

# California's Brightest Spark

by LARRY BORTSTEIN

Nico Nierenberg and Paddy Gallagher had spoken on and off for a year about claiming a horse together. But until June, 2001, the relationship between the computer software executive from La Jolla and the Irish-born veteran Southern California trainer hadn't advanced beyond the talking stage. Then a gray gelding named Adminniestrator brought them together.

"I'd seen his performance lines and he seemed like the kind of horse I was looking for," Nierenberg recalled. "A horse who'd shown some consistent ability and was ready to run." Gallagher said he never pushed Nierenberg after the two met at Del Mar in the summer of 2000. "I figured he wanted to take his time before deciding what he wanted to do," Gallagher said. "He studied all the options and I felt that made him potentially a good owner." And on January 25, Sunshine Millions Day, a happy one.

Claimed for \$50,000 in June, 2001, Adminniestrator won the first Santa Anita Park contest in the eight-race extravaganza between California-breds and Florida-breds. Under a brilliant ride from David Flores, Adminniestrator, by former Cardiff Stud Farms stallion Incinerator out of the Golden Eagle II mare Admiral Minnie, rallied on the outside from last in the backstretch to get up in the final strides for a nose victory over Music's Storm in the \$500,000 Barretts/CTBA Turf Stakes at 1 1/8 miles.

Even though this gelding had won several times since Nierenberg acquired him, the Sunshine Millions was the first time his owner had personally seem him capture a race. "I'd always had business matters to take care of," he recalled. "But I wasn't going to miss seeing one of my horses run in a half-million dollar race."

He picked a good day to be there.

Adminniestrator picked up top money of \$275,000 with his eighth victory in 34 starts and raised his career earnings to \$722,201. Furthermore, he proved to be the only Cal-bred winner in the inaugural Sunshine Millions. His winner's share of the Barretts/CTBA Turf purse accounted for more than a third of the \$752,400 banked by Cal-breds that day.

"The horse was a little farther back

a mile. I rode him with a lot of confidence."

Adminniestrator impressed his connections so much that they are now eyeing Santa Anita's San Luis Rey Handicap at 1 1/2 miles on March 15. "I don't think the distance will be a problem," Gallagher said.

Barry Abrams, the horse's former trainer, agreed. "We made about \$250,000 with him before we lost him," Abrams said. "If the rider keeps him outside and in the clear, he'll run as far as you want him to."

On the other hand, Incinerator's stallion career seems to have gone as far as it's going to go at the age of 19. Cal Britton, who stood the horse at his Horizon Farm in Calgary the past three years, recently sold him to Edmonton breeder Jerry Antoniuk.

Incinerator's racing record was hardly the stuff of legend. In six starts—four in England and two in the U. S.—he won only once, namely a maiden affair in England as a 3-year-old in 1987. He earned \$19,233.

"We didn't think his record on the track would get people excited," Britton admitted. "But we were sure his pedigree would attract people with mares. Especially here in Canada." Incinerator is by Northern Dancer, winner of the Kentucky Derby and Preakness in 1964 and later a record-breaking stallion and considered by many the finest Thoroughbred to come out of Canada.

Princess Karenda, Incinerator's dam, was by prodigious California stallion Gummo, who sired such stars as Ancient Title and Flying Paster, amongst others. Princess Karenda won the grade I Hollywood Oaks as a sophomore in 1980, and then the grade I Santa Margarita Handicap at Santa Anita the following year.



Benoit photos

Barretts/CTBA Sunshine Millions Turf Stakes

## Adminniestrator

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early than I thought he'd be," Gallagher said. "David had to save ground to the stretch and then pull out. He gave him a great ride."

Said Flores, who had won a Dec. 19 optional claiming event at Hollywood Park with Adminniestrator in their only previous collaboration, "I knew he'd kick it in for me the last eighth of