



OBS April cont.

**At OBS, Davis Remembers Secretariat...**

The history books don't tell us which exercise rider has been aboard the most Kentucky Derby winners.



**The man in the irons: Charlie Davis**

The winner, perhaps, is one associated with Calumet Farm during its incredible run of eight Derby winners in the span of 30 years. But in terms of prestige, it would be hard to surpass the daily double Charlie Davis put together in 1972-73, when his morning mounts included dual Classic winner Riva Ridge, and the horse many consider to be racing's best ever, Triple Crown hero Secretariat. Davis was on hand at

OBS April yesterday, and took time to speak with the *TDN* on the event of the 40th anniversary of Riva Ridge's Kentucky Derby win.

George "Charlie" Davis, a native of South Carolina, began riding for Lucien Laurin in the late 1950s, and was still at Laurin's stable in the early '70s when the Quebecois conditioner began training for the Chenery family's Meadow Stable. The next few years would be one of the most accomplished stretches for a single farm in racing history. Secretariat's achievements are well known, of course, and Riva Ridge is no shrinking violet. But the latter's accomplishments are often overshadowed, even though they would seem to be Hall of Fame worthy (he isn't enshrined at Saratoga). Riva Ridge was a champion at two and four, winning 13 stakes in all, including the Champagne and Futurity in New York as a juvenile, the Blue Grass, Kentucky Derby and Belmont at three, and the Brooklyn and Mass 'Cap at four. Along the way, he equaled or set three track records, including a world-record 1 3/16 miles in 1:52.40 at Aqueduct.

"When he was a 2-year-old, Riva Ridge didn't like to get near horses," Davis remembered yesterday from OBS. "When horses were next to him, he'd shy away from them. So we worked with him, me and Ronnie [Turcotte] and another rider."

All horses in the *TDN* are bred in North America, unless otherwise indicated

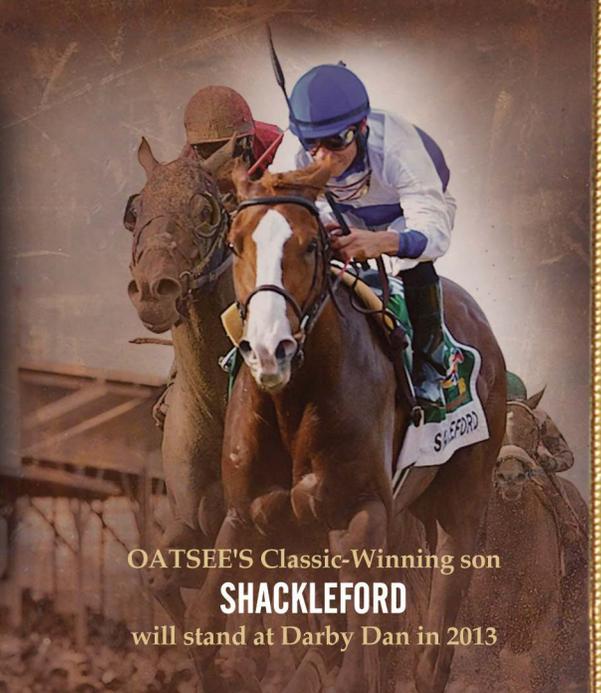
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**OBS April cont.**

Davis explained how he and the two other riders would create space between two work horses and arrange it so that Riva Ridge didn't have a choice except to come between them. He said by the time Riva Ridge had captured the Blue Grass S. at Keeneland, his nervousness around horses had dissipated greatly. "And in the Derby, he just went to the front and *whoosh*, they couldn't catch him," said Davis.

The Laurin stable was still in Florida in the winter of 1972 when a big, slightly overweight chestnut arrived-- Secretariat. Davis admitted the colt did little at first to distinguish himself. "That horse, nothing bothered him, and he didn't care about *nothin'*," said Davis. "When we first took him out, he acted like he'd been galloping for 15 years. Those flamingos that were in the infield would fly up, and he'd be like, 'Oh well.' I hit him with the whip a few times to get him going, and he'd look back and be like, 'What are you in a hurry for?' After a few days, I stopped and let him do his thing. That was the thing with Secretariat--he did things *his* way. Finally he started to pick it up a little bit, and I was like, 'Ahhhh...'"

Davis said that he and Secretariat began building a rapport from the beginning. "I always said that I didn't thing of him as a horse, I thought of him as a human," said Davis. "I knew when he didn't feel good, and he knew when I didn't feel good. If I came in after a Friday night, a Saturday night, and had been out drinking Crown all night, he'd be like, 'Oh man, you had some fun last night.'"

Davis said that, as the spring progressed and it became apparent that the horse was more than just another talented juvenile, he choose to "keep [his] mouth shut" about the colt's brilliance. "That's something I learned when I was younger," he said, mock zipping his mouth and pointing to his eyes and ears. "That's how you learn." But Secretariat didn't stay a secret for long, and by the end of the year was crowned Horse of the Year.

In his final prep before the following season's Kentucky Derby, the Wood Memorial S. at Aqueduct, Secretariat was the overwhelming favorite, but could do no better than third that day, beaten by his stablemate Angle Light with Sham second. "At the time, I didn't blame Ronnie [Secretariat's regular rider], but I just didn't know what happened," he said. "He shoulda run past those horses. After, the doctor came and looked at him, at his knees, his ankles, his legs. Everything was fine."

