

Making *Runners*

Follow along as a couple of 2-year-olds continue their freshman seasons.

By Richard Chamberlain

THE RACING JOURNAL CONTINUES ITS SERIES LOOKING AT THE PROCESS of turning race-bred prospects into racehorses and how those horses perform on the track. The two freshmen being profiled are products of Vessels Stallion Farm.

Harems Last Dash is a First Down Dash colt out of the Beduino (TB) mare Harems Choice. Trained by Mike Joiner at Ruidoso Downs in New Mexico, “Harem” has started twice, but pulled up with sore shins after the July 2 trials to the Rainbow Futurity (G1). The colt then returned to the farm at Bonsall, California, to rest and recuperate. On September 22, “Harem” returned to the track, this time at Los Alamitos, where Joiner’s son Cody is pointing him to American Quarter Horse racing’s richest event, the Los Alamitos Two Million Futurity (G1) on December 11.

Cody Joiner, 29, learned his trade as his father’s assistant trainer, and trains his own stable of 17 horses at Los Alamitos. In addition to horses for Vessels, the younger Joiner also conditions for owners such as Dr. Ed Allred and Double Bar S Ranch. Joiner has been involved with champions Brimmerton and FDD Dynasty, Grade 1 winners Alice K White and All About Ease, and six-figure earners such as Fishers Tale (\$363,312), Jess Rapid (\$300,138) and Identity Theft (\$225,469). Joiner lives in Garden Grove, California, with his longtime girlfriend, Laura Burger, who manages the office and handles all the bookwork for his barn.

Whole Lot Of Karma also is at Los Alamitos, where he is trained by Chris O’Dell. The Apollo (TB) gelding out of the First Down Dash mare Its Good To Be Queen has won one of three starts. With Juan Andrade in the irons, “Karma” on June 20 finished second to Tylerite in the Ed Burke Memorial Juvenile (R). Prepping for the trials to the PCQHRA Breeders’ Futurity (G1), Karma on August 28 worked 350 yards in :18.20. He then won his September 12 trial in :17.535, narrowly missing the Pacific Coast final by 5/1000ths. Karma next was to start in the October 17 trials to the Golden State Million Futurity (G1).

The *Racing Journal* spoke September 29 with Cody Joiner and O’Dell.

Harems Last Dash Cody Joiner, trainer

I STILL HELP DAD OUT AS MUCH AS I CAN, AND AS A MATTER OF fact, Harems Last Dash will still run in his name the remainder of the year. “Harem” is still my Dad’s horse.



COURTESY CODY JOINER

Harems Last Dash

I got Harem a week ago. I actually first saw the horse at the Los Alamitos Equine Sale, ironically, just about a year ago to date. I just *loved* him, absolutely loved the horse. He has terrific conformation and, obviously, is bred in the purple. His overall demeanor and manners were great, and I just love the way he did things. But that was pretty much all I had to do with the horse up until he came here a week ago.

My opinion of the horse hasn't changed at all. I did watch Harem run in Ruidoso a couple of times. He seemed a little bit immature and whatnot, but I think the horse is going to be a very, very nice horse. He still has all the tools and the talent. My Dad has always spoken pretty highly of the horse. He really likes him, and I tell you what, Dad has never steered me wrong, as far as that goes.

Harem was turned out for about two months at Vessels. In fact, while he was there, "Pancho" (Francisco Ramirez) ponied the horse and did some minimal exercising on him. So the horse came in here with a little bit of a bottom in him and he really looked great. I've already taken the horse to the track three or four times, and he's done just absolutely perfect.

I'm probably going to give Harem a little breeze in the next week or so. We're trying to shoot for the Two Million. If we make it, we make it – but ultimately, that's going to be up to my Dad, to decide whether he's ready or not. Dad and I will discuss it, obviously, because I think he values my opinion a little bit. We'll make a decision whenever we get to that point. As long as Harem holds up physically, I think there's a good chance that we'll be able to run the colt in the Los Alamitos Two Million trials.

Whether we'd start him beforehand, like in a little allowance, is something that at this point we'll just have to play by ear. The horse ultimately is going to be telling us whether he's ready or not, both physically and psychologically. We're going to just take it a step at a time and see how the horse progresses.

To get this horse ready to meet the challenge of horses that have been running here all year long – good horses, obviously, because the horses that are going to go in that kind of race are very talented – he's going to get that first breeze at half to three-quarters speed. Then we'll turn and breeze him again, and it would be a little more solid breeze. And he'll need at least a gating – a gate work, as well – to get ready. So he's got a hefty schedule in front of him, but we're not going to push him ahead of where he needs to be. He's going to tell us how he's coming along. And we'll listen.

I really think this colt is going to be a very nice horse. If he doesn't show it this year, I certainly think he'll show it next year.

Anyway, we certainly have high hopes for him. With a high-profile horse like him, there's always a little bit of added pressure to do well. But in the same respect, the clientele that owns this horse have been in the business a long time and they are reasonable people with reasonable expectations. That makes it so much easier to have a horse that is this talented and this high-profile.

But Dad and I both are demanding of ourselves, as far as our performance goes. So I think the pressure falls maybe not so much on how we perform with this horse himself, but more on our operation as a whole. It's not just with this one particular horse. We've had some high-profile horses before, so we kinda know how to handle pressure.

Whole Lot Of Karma Chris O'Dell, trainer

HE'S CLOSE. HE'S GETTING SO CLOSE TO BEING RIGHT WHERE WE want him. "Karma" had the 11th-fastest time to the PCQHRA the other day. He ran a perfect race, too, and came back good. So all systems are *go*.

We are looking for the next million-dollar race that comes up. That'd be the Golden State. It's 400 yards, and that will help him some, going a little farther. He's proven he can get close going 350, so I think if he runs a little farther, he'll be OK.

Remember the things I said about him and the starting gate? (October issue, page 44) I told the starter here, "Hey, we gotta make sure this horse does good. I talked to Richard Chamberlain at the *Racing Journal*, told him what all we were going to accomplish in the gate and everything, so now don't make me look bad!"

And he didn't! I'd say, it looked like Karma did OK in the PCQHRA race. He broke good, ran good and came out of the race *real* good.

He's wrapped up and ready to go off that race the other day. So we're wanting to try him in another set of trials and see if we get lucky. He's fine for the Golden State, and that's where we're pointing him, for the time being.

I think the horse is sitting on the edge of doing something really good. We've been trying to decide whether the horse is good enough to make the finals of one of these big races. Like I said, I think he's been pretty close. He's been in two different sets of trials, and he's tied for 11th fastest (for the Ed Burke) and he's been the 11th. I think he's done pretty good, so right now we're going for the Golden State Million.

We've been lucky once again, in that the horse is holding together so good. He's happy, ready to go and, I'd say, *perfect*. We'll see what happens. ♣



COURTESY CHRIS O'DELL