

In the Klarion Spotlight



THIS MONTH: MJR owner Bob Barbiaux

THE Klarion Spotlight this month shines on owner, Bob Barbiaux. Bob is a well-known and popular figure within the MJR community, not least because he has been a lynchpin of numerous partnerships over the years, dating back to his first interest in the Mtoto filly, Highland Fling. She may not have set the heather on fire with her performances, but she certainly kindled in Bob an enduring love for racehorses and for the sport. In our fea-

ture, Bob reveals that he is a life-long Green Bay Packers fan, an entirely understandable passion given that the Packers are not only based in his home state of Wisconsin, but they also won Super Bowls I and II when Bob was an impressionable youth of 10 and 11! Bob has a wry sense of humour, and it is perhaps fitting that his reply to the question 'Are you superstitious?' was penned on the day that news came through of the death of Star Trek's Leonard Nimoy.

Date and place of birth: January 10, 1957 in a small town called Luxemburg, Wisconsin in the USA, the third oldest of eight – six sisters and a brother.



Bob as a child

Spouse: Janie. We married officially in Stowmarket, Suffolk on July 11, 2002, but the blessing and party was the day after, so I get a second chance to remember our anniversary!

How, and when, were you introduced to horseracing? My father used to take us to the sulky races when the Kewaunee County Fair rolled into town every summer in my early years. My recollection is that he would give each of us kids five cents to bet against each other on the races, and then we would go to the barns to see the horses afterward. After that, it wasn't until my wife and Ron Huggins convinced me to buy into a partnership in the late 1990s with our first horse, Highland Fling.

And to MJR? Highland Fling was with Mark.

What is your main occupation? I am responsible for IT Services globally for a Swedish hygiene and forest products company – SCA, and I typically commute weekly to either Munich or Gothenburg. An IT guy working for a toilet paper company

... people ask me all the time how I cope with the glamour.

If you could choose any other career, what would it be? An architect. I like to build things.

Where do you live and what took you to that area? We live in Lower Layham on the Essex-Suffolk border. My wife used to live near here and we first bought a week-end cottage before we decided this would be home. It also didn't hurt that there is a pub within walking distance.

What was your most exciting racing moment? Knavesmire Omen winning the Goodwood Stakes at Glorious Goodwood in 2003. (I believe it was a significant winner for Mark – maybe the 100th winner of that year making it 10 years in a row with 100?) Deirdre had tears on the way to the winner's enclosure and it started me going. Then I called my father in the US to tell him we had won – he follows all our horses avidly – and I started to well-up all over again.

What is the best horse you have been associated with? We were in the partnership that originally owned Always Wainig, who won a nice race at Ascot for us in 2004, before he eventually went chasing and won the Topham Chase at Aintree

three years on the trot long after we sold him.

And the best MJR horse, if different from above? We had great fun with Maid in Rio last year and are hopeful she will come back again this year and be even better!

What are your racing colours and why did you choose them? As I have always been in partnerships, I leave the colour choices to the partners. Janie picks out my shirts too . . .

What is the best name you have given to a horse and why did you choose it? I believe I submitted the name 'Absconder' for a colt we had by Shamardal out of Desertion in 2011. Unfortunately the quality of his racing didn't live up to the quality of his name.

And the name you wish you had thought of? Secretariat. Galileo. Authorized. I like strong one-word names.

The best race you have won and what it meant to you personally?

Knavesmire Omen also won a listed race in Hamburg in 2003. I was the only one of the partners who made the trip. I think it was a Tuesday afternoon, and I was just happy it wasn't a waste of time and airfare! I had organised the partners who 'bought him back' at the sales the prior year; our confidence in him was confirmed.



Bob played American football in High School



Bob out hunting on Rooster

Choose one race to have replayed on TV. Double Trigger's third Goodwood Cup in 1998. My memory is that I was in an airport lounge somewhere and watching on TV. The way he won was not his typical front-running style, which made it even more of a feat, and I was screaming at the television the whole time.

