



Racing Reflections

by DEBRA GINSBURG

It was January of 1972. I was in my junior year of high school and racing's next superstar, the 1973 Triple Crown Champion Secretariat, hadn't even yet launched his legendary racing career. Yet, my mind and heart was filled with news of a California-bred colt named Kfar Tov who had just become the hottest sprinter around at Santa Anita Park that winter.

I first crossed paths with Kfar Tov during the summer of 1970. I was spending the summer in Los Angeles with my grandparents and, of course, a trip to Hollywood Park for the Hollywood Gold Cup was in order. The Gold Cup may be Hollywood Park's biggest race, but all the buzz was about a two-year-old who had just broken his maiden in impressive fashion earlier in the week and was being entered in the Hollywood Juvenile Championship the following weekend. My Jewish heritage made me want to embrace this two-year-old very badly. He was named for a Kibbutz in Israel and his name was Kfar Tov.

So we returned to Inglewood the following weekend to see Kfar Tov run. When we first noticed the colt in the saddling paddock, we couldn't resist placing a bet on the gorgeous bay with the white Star of David on the back of his racing silks. I would find out later that his owner, Allan Lazaroff, won his first racehorse in a raffle sponsored by his synagogue and decided to build himself a racing stable. A deeply religious man, he designed his silks after the flag of Israel and named most of his horses for Jewish settlements in that country.

All eyes were on Moon splash for the Juvenile Championship, an undefeated invader from Chicago. No one paid much attention to the local horses, especially to a colt who had just broken his maiden. Kfar Tov was sent off at 7-1 odds, but he finished just a nose back of Fast Fellow, another Cal-bred who was a 15-1 longshot. Moon splash could do no bet-



Kfar Tov (#8) is narrowly defeated by Fast Fellow in the \$100,000 Hollywood Juvenile Championship Stakes at Hollywood Park on July 18, 1970

Old Friends

ter than third. Most of the crowd at Hollywood Park that day believed that Kfar Tov could have easily won if he had more experience.

The summer of 1970 was a good season for Cal-breds and Kfar Tov played a big part in that. He scored back-to-back victories in the CTBA Sales and De Anza Stakes at Del Mar and was the favorite to take the historic Del Mar Futurity at the seaside track. Bill Shoemaker, who had just surpassed Johnny Longden as racing's winningest rider, was assigned to ride him. They finished second, beaten by June Darling, the first filly to win the Futurity.

That was about the last I heard about about Kfar Tov for nearly a year. Sore shins sent him to the sidelines following the Futurity and he made just one appearance as a three-year-old, winning the Golden Bear Handicap at Golden Gate Fields in his sophomore debut before he was sidelined with a knee injury. The 1971 Kentucky Derby was won by Canonero II, who had run fifth to June Darling and Kfar Tov in the Del Mar Futurity.

When Kfar Tov returned for Santa Anita's 1971-72 winter meet, John Pappalardo had replaced Jerry Fanning as his trainer. He had the colt tuned up to win in the prestigious Malibu Stakes on his return and follow that up with a victory in the San Carlos Handicap a week later. In the history of Santa Anita, no horse has ever won those two races back-to-back in a single season. Kfar Tov, for his accomplishment, was voted the meet's outstanding sprinter of 1972.

Kfar Tov concluded his career by winning the Governor's Cup Handicap and running third in the Pomona Handicap at the Los Angeles County Fair. I went on to a job at the fair myself a decade later. It was there that I got to interview the man who had trained him.

Once I moved on to the CTBA, Kfar Tov didn't reenter my thoughts for another two decades. Oh, I knew that he sired Rosie's K. T., a graded stakes-winning half-brother to Melair, but I didn't come up with an idea to write about him until Craig Harzmann did a story about The Rogers Four in the January 2006 issue of *California Thoroughbred*.

"He reminds me of a horse I loved as a kid," I said. How much The Rogers Four reminded me of Kfar Tov wasn't revealed until I started digging out long-forgotten information for my column. Lonnie Stein, who raced The Rogers Four, owned Hermacinto Stables in Hemet, where Kfar Tov was foaled and later went to stud. Lonnie's family even raced horses with Kfar Tov's owner. How's that for coincidence?

I also found John Pappalardo again. Long retired from training and living in Monrovia, I ran into him at Santa Anita early last January. We shared a lot of memories about Kfar Tov. "He was always one of my favorites, too," he told me. 🐾