



CTHS Alberta Brings Legendary

Jockey Gary Stevens to Alberta

By Lindsay Ward

The CTHS Alberta Division is proud to bring legendary horseman and Hall of Fame Jockey Gary Stevens to speak at the CTHS Summer Sale yearling preview day on Monday August 31, 2009. Stevens will speak at a luncheon for ticket holders and sponsors following the Yearling Sale preview parade at the Agricentre in Red Deer, Alberta.

Gary Stevens is an inspirational rider – his victories include eight Triple Crown races: three Kentucky Derbies – Winning Colors in 1988, Thunder Gulch in 1995 and Silver Charm in 1997; two Preakness Stakes – Silver Charm in 1997, Point Given in 2001; three Belmont Stakes – Thunder Gulch in 1994, Victory Gallop in 1998 and Point Given in 2001. His Breeders' Cup titles include eight wins; the 2000 Mile with War Chant, 1999 Juvenile with Anees and the 1998 Distaff on Escena and Juvenile Fillies on Silverbulletday, 1996 Mile on Da Hoss, 1994 Distaff on One Dreamer, 1993 Juvenile on Brocco and 1990 Turf on In the Wings (GB). He earned national money titles in 1990 and 1998 and was ranked among the top 10 money winners from 1985 – 99 and in 2001. His mounts collected over \$221 million and he had 4,888 winners in his career. Stevens won the Santa Anita Derby a record 9 times.

Not bad statistics for a boy who had to overcome the challenges of a degenerative disease of the hip, Perthes Syndrome, when he was seven and wear a hip brace for nineteen months. Born to a family heavily involved with horses – his Mom was a Rodeo Queen

and his Dad was a trainer – it was perhaps inevitable that Stevens would be drawn in to the same world but who could have predicted to what extent! His father, Ron, had him grooming horses at age 8 and riding winners in Quarter Horse races at bush tracks and fairs by the time he was 14. The thoroughbred racehorse, Lil Star, was his first winner at Les Bois Park in Idaho in 1979 when Stevens was 16 years old. From that win, he became the top jockey in Washington winning riding titles at Longacres in 1983 – 1984. Stevens then took his career to Southern California where, over the next ten years, he built his profession to the point where, in 1993, he became the youngest jockey ever to surpass \$100 million in earnings. He was then awarded the George Woolf Memorial Award in 1996 for the rider who exhibits exemplary conduct both on and off the track. Stevens was inducted into racing's Hall of Fame in 1997 and won the Eclipse Award as the nation's top jockey in 1998.

In 1999, Stevens announced that he would be taking early retirement due to chronic and debilitating knee pain from his riding career. After numerous surgeries to attempt to solve his knee problems, Stevens shifted his focus into training and became an assistant trainer for Alex Hassinger and the Thoroughbred Corp. In October 2000, he decided to return to riding and rode Derby favorite Point Given to wins in the Preakness and the Belmont in 2001. Unfortunately, Point Given finished fifth to Monarchos in the Kentucky Derby that year – a loss that he regrets deeply as he felt Point Given deserved the Triple Crown.

In 2002, Stevens wrote his first book “A Perfect Ride” about his racing career and the next year, Stevens was chosen to play the role of George Woolf (1910 – 1946) in the 2003 Academy Award nominated movie, “Seabiscuit”.

It is interesting that Stevens received the George Woolf Memorial Jockey Award in 1996 and was then chosen to play the role of Woolf in Seabiscuit seven years later. George Woolf was one of the leading jockeys in America during his time until his untimely death at the age of 35. Woolf was one of the country's best and most respected jockeys and a favorite of fans which led to the creation of the George Woolf Memorial Jockey Award. Woolf was known as the “Iceman” due to his patience in waiting for the right time to

have his horse make a move in a race and also for this totally calm attitude even before major races. Stevens also is known for his superior sportsmanship and citizenship. Both jockeys struggled with illness and injuries throughout their careers but managed to achieve great success and reach the pinnacle of their sport. Stevens and Woolf each won numerous major stakes races including key titles in southern California.

Despite the fact that Woolf had a relatively short career, he had 721 career wins around the United States – Stevens had 4888 career wins over a 26 year period. Both careers included numerous major stakes wins – Woolf actually rode Azucar to victory in 1935 in the first \$100,000 horse race, the Santa Anita Handicap, which Stevens went on to win 4 times in 1990, 1991, 1995 and 2005. Stevens would have seen the bronze statue of George Woolf in the paddock at Santa Anita Park every time he rode a horse there! Woolf was an inaugural inductee into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in 1955 and Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in 1956. He was voted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in 1976. 42 years later, in 1997, Stevens entered the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. Both jockeys were born in the west, Stevens was born in Caldwell, Idaho while Woolf was born in Cardston, Alberta.

On November 27, 2005 Stevens announced his retirement at the age of 46 with over 5,000 wins and earnings exceeding \$221 million. Stevens started working as a racing analyst on television in January 2006 and a week later, his favorite horse, Rock Hard Ten was retired due to a foot injury. In 2009, Stevens began the California based Gary Stevens Racing Stable Inc. where he will train race horses with the assistance of his son, T.C. Stevens "This is something I've wanted to do for a long time, and things finally fell into place" said Stevens.