

## Macho Again's Ownership Has a Fort Worth Connection

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By Gary West, Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Aug. 7--Sara and Jim Cutbush of Fort Worth will be right there in the Saratoga paddock Saturday, in the shade perhaps of one those venerable live oaks, alongside Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum, who also has a horse in the \$750,000 Whitney Handicap.

Jim Cutbush is a sales rep; Sheikh Mohammed is, well, a genuine sheikh from Dubai; and horse racing is the most democratic of sports. Horse racing, contrary to what you might have heard, isn't the sport of kings, or even sheikhs. Perhaps it never was. And these days, with the prominence achieved by racing partnerships, such as the one that owns Macho Again, the sport makes democracy downright vivid.

Just look in the paddock for the Whitney, or just about any other major race. Horse racing, more than ever, brings a diversity of people together, many as owners, competing at the sport's highest level.

Owning a pro baseball, basketball or football team can require a gargantuan bankroll; most people can't truly participate and have to rely instead on fantasies. But owning a top racehorse doesn't have to be a fantasy. A partnership of 17 people owns Macho Again.

The Cutbushes got involved at the beginning, two years ago, when the colt was a 2-year-old. West Point Thoroughbreds, a company that finds racing prospects and then syndicates them, put together the partnership. Initially, Macho Again was syndicated for \$280,000, including all expenses for the first year.

Since then, Macho Again has earned nearly \$1.48 million. The runner-up in last year's Preakness Stakes, he has emerged this year as one of the country's best older horses, winning the New Orleans Handicap at Fair Grounds and the Stephen Foster at Churchill Downs.

"It's a great way to get involved and own horses because you spread your risk around," Jim Cutbush said, explaining that they're also partners in four other horses, including Encore Saritta, who makes her debut today at Saratoga. The Cutbushes also have been partners in such major stakes winners as Dream Rush and Irish Smoke.

As a youngster, Cutbush often would go to Saratoga, and he went to Western Kentucky University, so he always wanted to own racehorses. It was a "dream," he said, and it was quickly embraced and shared by his wife. So they go to the sales and to most of their horses' races; and on Saturday they can pass along your best wishes to the Sheikh.

Terry Finley, the founder and president of West Point, explained that he and his team select the prospects, but potential investors and partners often attend sales. After the horses are purchased, they're assigned to a trainer, and then they're syndicated.

West Point, which began with one horse in 1991, now has 71, including such stakes winners as Mr. Fantasy, Justwhistledixie, Awesome Gem and El Gato Malo, winner of last year's Lone Star Derby. West Point has become one of the country's leading buyers of racehorses.

The expense of owning a top racehorse, Finley said, can be stunning. Insurance alone can be 4-5 percent of a horse's value. Shipping a horse by plane to compete in a major race can cost several thousands of dollars, and then there are training and veterinary expenses, plus a handsome cut for the jockey. And so for those who aren't kings or sheikhs or even satraps, partnerships continue to ensure that horse racing will remain the most democratic of sports.