



CTBA Member
PROFILE

MAKING
DREAMS
COME TRUE

MICHAEL PAGELER

BY EMILY SHIELDS

Breeder Michael Pageler is making a splash in California by way of Arizona, where he resides. His California-bred Heck Yeah has earned \$308,000 in his first five starts, which is even more impressive when factoring in that Pageler joined the sport on a whim just seven years ago.

Pageler, who owned an electric company and retired in 2016, had been a lifelong fan and bettor but never imagined getting involved.

“I didn’t know a whole lot about it,” he said. “I knew Bob Baedeker because he was

on TVG a lot when I was watching. I found out that he was managing Live Your Dream Racing Stable, and that Bob Baffert was doing their training. I felt that you have to know somebody that knows something if you want to get started in this sport, and I thought, ‘Well, that sounds like two pretty good connections to get me going.’”

Baedeker recommended horses to claim, with Baffert taking the reins once the Thoroughbreds changed hands. Live Your Dream was a successful outfit established in 2010, and Pageler’s gamble was rewarded immediately.

“The first horse we ever claimed, as in the first horse I was partners in, was Lutess,” Pageler said.

The daughter of Maria’s Mon—Alchemia, by Menifee, ran 10th the day of the claim, Oct. 10, 2011. She won by a half-length in her very next start, at Hollywood Park in November. Lutess finished second at Santa Anita twice before being claimed away, with the Live Your Dream partners taking her back in her very next start.

“She had some sesamoid issues once we claimed her back, so she couldn’t race again,” Pageler said. “We had to retire



A pair of cowboy hat-wearing horsemen, Michael Pageler, third right, shares the dream of Thoroughbred racing with a future generation, his grandson Leland, in the winner’s circle for Heck Yeah’s Cal Cup Derby

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her, so most of the partners wanted out. (Live Your Dream founder) Don Palmer and I kept her and bred her as 50-50 partners the first year.”

Lutess’ first foal was Acclaim the Queen, by the mighty Eclipse Award-winning Cal-bred Acclamation. Then Baedeker amicably split with Palmer, and Pageler and Palmer made a deal: Pageler got to keep Lutess, in foal once again to Acclamation while Palmer kept Acclaim the Queen. The latter did not make it to the races until early in 2018 as a 4-year-old, running third in her first of two starts.

But Lutess’ second foal is Heck Yeah, now a multiple stakes winner. Pageler owns the colt in partnership with Michael Sigband and Baedeker, who “snuck” the colt into Baffert’s Los Alamitos string while suspecting Heck Yeah wouldn’t make the cut in such a prestigious barn. To the contrary, Heck Yeah impressed Baffert while training and debuted at Los Alamitos over 5½ furlongs on Dec. 7, 2017, as the second wagering choice in a field of eight.

Heck Yeah won, rolling home by 5¼ lengths. He then switched to turf for the \$102,415 California Cup Turf Sprint Stakes at Santa Anita, winning his stakes debut despite a slow start and having to rally through a full field of 11 rivals.

Stretching to 1¼ miles and switching back to dirt, Heck Yeah took on some of California’s finest sophomores in the \$201,035 California Cup Derby. With jockey Mike Smith aboard, replacing regular rider Drayden Van Dyke, Heck Yeah went straight to the lead and never wavered. He scored by 1¼ lengths, stretching his unbeaten streak to three.



COURTESY OF MICHAEL PAGELER

Lutess, Michael Pageler’s only broodmare and dam of his multiple stakes winner Heck Yeah, has been bred to Arrogate

Heck Yeah suffered his first loss in the \$200,690 Pasadena Stakes against open company. He finished fifth in the one-mile turf contest, beaten only four lengths for the win.

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After that start Baffert opted to remove Heck Yeah’s blinkers, and sent the colt to the post for the \$200,000 Echo Eddie Stakes going 6½ furlongs on Santa Anita’s main track. Heck Yeah scored again, winning by 2¼ lengths.

Pageler was on hand, saying, “This never gets old, I can tell you that. Bob’s done a great job with him, and taking the blinkers off today made a big difference. You could see he was more relaxed and he finished better.”

Heck Yeah now has a record of four wins in five starts.

Lutess’ 2-year-old Coil colt, Inconceivable, will join Baffert’s juvenile string at Los Alamitos shortly, just as Heck Yeah had done two years ago.

“He’s just getting ready to go to the

track,” Pageler said of Inconceivable.

The mare has had a run of bad luck since the birth of Heck Yeah and Inconceivable. She foaled a Surf Cat colt in 2017, but he died from colic as a yearling in January. Lutess was bred to Vronsky for 2018 but did not get in foal, and she is now residing in Kentucky following a date with one of the sport’s most exciting young sires.

“She was bred to Arrogate,” Pageler confirmed. “Baffert had a breeding to Arrogate, and he was asking who I would be breeding Lutess to. I hadn’t made any plans, so the new foal will be half Baffert’s and half mine. She’s currently at Hill ‘N’ Dale Farm in Lexington, Ky., but we will bring her back in a couple of months to get an Arrogate California-bred. She will be stabled at Harris Farms. I’ve already talked to them and set it up.”

Lutess is the only broodmare that Pageler owns, but he has a piece of the racemare C. C. Zipp, a dual winner in training with Jerry Hollendorfer. In addition, Pageler and Heck Yeah partner Sigband purchased a Jump Start colt out of the War Chant mare Dakota Sky—a half sister to multiple grade 2 winner Pants On Fire—for \$200,000 in Ocala in April. Baedeker acted as their agent.

With a Cal-bred by Arrogate on the way and Heck Yeah set to compete this summer, Pageler is poised to live out his own racing dreams. **CTB**