



CTBA Member  
PROFILE

CALIFORNIA  
THOROUGHBRED  
OWNER LEARNS  
VALUE OF  
FRIENDSHIPS  
AND RACING  
PARTNERSHIPS

# TOM BECKERLE

BY EMILY SHIELDS

Before he turned 16, Tom Beckerle was already working on the outskirts of the racing industry. He began by selling tip sheets at Los Alamitos near where he grew up and fell in love with the racehorses, as so many do.

“That’s how I got started,” Beckerle recalled. “As I got older, I got involved with a syndicate.” One syndicate of horse owners turned into many, and Beckerle was recently rewarded for his investment via Tom’s Regret. That California-bred 2-year-old filly triumphed in the \$179,785 Kentucky Juvenile Stakes at Churchill Downs in Kentucky May 5.

Long before Tom’s Regret, Beckerle was trying his hand in the game. The first horse that Beckerle bought into was Set Play, a Florida-bred filly trained by Peter Miller. Set Play broke her maiden first out, won the 2007 Del Mar Debutante Stakes (G1) three months later and ultimately ran 11th in the 2007 Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Fillies at odds of 41-1.

“I got to go to the Breeders’ Cup with the very first horse I ever got involved with,” Beckerle said. “It was diluted because you didn’t own a lot of the horse, but you got to get in the winner’s circle picture more or less.”

Although Set Play never again reached top competi-

tion, the fire within Beckerle was already burning. Fifteen years later he has become much more involved in racing, both via partnerships and on his own.

“I bumped into Terry Lovingier one day back when his Lovacres Ranch was still in Murrieta,” Beckerle said. “I had a horse on layup there from another partnership, and he offered for me to get involved with some of his horses. I’m not a big-time player in the game and I was just trying to get lucky, so getting in with him felt like I could learn the knowledge to pick out some winners myself.”

Beckerle partnered on My Fiona, a California-bred daughter of Ghostzaper—A Vision in Gray, by Two Punch. Winner of six in 16 starts, My Fiona earned \$478,743. She was named California’s champion 2-year-old female in 2014 and has since gone on to acclaim as the dam of stakes winners Fi Fi Pharoah and Finneus. In 2021, Finneus was named champion Cal-bred 2-year-old male, and My Fiona was the California Broodmare of the Year.

“I started buying more and more horses,” Beckerle said. “First one, then two, then part of two more, then part of four. Over the years I’ve had a couple of winners, but not a lot.”

Beckerle is still involved with stakes winner Fi Fi Pharoah, a daughter of Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, and last year he was a partner on Cal-bred champion 2-year-old female



Tom Beckerle (second from right) with the late Jim Causky (second from left) and friends at Angels Stadium.

COURTESY OF TOM BECKERLE

At the Spa, now retired. Fi Fi Pharoah was recently seen running second in allowance company at Santa Anita after earlier this year finishing fourth in the \$200,000 La Canada Stakes (G2) on New Year's Day. She won the \$151,000 Melair Stakes in June 2021 and has earned \$285,594 in 15 starts.

When Beckerle's closest friend and fellow horse owner, Jim Causky, passed away, Beckerle gathered a few of Casuky's friends to make a partnership in his honor.

"His nickname was Pappy, so we named our first horse Papster after him," Beckerle said.

Although, to date, the Cal-bred remains a maiden in three starts, Papster is twice stakes-placed and has earned \$44,000.

The small success caught the interest in others, and a bigger partnership was born.

"I got involved with some friends from Los Alamitos High School," Beckerle said. "The mascot is the Griffins, so I started a group called Griffin Stables."

The group currently has six horses in training, including brilliant maiden winner EZ Pharis, a Cal-bred by American Pharoah.

"I've had a lot more friends that want to get involved," Beckerle said. "I'm hoping we can keep expanding and be a point of entry for people that want to get into the racing business but have found out that it's hard to own them by yourself. I want to keep this



RON MESAROS

Sandy Grey, Beckerle, and Amanda Navarro, another partner in My Fiona

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— Tom Beckerle



COADY PHOTOGRAPHY

California-bred Tom's Regret, owned by Beckerle in partnership, wins Kentucky Juvenile Stakes at Churchill Downs

party going.”

Part of the “party” has been Tom's Regret, a daughter of Tom's Tribute –

Pure, by Quality Road.

“We were at an auction, and Saul Carrillo asked me if I wanted to go in on a horse,” Beckerle said. “I was at the bar at the time, so I said that sounds great. Half an hour later Saul came back and said I owe him \$5,000 because we got that horse. I regretted buying it, so we named her Tom's Regret. I don't regret her now, of course; it was just meant to be a joke with the guys. She's turned out well!”

A \$20,000 yearling purchase out of a maiden winning mare, Tom's Regret went into training with Jorge Periban for a partnership that includes Beckerle and Carrillo. She broke her maiden by 11 1/2 lengths April 15 at Santa Anita. Tom's Regret then shipped to Churchill for Kentucky Derby week to run in the Kentucky Juvenile, where she went favored and ran as such, scoring by a length under Tyler Baze.

“It's been fun,” Beckerle said of racing Tom's Regret.

Griffin Stables also has several unraced 2-year-olds, and Beckerle himself has the Awesome Gambler daughter Da Ruba Girl currently working at San Luis Rey Downs. Some of the partnerships' summer hopefuls include Cal-breds Pappy's Girl, Tapatío Leo, and Thirsty Pappy.

In the interim, Beckerle will look to expand his racing group.

“It's hard to make money in this sport without having a lot of horses,” he said. “At this point I want to get more partners so I can get more horses.” **CTB**