

TDN Q&A

Last week, Craig and Holly Bendoroff, who operate Denali Stud in Kentucky, entered into a strategic alliance with Vivien Molloy's Edition Farm, a two-time New York breeder of the year, in an attempt to give their client base



Holly & Craig Bendoroff
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an opportunity to take advantage of the new purse structure and breeding incentives in the state of New York. *TDN's* Christina Bossinakis recently caught up with Craig Bendoroff to get further insight into the new venture and to get Bendoroff's thoughts on the Thoroughbred market in the Empire State.

Q: How has the market changed in New York over the last couple of years to spark people's interest in that area?

A: We have been the leading consignor at the [Fasig-Titpon sale for New York-breds] in Saratoga for the last four years, and every year really, we are at or near the top, so the New York market has been a very good one for us. In 2009 and 2010, [New York-breds] weren't bringing a premium, just like the rest of the market wasn't bringing a premium. The New York program and the promise of getting the money from the Aqueduct casino was still a promise to the point where people were wondering if it was ever really going to happen. And this year, when it was signed, sealed and delivered, the facility was under construction and everybody knew it was coming, the sale was one of the best ones we went to all year. There has been a real premium paid for New York-breds. So I think everybody, whether they are breeding to sell as commercial breeders or breeding to race, it's hard to ignore the money those New York-breds are going to be running for.

Q: Do you think the local breeding industry is capable of supporting the upswing in purses and incentives in New York?

A: From my experience, there is room for a quality operation. The availability of top-class operations are limited, and the ones that are there are full.

Q: Will you be sending anybody up from Denali or is it going to be completely staffed by people already at Edition? Is there any other Denali service you will be putting in place at Edition to ensure it maintains similar type and quality care to what is already in place in Kentucky?

A: The staff and management team at Edition Farm are excellent. I've worked with them for many years. We will be visiting periodically on a regular basis, once we determine what that needs to be. The primary service we will be providing is mare care and breeding. Once weaned, the foals will return to Kentucky, to Denali or the owner's farm. We don't plan to raise the babies [at Edition], which simplifies the management issues tremendously.

Q: How does this new partnership complement the Kentucky-based Denali Stud?

A: All of us in Kentucky are playing defense. The business has been contracting and the number of broodmares bred have been reduced, so many people have decided to take advantage of these lucrative breeders' programs. Basically, we have all had to look for alternative sources. For me, it was a very natural move, because I am very familiar with the lay of the land [in New York]. I also have good relationships with some quality farms in New York, including Edition, so it made sense. The reason I really decided to give this a try was, number one, I really know the area and Mrs. Molloy's farm very well; and number two, this initiative can really appeal to a lot of people who want to race, too. Racing in New York is still one of the main centers in racing and, I think it will move closer to the fore when the purses start to go up after the first of the year.

Q: What kind of value do you think New York-breds offer those interested in both breeding and racing?

A: Commercially, we have seen the value of New York-breds have increased in the last year dramatically, so if someone has a commercial operation with a commercial slant to what they are doing, it's something they should strongly consider. And I am not saying this from the perspective of someone with a big operation in Kentucky. New York-breds are a valuable commodity at this point. For people who are racing, or have that as their primary objective, not only are the open purses going to be substantial, but the state-bred purses are also very significant, but the only difference is that the company isn't as tough as the open company.

Q: What is your impression of the current group of stallions standing in New York?

A: [The stallion roster] has definitely improved from a couple of years ago, and I think you will just see it get better. Commerce follows money; and once that moneys shows up, stallions, mares and infrastructure are going to follow.

Q: What message do you think this sends to other markets?

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A: A significant message here is for the politicians in Kentucky to get their act together. Somebody once said to me that they weren't going to do anything about [the recession] until the time comes. And, the fact is, the time is here.

Q: If things were to surpass your expectations in this new partnership with Edition, would you consider expanding your own resources in New York?

A: We'll cross that bridge when we get to it. For the moment, this is another avenue available to us. It's just like the Denali operation in Kentucky; Denali in Kentucky is not all things to all people. It's for people that are looking for a certain level of service and expertise, and are willing to pay for it. I think our New York venture is going to be modeled the same way.

Q: What do think the New York market will look like five years down the road?

A: I expect it will look drastically different than it does right now. I think you'll see a higher level of everything, closer to what I like to call the Kentucky standard--a higher level of horsemanship, facilities and professionals. I'm not trying in any way to demean what is going on in New York right now, but as the demand increases and the quality improves, then everything else will follow.



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