

# Headley Bell

BY DEIRDRE B. BILES

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## *Bloodstock agent makes it two Derbys in a row*

If your dream is to breed a homebred classic winner, then you might want to give Headley Bell a call. The Central Kentucky bloodstock agent is an adviser to the connections of the two most recent winners of the Kentucky Derby Presented By Yum! Brands (gr. I): Street Sense and Barbaro. Jim Tafel races the former and Gretchen and Roy Jackson raced the latter.

"I'm just truly blessed," Bell said. "It's everybody's dream to have a chance to touch that Derby magic, and, in my small way, I've been able to contribute to the cause. It means a lot."

Bell operates Nicoma Bloodstock, whose offices are located at Mill Ridge Farm near

Lexington. Bell's mother, Alice Chandler, founded Mill Ridge, where such talented runners as 2005 Derby winner Giacomo, 2001 Horse of the Year Point Given, 2005 NetJets Breeders' Cup Mile (gr. IT) winner Artie Schiller, and 2006 Emirates Airline Breeders' Cup Distaff (gr. I) winner

Round Pond were raised.

Bell started Nicoma in 1979 after graduating from Vanderbilt University.

"Nicoma has always been a spoke in the wheel of Mill Ridge," Bell said. "I'm there every day, and it's part of my role to assist my mom in whatever way to allow her to enjoy the fruits of her labor. The reason I ended up working with Jim Tafel is because he had been a longtime client and friend of Mill Ridge."


When he plans matings, Bell usually gives clients three stallion choices for each mare, and that was the case with Street Sense's dam, Bedazzle.

"Maria's Mon was first; Street Cry was second; and Coronado's Quest was third," Bell said. "We went to look at all those stallions, and he (Tafel) wanted to use Street Cry somewhere. There were two mares that I recommended Street Cry for, and Bedazzle was one of them."

Mixing Street Cry and Bedazzle's bloodlines worked because her sire Dixieland Band (by Northern Dancer) is "a super broodmare sire with Hyperion blood and that crossed well with the Mr. Prospector line" in Street Cry's pedigree, Bell explained.

Tafel has recently reduced the size of his breeding venture and owns only about six mares, according to Bell. One is boarded at Drew Nardiello's Chesapeake Farm near Lexington and the others are at Mill Ridge. Tafel no longer owns Bedazzle.

"My first directive from him (Tafel) was: 'I am breeding to race, but I need the option of being prepared so I can sell,'" Bell said. "I always plan a mating with the idea of breeding a racehorse, but I also take into consideration what horse, timing wise, might be a hot stallion. In other words, I don't jump on the fashion of the day and just try to breed to the 'now' horse, the horse of the moment. Commercial breeders or people who are breeding to race are all breeding for two years or more down the road, so I try to anticipate what will be happening."

Bell's other clients include such well-known horsemen as George Strawbridge, former Mattel executive John Amerman, and Charles-Henri de Moussac of Haras du Mezeray in France. 



Headley Bell with James Tafel's wife, Gus