

The first thought that comes to mind when entering a thoroughbred racing stable of twenty-five horses is that the trainer must be experienced and prosperous. You would expect to be greeted by a middle-aged or older trainer with lines of maturity and wisdom on his face. So when you enter Randy Gullatt's barn of twenty-five head and approach a clean-cut, red-haired, young man to ask where you might find the trainer, you may be surprised when he responds, "You're speaking to him."

Gullatt, twenty-four, has proven to have the ambition and knowledge necessary to become a high achiever in thoroughbred racing. His abilities as a horseman are evidenced by the several stakes-caliber horses to his credit and presently in his care.

In just six years as a trainer, Gullatt has gained respect among horsemen by conditioning some outstanding equine athletes. For example, there is Missouri Ace, the claimer turned stakes-winner. There is Joey Jr., who holds the world record for seven and one-half furlongs. And there is Miss Jesy, who was voted Filly of the Meet at Bay Meadows in 1990. All are remarkable accomplishments for a young man who dreamed of becoming a jockey but settled for training instead.

While in high school, Gullatt, aspiring to become a jockey, started galloping his father's horses for trainer Gerald Broomfield. But Gullatt explains, with regret, "I was working on a small farm in Benton, Louisiana, and didn't have anyone to school me to be a rider."

Although his dream to ride was therefore never realized, Gullatt chanced onto a training opportunity which began as a lark.

He was lightly seasoned as a horseman in the fall of 1985, when he was approached by his former high school friend, Steve Davidson to claim a horse. Gullatt recalls, "Steve liked to come over to Louisiana Downs and bet. He knew that I wanted to be a rider and that I was working with the horses. One day we were talking, and Steve said he wanted to claim a horse, just to play

RANDY GULLATT SUCCESSFUL ROOKIE HORSEMAN

By Norman A. Ashauer

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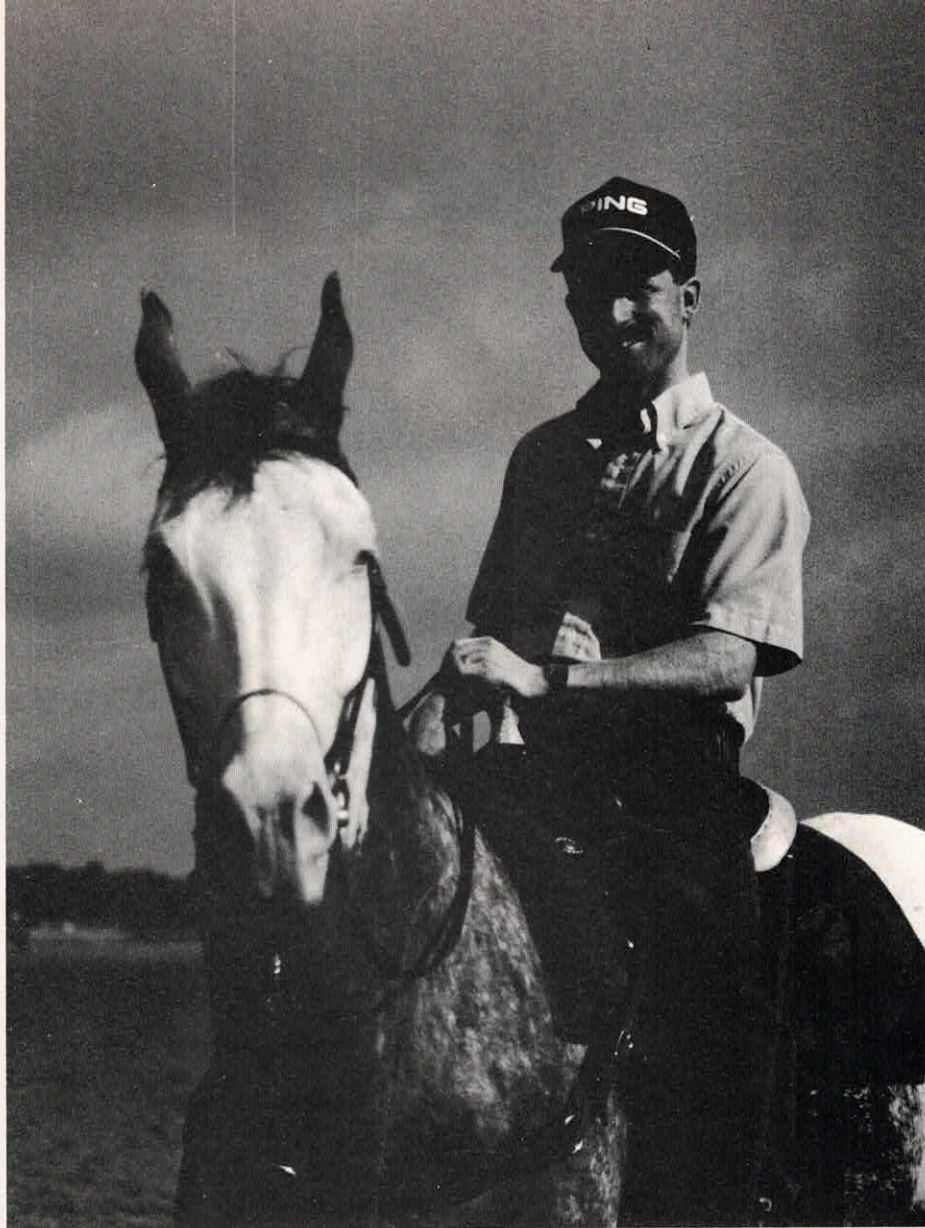
around with. That's how we got started." But since Gullatt still had the ambition to ride at that time, his start at training was "just a hobby."