Then, Davis explained, the doctor ran a finger along Secretariat's gumline, curling around to the side of his mouth until he reached a massive abscess. Secretariat, said Davis, threw his head back in pain, and connections surmised the abscess had bothered him enough to compromise his chances in the Wood.

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Ironically, Davis said that he hadn't been the one to gallop Secretariat in the week leading up to the race. Instead, he'd been riding Angle Light, a tough horse to gallop. "When you were on that horse, you better be ready, Freddy," said Davis. "Anyway, the exercise boy who was on Secretariat was a good exercise boy, but he either didn't tell Lucien that the horse was in pain before the race, or didn't know. When a horse has an abscess, you pull back on the reins, and he'll throw his head back. When I was on a good horse, especially, I always.."--at this point, Davis leans into his imaginary horse and listens and watches--"all the time," he said.

Secretariat went on to become racing's ninth Triple Crown winner and the first since Citation in '48. For Davis, one of the most remarkable things about Secretariat is that he seemed to get stronger as the series went on.

"After the Derby we went to Maryland for the Preakness, and one day [groom] Eddie [Sweet] came to me and said I'd given him the wrong girth," said Davis. "Secretariat had a 48" girth for the Derby, and I said to Eddie, 'No I didn't,' and showed him the number on it: 48". It was too small for him after the Derby--he'd grown! He put muscle on muscle. We had to get a special girth made for him."

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After Secretariat's Belmont run, regarded as maybe the best single performance in the annals of racing, Davis said that the colt, "didn't drink but half a bucket of water. And the next day, you wouldn't know he ran. By Monday I had to put the tack on him, he was feeling so good!"

Secretariat's winning time of 2:24 is still a world record, and came after a scorching six furlongs in 1:09 4/5. Asked if he thought the big horse was being asked to do too much during the running of the race, Davis said, "No. I never did. And Ronnie came back and said the horse was just cruising along. He said he never asked him, except in the last little bit, when he smooched at him. And when he did, *woosh*. That horse was ready, Freddy."

Davis said he is sure another horse will come along and win another Triple Crown, but he's equally sure no one will do it in the way Secretariat did. "For them to beat Secretariat, they have to set records in all three legs--the Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont--and I don't think another horse will ever do it," he said.

Asked what it meant to be part of Secretariat's Triple Crown run, Davis just smiled. "It felt like I had \$5 million in each of my front pockets," he said. "And to Mrs. [Penny] Chenery [who owned Secretariat], Ronnie, Lucien and everyone else, I just want to say: thank you."

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**OBS APRIL - WEDNESDAY**

Hip	Sex	Sire	Dam	Price (\$)
<u>685</u>	f	Greeley's Galaxy	Maggie's Pearle	215,000

*B-Belvedere Farm (NY)*

Consigned by de Meric Sales, Agent I  
Purchased by XIB, agent

This New York-bred from the family of GISW Mandy's Gold (Gilded Time) was picked up by Nick de Meric for \$25,000 at FTNAUG. A work in :10 last week ensured her popularity early during yesterday's session.

<u>714</u>	<u>Freud</u>	<u>Maya's Note</u>	130,000
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*B-McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds (NY)*

Consigned by Everett Livestock  
Purchased by Patsy Symons

At OBS last January, this daughter of the popular Empire State stallion Freud was purchased by Antigo Farms for just \$4,000. The dark bay zipped through a quarter in :20 3/5 and found many more takers this time.

<u>729</u>	f	<u>Purge</u>	<u>Miner's Blessing</u>	125,000
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*B-Lantern Hill Farm, William J Punk Jr & Lighthouse Group (KY)*

Consigned by Woodside Ranch, Agent I  
Purchased by Hidden Brook, agent

This dark bay was acquired for \$20,000 at KEESEP at Bryan Rice just about two months before her elder brother Sabercat (Bluegrass Cat) secured the \$1-million GIII Delta Downs Jackpot S. He is now headed to the GI Kentucky Derby following his third-place finish in the GI Arkansas Derby. Hip 729, who is also a half to SW Olivine (Royal Academy), breezed in :10 1/5 last week.

<u>762</u>	f	<u>Belong to Me</u>	<u>Move Smartly</u>	150,000
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*B-Joseph A Duffel (CA)*

Consigned by Hartley/DeRenzo Thoroughbreds LLC, agent  
Purchased by Mayberry Farm

A registered Cal-bred, this chestnut filly sold for \$25,000 at Barretts October to Randy Hartley and Dean DeRenzo. She breezed in :10 1/5 and increased markedly in value.

<u>774</u>	c	<u>Johannesburg</u>	<u>My Gallop</u>	130,000
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*B-Doug Branham (KY)*

Consigned by Classic Bloodstock (D Brendemuehl), agent  
Purchased by Jim & Susan Hill

Purchased by Don Graham for \$10,000 as a weanling at KEENOV, this chestnut from the family of the brilliant but ill-fated Left Bank (French Deputy) sold for \$12,000 to Santee Stables at OBSAUG. He went in :10 1/5 last week and will now be campaigned by Jim and Susan Hill.

OBS Editorial by Lucas Marquardt