



Trainer of the Year

Barry Abrams: A Popular Choice

by **DEBRA GINSBURG**

Longtime California conditioner Barry Abrams is the latest recipient of the CTBA's outstanding trainer award for his work with California-breds. In 2005, he sent out 183 Cal-breds for seasonal earnings of \$1,149,515. This number comprised an incredible 83 percent of his total earnings of \$1,392,851 for the year.

Abrams started in the horse business in 1972, training Standardbreds at Hollywood Park. He did this for about 15 years until harness racing started dying out in California. Barry took a year off, then started training Thoroughbreds full time in 1989.

"I had been working with Roger Stein," Abrams explained. "Roger made the switch to Thoroughbreds first and I followed him. After working with Roger for a few years, I started my own stable in 1993."

This was about the time that he met Madeline Auerbach and her late husband Jim. Small-time breeders from the San Fernando Valley, they were just coming off a personal high campaigning Knight Prospector, a speedy one-eyed filly who won several stakes for them. Abrams talked the Auerbachs into claiming a horse with him, a talented son of Nureyev named Unusual Heat.

Barry had been aware of the horse since he sold for \$250,000 at the 1992 Barretts March Sale of Selected Two-Year-Olds in Training. Unusual Heat won three stakes in Ire-

land during a European campaign, but was not as successful in this country with Richard Mandella and wound up running for an \$80,000 tag at Hollywood Park. Abrams, however, figured this was a gamble worth taking.


"Sons of Nureyev make good sires," he said in 2004. "If he didn't do well at the track for us, we figured we could always sell him as a stallion prospect."

Abrams claimed Unusual Heat for the Auerbachs and another partner on June 10, 1996. He won that race and ran back six days later in the Shoemaker Breeders' Cup Mile, finishing sixth. He won again two weeks later, but came out of that effort with a bowed tendon. Unusual Heat entered stud at Walter Greenman's Kachina Farm in 1998, but relocated to Old English Rancho a year later and has stood at the Sanger farm ever since.

In order to get him established during his first years at stud, Unusual Heat was bred only to the Auerbachs' mares, mostly anything that came off the track. Amazingly, they got good results. Frankie Eyelashes, the stallion's first starter, won at first asking. So did his first foal, Thermal Ablasion. Tucked Away became Unusual Heat's first stakes winner when she broke her maiden in the Magali Farms Stakes on California Gold Rush IV Day in 2003. In fact, Unusual Heat was six for six with his first time starters, an amazing statistic.

These days, Unusual Heat is among the leading sires in California and Madeline Auerbach is Abrams' leading owner. Most of the horses he trains for her are offspring of Unusual Heat and are all Cal-breds, including 2003 California Cup Mile victor Lennyfromalibu. Madeline sold a full brother to Lennyfromalibu for \$165,000 at California's October Yearling Sale last year, while another Unusual Heat offspring brought \$80,000 at the same sale, a testament to the stallion's new-found appeal to local horsemen.

Due to her current status among the leading breeders in this state, Madeline is seeking a spot on the TOC (Thoroughbred Owners of California) board of directors, a decision that Abrams is fully embracing.

"She's a great owner," he said. "She's very hands-on and has a lot of money invested in this business. There are a lot of uncertainties in California right now, a lot of insecurity. It's clearly lagging behind the other racing states that have slots bolstering their purses. With Madeline breeding so many horses, she needs a place to race and sell them here. She'll be a good watchdog for the racing industry in California." 



Barry Abrams and his wife Dyan (right) with Madeline Auerbach at the CTBA's Annual Awards Dinner on February 7, 2006

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