished second, and was claimed for \$20,000. "I thought, 'This is awesome! This is fantastic,'" said Suarez, who

crazy?" Suarez recalled. But, knowing it had always been Jaime's dream to go to the Breeders' Cup, Suarez told him, "I'm not going to squash your dreams." Suarez now describes the experience as "an incredible, incredible thrill that I'm viewing as once in a lifetime, because I can never expect it to happen again."

Suarez Racing has also campaigned Estate Collection (2005 Kentucky Cup Sprint winner) and Sharp Lisa – both in partnership with J. Paul Reddam, who Suarez said has taken ownership to "another level" for him. "I really admire him, and it has been an absolute thrill to be in partnerships with him," he said. Other Suarez Racing runners



was "hooked."

Even better known to racing fans is Suarez's success with 2006 Breeders' Cup Sprint (Gr. 1) winner Thor's Echo, owned in partnership with his friend Royce Jaime. After purchasing Thor's Echo privately last year, Suarez and Jaime planned a campaign that included an allowance race prep for the 2006 Cal Cup Sprint. When the allowance race failed to fill three times, they paid a supplemental fee to enter the Grade 1 Ancient Title at Oak Tree. To their surprise, Thor's Echo ran a huge race, finishing a close second to Bordonaro.

"I started getting calls from Doug and Royce asking, 'Would the Breeders' Cup be

have included Grand Appointment (2005 Sensational Star H.), Sea to See (2003 Khaled S.), Dancin Olivia, Hot Weekend, Absolute Nectar, and Full Moon Madness.

To an outsider, it may seem that Suarez is living a charmed life. A horseplayer might call it an incredible streak of good luck. But spend a few minutes chatting with Suarez, and you will realize his apparent good luck is the natural outgrowth of a unique worldview. An American-born son of Cuban immigrants, Suarez is dedicated to his family, and poignantly appreciative of freedom, opportunity, and education. And when it comes to luck, he is firmly convinced that his good fortune has been bestowed by a

An American-born son of Cuban immigrants, Suarez is dedicated to his family, and poignantly appreciative of freedom, opportunity, and education. And when it comes to luck, he is firmly convinced that his good fortune has been bestowed by a higher power.

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A self-described spiritual person, Suarez said, "I like to think that God has blessed us to this extent." Whether you call it lucky, or being blessed, he insists, "There's no other way to explain it. Everything kind of happened. It was meant to be, so to speak."

"I feel very fortunate and blessed that my grandparents and parents made the sacrifices that they made, for my education, and to enable my sisters and me to establish ourselves in this country and better ourselves, and get to this point – which is unbelievable," Suarez said. His mother came to California from Cuba in 1958 with her parents and brother, when she was 11 years old. Her father and mother – an attorney and a teacher – came to the United States so their children could learn English. Following the Cuban Revolution and Castro's takeover, they decided to stay. "My grandfather had to take odd jobs and stuff like that," Suarez said, "which really makes me appreciative."

His father, Pablo Sr., came to this country when he was 19 years old – in 1962, the year of the Cuban missile crisis, during the turbulent time when Castro was moving Cuba towards Communism modeled after the Soviet Union. "He was lucky to get out," said Suarez. "He moved first to Miami, then to Chicago, then to California."

"He met my mother at a Cuban reunion function in Los Angeles," said Suarez, reflecting on how his family background has colored his view of life. "I'm very, very grateful for everything. Believe me, I'm just grateful to be able to feed my family and have a home – and then you throw in this thing (horseracing), which started off as just an enjoyment and now has turned into kind of a business. What a thrill and excitement for my entire family: my dad, my wife, my kids, everybody."

The owner of Nectar Pharmaceutical, Inc. of Valencia, a wholesale distributor of prescription drugs, Suarez lives in nearby suburban Stevenson Ranch. In a recent interview, he graciously invited us into his home to meet his family – wife Michelle and children Justin (age 7), Kyle (5), and twins Jack and Olivia (2-1/2), as well as his father, Pablo Sr., who is an integral part of their daily family life.

Suarez graduated from San Francisco State, where he earned a degree in psychology and also pitched on the baseball team. Now he coaches both his sons' baseball teams, as well as their two soccer teams. "It's great to be out there with your kids," he said, "and I'm going to be there anyway – so I may as well be coaching. I get a lot out of it," he explained. "It's almost as exciting as watching the horses run!"

Suarez grew up in the San Fernando Valley and recalled driving to Hollywood Park and Santa Anita to watch the races with his dad. Michelle, who has no racing background, quickly became hooked when they purchased their first runner and now shares his passion for the sport. "The fact that she likes it too, and is involved in it, makes it great – makes it fantastic," he said.

The kids are enjoying it, too. In fact, when he was just five years old, Justin drew a picture depicting horses with their numbered saddlecloths, all with the correct colors. "It was kind of scary," said Suarez. "He could tell you every saddle cloth number and color, all the way up to 14. I said, 'What is that?' And he said, 'Those are the horses, Daddy – you know, all the colors.' That's when I realized, wow, he's paying attention!"

Suarez apparently enjoys the connection with family and friends that horseracing provides as much as he enjoys the horses. "I think the big thing in this business is to surround yourself with good people that really know what they're doing and have your best interests at heart," he said. "That's why Doug (O'Neill) is so important." O'Neill is Suarez's only trainer, as well as a friend. "He's such an honest person," Suarez continued. "He's an awesome person, and I'm very happy to be associated with him."

Although Suarez considers himself a "very involved" owner, he said, "Your trainer is basically running your business for you, because he's there with the horses every day. You can't be there every day. So, if he tells you something, you have to trust that he's giving you correct information... He's the heart-beat of the whole program."

Suarez currently owns about 30 horses – 12 to 15 in training with O'Neill. And he is just beginning to get in to the breeding business. "A lot of people have tried to discourage me from it, but so far I like it," said Suarez, who has about 12 mares in California and Kentucky, and three stallions: Atticus and Event of the Year standing at Magali Farms and Kissin Kris at Tommy Town Thoroughbreds, both farms in Santa Ynez. "We've had our first breeders' award check," he said. "Breeding a horse is almost as exciting as owning a horse because, when it wins, you feel like,

'Wow! I brought that horse to life, and it won!' You get all the benefits of a horse race without the bills," he continued. "The lucrative breeders' awards initially got me into it."

Hopefully he will have the same success as a breeder that he has owning racehorses; yet, Suarez is clearly not expecting it. "Once you have kids, and they're healthy and everything's good, you realize how really blessed you are in life. So what more could you really ask for? Then something like this happens, and you feel like, 'This is ridiculous, this is incredible!' So, we're big believers in giving back and trying to help others."

In the meantime, he's totally enjoying the ride, and encouraging others to experience it. As he put it, "There's no greater thrill than to have your horse coming down the stretch and winning a race. It really brings that rush, exhilaration, and adrenaline flowing like nothing else. I would just tell people who want to get into the business, if you have a little bit of extra money and you want to experience something that's just an incredible rush and incredible feeling, get into this and decide for yourself!"

