



The Grade California-Breds

by LISA MARIE WOOD

In Thoroughbred racing, the terms “Frankel” and “grade I winner” have become practically synonymous. To most, the words conjure up thoughts of Eclipse Award-winning trainer Bobby Frankel, whose 20 grade I victories of 2003 place him squarely on target to surpass D. Wayne Lukas’ 16-year-old North American record of saddling 22 grade I winners in a single season.

Far from the media-fueled countdown, however, there is another Frankel in horse racing who is quietly enjoying success with his own Southern California stable. And although he is not related to the Brooklyn-born trainer, Jerry Frankel does share one conspicuous trait with the Hall of Famer.

“Sometimes when I call a person who doesn’t know me, they misunderstand when I introduce myself and actually think they’re talking to someone named Joey Franco,” the 73-year-old horseman said in his native New York accent. So when it came time to register his 1999 Avenue of Flags colt, Frankel good-naturedly paid homage to the pronunciation blunder.

Shakespeare devotees would quickly argue that a rose is a rose and that there is, accordingly, not much to a name. But the late-blooming career of that homebred colt is starting to smell pretty sweet. In his 4-year-old campaign, Joey Franco has gone from recording his second stakes victory in state-bred company to winning a grade I contest to becoming the first Breeders’ Cup-caliber colt for his sire, his dam and Frankel himself.

Joey Franco’s accomplishments are a culmination of Frankel’s three decades in the Thoroughbred indus-

try. The bicoastal businessman, who resides in Dallas but regularly commutes to New York City and Carlsbad, California, acquired his first racehorse at Del Mar in 1973.

Fortune smiled early upon Frankel when his Esops Foibles earned a ticket to the 1978 Kentucky Derby (grade I) by capturing the grade II Arkansas and

woman who partnered with Frankel to produce the popular “Stop the Insanity!” infomercial that developed into a small-screen diet and exercise sensation during the mid-1990s. But success on the racetrack was, regrettably, not to follow success in the business arena.

“She was showing promise while in training with Eddie Gregson at Hollywood Park,” Frankel recalled. “But one night, she got spooked by some Fourth of July fireworks at the track. She broke through her stall webbing, ran out of the barn and slipped and fell on the concrete. Her shoulder injury required more than 100 stitches, and she was never really the same after that.”

Retired winless in 1993 to Frankel’s modest broodmare band, Susan Powter soon became a blue-chip stock in her owner’s California-based breeding program. Her first three foals all won, including stakes winner Miss Lawless, a daughter of Present Value who collected \$212,694 from 27 outings.

On Feb. 1, 1999, Susan Powter delivered Joey Franco, the dark bay colt who has since tallied five stakes victories, including

the 2003 Triple Bend Breeders’ Cup Invitational Handicap (grade I). To date, the California-bred has earned \$611,091 and the ultimate respect from Frankel, who calls Joey Franco “the most handsome and intelligent horse I’ve ever owned.”

Last March, the 13-year-old broodmare presented Frankel with a full brother to Joey Franco, whom he is anxious to watch develop.

“I’ll tell you one thing,” Frankel said of his breeding and racing endeavors. “Being around these horses has kept me young.”

Grade II Del Mar Breeders’ Cup Hcp. Monday, September 1, 2003

Sprint star Joey Franco broadened his bag of tricks on Labor Day with a hearty run to the wire in the two-turn, \$178,000 Del Mar Breeders’ Cup Handicap (grade II), exhibiting an unforeseen ability to handle extra real estate with aplomb. Guided by leading Del Mar rider Patrick Valenzuela, the 4-year-old colt took advantage of an outside stalking position and a blistering pace to complete the mile test two lengths ahead of Reba’s Gold in 1:35 3/5; Cal-bred millionaire Grey Memo rallied to finish third.

Although only three of Joey Franco’s eight career victories have come at distances of greater than 7 1/2 furlongs, trainer Darrell Vienna plans to stretch the colt out to 1 1/8 miles for his 17th lifetime start: the \$500,000 Goodwood Breeders’ Cup Handicap (grade II) at Santa Anita on Oct. 4.



Louisiana Derbies. The Nashua colt finished fifth behind legendary rivals Affirmed and Alydar in Louisville; more importantly, he fostered his owner’s desire to breed and race a top-quality performer.

In 1991, Frankel made a fateful decision at the Del Mar Yearling Sale—one that would reap rewards for years to come. An athletic-looking daughter of Native Prospector caught his eye, and he took the California-bred filly home for \$50,000.

He named his new purchase after Susan Powter, the spiky-haired pitch-

