

TDN Q&A

JESSICA STEINBRENNER

With the recent passing of George Steinbrenner, it might seem that his racing and breeding operation, Kinsman Farm, would be in jeopardy. But that's hardly

the case. Led by his daughter Jessica, the Steinbrenner children are determined to keep Kinsman, for decades a racing and breeding force based in Ocala, Florida, going and as strong as ever. The

Thoroughbred Daily News sat

down with Jessica Steinbrenner to discuss Kinsman's future, her role with the operation and her famous father's love of racing and race horses. Photos courtesy New York Yankees.



TDN: Everyone knows your father from baseball, but not everyone realizes he was also quite passionate about horse racing. Where did that passion come from?

JS: With him, it was more the whole picture rather than just the racing itself. It was the ability to have a place such as Kinsman for his entire family to come to and to relax and to be out of the limelight. It was the ability to be able to get on the back of a tractor if he chose to or to go to the barn and pet all of his horses. He would carry sugar cubes in his pockets and go out to the mare fields and they would all come over to him. He loved the animal and he also loved winning. That is where the track came into play with him. He very much got caught up in it, and even till his last moments we were talking about the horses, particularly the 2-year-olds who were just going to the track. He very much loved them, just like he loved the Yankees. It was the same kind of love.

TDN: In baseball, he would often go out and spend whatever it took to acquire the very best players through free agency. In racing, he seemed to have a different philosophy. While Kinsman has had many terrific horses over the years, your father was never one to get into a bidding war in the sales rings or spend millions on yearlings. Why the different approaches to the two sports?

JS: Families mean a lot in horses, but it's not an exact science. There's some guesswork involved in baseball, too, but not like racing. Racing, truly, is an inexact science. You learn as you go that you can't necessarily buy the Kentucky Derby, you can't buy the Breeders' Cup. You can't buy any of those things. That's the way the game works. You do the best you can with the horses you purchase based partly on their conformation, partly on their family and partly other factors. He understood that. It's a lot different with horses than with baseball players.

TDN: Did your father ever have a favorite horse, one that was particularly special to him?

JS: He loved all the horses, especially the ones that could win. Emotionally, he was probably most attached to Image of Greatness (Secretariat). He had a painting of himself with Image of Greatness here in our house. Why Image of Greatness? I know it was an emotional attachment, but I was never sure where it came from. That was his horse.

TDN: Has your father's death meant any changes to the way Kinsman Farm is being run?

JS: We had started to change before his passing. We're doing things a little differently. We're scaling back somewhat on the racing. We're trying to keep it at the top level and to not have as much at the bottom level. We've started to put horses in sales where they belong and we'll also be putting some in the top-level sales also. We're running it truly more like a business, something we started doing about three years ago. You have to sell some of the good ones to keep going. We've been manicuring it in order to try to bulk up the top so things can sustain themselves. It was more my doing that set that in motion than my father's. Things are very costly in this business. It's important to us as a family to hold on to this farm and I realized we might have to do things a touch differently.

TDN: It seems that Kinsman is still going strong in the wake of your father's death and, apparently, is here to stay. Why are you and your siblings so committed to keeping the operation going? Oftentimes, when a patriarchal figure dies, the children do not keep the stable going.

JS: I've been on the back of a horse since I was five years old. I rode through college on a varsity jumping team. I've been around horses my entire life and on top of that all of our greatest emotional memories were here at Kinsman. We spent all of our holidays here as a family. Of the four kids, I might have the greatest passion for the animal, but all of us want to keep Kinsman going. Like the Yankees, it's been a huge chunk of our lives. The ultimate decisions on day to day matters may be mine, but we all work together as a team, all of my siblings, and that goes for whatever the venture is. We all hope to continue here.

TDN: For many years, your brother, Hank seemed to be the one, besides your father, who was most involved in the racing operation. Lately, you have been the public face of Kinsman Farm. Why is it that you are now in that role?



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JS: There was a void to be filled with the Yankees and all the other siblings have stepped up there, including my sister, Jenny. I have had the most experience with the horses and was working on the farm before it was something I considered a job. I have been doing this for many years with the horses. I'm touchy feely with them. I have touched every single horse that has had the name of Kinsman. I am more at ease with the horses than I might be in some other work places. I'm very much a farm girl and I prefer to be here. I just love the horses.



TDN: As the new head of Kinsman, what are your goals?

JS: Jessica Steinbrenner wants to win the Breeders' Cup. There was a little competition with my dad and I going way back. He had always wanted to win the Kentucky Derby and I've always wanted to win the Breeders' Cup. We would sit there and debate why one was more important than the other. It was fantastic. And sure enough, this year, we may be lucky enough to have a filly in the Juvenile Fillies Turf. Her name is Fancy Point (Point Given). We know that if she is indeed able to make it that day, there will be an angel on her jockey's shoulders, because I know my father would want me to have my dream fulfilled.

TDN: Why is the Breeders' Cup so important to you, even more important than the Kentucky Derby?

JS: Because there are so many different divisions and so many different types of great horses. The Derby is dirt only and on one day only. With the Breeders' Cup, you also have so many great turf horses and, believe me, turf racing is tough. There are so many elements that come into play in the Breeders' Cup and it's just extremely important.

TDN: Your father won so many baseball championships, but he never did win the biggest prize in horse racing, the Kentucky Derby. Considering that he was such a competitor, did that bother him?

JS: Absolutely, he wanted to win the Derby. Even in his last days, he was curious what two-year-old colts he had. The name Bellamy's Boss (Bellamy Road) came up because he was a son of Bellamy Road. He's with John Servis. That particular horse, we renamed after he passed away. It started as Bellamy's Shadow and we changed it because we had so many nice conversations about that particular colt. That would have been terrific to have given him a Derby.