As novice horsemen, they gambled their fledgling start on the claim of La ViVat for \$7500. Having no serious long-term goals in mind, Davidson precluded their business agreement by telling Gullatt that if the filly made money, they would invest her profits into more horses. La ViVat did win, and Davidson was good for his word. Thus, Gullatt began to slowly build a small stable while enjoying the success of winning races.

While learning from hands-on ex-

perience, Gullatt also watched the methods of more seasoned and successful trainers such as Frank Brothers, Gerald Romero and Terry Masson. In this way, Gullatt developed a successful training style of his own. Gullatt explains, "Since I was galloping, hot walking and rubbing, I could experiment in every part of the game to see what worked and what didn't."

As time went on, Gullatt sought to buy better horses both to keep Davidson interested and to have more profits to invest in more horses. "One good horse led to another," Gullatt says. "The luck of success got me where I'm at."



He had Davidson invest in horses like Racy Suzy and Rocket Miss, who started the stable's upward climb. They were, Gullatt says, "Horses that really got you interested because they gave you everything, and they made a lot of money."

His good fortune continued when he claimed Missouri Ace for \$35,000 at Oaklawn Park. Gullatt saw in him both consistency and the desire to win. The gelding first started for Gullatt for \$45,000 on the turf at Louisiana Downs, winning by a narrow margin.

"The turf sparked his talent," Gullatt says. Even Gullatt was surprised when Missouri Ace went to the oval for the

second time on the turf, winning an allowance race. The gelding went on to become a stakes-winner and stakes-placed several times while accumulating \$185,000.

Starting in 1989, Gullatt would leave Louisiana at the close of the Louisiana Downs meet each year to campaign out of state. He traveled to Illinois, Kentucky and California, where he accumulated more knowledge and more victories.

In Illinois, Gullatt gained recognition with Joey Jr., who set a world record at Hawthorne Park on November 5, 1989, going seven and one-half furlongs on turf in 1:27 1/5.

While in California in 1990, Gullatt developed Miss Jesy into a multiple stakes winner who was named Filly of the Meet at Bay Meadows.

Despite his success, Gullatt remains modest. He attributes most of his good fortune to finding fast and willing horses, and in having supportive people around him.

One of those people is Kim, Gullatt's bride of just under one year. Kim helps with the bookkeeping and also exercises horses for Gullatt. "She's terrific help," he says. "She always knows what I'm out to get in a morning workout. We communicate well together."

Gullatt's success can also be attributed to his training philosophies. "I consider every horse an individual," he says. "I try to learn his attitude and his habits, from the way he eats, to the way he walks out of the stall each day, to the way he looks going to the racetrack. I put that all together to decide how that horse should be trained that day."

Gullatt believes that desire and patience make a good horseman. "It takes the willingness to work seven days a week. It takes the ability to handle the bad with the good. You need the patience to wait out the slumps and not change the training techniques that got you where you're at, and the patience not to push a horse with problems, creating more problems." Gullatt adds, "It also takes a lot of responsibility to be at the barn every day. You need to be always willing to learn something new instead of thinking that you know everything."

Gullatt feels fortunate when he sees other young trainers struggling for success. He knows he's lucky to have a business associate and friend like Steve Davidson, who also has patience and, what's more, trusts Gullatt's decisions. Says Gullatt of Davidson, "He put me where I am. There are so many people who could be in my shoes with the same client."

Maybe. But maybe not.

