



CTBA Member
PROFILE

SMOOTH
MOVE

DAR HANSON

BY EMILY SHIELDS

After 20 years in the Quarter Horse business, Dar Hanson has made the seamless transition to Thoroughbreds. He is enjoying a modicum of success thanks to a recent \$100,000 California-bred filly sold at the Fasig-Tipton July yearling sale. More prosperity could be on the way, as Hanson has another set to go in the inaugural Fasig-Tipton California fall yearling sale Sept. 26.

But long before he was sales prepping and selling Thoroughbreds, Hanson was managing Ward River Ranch, one of the country's premier cutting horse breeding farms.

"I've been in the horse business my whole adult life," Hanson said. "I was an apprentice farrier and met some people and started training cutting horses. I did that for a

few years. Ward River Ranch was the leading breeder of cowhorses in the country, and the largest cowhorse breeding farm on the West Coast. They sold it back in 2013, and I've leased it from the new owners."

Now called Hanson's River Ranch, the 60-acre spread in Kingsburg, Calif., is still home to plenty of Quarter Horses, but also eight of Hanson's own Thoroughbred mares and horses on layup and being sales prepped.

"I've probably got 12 weanlings this year," Hanson said, "and I bred six or seven mares this year."

Buying broodmares in Kentucky and bringing them back to California to foal and be bred back to Golden State sires is Hanson's game plan. He does it with the help of Checkmate Thoroughbreds' Adrian Gonzalez.

"He's absolutely phenomenal," Gonzalez said of Hanson. "He ran probably one of the nation's top Quarter Horse stallion stations and breeding farms for 20-plus years. Part of that was they were selling a lot of these horses at futurity sales, so they'd been sales prepping these yearlings and doing incredible work with them. That's how I got hooked up with him, while trying to get more knowledge on the sales prep side."

The partnership has since flourished.

"The amount of knowledge he has is incredible," Gonzalez said. "He's a very understated guy, but one of the top horsemen around. If someone has questions on fertility, they go to him. He's more of a reproductive specialist than many of the veterinarians in the state. With embryo



LISA FAHOUN

Dar Hanson with wife, Stacy, and daughters Shay (right) and Sage at their Hanson's River Ranch facility

transfer, recipient mare, and shipped semen stuff, Quarter Horses have this whole world we don't have anything to do with. But in the end, you're still just trying to raise a good horse."

Gonzalez helped to purchase Anura for \$14,000 at the Keeneland November sale last year. The stakes-placed daughter of Giant's Causeway—Shastri, by Alleged, is best known as the dam of Luck of the Kitten, a son of Kitten's Joy who won the \$100,000 Zuma Beach Stakes in 2014 en route to running second in the \$1 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf (G1T). He earned \$375,781 over 14 starts.

To date, Anura is five for five with winners from runners. She had a Flintshire filly for Hanson this year.

"I don't know how marketable that foal will be," Hanson admitted, "but I like the grass horses. I was excited to make this one a Cal-bred."

Another horse he was excited about was his Kitten's Joy filly out of Dynarhythm, a winning daughter of Dynaformer and the multiple stakes-winning Prospector's Halo mare Relic Rhythm. Hanson bought Dynarhythm for \$20,000 at Keeneland in 2017, along with a second mare in foal to Kitten's Joy.

Dynarhythm's first foal is a winning son of Trippi named Trippi Rhythm, and then she had four consecutive Kitten's Joy foals. Fear the Kitten ran second in the \$300,000 Southwest Stakes at Oaklawn Park and third in the \$200,000 Lecomte Stakes at the Fair Grounds. Union Kitten and Get Down Kitten were winners. Dynarhythm has five winners from six to race.

It was no surprise then when Dynarhythm's yearling sold for \$100,000 to Becky Thomas at the July sale in Lexington, Ky. The second Kitten's Joy filly, out of the stakes-placed winner Double Faced, will sell in September.

"They are both such quality fillies,"



COURTESY DAR HANSON

The Cal-bred Kitten's Joys: the Dynarhythm filly (right) that sold for \$100,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July auction and the Double Faced filly slated for FT's California fall yearling sale

Gonzalez said. "We're hoping we can do the same if not better on the next one."

Double Faced was a daughter of

Quarter Horses to Thoroughbreds, and in the right way.

"One year he bought a mare (Shatoosh) in foal to Munnings in November and flipped her at the Barretts sale in January," Gonzalez said. "He did well with her. This year are the first mares he has really kept to foal out. He breeds back to horses such as Vronsky, Acclamation, and Smiling Tiger. He'll have nice babies on the ground."

There are 40 Thoroughbreds on the farm, as well as a host of Quarter Horses.

The farm prepped five horses for the California Thoroughbred Breeders Association Northern California sale coming up Aug. 13 and 12 horses that will be in the Fasig-Tipton sale at Pomona. Hanson is even willing to accept more yearlings for sales prep despite it being late in the season.

And once the sales hubbub has died down, he will have something else to look forward to: Dynarhythm, dam of the \$100,000 Kitten's Joy filly, is confirmed in foal to Vronsky for 2020. **CTB**

“(Hanson) is absolutely phenomenal. He ran probably one of the nation’s top Quarter Horse stallion stations and breeding farms for 20-plus years. Part of that was they were selling a lot of these horses at futurity sales, so they’d been sales prepping these yearlings and doing incredible work with them.”

— Adrian Gonzalez

More Than Ready and stakes winner Angel Face, by Zilzal. She has produced seven winners to date. Unfortunately, Double Faced died from colic in June. As a small consolation, "she had an Acclamation foal this year," Hanson said.

Through partnerships with people such as Gonzalez—who is part owner in the upcoming Kitten's Joy yearling—and Old English Rancho/Harris Farms manager Johnny Hilvers, Hanson has been slowly able to switch focus from