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After romping in Pasco, Jersey-bred star Book'em Danno on his way to Saudi Derby

by Bill Finley

Bred in New Jersey, Book'em Danno (Bucchero) is a 3-year-old, has been beaten only once in five starts, has won three stakes, and is coming off a career-best effort when beating up on five inferior rivals in the Jan. 13 Pasco Stakes at Tampa Bay Downs. With most owners and trainers, to have a horse like that would mean they'd be hyper-focused on getting to the Grade 1 Kentucky Derby. But not trainer

Derek Ryan or the partnership that races under the name of Atlantic Six Racing LLC. They headed instead to Saudi Arabia for the \$1.5 million Saudi Derby-G3. (The race was to run Feb. 24, just as this magazine went to press. Book'em arrived at King Abdulaziz Racecourse in Riyadh Feb. 14.) The Kentucky Derby is not under consideration.



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"The Saudi Derby is a one-turn mile, he's a gelding, there's a lot of money," Ryan said. "I have no Derby dreams. I've been down that road before and it didn't do me any good. I think the Derby is overrated, but that's just me. We were never really considering the Derby trail. The Derby trail, you always have to make works, make races. You put the horse under a lot of pressure."

Atlantic Six Racing LLC is made up of six friends who reside on the Jersey Shore. They are Frank Camassa, Jeff Resnikoff, Mark Rubenstein, James Rubenstein, Jim Scappi and Jay Briscione. It was Mark Rubenstein who came up with the name Book'em Danno, which is what Steve McGarrett said at the end of each episode of *Hawaii Five-O* after nailing a guilty criminal.

The group never had the type of money needed to buy a highly-rated horse at the sales but did have some luck with a high-priced New Jersey-bred claimer named Counterfeitcurrency (Currency Swap), who made nearly \$200,000. That gave them enough money to look around for some younger horses and an advisor pointed them in the direction of Book'em Danno, a yearling being shopped around by his breeders, Greg Kilka and Christine Connelly of Bright View Farm. There was not a lot to go on. Book'em Danno is the second foal out of Adorabella (Ghostzapper), who never raced. The first foal had just broken her maiden when Atlantic Six privately purchased Book'em Danno and did so by just a half-length in a slow time. But she turned out to be a runner. Named Girl Trouble (Fast Anna), she is now a two-time stakes winner, having scored at her Parx base in the 2022 Future Stars Filly Division and 2023 Parx Futurity.

So the team was optimistic when Book'em Danno made his first start and won a maiden race for Jersey-breds by 9½ lengths.

"He always acted like a nice horse," Ryan said. "I don't crank horses up to win first time out because unless you really have a superstar, there's no place to run them. Nowadays, if you break your maiden, the only races available to you are stakes races. I only had him 70 percent right for that first race, which told me I had a good one."

He returned a month later and beat open company in the Smoke Glacken Stakes at Monmouth and followed that up with a win in the Futurity at the Belmont at Aqueduct meet. He then ran well in defeat when second in the Nashua at Aqueduct.

Atlantic Six and Ryan weren't the only ones cheering Book'em Danno along. Kilka bought Adorabella for \$14,000 at the 2020 Keeneland January Sale (while carrying Girl Trouble). They sold Girl Trouble as a yearling for just \$15,000 and probably didn't break the bank when selling Book'em Danno. But their rewards were about to come. They sold the third foal, a colt by Classic Empire, at the 2023 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic

Fall Yearling sale for \$135,000. They then sold Adorabella for \$550,000 at Fasig-Tipton November. She was believed to be in foal to Medaglia d'Oro (El Prado-Ire) at the time, but the foal was aborted.

After the defeat in the Nashua, Ryan and the owners began to formulate their plans for Book'em Danno's 3-year-old campaign. Ryan confirmed that he wanted no part of the Derby. He had started one horse in the race, Musket Man, who finished third in 2009.

