



CTBA Member
PROFILE

TODD SHEEHAN

BY EMILY SHIELDS

TODD SHEEHAN
TURNS
PLEASURE
TRIP INTO
BUSINESS
TRIP

Todd Sheehan grew up visiting Del Mar racetrack, first as a child with his parents and then as a high school student with friends. What stood out to him was a love not of gambling, but of the horses themselves.

“It was the racing, the people, the pageantry of it,” he said. “I fell in love with the whole thing.”

He knew then that he wanted to get involved with the business, but life had to fall in line first. Sheehan completed college and then law school before moving to Temecula in 1998. As soon as he could, he started dabbling in partnerships, then met

Rick Taylor at Special T Thoroughbreds.

Taylor was in the process of getting two young horses ready for owner B. J. Wright. One was Ultimate Eagle, who earned \$547,800 with wins in the Hollywood Derby (G1T) and Strub Stakes (G2). The other was Boat Trip.

“He was getting them ready at Galway Downs, and he would tell me he had two really good horses to watch,” Sheehan recalled. “They both went on and had good racing careers, and Rick was always saying how he wished for an opportunity to stand Boat Trip.”

Boat Trip, by Harlan’s Holiday out of the group 3-winning Seeking the Gold mare Turning Wheel, was a graded

stakes-placed stakes winner of \$268,410. He broke his maiden as a sophomore at Santa Anita in 2012, then won three in a row, including the \$74,330 Tsunami Slew Stakes on the turf at Hollywood Park.

He won the \$99,998 Hollywood Turf Express Handicap as a 4-year-old, the same year he was second in the Eddie D Stakes (G3T), and retired with five wins, a second, and three thirds in 22 starts.

“Rick liked his pedigree, race record, and everything about him,” Sheehan said. “In the summer of 2017, he said, ‘You’ll never guess who called.’ It was Robert Harmon, the owner of Boat Trip.”

Harmon wanted Taylor



COURTESY OF TODD SHEEHAN

Todd Sheehan and his grandfather Pat Peluso visit freshman stallion Boat Trip at Special T Thoroughbreds



to stand Boat Trip at Special T Thoroughbreds in Temecula.

“You’ve always wanted to do that,” Sheehan remembers telling Taylor. And when the chance came to buy into the stallion, Sheehan couldn’t get on board fast enough.

Sheehan and Taylor own a controlling interest in Boat Trip, with Harmon retaining a percentage as well. Boat Trip has proved an immediate success: With his first crop of racing age, he has a stakes winner in Bettor Trip Nick.

A California-bred out of the In Excess mare Bettor Knot, Bettor Trip Nick broke his maiden first out at Golden Gate in August.

“I watched his very first race, as he was the first starter for Boat Trip,” Sheehan said. “It’s always great when a sire can have a first runner be a debut winner.”

Bettor Trip Nick took a maiden claiming event by a nose, then added a starter allowance by 2½ lengths in October. Sheehan was in Kentucky with Taylor for the Keeneland November sale when Bettor Trip Nick won the \$63,800 Golden Nugget Stakes as a 15-1 shot. The gelding has since added the \$76,200 Gold Rush Stakes and is four for five lifetime with a second place to his credit.

Bettor Trip Nick’s classy campaign is no surprise to Sheehan, who firmly believes in Boat Trip as a sire.

“He is a nice, big, correct, good-looking horse,” Sheehan said. “He’s got a strong, powerful look to him, is a kind horse, and loves company.”

Sheehan’s 91-year-old grandfather, Pat Peluso, likes to visit the farm and feed



CHAD B. HARMON

A stakes winner himself, Boat Trip, a son of Harlan’s Holiday, has sired a multiple stakes winner in his first crop

Boat Trip “as many carrots as he can.”

Having the only son of the deceased Harlan’s Holiday in California helps, too. Harlan’s Holiday had sired multimillionaire Neolithic, Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (G1) winner Shanghai Bobby, leading sire Into Mischief, and New York-bred champion Notacatbutallama

“(Boat Trip) is a nice, big, correct, good-looking horse. He’s got a strong, powerful look to him, is a kind horse, and loves company.”

— Todd Sheehan

at the time of his early passing.

Sheehan owns three mares outright and several more in partnership, and he has had some success in the breeding game before. He bred the graded stakes-placed stakes winner Seattle Ruler, a son of Roman Ruler—Decades of Style,

by A.P. Indy.

“I was trying to buy myself more quality,” Sheehan said. “The market was really strong, and I felt like every horse was going for \$70,000 or more and I had a budget of \$40,000. I told Rick I wanted an A.P. Indy mare, and he rolled his eyes. But we found one that wasn’t in foal and got her for \$37,000.”

Sheehan bred the Irish-bred mare Decades of Style to grade 1-winning millionaire Roman Ruler for his first crop

and sold Seattle Ruler for \$27,000 at the Barretts October yearling sale of 2008. Seattle Ruler went on to earn \$164,323.

“I like to sell them as weanlings, but sometimes you have to wait,” Sheehan said.

He has since steadily upgraded his mares and now has a \$234,234-earning More Than Ready daughter named Knacque in foal to Boat Trip and a Medaglia d’Oro daughter named Seoul Gold in foal to Bernardini. His stakes-winning Thunder Gulch mare Over the Edge is in foal to popular young stallion Bolt d’Oro.

“It should be a really exciting year,” Sheehan said of 2020.

After getting 30 mares to Boat Trip in his first book with Taylor at the helm, now Sheehan simply has to sit back and wait for the foals he bred to mature and reach the track.

“I’m still learning the business,” he said. “Rick has taught me a lot. I didn’t want to jump right in; I took it slowly.”

Until then, he has visits between Boat Trip and his grandfather to manage.

“My grandfather loves to visit,” he said. “They are good buddies.” **CTB**