



CTBA Member  
**PROFILE**

# MARTIN BACH

BY EMILY SHIELDS

A PILLAR  
OF THE  
INDUSTRY

**M**artin Bach might be 80, but he still remembers ducking under the turnstiles to enter Arlington Park as a child with his parents. After his wedding 57 years ago, he told his wife, Bobbi, “One day I’m going to own a horse.” Her reply? “As long as it comes after a house.”

Bach, who graduated from

the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1962, got his chance. Friends bought a yearling out of the Del Mar sale in 1970 and offered him 25% ownership.

“I said, ‘Where do I send the money?’ That was my intro,” Bach recalled.

Over the next 15 years Bach dabbled in ownership and thought about breeding. But he became involved in the

management side when he snagged a spot on the board of the Thoroughbred Owners of California in 2003.

“I’m not sure I even knew what the TOC was,” Bach said. “But I was the finance chair for six years, and I became friends with everyone: Jack Owens, Madeline Auerbach, Ron Charles. Some of them even became clients.”

Bach spent 50 years in the finance business before calling it a career and retiring. He was able to offer his financial insight while on the TOC board and while developing his own racing business.

“I really was a straight shooter, with no politics involved,” he said. “We all did what we could do for the best of horse racing.”

The horses have done their share. Marty’s Zee was a homebred stakes winner of the Fairfield Stakes in 2000; she ultimately earned \$362,553. In partnership with Jack Owens, Bach campaigned the City Zip filly English Royal to 11 wins and multiple stakes placings. City by the Bay was a three-time stakes winner, including the Barretts Debutante at Fairplex and the Seattle Handicap at Emerald Downs. Look Quickly was a multiple stakes winner, and California-bred My Friend George, a Bach homebred, has won 12 times and is one of 21 horses that Bach still owns.

The crowning achievement of Bach’s career as a breeder so far is from a horse that completely surprised him, 2019 California champion 2-year-old male El Tigre Terrible. The story goes back two generations.

“I loved the family of



COURTESY OF MARTIN BACH

During his stint on the TOC board, Martin Bach kept what’s best for horse racing as his guiding principle

Chanceofalifetime,” Bach said of the winning Pentelicus mare, the second dam of El Tigre Terrible.

Chanceofalifetime was little more than a claimer on the track, but she produced a perfect 11 winners from 11 starters. Her daughter Kelly’s Princess won the Solano County Juvenile Filly Stakes in 2004, and one year later Chulla Isabella was placed in the CTBA Stakes at Del Mar. Chanceofalifetime’s 2005 foal by Gotham City, King City Kitty, was stakes-placed at Fresno and won five times.

Bach got the chance to obtain both King City Kitty and her dam, but he ultimately grew fed up with King City Kitty as a broodmare. Her first foal, Tanner’s Kitty by Tannersmyman, won just twice in 15 starts while Ourprincessmelanie, by Roi Charmant, won four times in 41 tries.

Bach’s mares are stabled at Sue Greene’s Woodbridge Farm, and he remembers saying to Greene, “I don’t need all these horses. Why don’t we sell the mare and her offspring?”

He noted that King City Kitty’s yearling by leading California sire Smiling Tiger was “the nicest foal she’d had.” Bach thought the Smiling Tiger colt might sell well.

Consigned by Woodbridge Farm, the Smiling Tiger—King City Kitty colt, later named El Tigre Terrible, brought a bid of \$18,000 from Slam Dunk Racing at the 2018 Barretts October yearling and horses of all ages sale. Three months later King City Kitty went for \$7,000 while carrying a full sibling to the colt.

“Frankly, I didn’t like her,” Bach said of the mare. “It just goes to show you how you can be so wrong.”

Bach missed El Tigre Terrible’s debut, which is becoming more common after a complicated back surgery that has left it difficult for him to get around. When Cal-bred El Tigre Terrible won for the



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Bach-bred El Tigre Terrible was 2019 Cal-bred champion 2-year-old male

third time, defeating open company in the \$101,755 Speakeasy Stakes at Santa Anita in October, Bach’s phone began to ring off the hook.

“It was just a Saturday afternoon, and the phone starts ringing like mad,” he said. “I had to tell everyone I sold the mare. I wish everybody well, and I got a nice

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— Martin Bach

breeders award out of it.”

El Tigre Terrible, who has three wins from five starts and earnings of \$118,300, is in training with Peter Miller at San Luis Rey Downs for his 2020 debut.

Bach still has several members of the female family, however. Chanceofalifetime’s daughters Recoiling, by Coil, and stakes-placed She’s So Vain, by Gotham

City, are part of his broodmare band at Woodbridge. He also owns Z Z Tiger, who he claims is the best horse he ever bred.

A daughter of Smiling Tiger and Chanceofalifetime, Z Z Tiger brought \$130,000 as a yearling at Barretts in 2016.

“I just about fell off the kitchen table when I was watching that,” Bach said.

But Z Z Tiger struggled for her new connections, placing in open maiden company for a full year before

finally winning at the maiden claiming level in November 2018. One month later Bach claimed her for \$16,000, and she now resides at Woodbridge.

Despite Bobbi being intensely allergic to horses—“she has to take a few pills just to go to the paddock,” Bach said—the family remains involved in Bach’s horses, partially because Bach pays tribute to them in the names he gives his runners. Son David Bach is a *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Latte Factor* and other books; the juvenile version of *The Latte Factor* will debut later this year. Nine-time winner Melanie Rose, who finished top three in 25 of 48 starts, is named after a beloved granddaughter.

“I try to keep the names in the family,” Bach said.

Despite his limited mobility, Bach tries to make it to the track as often as possible to watch training. He still laments the loss of his position on the TOC board in 2011 due to physical limitations. He also tries to get to Woodbridge to watch foals being born.

As for 25-year-old Chanceofalifetime, she has been pensioned and is living out her days at Woodbridge.

“I really love the sport and really love the people at the TOC,” Bach said. “I love the challenge of it; there are a lot of similarities to buying a *Racing Form* and reading a *Wall Street Journal*. I just really love the industry.” **CTB**