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PROFILE

PAUL AND VIRGINIA HAALAND

BY EMILY SHIELDS

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Virginia Haaland always supported husband Paul's love of horse racing; they both hail from similar backgrounds and childhoods that included trips to the track. But when a California stallion named Prospect Park helped Paul during his battle with brain

cancer, Virginia became an even deeper believer.

"The miracle about all this horse stuff," she said, "is that it would be a much heavier experience for him if he didn't have this thing to think about and be excited about."

That "thing" is standing Prospect Park at Harris Farms in Coalinga. The well-bred horse marks the Haalands' first foray into stallion ownership, although they have been partners in both racehorses and broodmares before. With horses on the farm and at the track, their PVNC Stables—named for Paul, Virginia, and daughters Nora and Charlotte—is an ever-evolving operation and a family affair.

When Paul and Virginia met on a ski trip to Mammoth, memories of the racetrack ran in both of their minds. Paul's father taught his 6-year-old son to read the *Daily Racing Form* while the family stayed in Solana Beach, enjoying the ocean in the morning and the Del Mar races in the afternoon. Virginia hailed from Los Angeles, where she was exposed to racing at Santa Anita.

"It was Paul's passion, but it has become a family thing," she explained.

The couple's daughters, ages 10 and 8, have already learned how to bet.

"It's pretty cute," Virginia admitted. "It's been a fun thing to share as a family."

As the children got older, the couple was able to invest in the sport as owners for the first time.

"We got involved in both racehorse partnerships and

breeding partnerships," Paul said.

They were involved with multiple stakes-placed California-bred Takeo Squared, a son of Square Eddie who was retired after running second by just a neck in the \$100,351 California Cup Turf Sprint Stakes last January. They were also part of the Uptowncharlybrown Stud syndicate that campaigned stakes-placed winner Kelli's Smile.

"But it seemed we wanted to do a little more on the breeding side," said Paul.

Opportunity knocked when Prospect Park was offered at the 2018 Keeneland November sale. The Haalands were able to buy him privately before the sale in a deal brokered by Chad Schumer. The horse was everything they had been looking for in a stallion prospect.

Pam and Martin Wygod's homebred Prospect Park, a son of Tapit—Quiet Romance, by Bertrando, was well regarded even before his debut. His dam never raced, but she produced Santa Anita Oaks (G1) winner Silent Sighs and dual grade 2 winner and grade 1-placed Proposed. Prospect Park is another in a line of classy runners for the mare, who was out of multiple stakes-placed Cal-bred Brisa de Mar.

Prospect Park didn't break his maiden until his fourth start, where he defeated future graded stakes winner Cyrus Alexander—also known as Kentucky Derby (G1) winner Super Saver's half brother—in



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAUL AND VIRGINIA HAALAND

Paul and Virginia Haaland enjoying the racing at Del Mar

As the Thoroughbred business is a family affair, Virginia, with daughters Nora, left, and Charlotte, visit Prospect Park at his new home



a maiden race routing on the dirt at Santa Anita in late 2014. Prospect Park then added an allowance optional claiming race in January 2015, which turned up Kentucky Derby fever in his camp. He ran second behind Dortmund in the \$401,250 San Felipe Stakes (G2), but fourth in the \$1 million Santa Anita Derby (G1), ending his Triple Crown dreams.

Prospect Park was graded stakes-placed, in the Los Alamitos Derby (G2) and Affirmed Stakes (G3), before he broke through on the grass, defeating the classy runner Om in the \$151,000 La Jolla Handicap (G3T) at Del Mar. He was then third in the grade 2 Del Mar Derby.

Prospect Park ran at 4 and 5, adding an allowance score and placing in the Californian Stakes (G2) behind grade 1 winner Collected. He was slated to return to the track at 6, but was involved in the San Luis Rey Downs fire and injured himself escaping from the flames. With \$539,770 in earnings and four wins, seven seconds, and three thirds in 18 starts, Prospect Park was retired.

The chance to stand a graded stakes-winning son of Tapit from a top California family was not lost on the Haalands.

“The main thing was he checks all the boxes,” Paul said. “Being he’s a son of Tapit and being able to bring that to California, where there was not a graded stakes-winning son of Tapit that could be available to California breeders, was a big thing. He filled that void to bring something unique and different and important to the breeders.”

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The Haalands with their pride and joy, Prospect Park

popular horse.

“He was a great horse and was really loved by a lot of people during his career,” Paul said. “I think it’s because

everyone loves a closer, and he was a closer. There is something about a closer.”

Prospect Park has been well received by breeders at his \$2,500 fee.

“One great thing about the Tapit line in terms of doing nicks and pedigree crosses is that it’s so versatile,” Paul said. “I talked to the folks at Gainesway Farm (home of Tapit), and they say everything goes with Tapit.”

The couple has been building their broodmare band to support their acquisition while still racing horses in partnership. In all, they have three retired broodmares at Sue Greene’s Woodbridge Farm, two fillies still to come, and over a dozen in various partnerships.

But for now, “our focus is on Prospect Park,” Paul said.

The San Diego-based couple, who have career backgrounds in engineering and human resources, will be adding a fourth broodmare to their band soon with plans to visit the stallion in the spring.

And as for Paul’s brain cancer?

“He’s home recovering from surgery now,” Virginia said. “He’s had radiation; he’s on chemotherapy. And I’m telling you that when I think about the business, I think it is the best thing for him. It keeps him super positive. He’s not home just stressing about the illness.

“The timing is amazing; it got off the ground last year before we knew this was coming. It’s something he can do during the day to stay excited and positive. I think about it all the time, but when I asked him if he thought about it all the time, he said, ‘No, I think about Prospect Park.’” **CTB**