



Hook, Line and Sinker

Jim Rome's "Take" on Horse Racing

By Mary Forney

For those of you familiar with the man, “grab a vine!” For those of you not, you’ll need to spend some time reviewing the “glossary.” Jim Rome is, after all, one of the most visible and influential syndicated sports talk radio hosts in the country, having crafted a jargon and following about as unique and enthusiastic as they come. But until recently, Rome didn’t “get it,” this Thoroughbred horse racing thing we’re all so crazy about. Well, he does now, and in a big way... Rack him!

Rome, who got into ownership as a partner in Little Red Feather Racing just about a year ago, is now totally hooked on horseracing – or, as he put it, “hook, line, and sinker.” His daily “take” on current sports news and issues reaches more than two million listeners, and often expresses his new found appreciation for the sport, the people involved, and most importantly, the horse. Rome is an enthusiastic Thoroughbred owner and at the same time a huge, living PR boost for a classic sport!

One of the most respected voices in the world of sports broadcasting, Rome is equally popular with athletes and fans, and is famous for his aggressive, informed, rapid-fire dialogue – a unique on-air style that has been dubbed “talking smack” by his fans.

On a recent Friday afternoon at Oak Tree, Rome joined family, friends, and racing partners to watch their three-year-old filly, Hot n’ Dusty, break her maiden in impressive fashion. Trained by Barry Abrams, Hot n’ Dusty is owned by M. Auerbach LLC and Little Red Feather Racing. In the winners circle, Alex Solis handed his goggles to Rome. When asked what he would do with them, Rome replied, “Wear them every day, wear them to work, sleep with them, shower with them!”

Rome broadcasts *The Jim Rome Show* from a studio near Los Angeles, and hosts the TV show *Jim Rome is Burning*, which airs daily on ESPN. His radio show, also known as “*The Jungle*,” is one of the most listened-to talk radio shows in the U.S, airing on more than 200 radio stations.

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Born Oct. 14, 1964 in Tarzana, California, Rome graduated from Calabasas High School, then the University of California Santa Barbara, where he earned a degree in Communications. He began his radio career on college radio station, KCSB-FM, at UC Santa Barbara, where he was sports director, and at news station KTMS Santa Barbara as a traffic reporter. He left KTMS for San Diego’s all-sports radio station, XTRA Sports 690, and subsequently hosted *Talk2* (ESPN2), *The FX Sports Show*, and *The Last Word* (Fox Sports Net).

Rome now lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Janet, and their two boys, 7-year-old Jake, and 3-year-old Logan.

Rome was just a casual fan until he met Billy



Hot n’ Dusty enters the saddling paddock before breaking her maiden impressively at Santa Anita.

Home

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Koch, a director of TOC and managing partner of Little Red Feather Racing. Koch was relentless in his efforts to get Rome involved in ownership.

“Janet and I would go to Del Mar once a year, and every once in a while we’d come out here (to Santa Anita) and we’d just run into Billy,” said Rome. “Billy would try to put the pitch on me, and I was – kind of like with the Heisman trophy – I’d keep him at a distance! But then last summer for some reason,” Rome continued, “Janet said to me, ‘I want to do this, and I’ll run this whole thing for you.’ So I said, ‘Let’s do it!’”

Rome bought a piece of three-year-old colt, Wing Forward, who made his North American racing debut at Oak Tree last September, rallying from last in a field of 12 to win the one-mile allowance by a neck on the turf.

“We came out that day,” said Rome, recalling his first experience as an owner. “I was all fired up, not really knowing what to expect. Wing Forward broke dead last, for about half the race. I thought, ‘I’m the biggest idiot ever, what was I thinking?’ I wanted to call my banker in the middle of the race and put a stop on the check, and tell Koch never to bother me ever again,” Rome joked. “But the damnest thing happened,” he continued, “The horse came from worst to first! I got hooked, and I’ve had the bug ever since.”

Later, Rome would tell his on-air listeners: “It was one of the most amazing experiences I’ve ever had.”

“The funny thing,” said Rome, “is I grew up with horses but

had no interest. I grew up in the valley – and my mom had a horse, my dad had a horse, my sister had a horse – and I had no use for one, no interest.” Now he owns all or part of seven racehorses. This time, it is a family affair. Janet, who often went to the races with her parents at Los Alamitos when growing up, is equally enthusiastic, as are the boys – who love to feed the horses carrots.

“We just bought a beautiful, beautiful filly – Surfer Girl – the first horse Janet and I own outright,” said Rome. Yet he extols the benefits of being part of racing partnerships saying, “We all get together; we share the highs and lows. And that’s neat, too.”

Madeline Auerbach, who bred Hot n’ Dusty, is equally enthusiastic about being in a partnership with Rome, and recalled the first time he came out to the track to see the filly:

“Jim came to the barn one morning to get a really good look at her,” Auerbach said. “I was in the pen with her, and I said, ‘She’s very picky; she doesn’t accept everybody.’ But when he came in the pen, she went right up to him, without pinning her ears, and just nuzzled him. And he was smitten!”

Frankly, smitten is probably the best word to describe his reaction to the sport. When asked what he likes best about being a racehorse owner, he simply replied, “I like the horses best about it.”



Rome signs autographs for admiring fans.