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2011 Hall of Fame

Randy Goulding



Awards & Honours

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LORD NELSON

Hall of Fame Inductees

by Randy Goulding

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"It was my first year training for the Bennetts and RJ asked me to pick six horses to take to Hastings," recalls Condilenios. "They had about 50 horses in training in Vernon, but Lord Nelson really stood out. He wasn't that big, but when he trained he puffed himself up to look like he was a big horse. It was the way he presented himself that attracted me to him."

...Dino Condilenios-trainer



Lord Nelson

Lord Nelson was named after an Admiral in the British Navy but he was the king at Hastings from 2001 through 2005. In just about every race he ran during that period he was the horse to beat.

A son of Maudlin, out of the mare Lady Hamilton, Lord Nelson was bred and owned by British Columbia's perennial leading breeders Russell (RJ) and Lois Bennett.

"Horses like Lord Nelson don't come along very often and are the reason you keep at it," says RJ.

A foal of 1997, Lord Nelson didn't race as a 2-year-old. He won his first two starts as a 3-year-old for trainer Dino Condilenios in mid-summer 2000, but due to the late start he wasn't a serious factor in the major races for sophomores. Over the next four years, however, Lord Nelson dominated the older handicap division at Hastings. In one streak he compiled a record of 13-7-1 from 21 starts in stakes races at Hastings. In his career he won 16 races for total earnings of \$673,099.

Lord Nelson's dominance began with a win over King Jeremy in the 2001 Hong Kong Jockey Club. He forced the early pace and then drew away in the stretch. In his next start in the B C Cup Classic he went right to the lead and was never threatened. A similar scenario developed in the S.W. Randall Plate, where he toyed with his rivals. It became the norm at Hastings. Lord Nelson, with Frank Fuentes aboard, dictated the terms of most of the stakes races for older horses. Any horse that beat him, earned it.

He won the Grade 3 Lieutenant Governor's twice and lost by a neck in 2001 and 2004.

He was voted the champion older horse in the province from 2001 through 2004. He was also the top sprinter and Horse of the Year in 2004. He earned the award

for being the best older B.C.-bred in 2005.

Lord Nelson's remarkable record was accomplished despite battling quarter cracks throughout his career.

"I think he could have competed with the top horses anywhere if he didn't have such poor feet," says Condilenios. "Every time he ran, his feet would fall apart. He was so talented. I remember when he won the 2004 Hong Kong Jockey Club. It was a strong field and he drew the nine-hole. Frank said he was going to send him despite all the other speed in the field, including Celt, who I trained and was as fast as any horse around. I didn't like Frank's plan at first, but the more I thought about the more I liked it. Lord Nelson was just that much better than any horse in the field."

Condilenios was impressed with Lord Nelson the first time he saw him.

"It was my first year training for the Bennetts and RJ asked me to pick six horses to take to Hastings," recalls Condilenios. "They had about 50 horses in training in Vernon, but Lord Nelson really stood out. He wasn't that big, but when he trained he puffed himself up to look like he was a big horse. It was the way he presented himself that attracted me to him."

According to Condilenios, Lord Nelson was the smartest horse he has ever been around. Condilenios also described Lord Nelson as having some human traits – for example the way he felt about Anita Bolton, his exercise rider and groom.

"He was in love with Anita," said Condilenios. "Like most good horses Lord Nelson ate up everything in his feed tub. I made Anita take a few days off when she was sick one time. He did not eat an oat for the three days she was gone. As soon as she came back, the feed tub was empty

again. Anita was a huge part of his success."

Condilenios also praised the Bennetts for the way they let him manage Lord Nelson's career.

"Because of the problems with his feet I let him sit out a lot of races he would have been 2-5 and won," said Condilenios. "They never complained that he wasn't running enough, and they were always supportive with what I did with him. You couldn't train for better people."

Lord Nelson's last win came in the 2005 John Longden though he continued racing through 2008 before being retired. His best race during the twilight of his career was memorable. It was a neck loss to Notis Otis in the 2006 B C Cup Sprint. Notis Otis was making a comeback after nearly dying and Lord Nelson was clearly beyond his peak. The classy pair hooked up at the top of the stretch and thrilled the large crowd with a stretch-long duel. Lord Nelson's performance displayed his tremendous heart.

"It was one of the greatest races I have ever seen at Hastings," recalls track announcer Dan Jukich. "Neither horse wanted to give an inch."

"We tried to retire him earlier, but he was just miserable at the farm," said Condilenios. "He was a real race horse and much happier at the track."

According to RJ, Lord Nelson has finally settled into his life of leisure at the Bennett's Flying Horse Farm in Westbank.

"He seems happy enough but he still misses the track," says RJ. "Whenever a van comes by to pick up a load of horses, he wants to go with them."



Robert (Bobby) W. Hall



"I had no idea where Canada was and I had never heard of British Columbia," says Hall. "I was the youngest of four children so there wasn't any chance of me getting part of my parent's property and there just weren't many jobs around at the time. When my friend said he was going to Canada, I decided to join him."

...R.W. "Bobby" Hall

Robert (Bobby) W. Hall is best known for being the owner and trainer of the greatest British Columbia-bred ever, George Royal. Training horses, however, was the furthest thing from his mind when he moved to Canada from Ireland in 1954.

