

# COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

Juddmonte Farms  
produces exceptional  
racehorses with its  
blue-chip breeding stock  
and supports Keeneland  
with strategic purchases  
and race sponsorship

By Maryjean Wall / Photos by Lee Thomas







Juddmonte Farms encompasses some 1,500 acres, home to a carefully cultivated group of broodmares and their foals.

The trees at Juddmonte Farms speak a language of tranquility. Their branches are heavy with leaf on summer days, evoking a pleasing passage into a timeless past. Central Kentucky looked this way some 200 years ago, renowned then for its heavily wooded pastures. Juddmonte, tree by tree, has re-created the look by planting some 500,000 trees over three decades.

Prince Khalid Abdullah's love of trees is a lesser-known side of this Saudi Arabian businessman and founder of Juddmonte. The prince is better known to racing fans for his success in nearly every significant event, including the Epsom Derby, Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, Breeders' Cup Classic, and the Belmont Stakes. But on his various breeding farms resides the soul of his operation, with trees expressing his joy in simple things and his firm belief in stewardship of the land.

"In 1995 a tornado came through and knocked down a lot of huge, magnificent oak trees on one section of the farm," said Garrett O'Rourke, now in his 25th year as Juddmonte manager. "Prince Khalid called that his Stubbs field because he had a Stubbs painting that had all these magnificent old oak trees in it. I think it saddened him that they came down."

The farm installed replacement saplings, running up the total of what O'Rourke said must be half a million trees. Juddmonte



Garrett O'Rourke has helped guide the American operation for 25 years.

planted this number on its three farms along Walnut Hill Road, plus another on Lemons Mill Road sold this year.

"We never skimped on planting trees," said veterinarian John Chandler, Juddmonte president. "When we bought this place, it was bare. The prince has said, 'I plant trees for the future.' He loves planting trees."

Juddmonte has evolved from an original 1,100 acres to its present size of almost 1,500 acres. The American operation complements the prince's breeding operations in England and Ireland even while serving its own purpose. Juddmonte in Lexington is part of a vast empire that has made Prince Khalid one of the most successful participants in Thoroughbred racing, ever.

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The farm has a long and rich history with Keeneland. Juddmonte has sponsored Keeneland's Grade 1, \$500,000 Juddmonte Spinster Stakes for fillies and mares since 2005. The Spinster is one of Keeneland's most storied stakes races, producing horses that have won 10 runnings of the Breeders' Cup Distaff and counting numerous champions among its winners. Juddmonte

won the 2013 Spinster with Emollient, who accounted for the Grade 1 Central Bank Ashland that same year. To date Juddmonte has won 17 stakes at Keeneland, earning a milestone Keeneland Tray in the fall of 2005 and putting the farm only two wins away from a Keeneland Pitcher. Juddmonte's champion turf mare Intercontinental notched three of those stakes wins, including the 2005 WinStar Galaxy as a prep for her victory in the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Turf.

Juddmonte has been a dominating force in U.S. racing for more than a quarter century.

Prince Khalid is a three-time Eclipse Award winner as outstanding owner (2016, 2003, and 1992) and five-time Eclipse Award winner as outstanding breeder (2009, 2003, 2002, 2001, 1995).

Juddmonte has won five Breeders' Cup races, including last year's \$5.52 million Breeders' Cup Classic with Arrogate, to be the all-time leading Breeders' Cup owner in money won (\$13,355,820).

Juddmonte bought Arrogate, a 4-year-old son of Unbridled's Song, for



Frankel represents a crowning achievement for Prince Khalid.

\$560,000 from breeder Clearsky Farms at Keeneland's 2014 September yearling sale. Trained by Bob Baffert, Arrogate has emerged as a preeminent force in his generation, accumulating "world" title wins in the aforementioned Breeders' Cup Classic and inaugural \$12 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational and \$10 million Dubai World Cup in 2017. To date, his career bankroll stands at \$17,102,600, making him the richest

North American-based Thoroughbred in history, and third highest-earning Thoroughbred in the world. For his accomplishments, Arrogate won the Eclipse Award as champion 3-year-old colt and ranked as the World's Best Racehorse of 2016 by the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities.

Arrogate has been a great source of satisfaction to the prince, a man said to be 80 but who points out that not even he is certain of his age; he never had a birth certificate.

When Arrogate retires to stud at Juddmonte, he will join the farm's highly decorated breeding stallion Mizzen Mast. A long list of



Part of the Arrogate "collection"



Arrogate has conquered the world's most prestigious races.



