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PHOTOS: BENOIT PHOTO, HORSEPHOTOS.COM

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OLLOWING his last set at 9:30 a.m. recently, trainer Richard Mandella strode inconspicuously into his stable office at Santa Anita Park wearing jeans and a straw hat.

Mandella sparred playfully with a quick-pawed gray cat for control of his desktop and spent the next hour patiently answering phone calls and talking with a steady stream of assistants, exercise riders, veterinarians, and jockey agents who stuck their heads in his doorway.

Mandella occupied the same Barn 4 in which the legendary Charlie Whittingham resided for decades. Mandella is resembling the Bald Eagle more each day with his receding hairline and growing list of accomplishments.

None glow brighter than three large Breeders' Cup Day montages that dominate one of the walls in his office. In 1993, Mandella put his name on the international map with victories in two Breeders' Cup races and two supporting stakes at Santa Anita.

Mandella outdid himself a decade later in 2003 with victories in four of the eight Breeders' Cup races for earnings of \$4,564,040 at Santa Anita during a day that was not only the best of his career, but arguably the best ever for ANY trainer. Whittingham would have certainly tipped his hat.

Another nostalgic photo showed the garlands of the four Breeders' Cup winners straddling a sawhorse outside the Mandella barn at the end of the historic day.

The montages of the two dream days flanked another of a victory by Beholder in the 2012 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies at Santa Anita, Mandella's seventh Breeders' Cup score with just 36 starters, and his third in the Juvenile Fillies. His Breeders' Cup earnings total more than \$9 million.

Preparing for another Breeders' Cup at Santa Anita on November 1 and 2, Mandella still shakes his head at the good fortune of 1993 and 2003. "As the years go by, I add a little each year," said Mandella with his self-deprecating sense of humor about his story-telling embellishment rights. "But I just can't believe it happened. I've had other days when I wondered how I ever won a race."



## Mandella ready to add another to his magnificent seven

Not necessarily hoping that weather patterns continue this year, Mandella recalled that both 1993 and 2003 Breeders' Cups were marked by unseasonably hot temperatures following fires in the nearby mountains that blackened the skies with smoke and spewed ashes on the track days before.

"The smoke was so bad one year that I had to take the horses to Hollywood Park so as not to fill their lungs with smoke and ash," recalled Mandella.

But the Hell-like weather produced heavenly

results for Mandella.

"The two days were very different," pointed out Mandella of his 1993 and 2003 quadruples.

"The first time, I only ran the four horses," he said. "I looked at the races going in and didn't see any of the four not having a good chance to win. I didn't expect all four to win, but each had a chance."

Phone Chatter rallied to nip Sardula by a head in the Juvenile Fillies and Kotashaan also came from behind for a half-length victory over



Pleasantly Perfect with Alex Solis up defeats Medaglia d'Oro in the Dubai World Cup at Nad Al Sheba

Bien Bien in the Turf, races that decided Eclipse Awards as well as Horse of the Year honors for Kotashaan.

Mandella completed his perfect day with scores by Region in the \$150,000 Skywalker Handicap and Memo in the \$100,000 Smile Handicap. The total earnings: \$1,697,500.

"One of the things that I'm proudest of is that I've had owners with me a long time," said Mandella. "The Wertheimers (Kotashaan), Herman Sarkowsky (Phone Chatter) and Claiborne (Region) still have horses with me today.

"In 1993, I thought it will never get better than this," said Mandella, never expecting that it would a decade later.

"The next time (2003), I had eight horses in," explained Mandella of the contrast to 1993. "I had cut my second barn six months earlier and was down to 35 horses from 75. It was by design. I wanted a good smaller barn for peace of mind. I was getting a little older and trying to enjoy it."

Boy, did he ever enjoy October 25, 2003! Eight starters on the Breeders' Cup card from one medium-sized 35-horse barn might have been an overlooked feat on its own. And although only one stood out as a favorite, Mandella – who two years earlier had been inducted into the Hall of Fame – had good feelings about several of his longshots as well.

"They were all blooming at the same time," said Mandella. "I looked at the form and thought they all had good chances, although I never dreamed of winning all four."

Halfbridled appeared to be a standout in the Juvenile Fillies, and only drawing the disadvantageous outside post in a field of 14 explained odds as good as 2-to-1.

"I had no doubt she was the best filly and had all the confidence in the world in her," said Mandella. "My only concern was the 14th post position, but Julie (Krone) rode a masterpiece."

*"I began feeling exhaustion, sat down for a few minutes and remembered I had a \$20 win ticket in my shoe on Pleasantly Perfect"*

Halfbridled rallied to win by 2½ lengths and Krone pointed to the filly's head to show who deserved the credit after both were showered with applause en route to the winner's circle after the first Breeders' Cup victory by a female jockey.

"Julie was always generous," said Mandella. "I thought that Halfbridled should win that race, and she did, and that took the pressure off."

A parade of double-digit longshots followed. Lightly raced Action This Day began the toteboard light-up by rallying from 12th to win

the Juvenile by 2¼ lengths over Minister Eric, a second Mandella trainee who was five lengths clear of the third-place finisher.

"Action This Day was the up-and-coming newcomer, and I always had a feeling he could win a race like this," said Mandella of the colt making only his third start.

"After he finished second in his first start at Del Mar, I told Wayne (owner B. Wayne Hughes) that I hoped we could get a maiden race for him the first week at Oak Tree because I thought he would have a good chance in the Breeders' Cup," said Mandella.

