



*The Grade California-Breds*

# River's Prayer: Along For The Ride

by **LARRY BORTSTEIN**

Dr. Donnie Vice, an equine practitioner from Jackson, Mississippi, is a big long-distance fan of River's Prayer, the California-bred four-year-old filly who won the \$108,700 Las Cienegas Handicap (grade III) in front-running fashion at Santa Anita Park on April 15.

That's because Vice, 43, is the owner of Cozzy Flyer, the dam of River's Prayer. Now 13 years old, Cozzy Flyer, by 1985 Breeders' Cup Mile champion Cozzene, was acquired privately by Vice after she was led through the ring unsold for \$110,000 at the 2005 Fasig-Tipton November Selected Mixed Sale in Lexington, Kentucky.

"She won only once in 30 starts, but she's very sturdy and her legs are strong," Vice said of the \$97,991-earner who also placed 14 times. "I'm not surprised that River's Prayer is showing that sturdiness. I've worked with show horses for a long time and wanted to get involved with Thoroughbred racing. Though I bought Cozzy Flyer two years after she foaled River's Prayer, I'm thrilled to be connected with her."

Owned by Bantry Farms and Martin Racing Stable LLC, in partnership with her trainer Paula Capestro, River's Prayer improved her unbeaten record over Santa Anita's downhill turf course to three with her Las Cienegas victory. Under Clinton Potts, the daughter of Devon Lane, bred by Vessels Stallion Farm LLC, completed the about 6 1/2-furlong trip in 1:12.99 to win by half a length in the field of seven.

Capestro attests to Vice's great fondness for her big gray

filly who, like fellow Cal-bred Cambiocorsa, made the Las Cienegas her first graded stakes win. Now retired, Cambiocorsa posted an unprecedented eight consecutive victories over this unique patch of racing turf from April 2005 to September 2006.

"He calls me about once a week to ask about her," Capestro said. "And last summer, he and his wife made their first trip to Del Mar to see her."

River's Prayer's previous downhill wins at Santa Anita both came in Cal-bred company. They were the \$150,000 California Cup Distaff Handicap on Oct. 28, 2006, when she ended Cambiocorsa's record winning streak, and this year's \$133,750 Irish O'Brien Stakes on March 17.

Her triumph in the Las Cienegas was her fifth in a stakes race and sixth overall in 13 career starts. As a two-year-old in 2005, she won the \$94,125 Cinderella Stakes at Hollywood Park after posting a five-length debut victory at the Inglewood track. A \$15,000 purchase at the Barretts October Preferred Yearling Sale in 2004, River's Prayer has proved to be a very sound investment with \$457,253 in earnings and is also the winner of last year's Fleet Treat Stakes at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club.

Capestro is seeking new worlds for her to conquer now that Santa Anita's winter-spring meet has concluded.

"She trains well over the Cushion Track at Hollywood Park, so we might consider running her on either surface there," she said. "Or we might look for a spot out of town."

Vice, who breeds Thoroughbreds at his farm in Mound, Louisiana, near his Mississippi home, has a 2007 Forest Wildcat filly out of Cozzy Flyer, who has since been bred to 2004 Eclipse Champion Sprinter Speightstown.

"I think she fits well with sprinters," Vice said.

River's Prayer is the eighth Cal-bred to win the Las Cienegas in the 33-year history of this event. That's an impressive tally, as only nine fillies or mares bred in Kentucky have won the race.

Preceding Cambiocorsa in 2006, the other Cal-bred winners of the Las Cienegas were Woodland Pines, winner of the inaugural running in 1974, Dancing Femme (1977), Wishing Well (1981), Danzadar (1985), Shywing (1986) and Go Go in 2001.

So, it certainly looks like River's Prayer can now lay claim to the title of "Queen of the Hill" that was carried with aplomb by Cambiocorsa these past two years. Unfortunately, we will all have a while to wait before she hopefully returns to defend her throne during the Oak Tree Racing Association's 39th meet at Santa Anita from Sept. 26 to Nov. 4. 🐾

**Grade III Las Cienegas Handicap  
Santa Anita Park  
Sunday, April 15, 2007**



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