

WINNER'S CIRCLE

Owner

BY MELAINA PHIPPS

On one of the biggest racing weekends of the year, owner Maggi Moss enjoyed a huge couple of days. Moss had runners entered in a pair of stakes races Kentucky Derby weekend at Churchill Downs and won both: the May 3 Eight Belles Stakes (gr. III) with So Many Ways and the May 4 Churchill Downs Stakes (gr. II) with Delaunay.

Moss, however, wasn't there. What kept her from traveling to Louisville was her mother, Berenice, and a special tie her mother has to So Many Ways. During a visit last Christmas to Palm Meadows Training Center in South Florida to see the 3-year-old bay filly by Sightseeing (whom Maggi Moss describes as a "big Labrador"), the matriarchal Moss began something of a love affair. Later, when Moss was offered a generous sum for the filly, it was her mother who convinced her not to sell.

"I've never seen her take so much interest before," said Moss.

So they watched the races together at Moss's home in Des Moines, Iowa.

"The most important thing was to be with my mom...that moment was worth not being there for one of the best racing weekends I've had," she said.

Delaunay's victory was the 6-year-old Smoke Glacken gelding's first graded stakes win and sixth straight stakes victory. Since being claimed for \$40,000 by Moss last May, Delaunay has won seven of eight starts. But that's not why he's special to the Des Moines native.

Moss Code

Good karma delivers two graded stakes wins Derby weekend

"I have a real soft spot for older male claiming horses," she said. "They're warriors. They've persevered through many places and conditions—they're heroic, and they're my favorite kind of horse."

Before landing in Moss' stable, Delaunay had been claimed and reclaimed five times in a four-month period. That kind of instability can affect any living being, and so it was with Delaunay, whose appearance concerned trainer Tom Amoss. But Moss told him, "I'll give you all the time you need. I really want this horse."

Once Delaunay arrived at the Amoss barn, the trainer's reports of his improvement guaranteed he would never run for a tag again. As it turned out he didn't need that much time. About six weeks into his training with Amoss, Delaunay won the Kelly's Landing Stakes at Churchill. He's been thriving ever since.

With her stable spread across the country, there was a time when Moss had many trainers. Now she is down to only two: Amoss and his former assistant, Chris Richard.

"Philosophically, those two and I just clicked," said Moss. "I have an absolute responsibility to take care of the horses I own, so I can only work with individuals who can and will accurately depict to me what I own."

With a program built around doing what is right for the horses—keeping them healthy, avoiding unnecessary medications, giving them regular time off, and retiring them while they can still have a productive second chapter—Moss aims to keep her horses happy.

"I think happy horses reward you for eons," she said. "If you've done everything to make sure they're OK and they're happy and they're still not performing, that's the time to stop because they can still have a great life as a dressage horse or a hunter."

Moss' prowess in racing is indeed remarkable. Since her 2006 ranking as the nation's leading owner by wins, she's been in the top five in that category and in the top 10 rankings by earnings. Her keen understanding of the horse and the sport has contributed to her many successes. But while the wins are more than satisfying, they are not the only victories for Moss. Holding herself accountable for the well-being of her own horses has rewarded her as well, but she doesn't stop at her own horses. A former board member for the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation and founder of Iowa's Hope After Racing Thoroughbreds (HART), she is a significant supporter of equine rescue organizations and is ready to help spare a horse from ending up in the wrong hands.

"I'm trying right now to help the smaller rescues that are trying to do good things," she said. "There are a lot of people doing good things...I just wish there were more."

The concept of karma—what you give will come back to you—is as old as time. Moss is certainly a believer.

"If you keep giving back in anything in life, you get rewarded," she said. "If you give nothing, maybe you shouldn't." ^B



Maggi Moss

MATT GOINS