With Book'em Danno being a gelding and possibly a horse who would prefer one turn, Ryan wanted to pick out spots with big purses that would fit the gelding's style. Even before the Pasco, he had set his sights on the Saudi Derby.

But first the Pasco. It was not a particularly strong field and Book'em Danno was sent off at odds on 1-10. A soft spot or not, he could not have won any easier. With Samuel Marin aboard, he inched up to the leaders while four wide on the turn. Marin never seemed to ask his horse for his best run, but he nonetheless drew off in the stretch to win by 12½ lengths.

"After the race, I had to pinch myself," Briscione said. "It would have been one thing if he won by a length or something, but for him to draw off the way he did and win so easily. That was something. He moves somewhat effortlessly. It's very exciting for all of us. We thought he'd run good but that was crazy what he did."

At the invitation of the Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia, Ryan was planning to hop on a plane to Riyadh on Jan. 17 so that he could get the lay of the land before sending the horse over.

"This is a great position to be in," Briscione said. "We're a little group and we don't have the experience some of the big groups have had but we're always trying to figure out what's best for the horse. There are rewards and risks. The reward in Saudi is the money. The distance seems to suit him. The only issue is that once you come back you'll probably need about three months before you're ready to race. That's ok if you run good. If you don't it can be a problem. But who would have thought we'd ever be going to Saudi Arabia. It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance. It's a lot of fun. It's also a little nerve-wracking. We couldn't be more excited about this."

The Saudi Derby won't be easy. Horses from 10 countries have been nominated and an American contingent could include horses from the stables of Christophe Clement, Brad Cox, Ken McPeck, Rick Dutrow, Brendan Walsh, Steve Asmussen, John Sadler, Bob Baffert and Todd Pletcher. All have at least one horse nominated.

But Book'em Danno is not to be underestimated.

"You can never take anything for granted in this sport," Ryan said. "But we think we're in a great position."



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Another stakes winner for Sea Wizard as Ship to Shore romps at Gulfstream

by Bill Finley

It's hard to expect much from a regional sire who has been bred to small books of mares, but New Jersey-based Sea Wizard keeps overcoming those obvious disadvantages. He hit another milestone in his brief stallion career when his son Ship to Shore romped to an 8-length win in the Feb. 6 Limehouse Stakes at Gulfstream. For Sea Wizard, it was the first stakes win in an open company race from one of his progeny.

"His runners can run," said Cameron Beatty, who is an advisor to Carmine Spinella, who operates Pegasus Stud in Colts Neck, where Sea Wizard stands. "It's not just against Jersey-breds. They're running all across the east coast and winning."

In this case, a little luck didn't hurt. The race was scratched down to four after odds-on favorite Valiant Force was scratched at the gate. But as well as Ship to Shore ran, who's to stay he wouldn't have won had there not been so many scratches.

Sea Wizard was an unknown when he entered stud duty in 2017. Trained by the late John Mazza, the son of Uncle Mo was second in his debut in 2015, losing to Destin, who would go on to win the Tampa Bay Derby. After a 5½-month layoff, he returned at Gulfstream and scored an easy win in a maiden special weight, which would turn out to be his last start.

Mazza talked Sam Fieramosca, who then ran Colonial Farms, into giving the horse a try as a sire. (Fieramosca subsequently sold the farm to Spinella.) He'd have to make do with a small book of mares. He was bred to just 21 mares in his first year. But that first crop included Great Navigator, who, as a 2-year-old, broke his maiden against open company and finished second in the Grade 3 Sanford Stakes at Saratoga in his second



start. In 2023, he won the Charles Hesse III Handicap and finished third behind leading Horse of the Year contender Cody's Wish in the Vosburgh Stakes-G2.

The second crop consisted of just 13 foals, but, again, it included some runners. In addition to Ship to Shore, Sea Streak was second against open company in the Smoke Glacken and third in Gulfstream Park's Mucho Macho Man Stakes.

