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PROFILE

THE  
WINNER'S  
CIRCLE IS  
ROBBINS'  
HOOD

# JIM ROBBINS

BY EMILY SHIELDS

Jim Robbins jokingly laments that the worst thing that ever happened to him was having early success in the horse business.

“That beginner’s luck, where the first one grabs you because they are a winner? That happened to me,” Robbins said. “It makes it look easy when that happens.”

After mild success with his first horse, California-bred Por D.J., Robbins was hooked and has dabbled in the breeding and racing industry ever since.

“It goes back a good 25 years,” he said. “I’ve always had one or two at a time, mostly low-level claiming horses.”

Robbins and partners went to \$62,500 to claim Wild Baby Girl, a debuting daughter of Misbah, during the Del Mar meet in 2007, Robbins recalling that “she showed a lot of heart in that maiden race.” The juvenile filly broke poorly, was bumped, and still rallied to win the race at 12-1 odds.

Racing for her new connections, Wild Baby Girl wheeled back in the \$250,000 Del Mar Debutante Stakes (G1), finishing fifth of 12

starters. She started twice more, running third each time, before injury forced her retirement.

“I remembered her heart,” Robbins said, “so I thought she was worth breeding.”

Wild Baby Girl’s second foal, Racing for Chasen, has made 57 starts for earnings of \$146,660. The daughter of Swiss Yodeler is still in training this year at age 6. Wild Baby Girl, who resides at Terry Lovingier’s Lovacres Ranch in Warner Springs, has since been bred several times to Empire Way.

Royally bred Empire Way was a winner at 2 and boasts the pedigree to be a top stallion. The grade 2 stakes-placed son of Empire Maker is out of \$740,918-earner Delta Princess, a daughter of A.P. Indy. Delta Princess is the dam of Royal Delta, a three-time Eclipse Award champion, two-time Breeders’ Cup winner, and an earner of \$4,811,126. But full siblings Royal Delta and Empire Way are also related to Delta Princess’ Smart Strike filly Crown Queen, a grade 1 winner on the grass, and grade 1-placed Carnival Court.

Wild Baby Girl’s first Empire Way foal is the colt Wild Lando. The next is Loving Lynda, named after Robbins’ wife. That filly, now the winner of this year’s Melair Stakes, was so exceptional as a yearling that Lovingier told Robbins she was among the top 10% of fillies he’d raised on the ranch.

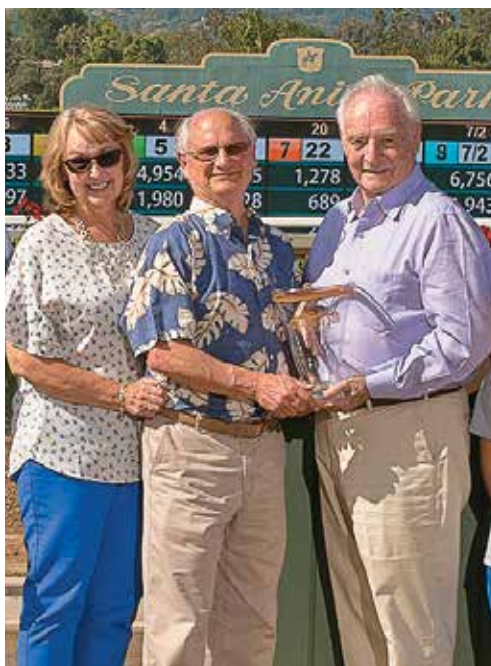
“It’s hard to measure that,” Robbins said, “but it gave me some encouragement.”

Loving Lynda was involved in the devastating Lilac Fire at San Luis Rey Downs in December.

“We didn’t know where she was for a few days,” Robbins said. “Once they identified her, she needed 26 stitches in her neck.”

That set the filly back several months, but she healed and made her debut April 1, running second against fillies and mares 3-year-old and up after going wide on the turn. When she returned to the races for her second start, it was without Robbins or her trainer, Phil D’Amato, at the track that day.

“We were at a wedding in Las Vegas,” Robbins said. “The wedding ceremony commenced simultaneously with the beginning of the race. I was sitting with Phil, who was inconspicuously watching the horse. She won going



Jim Robbins, center, and wife, Lynda, receive Loving Lynda’s Melair Stakes trophy from Don Valpredo

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A San Luis Rey Downs fire survivor, Cal-bred Loving Lynda won the Melair Stakes at Santa Anita

away—it was very impressive.”

The race was eventful. Loving Lynda stumbled at the start, was taken back, forced four wide, and won anyway by two lengths. One day later, Wild Lando broke his maiden, also at Santa Anita.

Jumping from maiden company over 5½ furlongs to stakes company going two turns is an arduous task, but Loving Lynda was up to the challenge. Under jockey Franco Geovanni, the 6-1 shot pressed the pace early and then got up in time to win the \$196,000 Melair Stakes. The victory gave D’Amato his fourth consecutive win in the race, named for the wickedly fast California-bred filly who was unbeaten in five starts. The 1¼-mile contest proved not only that Loving Lynda could stretch out but also that Lovingier was right about her talent.

“It was fairly unexpected,” said Robbins, who was on hand for the race.

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“I thought she’d do well, but you’re not sure after a maiden win. This was a good test for her; she must be a legit horse.”

Loving Lynda has now earned \$153,200 in just three starts, and she won’t be the last from Wild Baby Girl.

“Phil is convinced that the 2-year-old is going to be even better,” Robbins said of Mrs. Kimberly K, the juvenile

full sister to Loving Lynda. “She’s already as big or bigger, and we’ve turned her back out to finish growing. But I’ve learned not to get too excited; the industry can be tough. Just look at the Lilac Fire. I felt so bad for everyone involved on every level.”

This attitude is one of the reasons why Lovingier is so impressed with the Robbins family.

“There is no finer man out there than Jim Robbins,” Lovingier said. “He is one of the best people there is. We bred, birthed, and raised that filly, who has always been nice with a good girth and a big shoulder. Lovacres was unbelievably happy with Lynda for winning the race because they don’t come any better than Jim and his wife. We think the world of them.”

Loving Lynda is scheduled to make her next start in the Fleet Treat Stakes for Cal-bred sophomore fillies at Del Mar on July 29, but Robbins will have to miss the race.

“My grandson is getting married that day,” he said. “The ceremony will be about the same time as post time.”

It could be a good omen because that angle has worked before. **CTB**