The race you would most like to win. The Gold Cup at Ascot.

What is your favourite holiday destination? The Crane Resort in Barbados. We have an apartment there and go out every year in February because Janie claims she gets Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in the winter.

Place/s you most want to visit? Australia and New Zealand. I've travelled quite a bit but have not made it to either yet.

What is your favourite sport outside racing? American Football. I played it in high school and have been an avid Green Bay Packer fan all of my life.

Other recreations? I took up hunting last year with the Essex and Suffolk Hunt which is local to us. This year I am getting used to my new hunter 'Rooster', who Deirdre found for me in Yorkshire. He's much more capable than I am, so he's teaching me.

Favourite Racecourse? Why? Goodwood. Beautiful scenery, great facilities, superb racing.

Least favourite? Why? Wolverhampton.

Unfortunately we have had more than our fair share of runners there, and it's a long way from Suffolk.

What is the last film you saw and film you would most recommend? Saw 'Gone Girl' recently. Very disturbing.

Last book you read and book you would most recommend? I read the Brough Scott biography on Henry Cecil – 'Trainer of Genius' on holiday and

thought it was a fantastic read.

Favourite TV programme? Grand Designs.

What schools did you attend? St. Mary's Grade School. Luxemburg-Casco High School. University of Wisconsin – La Crosse with a B.S in Computer Science.

What were your best, and worst, subjects at school? Best were math(s) and sciences. Worst was history. I thought it was useless looking backward, but I've gained a greater appreciation for it now.

Are you superstitious? No. My wife tells me I am the most logical person she knows. Superstition isn't logical.

Lucky number? Nahhh . . .

Two people you would most like to be seated next to at a dinner party? The Queen and Prince Philip - The Queen for her knowledge and Prince Philip for fun. Also I'd like to check on the rules for an American being knighted.

Do you have any pet hates? I fly quite a bit and don't like it when people think it is clever to jump queues.

Favourite actress? Judi Dench.

Favourite actor? Al Pacino.

Favourite author? I loved the late Stieg Larsson's Millenium Trilogy. And I think I have read most of Dick Francis's books.

Favourite singer/band? Moody Blues.

What pets do you have? Jack Russell named Millie. Labrador named Maggie. Black & white cat named Skunk.

What kind of car do you drive? Aside from the two Land Rovers my wife uses, last year I invested in a 1966 MGB. Great fun.

What cd/s do you currently have in your car? It's all on the iPhone now.

What station is your radio tuned to? 50-50 likelihood of either Radio 4 or 5-Live. I left Radio 1 when Chris Moyles was ousted. Apparently we were both too old.

What would be your 6 desert island discs and one possession you would like to have on your island? Feelin' Alright? – Joe Cocker; Free Bird – Lynyrd Skynyrd; Question – Moody Blues; Our House – Crosby, Stills & Nash; Old and Wise – The Alan Parsons Project; Take the 'A' Train – Duke Ellington. Possession – a piano . . . I've always wanted to learn.

A restaurant that you would recommend. The Lone Star in Barbados. Fantastic food and beautiful seaside ambiance.

What would you choose as your last meal? Steak frites. (Preferably from Le Relais de Venice in London, Paris or New York).

What is your favourite drink? I seldom say no to any single malt.

Who has had the biggest influence on your life? My father. He was a builder and I worked with him a lot when I was young. He has a great sense of humour and a laid-back attitude to life that I try to emulate.

What was the best advice you were ever given? From a former boss... 'Don't sweat the small stuff. And it's all small stuff.'

Tell us something about yourself that we probably don't know. I played slide trombone in school and in various bands over the years. The slide is nearly rusted shut now.

Do you have any regrets or things you would like to have done differently? I wish I had started riding earlier. I feel very comfortable on a horse, but wish I could do more now.

Do you have a racing hero, human or equine? I'm going to copy Charlie Johnston and say Mark and AP McCoy. I really respect longevity and consistency at a high standard.

