



CTBA Member  
**PROFILE**

# MADELINE AND HARRIS AUERBACH

BY EMILY SHIELDS

MAKING THE  
UNUSUALS  
USUAL

**M**adeline and Harris Auerbach know that racing can be a cyclical game. You can be lucky enough to get a sprinkling of stakes wins, followed by a lengthy drought. You could also have a hand in two graded stakes wins just 10 days apart.

For the Auerbachs, all these things have happened, with the latter extreme coming via California-breds from Nov. 23 through Dec. 3. The Auerbach-bred and -sold How Unusual won the Red Carpet Handicap (G3T) on Thanksgiving, and then homebred Majestic Heat took the Bayakoa Stakes (G2). These victories came at the tail end of a tough year for the well-known

California breeders, who lost their foundation stallion, Unusual Heat, in May.

But for Madeline, patience has always been the most important part of the game.

“When you’ve been doing it as long as we have,” she said, “it’s very validating because you know you’re doing things right. This business is an infinite test of patience and resources, but mostly patience. I believe that’s very difficult to remember sometimes.”

Madeline was particularly fond of How Unusual when the daughter of Unusual Heat—Veela, by Bartok, was young.

“I got to know our young horses very well,” she said. “When How Unusual came to the track (they) said she was very difficult and to watch myself. She came right over and laid her head in my arms. I don’t doubt that she was a spitfire, but she always had a wonderful connection with me.”

“How Unusual has always been one of Madeline’s favorites since she was a baby,” confirmed Harris. “She has exceeded all expectations and is a beautiful filly.”

Mother and son, along with partners, raced How Unusual through the first eight months of her career, which included a maiden win at Santa Anita and a second-place effort in the 2016 Campanile Stakes at Golden Gate Fields. Trainer Mike Pender approached the Auerbachs about buying the filly after he failed to acquire anything in the 2016 Barretts August select yearling sale.

“We sold her privately to him and told him he was getting a really good deal,” Harris said, “which it turns out he really did.”

How Unusual won her first start for her new connections, then finished in the top three spots in five of six starts in 2017. The \$102,415 Red Carpet Handicap for fillies and mares on the grass at Del Mar was her first stakes victory. She has five wins, two seconds, and three thirds from 19 starts for earnings of \$302,367.

On the other hand, Majestic Heat won her first stakes race in 2016, taking the Solana Beach Stakes at Del Mar. She successfully defended her title in 2017, then trainer Richard Mandella made the judgment call to move the multiple turf winner to the dirt for the \$100,690 Betty Grable Stakes Nov. 12. She had just run in the



RON MESAROS

Madeline Auerbach and her son Harris Auerbach are mainstays of California’s Thoroughbred industry



Nov. 4 Goldikova Stakes (G2T), but Mandella noted she was, “tearing the barn down and full of energy.”

“She always trained well on the dirt, and we wanted to try it,” Harris recalled. Majestic Heat responded well, winning the Betty Grable by 3¼ lengths. Mandella entered her back for the \$201,035 Bayakoa Stakes just three weeks later, Majestic Heat’s third race in 30 days.

“Up until race day we weren’t sure if she was running,” Harris said. “Richard wanted to be 100% sure she was ready to run. And she ended up delivering a performance that was breathtaking.”

Majestic Heat won by 2½ lengths over 14 Hands Winery Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies (G1) heroine Champagne Room to increase her record to seven wins in 16 starts and earnings of \$530,329.

In addition to breeding and owning countless horses over the years, including the likes of Golden Doc A, Lethal Heat, Lennyfromalibu, Pretty Unusual, and Burns, Madeline is active on several boards and advocates for Thoroughbred aftercare. She is the founder and former chairperson of the California Retirement Management



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— Madeline Auerbach

the last dozen years. I knew I was working for the right group of people, but I didn’t know just how special those people were. And now I do.”

Account (CARMA) and a founding director of the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance (TAA).

“I love all the things I do,” she said. “I love my work with CARMA. Their placement program is something I’m terribly proud of. It’s the only program of its kind in the nation. And I’m very proud of what the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance does on a national level. We need more organizations of that kind of scope and reach.”

But even while being around charity-driven people, Auerbach was still awed by the outpouring of support and help for the grooms and trainers that survived the San Luis Rey Downs fire on Dec. 7.

“As sad and as horrible as that event has been, I couldn’t be more impressed and proud of the people who were involved,” she said as donations and help from around the country poured in. “I don’t even know how to talk about it. I am so grateful to the industry, and this will stay with us. It really restores my faith in all the work that I’ve done for



VASSAR PHOTOGRAPHY

Harris Auerbach, center, and Madeline celebrate Cheekaboo’s victory in the state-bred Campanile Stakes at Golden Gate with CTBA’s Doug Burge, left, Joe Ciaglia, jockey Juan Hernandez, and trainer Peter Eurton, right

With affirmation of the kindness within the industry and a host of Unusual Heat offspring on the track and in the shed, the Auerbachs always have something to look forward to. How Unusual’s dam, Veela, is in foal to California stallion Gervinho, but she will give birth in Kentucky and be bred back to Hard Spun. Majestic Heat’s dam, Chi Chi Nette, is in foal to Tamarando on behalf of the employees of Harris Farms, whom she was leased to last year.

On top of that, the California Cup Classic, first run in 1990, has been renamed the Unusual Heat Turf Classic Presented by City National Bank.

“That is so special,” said Madeline. “I know how important he was for California. We don’t know what would have happened to racing here without him. This shows that he was recognized by our peers.” **CTB**