

Aiken Standard

December 30, 2010



AP file photo

Quality Road was named the Aiken Trained Horse of the Year

Quality Road is Aiken's best again

By BEN BAUGH

Correspondent

Spring Hill Farm's homebred Quality Road becomes the first horse to repeat as the Aiken Trained Horse of the Year. Quality Road will be honored in a ceremony on March 20, 2011 at 12:30 p.m. at the Aiken Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame and Museum.

There will be memorabilia on display from Quality Road's racing career, and the public is invited to attend.

A winner of four Grade One races, and seven stakes contests, Quality Road set three track records that saw him win or place in 12 of 13 career starts. The bay colt was broken and trained in Aiken by Legacy Stable's Ron Stevens. "I look at it as a team effort," said Stevens, who credits his partner Brad Stauffer and their outstanding staff for playing an important role in Quality Road's early training. "It's a privilege to be associated with a horse like Quality Road."

The Virginia-bred colt broke his maiden in his debut, winning a 6 ½-furlong race at Aqueduct on Nov. 29, 2008, while being conditioned by Jimmy Jerkens. He picked up right where he left off during his juvenile campaign as a three-year-old with an impressive 4 ¼-length victory in the Grade 2 Fountain of Youth Stakes, and then established a track record setting performance in the 58th edition of the Grade 1 Florida Derby on March 28, 2009 at Gulfstream Park, completing the 1 1/8-miles distance in 1:47:72, en route to a 1 ¾-length victory.

The colt's Triple Crown hopes were derailed when Quality Road developed quarter cracks in his right front and right hind hooves. He returned to the races during his sophomore campaign, this time in the barn of four-time Eclipse Award Winning Trainer Todd Pletcher, and his return in the 6 ½-furlong Grade 2 Amsterdam Stakes at Saratoga Race Course would see him once again set a track record winning the race in a time of 1:13:74.

He wired the field in the Grade 3 Hal's Hope Stakes at Gulfstream Park on Jan. 3, 2010, and his four-year-old debut seemed to serve as a harbinger of what was to come. In his next start the 1 1/8-miles Grade 1 Donn Handicap at Gulfstream Park, Quality Road annihilated the field winning by 12 ¾-lengths and broke his own track record for the distance, stopping the timer in 1:47:49. He would run the third fastest time ever in the Grade 1 Metropolitan Mile Handicap at Belmont Park on May 31, 2010, covering the distance in 1:33:11. His other Grade 1 victory came in the Grade 1 Woodward Stakes Sept. 4, 2010 at Saratoga.

"I'm certainly proud of his accomplishments and it's very satisfying," said Stevens.

Quality Road retires with eight wins from 13 lifetime starts, having finished second three times and third once, amassing \$2,232,830 in earnings.

Bred by owner Edward P. Evans, Quality Road is by Elusive Quality, out of the Strawberry Road broodmare Kobla, a full sister to the 1997 Eclipse Award winning Three-Year-Old Filly Ajina. He entered stud at Lane's End Farm in Versailles, Ky., where he will stand his first year in 2011 for \$35,000.

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EDWARD P. EVANS

Virginia Sportsman

BY DAVID SCHMITZ

Edward P. Evans, whose breeding and racing program at his Spring Hill Farm near Casanova, Va., produced 2010 star Quality Road and numerous other major winners, died Dec. 31 of acute myeloid leukemia at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, N.Y. He was 68.

"We will miss the man first and the sportsman second," said Spring Hill manager Chris Baker. "I will miss him personally, and the sport will really miss him. He was one of a kind the way he went about his business."

Evans, who went by Ned, enjoyed a resounding season of racing in 2010. He ranked seventh on the North American owners' list with stable earnings of more than \$3.6 million and was represented by eight homebred stakes winners.

Homebred Quality Road emerged as one of the top older runners of 2010. He captured the Donn Handicap (gr. I), the Metropolitan Handicap (gr. I), the Woodward Stakes (gr. I), and the Hal's Hope Stakes (gr. III) and ran second in the Whitney Handicap (gr. I). A grade I winner the previous year, he finished in the top three in 12 of his 13 career races and earned \$2,232,830. He has been retired from racing and will enter stud at William S. Farish's Lane's End Farm near Versailles, Ky.

Said Lane's End's Bill Farish: "We've done business with Ned for a lot of years, and he was a friend as well as a business associate. He put a lot of personal time, personal thought, and brain power into his operation. He took a tremendous amount of pride in his breeding and his ability to raise horses. He was a real purist in that he would rather breed and raise and race a good horse than anything else. Quality Road was the culmination of all of that for him."

Evans' other stakes winners of 2010 included Malibu Prayer, winner of the Ruffian Invitational Handicap (gr. I) at Saratoga

over subsequent Breeders' Cup Ladies' Classic (gr. I) winner Unrivaled Belle, and New York grade II winners A Little Warm and Dixie City.

Former chairman of Macmillan Publishing, Evans was the son of Thomas Mellon Evans, also a successful breeder/owner who counted 1981 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes (both gr. I) winner and champion Pleasant Colony among his stakes winners. Edward Evans' brother, Robert "Shel," also has proved successful in racing.

Edward Evans, who took an interest in racing while in college, prided himself on being his own man in the horse business. "My operation has always been separate, and I've been doing this for a long time," he told *The Blood-Horse* in 2002. "We have an extraordinarily beautiful piece of acreage, totaling 3,000 acres, and that's why pictures are more important than family comparisons. My interest in the horses was due to the horses... You don't inherit interests."

Evans, who purchased Spring Hill in 1969, was the breeder and/or owner of more than 100 stakes winners. Ironically, he sold what turned out to be one of the best he ever bred.

Racing for William and Suzanne Warren, Saint Liam was voted 2005 Horse of the Year and champion older male after winning the Breeders' Cup Classic - Powered by Dodge (gr. I), the Donn, the Woodward, and the Stephen Foster Handicap (gr. I).

Evans' other leading runners included grade I winners Cat Moves, Christmas Kid, Gygistar, Prenup, Raging Fever, and Summer Colony.

"He's had an extraordinary record, establishing himself as one of the most successful owners and breeders," said James E. "Ted" Bassett III, former chairman of Keeneland.

Evans invested many years in breeding his best mares to top-quality stallions, adding the fillies to his broodmare band upon retirement. One of his best purchases came at the 1999 Keeneland November breeding stock sale when he bought the Strawberry Road mare Kobla, in foal to Mt. Livermore, for \$1,050,000. Kobla, winless in two starts at the racetrack, is out of the graded stakes-winning Alydar mare Winglet, and Kobla's full sister was 1997 champion 3-year-old filly Ajina. In 2006 Kobla produced Quality Road.

"He was a terrific owner for us and our stable, and he cared greatly about his horses," said Todd Pletcher, who trained Quality Road and Malibu Prayer. "He was a tremendous person for the sport and loved the game and took great pride and pleasure in breeding, raising, and racing horses."

Honored six times as the breeder of the year in Virginia, Evans was also selected as national breeder of the year by the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association in 2009.

Recently, Yale University announced that Evans, a member of the 1964 graduating class, had given a \$50 million gift to the Ivy League school toward the construction of a new building at the School of Management. The gift will fund a portion of the estimated \$189 million in construction costs, and the building will be named after Evans. University officials say it is the largest gift ever given to the School of Management.

In addition to Shel, Evans is survived by another brother, Tom.

Additional reporting by Jacqueline Duke and Ron Mitchell



Edward Evans at his Spring Hill Farm in 2002

BRANT GAMMA