

# EVER WONDER?

*Racing is a sport of dreams.*

**By Jack Frazier**

SINCE THE INCEPTION OF AMERICAN Quarter Horse racing, there has been a host of great sires who went on to sire great runners who themselves became great sires.

Ever wonder how it would turn out if you had a pretty good racehorse who had a pretty good sire, and you had the chance to see them run at each other? In the back of your mind, you might have pictured First Down Dash racing Dash For Cash or Easy Jet taking a shot at Jet Deck.

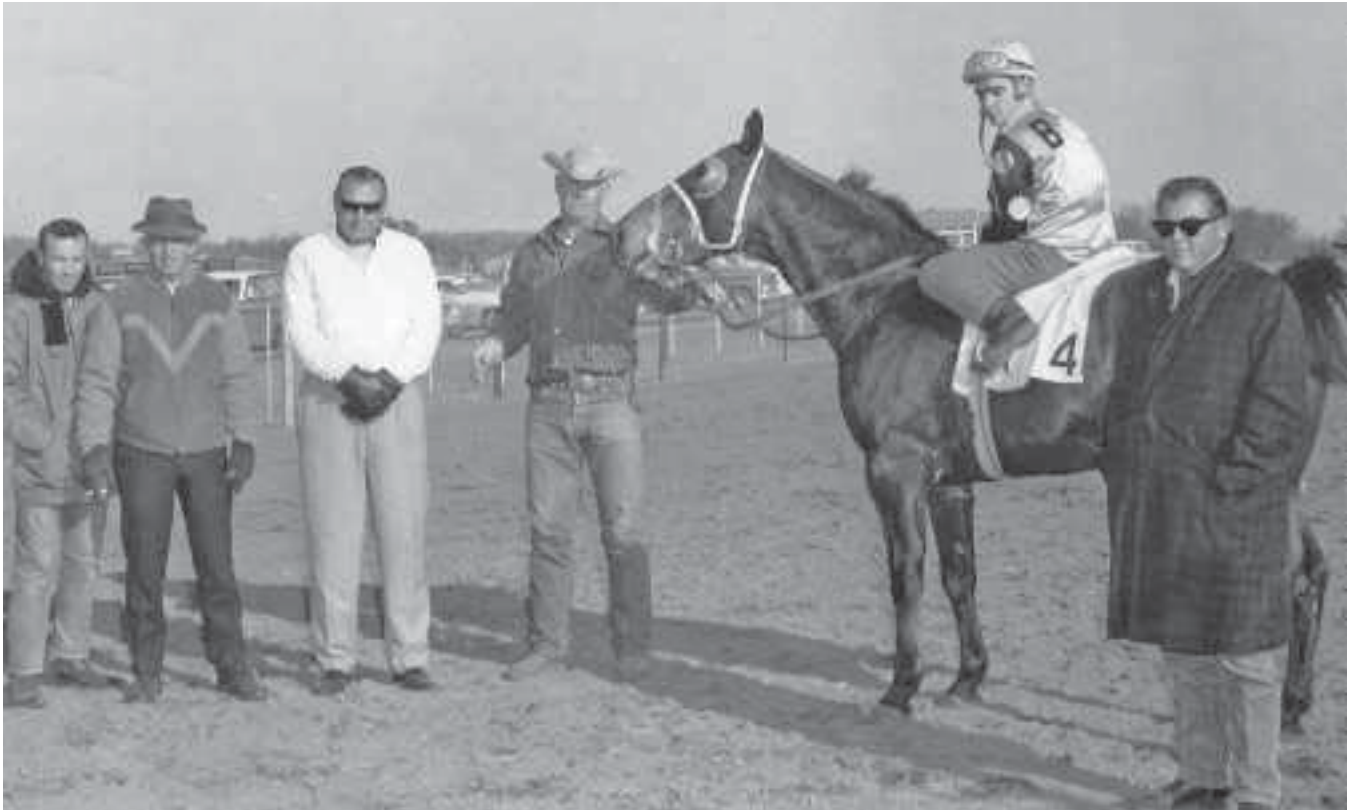
Because of embryo transplants, the possibility of siblings racing against each other increases with each season. But racing a sire against his son has seldom occurred, though it did at least once nearly five decades ago on a small ranch at Pryor Creek, Oklahoma. The year was 1963,

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and the ranch belonged to Bucky Howard, whose ancestors include Stand Waite, the last Confederate General to surrender in the American Civil War. Waite was a full-blooded Cherokee, and when the war broke out the Cherokee Nation joined the Confederacy because of the treatment they received under President Andrew Jackson during the Indian removal known as the Trail of Tears.