The late Bobby Frankel, third from left, elevated Juddmonte's U.S. racing presence.

premier stallions that includes Alhabatim, Aptitude, Chester House, Distant View, Empire Maker, Exbourne, First Defence, and Known Fact, has been in residence at Juddmonte in Kentucky over the years, for access to leading stallions has been of major importance to this operation. In fact, access to a portfolio of prominent stallion shares was a major reason Prince Khalid acquired the initial portion of Juddmonte in 1982.

### Package deal

Herbert Schnapka, a veterinarian, sold the original 1,100 acres of Juddmonte to the prince. The land then was known as Belair Stud and the transaction included a package of extreme importance to Prince Khalid: mares, foals, and most of all, a portfolio of stallion shares to give him access to some of the world's premier stallions, "given that Nijinsky and Blushing Groom and all the best stallions were (in Kentucky)," O'Rourke said.

Schnapka also owned a breeding farm in Ireland, called Ferrans Stud, as Chandler recalled. "The prince bought all his [Schnapka's] interests and all his farms, which included this

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## commitment to quality



Early in its existence, Juddmonte sent most of its young horses to Europe for racing. But Prince Khalid began keeping increasing numbers in the United States to race — with great success.

farm here,” he said. For about two years prior to this transaction, Prince Khalid had kept his American-based mares at Mill Ridge Farm, whose founder, Alice Headley Chandler, is married to John Chandler.

The prince began supporting the sales and building a broodmare band intended solely to supply his English and Irish racing stables. During those initial years, all foals produced on the Kentucky farm went to Europe to race.

“All of our early brilliant runners in Europe, the ones that were produced

over here, were by American-based stallions out of our [American-based] mares,” O’Rourke said.

The prince was assembling a group of broodmares equal in every way to the brilliant sires he accessed through shares and other means. Some of the original mares he acquired in a package deal from the late Robert Sangster, who waged legendary bidding battles for offspring of Northern Dancer in the Keeneland sales arena of the early 1980s. Included in that package was Sookera, a Roberto daughter

who was the female-line ancestress of significant winners, including champions Leroidesanimaux, Banks Hill, and Intercontinental, the latter two Breeders’ Cup winners for Juddmonte, and leading sire Dansili.

Chandler brought to mind a few of the families the prince’s original mares founded. One was Mofida. “Mofida had a very nice daughter called Zaizafon [by The Minstrel], the dam of Zafonic [1992 juvenile champion male in Europe and winner of the 1993 Two Thousand Guineas],”

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Chandler said. “The next mare [among foundation bloodstock] was called Modena who was by Roberto out of Mofida. Those were two of the most influential mares we had.”

A third mare, Tugela, was the dam of Makybe Diva, the latter a three-time winner (under ownership other than the prince) of the Melbourne Cup in Australia.

In more recent times Toussaud assumed a premier place in the broodmare band. She defeated males in both Europe and the United States, but her story really was in her offspring, a group led by Grade 1 winners Honest Lady, Chester House, and Empire Maker, the latter two who became prominent sires.

The Lexington farm’s acreage expanded to accommodate the growing broodmare band, but in a fashion dictated by practicality; none of the three farms adjoins the others. O’Rourke believes that “being so close to town, with [available] land in smaller parcels, it was going to be impossible to try to join up the farm ... as land became available we acquired properties along the way.” When O’Rourke visits the various sections, he drives with his dogs Masie and Darby happily ensconced in the rear of his SUV.

The number of broodmares at one point reached about 120 in the United States and about 300 in Europe. “We were producing more horses but not necessar-



The Juddmonte colors are known around the racing world.

ily more quality horses, and at that point we started to reduce numbers,” O’Rourke said. Now the numbers total about 70 mares in this country and from 120 to 130 in Europe. The latter mares reside in England on the prince’s farms in Gloucestershire, called Estcourt; in Newmarket at his farm called Banstead Manor; and at a collection of farms in Ireland under the banner of New Abbey and Ferrans.

### American presence

Over the past couple of decades, American racing fans became increasingly familiar with the prince’s pink-and-green silks as he began bringing back his American-bred horses following their European careers. He sought additional graded stakes opportunities for them in this country.

Then, further change became apparent in the prince’s decisions over where to race. He began keeping increasing numbers of young horses in the United States instead of sending them to Europe first.

