

Nick Alexander



by DEBRA GINSBURG

From high performance cars to high performance horses, CTBA member Nick Alexander is a jack of both trades. For 23 years, he has sold BMWs out of his Nick Alexander Imports in Los Angeles. He has also been a Thoroughbred breeder for a similar number of years and has bred and raced more than 200 winners.

“Unfortunately, the best horses we bred became successful runners for other people,” he said. “In that sense, it’s a lot like selling cars. You want to keep your customers happy and coming back by selling them your best products.”

Nick grew up in Pasadena and, when he was 13, his mother took him to Santa Anita and gave him \$2 to bet on any horse he wanted. He emerged from that adventure \$44 richer and with a real passion for Thoroughbred racing. He knew he wanted to own a stable of race-horses one day.

He bought his first Thoroughbred in 1978, an unraced Washington-bred gelding named Swift Feet, for \$5,000. Swift Feet wasn’t very swift, but he finished second five times. Then, through trainer Chay Knight, Alexander bought a son of Reb’s Policy named Pashanat Reb. The horse won eight races and earned \$85,204.

“Now, that was a real racehorse,” he recalled. “He tried all the time. He won a lot of money for us.”

Alexander got interested in the breeding part of the game during the early 1980s and started shopping around for fillies that could become good broodmare prospects. His

search eventually led him to Reckless Rose, a 1985 daughter of The Irish Lord and from the family of California-bred stakes winners Against the Snow and Regal Falcon. Another name that eventually appeared

in her pedigree was that of grade I winner Andestine, but that wouldn’t be until several years later. Reckless Rose was just a yearling when she was consigned to the Connie Ring dispersal in Santa Barbara.

“Ray Allen, a friend of mine, was standing along the rail when they brought Reckless Rose up from the barn,” Nick recalled. “He pointed her out to me and thought she looked like a nice filly. It was a spur of the moment thing, but we got her for \$10,500.”

Reckless Rose broke her maiden first time out for Alexander, but got hurt in a shedrow accident at Del Mar before she had a chance to prove herself further. Retired with two wins and earnings of \$12,987, she was bred to Shanekite and produced \$70,599-earner Cruella D as her first foal. Bred next to Marvin’s Policy, she dropped Dayla from that mating.

Marvin’s Policy captured the grade II Round Table Stakes and two other added-money events for earnings of \$367,730, but he had dropped in class when Nick and trainer Mike Mitchell claimed him. In fact, he broke down in the race they claimed him from and they had no choice but to stand him at stud. Nick managed to get five mares in foal to him before he died from the injuries he sustained in his last race. Three of those foals won at the track and one of them was Dayla, whom Alexander still considers the best horse he ever bred.

She broke her maiden on the Northern California fair circuit and won



Broodmare End to End in 1996, with her filly foal at Nick Alexander’s farm (Horse Haven) in Mendocino County.



three other races for Alexander before getting claimed away from him during her sophomore season. Dayla was claimed again, this time by Chuck Jenda, who put her on the grass and stretched her out. She won the Lady Morvich and Novel Sprite Handicaps at five, and at six she triumphed in the Miss America Handicap (below). Also third in the grade III Hillsborough Handicap in 1997, she earned \$300,510.

Reckless Rose did not rest on her laurels after Dayla, but produced Navarro Rose to the cover of Native Prospector. Nick entered her in the 1998 Del Mar Yearling Sale, but bought her back for \$7,000.

Dayla—Apr. 11, 1998



Vassar photo

“She just didn’t look good at sale time,” he recalled. “She was kind of skinny and undersized and had this big, ugly birthmark on her side. We decided to take her home and race her ourselves.”

It was a lucky decision, for Navarro Rose won three races and ran second in both the Floral Fiesta Stakes and Pike Place Dancer Handicap in her breeder’s silks. The filly that nobody wanted at Del Mar has now earned more than \$140,000.

Then Nick allowed Reckless Rose to slip out of his fingers.

“We decided one year to downsize our horses and cull some of our mares,” he said. “It must have caught me in a weak moment, for I sold Reckless Rose to Ron Stolich at Blooming Hills. Then, I woke up and realized I had parted with my best mare.”

He bought her back at the Barretts October Mixed Sale last year, paying \$19,000 for her this time. She was carrying a foal by 1998 Santa Anita Handicap winner Malek (Chi), who stands at Stolich’s farm. Nick still has Reckless Rose’s 1998 and 1999 foals. Rose of the Desert, her 1998 Desert Wine filly, provided him with his 200th winner, and Pirate’s Swan Song, from Pirate’s Bounty’s last crop, is in training with Mitchell.

Nick also bred stakes-placed Confirmed Flight, who was one of the first good runners to represent Flying Continental

at the track. Sold as a 2-year-old for a mere \$6,500 at the Barretts January sale in 1997, Confirmed Flight won seven races for earnings of \$284,840 and was second in the California Cup Starter Sprint Handicap at three.

Navarro Rose and a few other of Nick’s horses take their name from the tiny mountain community in Mendocino County where his farm is located. He bought 40 acres up there in 1987 and later expanded it to 110. It was a bare piece of ground when Nick bought it and he built it up from scratch, erecting the barns and fences himself. To him, there’s not a more beautiful spot on earth.

“We’re surrounded by timber country and vineyards,” he said. “It’s a nice quiet place to raise horses, very peaceful. The property was already named Horse Haven when we bought it. We thought the name fit it very well.”

Both Dayla and Navarro Rose were born on the property, which is home to about eight broodmares. Nick just purchased \$209,482-earner Mayflower Lass out of the Keeneland November Sale. She will be foaling an Old Trieste baby at the Navarro ranch and will then go back to Beau Genius. Reckless Rose is scheduled to go to Avenue of Flags after her Malek foal arrives.

Nick has another 10 horses at the track, divided roughly between Mitchell in Southern California and Chuck Jenda up north. Jenda also gets the babies to break and school.

“It was because of Chuck’s success with Dayla that I send him my

Navarro Rose—May 14, 2000



Vassar photo

Reckless Rose—July 21, 1988



T. Abahazy photo

young horses,” Alexander explained. “He’s a very patient horseman, very good with fillies and mares.”

In the meantime, Nick is still waiting and hoping for a stakes winner of his own to race. “I’ve probably raced more slow and unsuccessful horses than I care to remember,” he jokes. “We have just as much fun winning a \$10,000 claiming race as we do a stakes race. It’s the winning that counts.”