



CTBA Member
PROFILE

THE JOY
OF RACING
CAL-BREDS

JEFF KITCHEN

BY EMILY SHIELDS

When a friend encouraged Jeff Kitchen to try horse ownership, the longtime bettor resisted.

“I had been warned,” the 71-year-old said wryly. “I knew the risks.”

Kitchen had been “playing the ponies” since the early 1970s, getting involved right around the time of Secretariat’s immortal run through the Triple Crown.

“Racing was a constant in my life,” the longtime construction and remodeling guru

said. “But my friend finally prevailed.”

When Kitchen gave in, a new owner and breeder in California was born.

Kitchen’s first horse, California-bred Capital Cat, had “moderate success,” with three career wins while bouncing around the claiming ranks. Kitchen owned pieces of a few lower-level claiming horses before getting involved with a horse named Coach Bob.

Trained by Reina Gonzalez, the son of Bertrando—Gentleman’s Hope, by Yankee Gentleman, was a multiple stakes-placed winner of \$211,367. He won four of 35 starts, with five seconds and five thirds, competing in races such as the Bing Crosby Stakes (G1) and San Francisco Mile (G3T). He was second in the \$75,400 Casual Lies Handicap at Pleasanton in 2013, and second by 1¾ lengths in the \$126,000 Donald Valpredo California Cup Sprint Stakes a year later.

At the same time that Coach Bob was on the track, Kitchen also had his first broodmare, Pahiatus. He had campaigned her along with trainer Gonzalez and Dolores Silva, and when it came time for the three-time winning daughter of Tribal Rule—Agua de Mayo, by Mr. Greeley, to retire, Kitchen had a grand plan.

“Around then we were noticing the success of a 2-year-old named California Chrome,” Kitchen said. “I thought, ‘Gee, maybe we should try that.’ So we bred Pahiatus to Lucky Pulpit three months before the Kentucky Derby.”

California Chrome, a son of Lucky Pulpit, went on to win the Kentucky Derby (G1) and Preakness Stakes (G1) that year, then added the Dubai World Cup (G1) as an older horse en route to earnings of \$14,752,650.

“We thought California Chrome was special, and he was,” Kitchen said. “Of course, we also thought we’d get our own Kentucky Derby prospect.”

Just getting Pahiatus in foal proved difficult. After she finally caught, Kitchen named the resulting colt Conceivable in honor of the trouble they’d had.

“He didn’t work out,” Kitchen said. “After his third workout he bowed, and that was it for him. We found a new home for him.”

But then Coach Bob was also done racing, and Kitchen’s plan grew: Why not breed



COURTESY OF JEFF KITCHEN

California owner/breeder Jeff Kitchen has had a good start with his stallion Coach Bob



© BENOIT PHOTO

Jeff Kitchen's Cal-bred Coach Bob, shown right finishing behind Ain't No Other, center, in the 2013 Sensational Star Stakes, was multiple stakes-placed

Pahiatua to Coach Bob?

"Bertrando was always a favorite of mine as a racehorse," Kitchen said.

Coach Bob's broodmare sire, Yankee Gentleman, is also the broodmare sire of indomitable runner and leading stallion American Pharoah. Although dam Gentleman's Hope was unraced, her dam was graded stakes winner Unbridled Hope, by Unbridled, a half sister to the dams of grade 3 winner Bearpath and multiple stakes-placed runners Conquest Lemonraid and Loose On the Town.

"Reina always said she really liked Coach Bob, that he was both intelligent and super-fast," Kitchen said. "So why not try?"

Kitchen admitted to having fantasies of getting books of 50 mares, but he now understands that Coach Bob will have to fight for his chance to be noticed. The stallion himself has already started to prove worthy. From eight foals of racing age, he has had four

“It’s been an adventure, or an education, anyway. I’ve been very fortunate to get this far and do as well as I have. I’m grateful for the success I’ve had.”

— Jeff Kitchen

starters. All have won.

"He's had limited opportunities," Kitchen said of the stallion, who stands at Daehling Ranch in Elk Grove. "But out of limited data, it's pretty successful."

First Coach was the result of the initial Coach Bob—Pahiatua mating; he was a winner in 2018. A full sister,

Habobanero, came next and already has a 2020 victory to her credit at Golden Gate Fields. Fiesty Coach scored on the synthetic surface at Golden Gate, while two-time winner Smokin Hot Bobbie won in allowance optional claiming company on New Year's Day, leading to a start in the \$202,000 California Cup Oaks.

"That was a major disappointment," Kitchen said of the Oaks; Smokin Hot Bobbie finished last in a tough field. "But as a horse owner, we like to cling to any excuse, and we think she had an abscess that was affecting her. And one thing I like about Reina is that she's not afraid to swing for the fences."

He cited the Bing Crosby at Del Mar with Coach Bob as an example: "We were facing horses like Comma to the Top and Goldencents, and Coach Bob was leading for half the race before fading. If he broke better that day, maybe he could have hit the board against those horses."

Kitchen is involved with both Habobanero and Smokin Hot Bobbie, and he also has an unraced sophomore getting ready to debut. He still owns Pahiatua, who has a yearling filly by Coach Bob named Sis Boom Bob, and he bred the mare back to that stallion for 2020. The four Coach Bob runners to date have earned more than \$152,000, with an average earnings per starter of \$38,197.

"It's a pretty good start," Kitchen said. "If all goes well, there will be more runners coming in the next year."

Now that he has dabbled in betting, owning, and breeding, Kitchen is on a roll in California.

"It's been an adventure, or an education, anyway," he said. "I've been very fortunate to get this far and do as well as I have. I'm grateful for the success I've had."

If Coach Bob's early stats are any indication, there will be plenty of future success ahead. **CTB**