



KEEP UP MORE THAN KEEPING ON

by Heather Likins

The volatile nature of Thoroughbreds is well documented. Their penchant for accidents is legendary, but the story of **Keep Up** (Unbridled's Song–Keeper Hill, by Deputy Minister), is one of a horse who overcame long odds to survive and succeed as a racehorse. Foaled Apr. 29, 2007, the bay grew into a "beautiful individual, by Unbridled's Song out of an Oaks winner in Keeper Hill, the best race mare we had raced in a long time," said Headley Bell of Mill Ridge Farm in Lexington. "As a yearling, we were very hopeful for him." Keep Up looked to have a promising future.

Instead, one morning after regular turnout with the yearlings, the colt was found injured in the field. He'd sustained a fracture of his accessory carpal bone in his knee. The prognosis was not good.

"It was severe, it was tragic, and we really didn't think he'd have much chance to survive to be honest with you," said Bell. "We put him in the stall, had him evaluated by Dr. [Stuart] Brown, and gave him a chance to see how he was going to do. It was really quite something, and it is a story which is very touching to us [at Mill Ridge]. He was an incredible patient, he took great care of himself."

A period of 60 days of stall rest followed until it was determined that Keep Up was stable enough to attempt surgery, which was performed by Dr. Robert Hunt at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute. Bell continued, "Dr. Hunt had indicated that he had a 10% chance to even race."

"It is a very uncommon fracture," agreed Hunt. "They don't typically recover well enough to race, it was an oddity for him to overcome an injury of that nature. He was a phenomenal patient, that would be the reason for his success, everyone would have to credit the horse, his temperament, his overall will to both survive and heal. And the persistence of the parties involved, the owners for sticking it out."

Keep Up was confined to his stall for the next seven months to facilitate the recovery process.

"When you think about a Thoroughbred who is accustomed to run free in nature, that was quite an adjustment," said Bell.

"We gave him a chance and one day led to another, before you knew it, he was healing. It was well down the road before you started saying, 'Well, he's managing, so why not?' It was a good eight months after the initial injury before we started thinking he'd be a racing candidate.

"Eventually out of the cast, we broke him, but we still had to take an inordinate amount of time with him," continued Bell. "He still wasn't ready, still favored that knee, so we turned him back out."

Sent to Anthony Mitchell at Keeneland, Keep Up made his first start on Oct. 29, 2010, finishing third in a maiden special weight over seven furlongs on the all-weather.

"Mitchell let us know how much talent this horse had," said Bell. "He's a big horse and, with his stride, we grew very excited about him."

Transferred to trainer Shug McGaughey, who owned a quarter interest in 1998 GI Kentucky Oaks heroine Keeper Hill and was a co-owner in Keep Up, the bay broke his maiden in his third career start over a mile on the dirt at Gulfstream Feb. 21, 2011.

According to Bell, "He was so big, the dirt was not his best surface."

Eventually, Keep Up re-injured himself and Mill Ridge decided to give him more time.

New trainer Alex Clarkson started working with Keep Up in January 2012. By this time the bay had "matured and strengthened, so that he could train," explained Bell. "[Alex] did a masterful job with him. He was an incredible patient, he was able to overcome all these things."

Clarkson added, "He was a challenge, but a good challenge, he wanted to please and he did please in more ways than one. He's a character on his own. As far as training and later, he showed a lot of composure, but he could be very rough—he wanted to overdue it in his training."



Keep Up
Reed Palmer

After a 14-month break from the races, Keep Up made his fifth start in a seven-furlong allowance

race over Keeneland's all-weather surface July 29, 2012, finishing second.

Under the care of Clarkson, he thrived, capturing the Gill River City H. and Swoon's Son S. in 2012 and 2013, respectively. Despite his knee injury, Keep Up showed great durability and versatility while racing through the age of six and capturing races on dirt, turf, and synthetic. He retired to Mill Ridge to stand alongside Johar (Gone West) with a record of 18-7-1-4 and over \$300,000 in earnings.