“There were very few of those at first when I came to Juddmonte in the early 1990s,” said O’Rourke. “There were probably only about six that would stay to race here as 2-year-olds. But they were a well-chosen six, and we had a lot of success with Aptitude, Flute, and Honest Lady.”

Success breeds success, or as O’Rourke likes to explain, the prince tends to follow emerging trends by concentrating more resources in those directions. “If a trainer, a jockey, whatever, is succeeding for him, he wants them working for him; and (Hall of Fame trainer) Bobby Frankel did tremendously well with the initial horses that were sent to him.”

Frankel’s relationship with Juddmonte unfolded like a fairy tale. Early on Frankel had operated what largely was a low-profile stable. Then, in the 1980s in California, according to the Daily Racing Form — with the backing of such major owners as Bert and Diana Firestone, Ed Gann, Jerry Moss, and Stavros Niarchos in the 1980s — Frankel gradually turned his barn into one filled with stakes runners. His success with European imports attracted the attention of Prince Khalid and John Chan-



Young horses get their early lessons on the farm, which is home to one stallion, the successful Mizzen Mast.



The hands-on approach characterizes horse care at Juddmonte from the outset through early racehorse training and beyond.

dlar, who boosted Frankel's stock significantly by turning over the United States-based horses of Juddmonte Farms.

The Racing Form noted upon Frankel's death from leukemia at age 68 in 2009 that Juddmonte had won six Eclipse Awards as champion owner or breeder since being associated with Frankel. (Juddmonte and its horses have won a total of 15 Eclipse Awards.)

Frankel's business relationship with Juddmonte evolved into personal relationships as well. O'Rourke told BloodHorse that "my admiration for Bobby and his achievements evolved into quite a close friendship, one that never was forced. Bobby could put on a cold exterior, but there was softness inside him, especially for animals. He had a genuine love for and connection with animals, mainly horses and dogs. He had a very kind side to him."

Clearly Frankel's success was a turning point in persuading Juddmonte to race a great number of its American-bred horses stateside, particularly those from sires proving a success in dirt racing. This decision paid off spectacularly with Empire Maker (2003 Belmont Stakes winner and grandsire of 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah) and Aptitude (winner of the Grade 1 Hollywood Gold Cup and Jockey Club Gold Cup).

Frankel's death was a huge blow for Juddmonte. "It's not just how good a trainer he was but he developed relationships," O'Rourke said. Those relationships included families of horses. "After years of training horses [for Juddmonte], he was getting offspring of those horses, and as brilliant a trainer as he was, the help of knowing the quirks in lots of the families made him be even better with them. That had evolved to where it was firing on all cylinders — and then he was gone. That was hard on the operation."

Another storybook tale was Juddmonte's naming a horse for Frankel. The late, great Sir Henry Cecil trained Frankel in

Europe for Prince Khalid, and the world took quick notice of the colt's talent.

Frankel was a boon to Cecil in the twilight of his career. The legendary trainer had suffered setbacks late in life, resulting in the loss of some high-profile clients. Then, Cecil himself became ill with cancer. Through the difficult days, Prince Khalid never stopped sending horses to Cecil. In 2010, the prince turned over to Cecil the colt he had named for his late American trainer, Frankel. Following a brilliant racing career, Frankel retired in 2012 undefeated in 14 career races and was the highest-rated horse of all time in Europe. He now stands stud at Juddmonte's Banstead

Manor Stud in England. Cecil, who had continued to work while receiving cancer treatments, died the following year.

Today, trainers Chad Brown and Bill Mott have horses for Juddmonte in Florida and New York. Baffert is the California-based trainer of Arrogate. When the 4-year-old retires to Juddmonte Farm in Kentucky at the close of his racing career, he will take up the banner passed down through the years from the farm's original stallion, Known Fact,

best known for offspring Markofdistinction and Warning. Known Fact, winner of the 1980 Queen Elizabeth II Stakes and Two Thousand Guineas, was an early success for Juddmonte and represented all that Prince Khalid hoped for in Thoroughbred racing.

The trees, now mature, have been another success, even if it does take longer than a Thoroughbred for a tree to reach its peak.

"Even after we're all gone, it's nice to know that the beauty of the trees will still be around, that someone will still be enjoying it," O'Rourke said. "I'm sure a lot of what we've planted will be around for a couple hundred years."

As will Prince Khalid's legacy in Thoroughbred racing, as one who supported the land and participated as one of the most successful racing and breeding operations of all time. **KM**



A future champion might be found in this field.