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PROFILE

BAR NONE,
THE GREATEST
GAME
OUTDOORS

JERRY WESELOH

BY TRACY GANTZ

When owners were allowed on the Del Mar backstretch this summer after the COVID restrictions of 2020, Jerry Weseloh breathed a sigh of relief. He could finally again visit California-bred Brandothebartender at trainer Craig Dollase's barn.

"I'm going to be the biggest barn groupie this year," Weseloh told Dollase.

Weseloh would have camped out at the Dollase barn even if 8-year-old Brandothebartender weren't having the best season of his career. But now the San Diego native, who owns the gelding with four friends, has even more reason to visit. And since he and his family had recently sold their automotive dealerships, he has more time for his role as chief barn groupie.

Dollase has trained several good runners for Weseloh and his partners in Flawless Racing. It's an enthusiastic group that enjoys claiming horses and has had much success with just a few runners.

Weseloh attributes almost all of it to Brandothebartender, a \$40,000 claim at Del Mar in 2018 who subsequently has won four stakes and banked a career total of \$772,864.

Flawless Racing began in 2015 with Weseloh, Joe Letizia, Tim Aldrich, and Brian Flanagan. Weseloh and Letizia have been friends since childhood, Aldrich is Weseloh's brother-in-law and a former business partner, and Flanagan is a business vendor who had become a friend.

"We had no clue what we wanted to call ourselves," said Weseloh. "I started playing around with letters of our first names and last names, and the only word I could come up with was F for Flanagan, L for Letizia, A for Aldrich, and W for Weseloh. I didn't want to call it Flawed Racing, so we called it Flawless."

All four being from San Diego, the partners were also Chargers football fans. Aldrich chose the Chargers' royal blue and gold for their silks.

Flanagan eventually branched out on his own, but continued to own horses with

the other three. Once they chose Dollase as their trainer, Mike Jarvis, a longtime client with Craig and, before that, Dollase's late father, Wally, joined them on all of their horses. Jarvis came up with the idea of adding a Celtic trinity knot, which often symbolizes infinity, to their silks.

Weseloh's desire to own racehorses dated back to when as a young boy he accompanied his father, Ben, to Del Mar.

"I have four older brothers and one older sister," said Weseloh. "My dad liked horse racing, and none of my siblings really ever took to that. I guess he figured he had one last shot, so he used to take me down quite a bit when I was little."

Weseloh, now 53, remembers as a teenager seeing Calbred Best Pal win the inaugural Pacific Classic at Del Mar in 1993. It gave him a thrill 28 years later to have Cupid's Claws compete in what is now the TVG Pacific Classic (G1). The partners along with Joe Masino's Masino Racing Stable claimed Cupid's Claws for \$50,000, and the gelding won the 2020 Tokyo City Cup (G3) in his first start for them. In the Pacific Classic, Cupid's Claws finished unplaced.

"He was just in over his head," said Weseloh. "That was too much to ask of him. It wasn't his fault—he tried as hard as he could. But that was so much fun. Never in any of our wildest dreams a year ago did we think we'd be running in that race."

Other memorable horses Weseloh saw include Cigar, Winning Colors, and Alysheba. He has a special fondness for Davie's Lamb, whose stakes victories include the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JERRY WESELOH

Jerry Weseloh with Flawless Racing and partners' star performer, Brandothebartender

1987 San Clemente Stakes at Del Mar. His father had an opportunity to buy into the filly, but his mother, Pat, was “not excited” Jerry remembers, and Ben passed on the opportunity.

Flawless Racing’s first foray into ownership came with Room On the Broom, a \$40,000 claim with Jarvis at Los Alamitos in late 2015.

“I had a singular goal when we claimed that horse,” said Weseloh. “All I wanted—if we got nothing out of this entire venture—was one winner’s circle photo.”

Room On the Broom delivered that at Del Mar in 2017. The partners celebrated vociferously, and Weseloh ordered a large win photo that he says will never leave his wall.

Then came Brandothebartender, a then 5-year-old son of Tribal Rule—Frysland, by Stravinsky. The gelding appealed to others as well, resulting in a six-way shake.

“Right below our box is where they have the shake,” said Weseloh. “All the trainers were there. They pulled the pill, and Craig had no reaction. I saw a couple of trainers drop their head and start walking. Then Craig turned around and gave us the thumbs up, and we all started cheering.”

This occurred several minutes after the race, prompting people nearby to wonder what had happened.

“I remember Craig laughing, and he said, ‘You know, you’re supposed to act like you’ve been there before.’ I also remember Billy Koch (of Little Red Feather Racing) looked up at me and he just smiled. It was almost like, ‘If these guys wanted that horse that bad, I’m glad they got it.’ It was just neat.”

The third time Flawless, Flanagan, and Jarvis ran Brando-



From left, Tim Aldrich, Brian Flanagan, Mary Weseloh, Jerry Weseloh, Mike Jarvis, and Greta Jarvis with A.P. Indy at Lane’s End in Kentucky



From left Jerry Weseloh, trainer Craig Dollase, and Flawless Racing partner Joe Letizia at Santa Anita



Jerry Weseloh with trainer Craig Dollase’s right-hand man, groom Angel Estrada

thebartender, he won the California Flag Handicap at Santa Anita.

“That time we were completely over the moon,” said Weseloh, who told his wife, Mary, that he wanted to display large photos of the race as well as the trophy. Little did he know that eventually Brandothebartender would start winning at a clip that would strain their available space.

This year Brandothebartender has added trophies in the Sensational Star Stakes, Crystal Water Stakes, and California Dreamin’ Stakes.

He almost always finishes in the top three, and his dramatic come-from-behind style has earned him a legion of fans.

Weseloh credits not only the gelding but also Dollase and the trainer’s entire operation, including groom Angel Estrada.

“He’s Craig’s #2, though Craig’s barn isn’t the size where he needs an assistant trainer,” Weseloh said. “Everybody does everything.”

That included Estrada’s accompanying Code Duello, a new claim, to Golden Gate Fields. The 3-year-old colt finished second in the Aug. 14 Robert Dupret Derby in his first start for them.

Meanwhile, Weseloh continues his pilgrimages to Dollase’s barn, bringing carrots for the horses and donuts or other treats for the employees. And when Brandothebartender indicates that he’s done racing—something he has shown no signs of yet—Weseloh has already made arrangements to send him to Old Friends in Kentucky.

“I want him to just do nothing—just go be a horse and have fun the rest of his life,” said Weseloh. “If we can do that for him, we’ll feel like we did it the right way.” **CTB**