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KEEP UP MORE THAN KEEPING ON cont.

In describing the decision to stand Keep Up, Bell stated, "He was very, very talented; everyone [at Mill Ridge] who ever trained him or rode him or was associated with him, spoke of his raw talent. He was compromised with the knee, we just feel that, considering all that he went through, considering his breeding, considering his good looks and things like that, we want to give him a chance to be a stallion."

After discussing the candidacy of Keep Up for a 'Share the Upside' program with Mark Toothaker of Spendthrift Farm, Mill Ridge decided to go ahead with that breeding incentive plan.

Bell stated, "There will be 60 breeding rights to the horse, for \$4,000 [for two years] and you qualify for a lifetime breeding right."

Breeding to Keep Up without the incentive program will be \$5,000 LFSN.

"He's here at Mill Ridge and in Gone West's stall, as handsome a horse as you'll ever see," Bell continued. "His demeanor and attitude are everything you'd want. We're excited to have him here. The reality is, you never know where a stallion is going to come from. Obviously you'd like to line it up. You want to get the best mares possible to give him a chance."

Despite the busy holiday season, there has already been interest in Keep Up in his new role as a Mill Ridge stallion.

Bell concluded, "We live and hope and we always live in a dream in this industry, and we want the 'Share the Upside' people to live the dream."

Inbred to the great producer Killaloe through her Grade I-winning and sire son Fappiano, Bell feels Keep Up will fit most mares. He does caution against breeding in more Fappiano blood, as Keep Up is a tall horse.

Clarkson pointed out, "There are a lot of well-bred horses that are standing at stud that couldn't run, but he is well bred and he could run. I'm just so happy for [Mill Ridge founder] Alice Chandler and everyone associated with Keep Up, we always wanted him to go back to the farm and stand at stud. It's a dream come true for him to go back there, and I'm just delighted with it."

Now it's time to see if Keep Up makes it as a stallion as he retires sound to stand his first season at Mill Ridge in 2014.



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op/ed

by Frankie Lovato Jr.

TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE HEART

This week, hundreds of voters will submit their ballots for the Eclipse Awards. Recently, I have read comments that the award for Apprentice Jockey should be eliminated altogether. As the Eclipse Award-winning apprentice of 1980, an achievement I cherish to this day, it is breaking my heart that this is even in discussion.

From the surface, or should I say the "press box," it may appear looking down that some kid got lucky during their first year in the saddle; sat on some nice horses, perhaps made six figures, got a new fast shiny car and so on. As one of the lucky ones that have accomplished this great award, allow me to scratch the surface of my journey, and perhaps it'll offer some meaning to what this award has meant to me and to the others that have also achieved it.

I was eight years old when this award was inaugurated. Would a normal 8-year-old care or have any concept of what this award is about? Well, I did,



Lovato cleaning tack at Hialeah in 1979.

and as soon as I learned it existed, my eye was on the prize. I was not your typical 8-year-old and in fact, my obsession with racing and becoming a jockey started at age three. I was the youngest son of jockey Frank Lovato. My dad was a popular jockey on the East Coast circuit during the 60's and 70's. I remember before I could ride a bike, having a tack bag filled with my dad's trashed equipment; torn pants, a saddle with no stirrups, scratched goggles and two left boots. I was set and ready to go. All I ever knew and wanted was to

become a jockey. I drove my parents nuts, constantly wanting to go to the track. On weekends I was up before dawn, dressed and ready to go, tapping on my dad's bedroom door trying to get him up. I was a little snot-nosed kid hanging around the Garden State Park stable area hoping that the late, great Bobby Camac would ask me if I wanted to ride his pony around the barn once the training was done.

The obsession never swayed; my priorities were as straight as an arrow. With my father riding the Jersey circuit, it was hard to find a farm and the time to take me there. After years of begging, I got my big break. I was 13 years old when I left home.