Breeders are starting to take notice. And Sea Wizard's stud fee is now \$5,000.

"His first foals were pretty small," said Beatty. "Ship to Shore, he's the size of a toothpick. But for some reason they can run. They are lightning fast. Now he's starting to get bigger mares so his foals are starting to get significantly larger. Which is good. Sea Wizard is not the biggest specimen, the biggest horse on the grounds. People breeding to him want speed and he's been producing speed. People were saying he can't produce a two-turn horse. That was put to bed when Great Navigator went two turns for the first time and won by open lengths in the Hesse. He's getting better, bigger size mares which is helping him tremendously and he's getting more mares."

Beatty and Spinella are so devoted to promoting Sea Wizard that they have

acquired, between the two of them, 20 broodmares, most of whom will be bred to Sea Wizard. Beatty is hoping he will be bred 40 to 45 mares this year.

"Myself and Carmine have been bringing in mares to the farm from all different states, Kentucky, New York, Florida," Beatty said. "We've made a commitment not only to the New Jersey breeding community but to Monmouth Park. We want to get as many Jersey-breds as we can."

Beatty admits that some of those who inquire about breeding to Sea Wizard express concerns about the Jersey-bred program. He can't speak for other breeders, but will tell the potential customer that Pegasus Stud is committed to the program and is going to do everything possible to make it grow.

"I tell them what we're trying to do and how we are trying to make things better," he said. "We can do our part to help bring up the size of the foal crop. To help make that happen we went out and bought a bunch of mares on our own. We can't control what mares people bring to us but we can control mares we bring onto the farm on our behalf.

"People are more concerned about New Jersey breeding down the road and where will it be three, four years from now when their foals hit the racetrack. I can only tell them we have leaders involved who are trying to reenforce the Jersey breeding community as much as possible.

"I take it from my own standpoint. When I first got in game the purse for the Jersey-bred maiden special weight race was \$40,000. Over just a few years that purse is now right around \$70,000. They have good programs in places like New York and Pennsylvania. But it's all about numbers and if we can get the foal crop numbers up in New Jersey it's only going to be positive from there."

2024 Racing Calendar Approved by New Jersey Racing Commission

The New Jersey Racing Commission Jan. 24 approved 51 dates at Monmouth Park (May 11-Sept. 15) and 10 dates of turf-only racing at the Meadowlands (Sept. 20-Oct. 18). The complete schedule is available on www.njbreds.com.

