

Paul Buer – From Norway to North America

Paul Buer could not think of a better place for Fan Favourite to break her maiden than in the \$300,000 OSS Superfinal. But thanks to a masterful steer from Luc Ouellette, the Angus Hall miss did exactly that - taking a 1:59.2 mark and boosted her earnings to nearly \$200,000. Later on the Superfinal card, the Buer-trained Bliss 3, 1:56.2 (\$127,000+) trotted to a second place finish behind the great Peaceful Way in the three-year-old filly division.

A native of Norway, Buer (33) has been the head trainer for the Joie De Vie Farm (Antoinette and Paul Nigito) since the autumn of 2001. Since that time, he has campaigned performers like Shy Ticket A p, 9, 1.51.4 (\$207,769); Dream Angel 3, 1:56.2 (\$229,010); Nordic Dish 3, 1:55 (\$123,426); Wedding Singer 3, 1:56.2 (\$95,750); Excusez Moi 3, 1:56.1 (\$95,341) and Ecstatic 3, 1.54.4 (\$44 980),.

“Mrs. Nigito has a 120 acre farm with a half-mile training track, a straight track, a sand pit, an equisizer and 30-40 acres of paddocks. It is like a private training centre, although other trainers are there as well. I am a private trainer for Mrs. Nigito’s horses, but I’m open for public business as well.”

Like many of the Scandanavian trainers we have interviewed, Buer’s approach to the conditioning of his performers that is markedly different from the traditional North American bill of fare.

“Seventy-five percent of our training is interval training on the straight track while getting them to the races. Our straight track is 650 meters long with two circles at each end. Some people say they are concerned the straight track will make horses hot. I don’t think the straight track makes them hot – people do. I’m sure you could make any horse hot if you buzzed them all the time over any track.

“After taking our horses through their quarter mile intervals we walk them for six minutes, jog them for four minutes, then put them in cross-ties for a couple minutes before checking their heart-rate. After a good workout, I want to see the heart-rate at 70-75 beats per minute. If it’s at 80bpm, I will stay at that level for a while longer. If it’s at 90bpm – then I’ll check their bloods.

“With our yearlings, we build up their jogging for 3-4 weeks, until they get up to four miles per day. We will jog them four miles daily until mid-December, then start taking them three quarter mile intervals on the straight track twice per week – probably in 48-49 second quarters. By mid-January, we will have built them up to five 45 second quarters. The horses always walk for about 40 seconds between each quarter mile workout.

“I like to work my horses in sets, because it’s important to teach them – but it’s also important for them to have fun. We start with sets of two and work up to sets of four, with two on the lead and two following. We will switch that around so they learn to be in different positions – but we do not pass or change positions during the quarter mile intervals. By mid-March we should be going seven 40-second quarter-mile intervals.

“I like to put the horses on the round track every two weeks, but I am not looking for speed there. The round track training is simply to teach them how to handle the turns and for them to learn what’s going to be required when they race. As the horses are going faster quarter mile intervals, they will go faster every second week on the round track.

“Once we get to 2:30 on the round track, I will bring the horses to the Meadowlands. It is about an hour away from the farm, and is much harder on me to take them there. But it is much easier on them, and that’s what is important.”

The Sand Pit Revisited

“I started using the sand pit last October, and I am still experimenting with it. We have walls around our pit, so we don’t have to use a lunge-line. You just stay in the middle and turn with them, and they tend to stay on the outside of the pit by themselves. Some horses ‘get it’ right away. If they behave well, we’ll just turn them loose. Some need a harness and a tie-down, but most learn quickly that it is easier to trot through the sand with their heads down.

“I do not use the sand pit for my two-year-olds until May. I think ‘traditional’ jogging and training is enough for a yearling, and the sand pit might be a little too much stress for them. But by the time summer comes around even the two-year-olds are in the sand pit 2-3 times per week.”

Buer says that his approach to ‘bringing back 3-year-olds’ focuses on a significantly higher work load. “Horses coming back for their three-year-old year can handle the work more. With them, I will use the sand pit much more; I use the power cart; and I work them twice a day for four to six weeks.”

Twice a day for four to six weeks? Sounds like we have our next topic from Paul Buer.