Howard loved two things just less than he loved his family, and those were music and Quarter Horses.

He was a friend of Ronald Mason, who owned Oklahoma Star, and other very good running Quarter Horses, and also of Brandy Culver, who trained Van-



**Legs Diamond and Frazier in the winners circle at Blue Ribbon Downs in December 1964, when Frazier was a senior in high school. From left to right: Gene Johnson, former jockey who also trained for Leo Winters, lieutenant governor of Oklahoma; Bucky Howard, owner and trainer of Legs Diamond; Houston Cardwell, an owner and trainer who was the father-in-law of jockey Donnie Knight, who rode world champion Easy Date; Walter Hansen, owner, trainer and farrier, who started Frazier riding at Muskogee, Oklahoma in 1961; and Max Thomas, owner and trainer of many good Quarter Horses.**

dy's Flash for John Askew. Howard also was an accomplished musician who played the music of Jimmy Rogers and Woody Guthrie, and had a band before World War II. During the war, he served America honorably as well.

Howard was a very good horseman and a good trainer, but after the war opted to stay home to raise his family rather than hit the road to train horses. His older son wound up being a stockbroker and the younger son became a veterinarian who still works at Johnny T.L. Jones' Walmac Farm, where he saved the life of Nureyev (TB).

Howard always had a pretty nice horse or two around. In 1957, Howard's Boston Blacky ran second to Mr Bar None in the Oklahoma Futurity at Enid. He liked foundation sires, and through Bill Hedge, who founded Blue Ribbon Downs at Sallisaw, bred his Billy R mare Red Hot B to Bill Doolin and in 1960 got a filly he named Mean Mama.

The next year, Howard bred Red Hot B to Merry Legs Jr, a son of Leo out of the Bert mare Merry Legs E, and got a pretty good colt he named Legs Diamond. Back then, owners of stallions sometimes loaned their studs to friends to breed mares, and Howard borrowed Merry Legs Jr to breed Mean Mama and Red Hot B.

Howard had a friend named Carl "Red" Swift, who came around once in a while and on one occasion, when Merry Legs Jr still was at Howard's place, talked about how it would be to see the son and sire race each other. Legs Diamond had run third to Little Lady Go and Bar None Bob in a trial heat for that year's Oklahoma Futurity and had outrun the Oklahoma winner, Mr Streaky Bar, in a match race, so the idea was intriguing, to say the least.

Howard had a quarter-mile track with a set of starting

gates on his property. Swift arranged for Joe Ebert to come from Claremore to ride Merry Legs Jr, and I got to ride Legs Diamond. On a Saturday afternoon, with only a few people at the ranch, the race was on. No money was wagered – so they told me – but it was serious business, anyway.

Merry Legs Jr was a AAA racehorse in his own right and was 6 years old at the time that Legs Diamond was 2. The older horse was bigger, stouter and could really run, and to make things fair, Howard had galloped and trained him for a while before the race, which was to be a one-time affair at 220 yards.

On the big day, everyone showed up, milling around until the action started. The horses were saddled and warmed up, and as they marched to the gate, more than a little nervousness settled in on at least one of the riders.

Both horses loaded, settled and got ready to run, and then the gate opened. The two horses surged out in tandem, no more than an inch between them. Ears pinned flat, each horse gave his heart and soul to outrun the other. The two raced almost as a team, though Merry Legs Jr slowly moved ahead, first by a nose, then a head. But about 10 yards from the finish pole, a very determined Legs Diamond made one final move and the horses crossed the finish line too close to call.

Almost. Merry Legs Jr beat his son by a head.

All in all, it was an afternoon to remember, one that conjures images of First Down Dash taking on his sire or Easy Jet going against his. Wouldn't it be great if we could capture moments like these to savor on long, cold nights when good conversation and memories fill our lives? We can only dream. 🐾

*If you have a story to share, e-mail us at [aqhajrnl@aqha.org](mailto:aqhajrnl@aqha.org)*