

TDN Q&A

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Fabricio Buffolo
Darley America

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TDN: Can you tell us about how Mr. Leon got started in the

Thoroughbred business?

FB: He has been involved with horses his whole life, from a young age back in Cuba. He started with Paso Finos, and he has been very successful at it. He started with Thoroughbreds three years ago and has progressed from there, buying a few more horses in 2010, and then of course his biggest investment came in 2011, when he bought Royal Delta, a few broodmares from the Ned Evans dispersal, and some mares privately. During Keeneland September that year he also bought a good group of yearlings, so that was his biggest investment so far with horses, and in addition he was breeding a few already here on the farm.

TDN: How many horses does Besilu currently have?

FB: We have currently 51 horses, from broodmares through to horses in training and the youngsters. We have 10 with Bill Mott, including Royal Delta. It's an exciting time for all of us here, because the broodmares Mr. Leon bought are starting to have their first progeny under his care, so it's a good beginning that we are very much looking for.



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TDN: What is Mr. Leon's business plan for his racing stable and breeding operation, and how has this changed and developed since he started?

FB: Mr. Leon is a man who is committed to excellence and quality in everything he does. The plan right now is to consolidate what he has done so far, and build a very strong foundation for the future. This will enable us to have a top quality operation, not only with the bloodstock and personnel, but in every operational aspect. He bought quite a few horses, so he wants to consolidate that, and build it from there. We're in the process of developing a new business plan based along those lines. And of course in the meantime we could add horses to the operation, as long as the right opportunity comes along and they fit the program.

TDN: Can you explain what was involved in Mr. Leon's decision to sponsor two of Gulfstream's key races, the GI Florida Derby and the GI Fountain of Youth S.?

FB: The deal between Mr. Leon and Gulfstream was done before I started here, but he wanted to support the industry not only with having horses, but in other ways as well. He wants to give back in a way that people can appreciate. And he wants to make sure the name Besilu starts to get recognized. Once he gets more runners and starts breeding more horses, he wants people to know who we are.

TDN: Of course most people at this point associate Besilu Stables with Royal Delta. Can you tell us what she is doing at this time, and what Mr. Leon's future plans are for her?

FB: She's doing very well. She had some very well-deserved down time after the Breeders' Cup. She's just now getting back to her normal training routine at Payson Park. The plan is to have a prep race in February and then the GI Dubai World Cup on Mar. 30. Then we'll go from there, taking it one step at a time. She'll tell us what way we should go. She's in the more than capable hands of someone who knows her like nobody else, Bill Mott and his team, which gives us immense confidence.

TDN: Besilu Stables has started the Gulfstream meet on a good note, with two 2-year-old maiden winners in the first week: Bold Dance and Tapicat. What are the plans for these two horses?

FB: I saw both horses this morning. They both came out of their races in good shape, and we're looking forward to their next races. We're not in a hurry; we want them to have a good foundation early in their career and have a good year in 2013 as 3-year-olds, and then as 4-year-olds. Bold Dance should be out again towards the end of January, and we're looking for a spot for Tapicat.

TDN: How did your relationship with Mr. Leon begin?

FB: I met him in May 2011 during the Kentucky Derby. Since then we've gotten to know each other quite well, and this year we got closer when he took Royal Delta to the Dubai World Cup. We developed a good relationship quite fast. There is a mutual trust, and he's above all a family man and he has an incredible mind, which makes me feel very fortunate to be around him and learn from him.

TDN: Can you tell our readers how you got started in the Thoroughbred industry, and what experiences you have had to date to prepare yourself for your new role?

FB: Back home in Brazil, my family has been involved in the industry, mainly owning racehorses. My father and uncle have owned horses together since the 70s, and have been lucky so far, having four individual Group 1 winners, including a Derby winner in Brazil and another Derby winner in Argentina. So I got involved at an early age and I grew up going to the barn and the races with them. Later on I went to veterinary university, and right after graduating that, I joined Darley Flying Start, where I learned from top professionals in the industry and made great friendships. Once I finished the course I went to work for John Ferguson in Newmarket for a year and a half, and then I joined Darley America, first in nominations and then in the marketing department.

TDN: What can you tell us about the team you have in place at the moment?

FB: We have a very good team, and it reminds me of something Mr. Leon always says: "Good people won't do the worst thing, even in the worst moment, and there is only one thing about bad people: you can't teach them to be good people." He surrounds himself with good people; competent, hard workers. Here, we are trying to shape up a good team, and it's all about how they contribute to the big picture. Everybody is important, and a crucial part of every result. On the vet side we have as Chief Veterinarian Dr. Jorge Gomez, and at the farm we have Dr. Juan Pablo Toro. The trainer is of course Bill Mott, who doesn't need an introduction. And at the farm we have Joe Hennessy, who has done a remarkable job breaking and pre-training the youngsters. And on the marketing side is Jacqui Barsha, who just joined us to be the main contact regarding advertising and sponsorship, and we also have George Isaacs as an advisor and consultant. He brings a vast knowledge and experience. And of course all the employees here at the farm are nothing but excellent.