After rallying from far back for a game maiden score at the Breeders' Cup distance of 1¼ miles, Mandella thought the colt was peaking at the right time in a wide-open field. "He gave me confidence he was that good and could go that far," said Mandella, claims validated in the Breeders' Cup.

Action This Day was overlooked at 26-to-1, and Minister Eric was 8-to-1. A third Mandella-trained starter, Siphonizer, finished 10th, his only starter of the day not to pick up a check.

Mandella was just getting warmed up. The fun continued as Johar, a 14-to-1 outsider, rallied from ninth to finish in a dead-heat for first with High Chaparral in the Turf, with Falbrav another head back in third.

"The photo seemed like it took forever," said Mandella of the ensuing ten-minute wait in the broiling sun. "Johar took back and just started to run at the three-eighth pole, and once he leveled off, you could see he was really going to come home strong."

"I couldn't tell who won the photo; I just thought what a terrific race he ran," said Mandella of the four-year-old colt making his third start back after a layoff for The Thoroughbred Corporation. The Tin Man, a second Mandella trainee, finished fourth.

Mandella's Breeders' Cup day was climaxed by a perfect ending, but he was forced to sprint through the heat before saddling Pleasantly Perfect for the Classic.

"I was short of time because of the long wait," said Mandella. "I got the (Turf) picture taken and got to the paddock just in time to meet the valet waiting for me with the saddle towel in his hands.

"I felt that Pleasantly Perfect had 200 pounds on his back," said Mandella. "I thought all the good luck I had had been used up, but he didn't need good luck.

"He ran a great race, beat a good field, and I couldn't have been prouder," said Mandella of the five-year-old Diamond Racing Corporation standard-bearer, who rallied from eighth and wore down favored Medaglia d'Oro in the stretch for a 1½-length victory.

Dismissed at 14-to-1, Pleasantly Perfect made his second start back after a layoff and rewarded Mandella for his patience. "He overcame so much," said Mandella. "He had a heart virus problem as a young horse and didn't go the Breeders' Cup the previous year in Chicago when we discovered a little bit of blood cooling out after he won the Goodwood here. But he came back with a great year and then won the (2004) Dubai World Cup."

The long, hot day began taking a toll on Mandella. "Then I began feeling exhaustion, sat down for a few minutes and remembered I had a \$20 win ticket in my shoe on Pleasantly Perfect," said Mandella. "My son (trainer Gary) told me that he was 50-to-1 in the early book in Las Vegas when we took our wives out to dinner one night at Del Mar."

The day was not quite over for Mandella, who returned to send out Redattore to a

third-place finish in the \$150,000 Seabiscuit Handicap and watch Gary saddle Gold Sphinx to victory in the finale, an allowance race on turf.

"Things happened so fast that day, I didn't really feel it until days went by," said Mandella of the monumental feat.

Mandella, who turns 63 on November 5, has proudly watched son Gary develop into a Grade 1 stakes-winning trainer on his own. "I tried to chase him away from horses and get a real job, but when he grew to 6-4, I had to listen to him," said Mandella with his dry wit.

"He said he wanted to do what I do," added Mandella. "He does a good job of it and is a good person." Gary is a member of the CTT board of directors and gave his father his first grandson, Joshua, 7.

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Gary, 41, worked for his father before going on his own in 2002 and is one of many backsideers who have benefited from the education.

Mandella, in turn, praised his employees and clients for days like the 1993 and 2003 Breeders' Cups. "I can't take the credit by myself," said Mandella. "I have a great group of people that work for me and a great group of owners who always stood by what I thought was best."

Mandella, who lives in Pasadena with his wife Randi, oversees a 32-horse stable and looks forward to Breeders' Cup XXX with chief

assistants Angel Vega, Jose Vera, and Patty Eldridge.

Mandella is happy to stay here, but does not think the Santa Anita home track is the only reason for all seven of his Breeders' Cup winners. "It's more coincidence than anything," said Mandella. "It's the horse in the barn that makes the difference.

"It's always nice to be in your backyard, but we have traveled and won some big races," said Mandella, whose resume includes such coveted majors as the Dubai World Cup, Arlington Million, and Haskell Invitational.

Each Breeders' Cup that has been run in a year ending in three has produced a fabulous four for Mandella. Can the ten-year pattern continue for Mandella in 2013?

"I'm hoping I can win a race," said the veteran conditioner cautiously. His most accomplished hope is Beholder, who will try to repeat her 2012 Breeders' Cup success.

The three-year-old filly will have her work cut out in the \$2 million Distaff, expected to include defending champion Royal Delta, but Mandella is optimistic. "She's a very mature filly, and I think she's up to it," he said.

"She's a very special filly, comes off a terrific comeback at Del Mar, and ran away from them like they weren't there in the Zenyatta," said Mandella, the latter an impressive score against older females at Santa Anita on Sept. 28. Beholder has won seven of 11 starts and earned nearly \$2 million for Hughes.

Mandella also has high hopes for Indy Point in the \$2 million Turf. The four-year-old Argentine import punched his ticket with a sharp tally in the John Henry Turf Championship at Santa Anita Sept. 29 to atone for a disappointing effort in the Arlington Million when he was "banged up a little" in early traffic.

Mandella may have a couple of other rabbits to pull out of his hat as well. With that Breeders' Cup record, bet against him at your own peril. ■



Kotashaan outduels French millionaire Bien Bien in 1993 Breeders Cup Turf