Hall's decision to come to Canada was made on the spur of the moment over a few beers with a friend at a pub in his hometown of Sligo.

"I had no idea where Canada was and I had never heard of British Columbia," says Hall. "I was the youngest of four children so there wasn't any chance of me getting part of my parent's property and there just weren't many jobs around at the time. When my friend said he was going to Canada, I decided to join him."

The long lineup for permits at the Canadian Consulate spurred another snap decision that led him to B.C.

"Most of the people were either going to Toronto or Montreal," says Hall. "I heard the odd person say British Columbia so I thought it might be easier to find work where fewer people were going."

After walking the streets of Vancouver for several days, he found a job with a small logging company in Knight Inlet willing to take "green-horns."

Seeing the danger involved in logging, however, he decided to return to Vancouver.

It was still difficult to find work in the city, so he thought he would try to put his extensive knowledge of horses to use.

"We always had horses on our farm back home," he said. "Mostly hunters. My dad didn't

like racing, but at the end of the hunting season I usually rode in a point-to-point race, which was about three and a half miles."

Hall found work at a stable in the Vancouver southlands, mucking stalls and exercising horses to keep them in shape for weekend recreational riders.

In 1956 he went to work at Lavender Stock Farm in Walnut Grove, first galloping and then becoming the trainer for Elizabeth Gormley.

Elizabeth's daughter Ann was intrigued when she heard about the good-looking Irishman who was training horses for her mother.

"I was studying to be a nurse at St. Paul's Hospital and thought I should check him out," says Ann. "The first day I met him, my mom had a horse running and it won."

A romance blossomed and they were married in 1959.

Hall started to make a name for himself with horses like Desert Fire, a \$1,100 claim that won the 1959 Premiers. In 1960 he won the Futurity with Ky Look and in 1961 he finished second in the Futurity with Polly Royal.

Polly Royal was out of Polly Bashaw, making her a half-sister to George Royal. She was the main reason Hall was interested in buying George Royal for Vancouver furniture dealer Ernie Hammond.

"I thought if I could get a colt out of Polly Bashaw he might be a good one," says Hall. "Ernie would only take him if I took half, though. He paid \$3,000 for George and a filly out of Polly Bashaw. My share came out of training bills."

The rest is history.

As a 3-year-old in 1964 George Royal won nine consecutive stakes races at Hastings, then named Exhibition Park. He gained international recognition with a win in the 1965 San Juan Capistrano. His second win in the Capistrano was historic. Legendary jockey John Longden announced he would retire after riding George Royal in the Capistrano. As usual, George Royal was well back during the early stages of the mile and three-quarters race on the Santa Anita turf course. The 60,000 people in attendance roared their approval when he made his patented late move to win by a nose.

George Royal also won the Canadian International Championship twice, and at the time of his retirement, he was the second leading Canadian-bred money-winner behind Northern Dancer. He was inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame in 1976.

Hall gave a lot of credit to Don Richardson for the success of George Royal. Richardson was George Royal's jockey early in his career and his trainer when he was based in the United States.

"Donny stepped down as his rider in California because he wasn't riding many horses and felt he couldn't do George justice," says Ann. "It was one of the most unselfish things I've ever seen."

After George Royal came Timber Music. In 1971 she became the first of her sex to be voted the Horse of the Year in British Columbia. Hall was lucky to get Timber Music back after he sold her to Jack Diamond for \$2,000 in the 1970 yearling sale.

"She had an odd way of going, and when I

AWARDS & HONOURS

asked Mr. Diamond how she was training in the spring, he said he wasn't happy with her," says Hall. "I thought she was a good breeding prospect so I offered a colt in exchange for her and he accepted the offer. I wasn't planning on racing her, but she seemed fine so we just kept on going with her."

Another notable achievement came in 1988 when Hall trained Screaming Sue, the champion filly or mare, and the top B.C.-bred older horse, Big Brac.

One of the proudest accomplishments of his long career was winning a race for Earl Marks, an electrical shop owner who was also a small-time breeder.

"When I became his trainer he hadn't won a

race in 14 years," says Hall. "He was such a nice man and he was thrilled when we won a race with a horse called Never Out."

After the success of George Royal, Hall made a shift to mostly training horses that he and Ann bred at Emerald Acres in Aldergrove. They had bought the property in 1960 and according to Ann, "George built the house."

There have been many celebrations at Emerald Acres and a lot of fun along the way. Hall recalls meeting Bing Crosby in the winner's circle at Woodbine after George Royal won his second Canadian International.

"He had just returned from Ireland and was the decorator of the race," says Hall. "I tried to get him to sing 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' with

me but he wouldn't do it."

The Halls also have left a legacy of which they are very proud. Along with the horses they raised six children at Emerald Acres. Three of them are heavily involved in horse racing: Sandra Loeth as a trainer, breeder and owner, Jennifer Johnson and Phil Hall are trainers and owners. Granddaughter Christine Loeth started her career as a trainer at Hastings in 2011 with three wins from her first nine starts. Grandson Justin Jensen is a jockey at Mountaineer.

At 81, Hall officially retired this year. He enjoys spending his time with Ann and watching his family carry on a rich tradition while his Irish eyes are still smiling.



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