

Gold Bar

By Richard Chamberlain



The filly set the gold standard.

IT HAS BEEN 55 YEARS SINCE A LITTLE-KNOWN Thoroughbred named Three Bars was represented by his first stakes winner. On April 22, 1951, Gold Bar won the Baby Stakes at Rillito racetrack in Tucson – after finishing second to Parker’s Trouble, who was taken down with a positive drug test for having a cough treated with penicillin.

But on June 29, Gold Bar proved she was for real. Sid Vail’s homebred sorrel filly won the Central Bar & Grill Futurity, a 440-yard test that at \$5,290 was the richest race for freshmen sprinters at Ruidoso Downs.

“Gold Bar was in front or close to it nearly all the way through,” recalls LaVar Larson, 83, who now is retired in Green Valley, Arizona, but trained Gold Bar for her owner, who also owned and was trying to prove Three Bars. “It seemed like she had the race under control the whole way, and that win picture shows her winning by a neck.”

That was over Parker’s Trouble, an Ed Echols colt out of a Three Bars mare. Finishing third was Miss Bars, a Three Bars filly out of a King P-234 mare. Understand now that Three Bars wasn’t unknown – Barred had alerted folks in the know with his Arizona track records in ‘48 and ‘50. But Gold Bar sealed the deal. The filly was one of her sire’s 11 offspring foaled in 1949, a crop that included the track-record-setting stakes winner Barjo and champion Tonto Bars Gill. Gold Bar was out of the Smoky T mare Goldienug, who traced top and bottom to Peter McCue.

In a career stretching from January 1951 till August ‘55, Gold Bar set three track records and equaled three others, and earned \$29,219 while winning 24 of 45 races.

Overall, the filly won 10 stakes, ran second in another and finished third in five. But it was her freshmen year that was especially spectacular, when she went undefeated through four stakes and three other races and earned \$10,182 – this at a time when \$300 would get a breeding to Three Bars.

Winning races such as the Central Bar & Grill shot Three Bars’ stud fee through the roof. And this running had no bunch of slackers, either: Black Easter Bunny finished fourth, and was followed by Chudej’s Black Gold, Black Mike and Mistletoe Miss.

“Yeah, there were some nice horses in there,” Larson says. “Black Easter Bunny’s trainer, Walt Culbertson, had won that race the year before with another colt, and I heard from him pretty early. Before we ever ran the trials, he came over to check out Gold Bar. Nobody knew who I was and probably didn’t know her, but one of the things that impressed me when I first got to Ruidoso – I had barely gotten Gold Bar bedded down one morning, and I came out of the tack room



and there was a well-dressed man sitting on a bale of straw right beside her stall. I thought, ‘Wow, what’s this guy want?’ He stood up and introduced himself, said he owned the Central Bar & Grill, said he wanted to come down and see what my filly looked like. I guess the stable guy or somebody had called him, because he almost beat me there that morning. I thought, ‘Wow, what’s this all about?’ He was very friendly and very polite, well-dressed in western clothes, and it punched me up. I didn’t know quite what to think about it. I mean, I was nobody.”

Not anymore, he wasn’t. Neither was his filly. Gold Bar was off and running. And so was her sire. 🐾