

Racing

In the early 1930s, Keeneland's founders set about to create a special race track in Central Kentucky. Their vision, as outlined in the track's original prospectus, was "to create a model race track to perpetuate and improve the sport and to provide a course that is intended to serve as a symbol of the fine traditions of Thoroughbred racing."

Since its first meeting in October 1936, Keeneland has continued to strive for excellence in its racing program, which perennially ranks among the nation's best in terms of purse money, field size and quality of racing. Recent notable events include

- Oct. 4, 2014: Keeneland presented its first million-dollar race, the Shadwell Turf Mile (G1). The winner was Keeneland-based two-time Horse of the Year Wise Dan.
- April 4, 2015: Keeneland's signature Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (G1) prep, the Toyota Blue Grass, became a million-dollar race. The stakes also was moved to opening Saturday of the Spring Meet, joining the \$500,000 Central Bank Ashland (G1) and three other stakes to create a blockbuster day of racing.
- On Oct. 30-31, 2015, Keeneland for the first time hosted the Breeders' Cup World Championships (see page 127).

One of Keeneland's goals in hosting the Breeders' Cup was to enhance the quality of horses racing here during the Spring and Fall Meets. The success of the event heightened enthusiasm for racing here and introduced many horsemen to the track's world-class facilities and lucrative racing program.

During the 2016 Spring Meet, 45 horses who competed in the 2015 Breeders' Cup either raced or worked at Keeneland. Thirty-five horses raced here, and an additional 10 horses trained here.

Spring Excitement

Each April, early symptoms of Kentucky Derby fever are apparent as contenders from across the nation compete in the Toyota Blue Grass (G2). Since 1937, 18 horses have used the Blue Grass as a steppingstone to victory in the Derby, including Street Sense (2007), Thunder Gulch (1995), Unbridled (1990), Sea Hero (1993) and Strike the Gold (1991).

The Central Bank Ashland is a premier prep for fillies with aspirations of competing in the \$1 million Kentucky Oaks (G1). Thirty-three fillies have won the Oaks off a start in the Ashland, including 2016 winner Cathryn Sophia, who was third in the Central Bank Ashland. She joins such standouts as

Bob Elliston | Vice President of Racing and Sales

Biography can be found on page 10.



Ben Huffman | Racing Secretary

Ben Huffman brings a wealth of racing experience to his position as Keeneland's Racing Secretary, which he has held since 2002.

A native of Louisville, Ky., Huffman attended Western Kentucky University and the University of Louisville. He began working for his father, trainer William G. (Blackie) Huffman, as a teenager and for three years was his assistant. His first job in a racing office was at Ellis Park in 1990 when he worked as the claims clerk. His first job at Keeneland was also as a claims clerk.

Huffman worked as a paddock judge, patrol judge, stakes coordinator and placing judge before becoming co-assistant racing secretary at Saratoga in 1996 and 1997. He became the late Howard Battle's assistant racing secretary at Keeneland in 1994. At 30, Huffman was named racing secretary at Ellis Park. He also has served as assistant racing secretary at Turfway Park. Huffman was stakes coordinator at the Fair Grounds from 2002-2003, and racing secretary and director of racing from 2003-2006. He was named racing secretary and director of racing at Churchill Downs in the fall of 2006.

Ben resides in Crestwood, Ky., with his wife, Christi, and daughters, Abbey and Annie.



Keeneland/Photos by Z

Silverbulletday, Summerly, Princess Rooney, Blush With Pride, Optimistic Gal and Real Delight.

In 2015, Lovely Maria became the latest Central Bank Ashland winner to take the Oaks.

The Toyota Blue Grass and the Central Bank Ashland are worth 100 points each to the winners on the Road to the Kentucky Derby and Road to the Kentucky Oaks, respectively.

In 2017, Keeneland will present a \$4.325 million stakes schedule for its Spring Meet that offers 16 stakes, led by the Toyota Blue Grass and Central Bank Ashland and introduces Stonestreet as sponsor of the Lexington (G3). The Stonestreet Lexington is one of the final Derby preps.

Other Grade 1 stakes during the Spring Meet are the \$300,000 Madison on opening Saturday; \$300,000 Maker's 46 Mile, one of the sport's key turf stakes early in the year; and the Coolmore Jenny Wiley, a 1 1/16-mile race for fillies and mares on the turf – won in 2016 by champion Tepin. Last year, Miss Temple City became the first filly to run in and win the Maker's 46 Mile.

Fall Excellence

In October, Keeneland's signature Fall Stars Weekend offers an exciting kick-off to the Fall Meet, when nine graded stakes are contested opening weekend. Five of those races are Grade 1 events: the Darley Alcibiades, Shadwell Turf Mile, Claiborne Breeders' Futurity, First Lady and Juddmonte Spinster.

