



CTBA Member
PROFILE

MICK RUIS

BY EMILY SHIELDS

Mickey “Mick” Ruis doesn’t want to be “just another horseman” in California. He has his sights set on playing at the same level as Hall of Famer Bob Baffert, with the twist that Ruis owns and trains all his own horses.

With grade 1 winners Union Strike and Bolt d’Oro in the barn, Ruis is already on his way. With two new stallions and 25 broodmares in California, he looks to add even more to his Golden State footprint.

Ruis sports a classic “pulled up by his own bootstraps” story. He left high school just before graduating to work at a construction company, quickly rising through the ranks despite his age.

He sold his first company for \$2.5 million with a five-year non-compete clause, and thought that would be enough money to get into horse racing.

“The most expensive horse I had at the time was \$10,000,” Ruis said. “That’s just the kind of stock we had.”

After the five years Ruis was \$1 million in debt. He had some minor success, such as when homebred California-bred Wendy’s On to Me defeated Baffert’s heavy favorite Del Mar Miss in the \$70,000 Warren’s Thoroughbreds Stakes at 35-1 in 2005. But Ruis wanted to be better, and knew he could do better.

“I thought, ‘Wow, if only I had some more ammunition,’” Ruis recalled.

He went back into construction, namely, the

RUIS RACING
STABLES BOLTS
TOWARD THE
FUTURE



Wendy and Mick Ruis with their multiple grade 1-winning juvenile colt Bolt d’Oro

ANNE M. EBERHARDT



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Ruis' Racing's four-leaf clover is more a symbol for skill meeting opportunity than for luck

scaffolding industry. When American Scaffolding sold for \$78 million, Ruis felt he would be able to invest to his satisfaction. He spent just over \$3 million in two years to purchase bloodstock, including a \$375,000 Union Rags filly and a \$630,000 Medaglia d'Oro colt.

The filly, Union Strike, broke her maiden in the \$300,690 Del Mar Debutante Stakes (gr. I), defeating American Pharoah's full sister, American Cleopatra, and subsequent Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (gr. I) winner Champagne Room. At the time, Ruis' daughter Shelbe was training the stable's runners because Ruis himself was being stubborn about re-taking the required trainer's test.

“I'm buying mares in Kentucky, but I'm going to be foaling and breeding back in California.”

— Mick Ruis

“I had a trainer's license before, 10 years ago,” Ruis explained. “I didn't see why I had to take it again. Eventually, they made me and I passed with a 98.”

To kick off the 2017 season, Union Strike won the \$79,290 Santa Paula Stakes.

“That was a fantastic race,” Ruis said. “We shipped her over to Churchill Downs for the Eight Belles on Derby day, and that was tough. A bad start, then she was flying but she lost by a nose in a photo finish. Then there was an inquiry.”

The seasonal goal for Union Strike was the one-mile, \$687,000 Acorn Stakes (gr. I) at Belmont Park. She stumbled badly “to her face” and lost both right shoes.

“She grabbed her quarter and still finished fifth while trying

hard,” said Ruis. “We tried to get her ready for the Test (G1), but she had a little injury that just needed nature to heal it.”

Since returning to San Luis Rey Downs, Union Strike has been swimming and relaxing, and she is scheduled to return in the La Brea Stakes (gr. I) at Santa Anita. She has earned \$322,160 in seven starts.

When Union Strike left the barn to recover, the juvenile Medaglia d'Oro colt was just gearing up. Bolt d'Oro, out of the A.P. Indy mare Globe Trot, broke his maiden first out on Aug. 5 at Del Mar. He then reeled off consecutive grade 1 wins in the Del Mar Futurity and the FrontRunner Stakes, both worth \$301,380. The latter came by 7¾ lengths, stamping Bolt d'Oro as the favorite for the \$1,840,000 Sentient Jet Breeders' Cup Juvenile (gr. I) at Del Mar.

Bolt d'Oro bobbled at the break of the Juvenile, ending up third last in a field of 12, and ran five or six wide on both turns to finish third, with Corey Nakatani riding.

“It was very disappointing,” Ruis said, “but that's horse racing. He ate up his dinner like he didn't run, and the next morning you wouldn't have known he raced. I wouldn't trade horses with anyone going into the 3-year-old campaign. He breathes a different air than the other horses.”

While Bolt d'Oro may have come up short in the Breeders' Cup, another Ruis runner eased the sting with a stakes victory of her own. One Fast Broad, a Cal-bred daughter of Decarchy—Awesome Broad, by Mr. Broad Blade, won the \$200,345 Golden State Juvenile Fillies by a length. She had previously broken her maiden one day before Bolt d'Oro did and ran second in the \$103,105 Del Mar Juvenile Fillies Turf at 46-1 odds.

Ruis is looking forward to running all three of his stakes stars in California next year.

“This is my state, my hometown,” he said. “Santa Anita gives me stalls, so I support them. I've found it's best to help those that help you.”

Among his ranch in Montana, mares in Kentucky, and a host of racehorses and yearlings, Ruis has 78 horses in his stead. He will be standing two horses at Tommy Town Thoroughbreds in 2018, where he is moving 25 mares to bolster his California breeding operation.

One new stud is \$494,781-earner War Envoy, a son of War Front out of the winning Elusive Quality mare La Conseillante. The other is Saburo, who raced only twice by but is a son of Medaglia d'Oro out of the stakes-placed Lemon Drop Kid mare Kid Majic.

“I'm buying mares in Kentucky,” Ruis said, “but I'm going to be foaling and breeding back in California.”

Family remains most important to Ruis. The stable's runners are often named after his wife, Wendy, while Shelbe has been working in the barn since she turned 14.

“She ran the barn for me for a week while I was in New York,” Ruis said. “It has worked out really well.”

With a horse to start on the Triple Crown trail and so much to look forward to in the Golden State, more could go Ruis' way soon. **CTB**