RACE DATE	RACE NAME	AGE/SEX	DISTANCE	SURFACE
5/11/2024	\$100,000 Long Branch Stakes	3YO	One Mile and Seventy Yards	
5/12/2024	\$100,000 Serena's Song Stakes	F&M 3+	One Mile and Seventy Yards	
5/18/2024	\$85,000 Spruce Fir Handicap (NJB)	F&M 3+	Six Furlongs	
5/19/2024	\$85,000 John J. Reilly Handicap (NJB)	3+	Six Furlongs	
5/25/2024	\$100,000 Cliffhanger Stakes (Listed)	3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	Turf
5/26/2024	\$100,000 Miss Liberty Stakes (Listed)	F&M 3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	Turf
5/27/2024	\$100,000 Mr. Prospector Stakes (Listed)	3+	Six Furlongs	
6/1/2024	\$100,000 Jersey Derby	3YO	One Mile	
6/2/2024	\$85,000 Smart N Classy Handicap (NJB)	F&M 3+	One Mile	Turf
6/8/2024	\$100,000 Lady's Secret Stakes (Listed)	F&M 3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	
6/9/2024	\$85,000 Friendly Lover Handicap (NJB)	3+	One Mile	
6/15/2024	\$150,000 Pegasus Stakes (Listed)	3YO	One Mile and One Sixteenth	
6/15/2024	\$150,000 G3 Monmouth Stakes	3+	One Mile and One Eighth	Turf
6/15/2024	\$150,000 G3 Salvator Mile	3+	One Mile	
6/15/2024	\$150,000 G3 Eatontown Stakes	F&M 3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	Turf
6/16/2024	\$100,000 Get Serious Stakes	3+	Five and a Half Furlongs	Turf
6/22/2024	\$100,000 Goldwood Stakes	F&M 3+	Five and a Half Furlongs	Turf
6/23/2024	\$100,000 Tale of the Cat Stakes	3YO	One Mile and One Sixteenth	Turf
6/29/2024	\$100,000 Maryfield Stakes	3YO Fillies	Six Furlongs	
6/30/2024	\$100,000 Boiling Springs Stakes	3YO Fillies	One Mile and One Sixteenth	Turf
7/6/2024	\$85,000 Jersey Girl Handicap (NJB)	F&M 3+	One Mile	Turf
7/7/2024	\$85,000 Irish War Cry Handicap (NJB)	3+	One Mile	Turf
7/13/2024	\$100,000 Blue Sparkler Stakes	3YO Fillies	Five and a Half Furlongs	Turf
7/14/2024	\$100,000 My Frenchman Stakes	3YO	Five and a Half Furlongs	Turf
7/19/2024	\$100,000 Jersey Shore Stakes	3YO	Six Furlongs	
7/20/2024	\$1,000,000 G1 Haskell Stakes	3YO	One Mile and One Eighth	
7/20/2024	\$600,000 G2 United Nations Stakes	3+	One Mile and Three Eighths	Turf
7/20/2024	\$400,000 G3 Monmouth Cup	3+	One Mile and One Eighth	
7/20/2024	\$500,000 G3 Molly Pitcher Stakes	F&M 3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	
7/20/2024	\$300,000 G3 WinStar Matchmaker Stakes	F&M 3+	One Mile and One Eighth	Turf
7/20/2024	\$100,000 Wolf Hill Stakes	3+	Five and a Half Furlongs	Turf
7/21/2024	\$100,000 Regret Stakes	F&M 3+	Six Furlongs	
7/27/2024	\$250,000 G3 Monmouth Oaks	3YO Fillies	One Mile and One Sixteenth	
7/28/2024	\$100,000 Colleen Stakes	2YO Fillies	Five Furlongs	Turf
8/3/2024	\$100,000 Tyro Stakes	2YO	Five Furlongs	Turf
8/4/2024	\$100,000 Incredible Revenge Stakes	F&M 3+	Five and a Half Furlongs	Turf
8/10/2024	\$100,000 Select Stakes	3+	Five and a Half Furlongs	Turf
8/11/2024	\$100,000 Oceanport Stakes (Listed)	3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	Turf
8/17/2024	\$250,000 G3 Philip H. Iselin Stakes	3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	
8/18/2024	\$200,000 Sorority Stakes	2YO Fillies	One Mile	
8/24/2024	\$200,000 Sapling Stakes (Listed)	2YO	One Mile	
8/25/2024	\$125,000 Charles Hesse III Handicap (NJB)	3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	
8/25/2024	\$100,000 New Jersey Breeders' Handicap (NJB)	3+	Six Furlongs	
8/25/2024	\$100,000 Eleven North Handicap (NJB)	F&M 3+	Six Furlongs	
8/31/2024	\$100,000 Violet Stakes	F&M 3+	One Mile and One Sixteenth	Turf
9/1/2024	\$100,000 Rumson Stakes	3+	Five Furlongs	
9/2/2024	\$100,000 Red Bank Stakes	3+	One Mile	Turf
9/7/2024	\$100,000 Smoke Glacken Stakes	2YO	Six Furlongs	
9/8/2024	\$100,000 Precious Passion Stakes	3+	One Mile and One Half	Turf
9/14/2024	\$85,000 Pinot Grigio Handicap (NJB)	F&M 3+	Five Furlongs	Turf
9/15/2024	\$85,000 Joey P. Handicap (NJB)	3+	Five Furlongs	Turf



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