A sixth Grade 1 stakes, the \$500,000 Queen Elizabeth II Challenge Cup Presented by Lane's End, is an internationally renowned invitational for 3-year-old fillies at 1 1/8 miles on the turf.

Fans see many Breeders' Cup-bound stars prep at Keeneland as a prelude to the World Championships. Eight Breeders' Cup Challenge stakes are run Fall Stars Weekend: Darley Alcibiades (a Challenge race for the Juvenile Fillies-G1) and Stoll Keenon Ogden Phoenix-G2 (Sprint-G1) on Oct. 6; Shadwell Turf Mile (Mile-G1), Claiborne Breeders' Futurity (Sentient Jet Juvenile-G1), First Lady (Filly and Mare Turf-G1) and Thoroughbred Club of America (Filly and Mare Sprint-G1) on Oct. 7; and Juddmonte Spinster (Distaff-G1) and Dixiana Bourbon-G3 (Juvenile Turf-G1) on Oct. 8.

The ninth Breeders' Cup Challenge race is the JPMorgan Chase Jessamine (G3), which awards the winner a berth in the Juvenile Fillies Turf (G1).

Forty-two horses that have won 45 Breeders' Cup races made their final start before the World Championships during Keeneland's Fall Meet. In 2016, horses that prepped at Keeneland in October won two Breeders' Cup races: Claiborne Breeders' Futurity winner Classic Empire captured the Sentient Jet Breeders' Cup Juvenile, and Shadwell Turf Mile third-place finisher

Katherine McKee |

Director of Racing Administration and Horsemen's Relations



As Director of Racing Administration and Horsemen's Relations, Katherine McKee supports Keeneland's racing program through such responsibilities as completing the annual license renewal process required by the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission; compiling necessary materials for the National Thoroughbred Racing Association Safety and Integrity Alliance accreditation; ensuring Keeneland adheres to Alliance standards; coordinating horsemen's relations and overseeing the trophy program.

McKee, who is from Henderson, Ky., is a graduate of Transylvania University in Lexington and has an MBA from the University of Kentucky.

She has worked at Keeneland since 2006.

Katherine has two children, Ava Katherine and Walker.

Javier Barajas | Track Superintendent



Named Keeneland's Track Superintendent on Aug. 5, 2014, Javier Barajas supervises maintenance of the 1 1/16-mile dirt track, along with the seven-furlong turf course and the five-furlong Polytrack training track.

Barajas has nearly four decades of expertise in international race track installation and maintenance. He began working on track and turf course crews at Arlington Park in 1976. In 1996, he was promoted to track superintendent, a position he held for 13 years. During that time, he managed the dirt track and turf course, and oversaw installation of the synthetic Polytrack surface.

In 2009, Barajas became track superintendent for the Dubai Racing Club, overseeing the care of Meydan Racecourse, home of the \$10 million Dubai World Cup (G1), and its associated training facilities. He also was the track superintendent for Canterbury Park, which features a dirt track and turf course.

Javier and his wife, Sylvia, have a son, Roberto, and a daughter, Elizabeth.

Tourist took the Breeders' Cup Mile.

Classic Empire earned the 2016 Eclipse Award as champion 2-year-old male.

Historic Vision

That Keeneland is such a special place is no accident. Grand thinking by Jack Keene, coupled with the shared aspirations of a group of prominent horsemen, most notably Hal Price Headley and Maj. Louie Beard, and the careful stewardship of subsequent management led to Keeneland's creation.

With the demise of the Kentucky Association track near downtown Lexington in 1933, horsemen faced a dilemma: For the first time in more than 100 years the city was without a race track. Concerned citizens began meeting in 1934 after determining it wasn't feasible to reopen the shuttered track. From among 20 locations, they selected Jack Keene's property, primarily because Keene was willing to part with the property for much less than its fair market value. Plus, the site included a mile-and-a-furlong private track, combination stone castle and barn, a 100,000-gallon water tank, a roadway and land for future stables and parking.

The facility, while a good start, still

required much work. Headley, Beard and others worked feverishly around the clock, and a mere 15 months later, Keeneland opened its gates. It was managed by the Keeneland Association, which consisted of a team of volunteers under the direction of Beard and Headley, Keeneland's first President.

On opening day, more than 8,000 fans came to the races — ranging from locals who simply wanted to see racing in their hometown for the first time in years to titans of business who brought their best bloodstock to compete. By the end of the nine-day meet, Keeneland had scraped by, losing just \$3.47 in its first year. Lexington, a town of 46,000, had supported racing's comeback as the meet posted attendance of 25,337. And even with 15 million Americans out of work, those fans had taken a gamble or two, wagering more than \$500,000.

As Headley said, "We want a place where those who love horses can come and picnic with us and thrill to the sport of the Bluegrass. We are not running a race plant to hear the click of the mutuel machines. We want them to come out here to enjoy God's sunshine, fresh air and to watch horses race."