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Matt Haney builds on Maryland legends

Story by Lucy Acton. Photographs by Barrie B. Reightler.



Matt Haney with wife, Amie, daughter, Lizzie, and their multiple stakes producer Lunar's Legend.

Matt and Amie Haney belong to a demographic that's become all too rare in Maryland—bright young people new to the business but eager to breed and race horses in this state.

And their results so far have been off the charts.

The Haney's are part-owners of two 2009 stakes winners:

Amie's Legend (by Not For Love) and Sarah Cataldo (by Smarty Jones).

They also own, on their own account, the 3-year-old filly Saar Treaty (by Saarland), a \$50,000 Keeneland November weanling purchase who was runner-up in last year's Missy Moo I Love You Stakes at Belmont Park.

Their broodmare band is sparked by a multiple stakes producer: Amie's Legend's dam Lunar's Legend (by Polish Numbers).

But if their vision becomes reality, this is just the beginning of a long-running story for the Haney's' 112-acre Two Legends Farm, named for the

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Because the farm is in historic agricultural preservation, the Haney's are limited to the footprint of existing buildings unless they are willing to submit to a lengthy process of change. This barn was an equipment shed, and while it is still in the process of renovation, the right side has five roomy stalls for broodmares and a tack room. Below, Haney with his Dance With Ravens weanling out of Startingoveragain (by Officer).



stars of their racing stable and broodmare band and located in Maryland's horse breeding mecca of Chesapeake City.

As recently as four years ago, Matt Haney knew next to nothing about Thoroughbred racing.

"I bought an inexpensive 4-year-old gelding with thoughts of running him in the Kentucky Derby," he says with a laugh.

But Haney, 41, proved to be a super-quick study.

By then he was already a highly successful entrepreneur, as a co-founder of PRO Physical Therapy, which grew to include 13 clinics in three states before Haney and his partners sold the business to

Chicago-based ATI Physical Therapy in June 2006.

Haney serves on the board of directors for ATI and is the chief merger and acquisition officer for the entire company.

A physical therapist by training, he holds a master's degree from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science (today known as University of the Sciences in Philadelphia), which he attended on a partial athletic scholarship, playing basketball and baseball.

"Biomechanics and the physiology of movement are something that I've spent a lot of years studying," Haney says. "And it's much the same in humans and horses."

Matt and Amie Haney were married in 1992, and she taught elementary school for two years until they welcomed their first child, Nathanael, in 1994. Their family has since expanded with Johnathan, 13; Emilie, 10; and 2-year-old Elizabeth, whom Matt refers to as the "farm baby."

The Haney's were living near Wilmington, Del., when they first became involved with horses. But it was riding, not racing, that initially drew them in.

Their daughter Emilie was born with Apert syndrome, a genetic disorder affecting bone formation and growth. Riding helps with balance and stability, as Matt Haney explains it. Grooming horses has also been part of her therapy. "For instance, the circular motion of the curry comb works a whole range of motion as well as muscle strengthening and stability," he says.

"The whole family took riding lessons," Haney explains. "We bought a Palomino and a Quarter Horse."

Soon the Haney's found themselves traveling back and forth to Top Notch Farm, a hunter/jumper facility in

Chesapeake City, with wearying regularity.

"We loved the area," he says. "So we decided to move here. We bought 33 acres in Middletown, Del. [just over the state line from Chesapeake City]. Then we found out that there were plans for a highway to go right through that farm, which put the brakes on that deal."

When the Haney's first saw the property that would become Two Legends Farm, they were awed by its possibilities—and that was before they knew about its history.

Situated right next to Woodstock Farm, the private enclave of the late legendary Maryland horsewoman Allaire duPont, the farm was originally constructed as a semi-secluded portion of Woodstock. DuPont maintained a commercial stallion operation there in the 1960s and into the '70s, with her flagship horse being Nearctic, who stood six seasons at Woodstock until his death in 1973.

Eventually duPont decided she'd had enough of the stallion business, with all of the traffic coming and going from her farm, and she sold that parcel to her friend E.P.



Above, the main house and garage where Haney has a home office on the top floor. Right, the barns arranged courtyard-style are leased to Lisa Striplin (pictured below left), except for some space reserved for the Haney family's riding horses. Matt Haney had the finish line post designed for the garden in front of the house. In season, roses, black-eyed Susans and white carnations represent the Triple Crown races.



Taylor, who incorporated it into his vast Windfields Farm, then home to world-leading sire Northern Dancer (a son of Nearctic). It became known as Windfields's Northview Annex, and housed the farm's second-string stallions until Windfields closed in 1988.

Among its best-known occupants during the Windfields era was Halo, who rose to premier ranking as the sire of champions Glorious Song and Devil's Bag.

When Windfields closed, its former Northview Annex briefly served as the site of a new stallion facility assembled by Richard Golden, Tom Bowman and duPont, and known as Northview Stallion Station. In 1990, Northview Stallion Station relocated to its present site, at what had been Windfields's main stallion complex.

Northview, the farm, was sold at that time to Ron and Elizabeth Cullis, who renamed



it Plane Tree Farm. The Cullises maintained the property as a Thoroughbred breeding establishment, as well as a base for their daughter Heather's show horse operation, until selling it to the Haney family in October 2005.

"We really liked it," says Matt Haney, "but it was a lot of land for us." That concern was resolved when the Haney family's riding instructor, Lisa Striplin, agreed to lease half of the farm and relocate her Top Notch Farm to the Haney family's new facility.

"We began by replacing and repairing miles of fencing," Haney recounts. Then fencing and footing was replaced in the show ring. After that, the former stallion barn was transformed into a show barn. The focus then moved to re-fencing and replacing the metal on the courtyard barns and rehabilitating a barn from the duPont era.



"We put an addition on the already beautifully renovated farm house," Haney says. "We also built a 'sport court,' added a swimming pool, and re-constructed the pond. Finally, we added a gated entrance."

The Haney family permanently moved into the renovated house on January 1, 2007.

After getting to know the Cullises, Matt Haney became "intrigued" by horse racing, and bought three racing-aged geldings from them. Before long, he met Golden and Bowman, and Golden's farm manager, David Wade, who became his mentors and partners.

Haney's very first auction buy was Amie's Legend, an \$180,000 purchase at the 2006 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga Selected Yearling sale. Bred by Wade in partnership with Bill Fitzgibbons, Amie's Legend campaigned for the partnership of Two Legends Farm, Golden and Wade. Trained by Graham Motion, she captured the \$50,000 Shine Again Stakes at Pimlico last May and has finished first or second in six of her eight career starts for earnings of \$98,370.

Haney privately purchased Lunar's Legend a few months after acquiring Amie's Legend. The 16-year-old mare is also the dam of multiple stakes winner Celestial Legend, a daughter of City Zip who was the champion Maryland-bred 2-year-old filly of 2005.

One of four broodmares owned solely or in partnership by the Haney family, and residing at Two Legends, Lunar's Legend is in foal to Lemon Drop Kid.

The other mares, each just beginning her broodmare career, are Kissemlie (by Broken Vow), the Haney family's first winner and a half-sister to stakes winner Lycurgus who is now in foal to Not For Love; Knock

Out Queen (by Two Punch), in foal to Fairbanks; and Starting-overagain (by Officer), in foal to Dance With Ravens.

The Haney family also own, by themselves or in partnership, seven horses in training, divided among Motion and Tim Woolley at Fair Hill Training Center and Dickie Small at Laurel.

Sarah Cataldo, trained by Small and owned in partnership with Tom and Chris Bowman and Milton Higgins, brought the Haney family their richest win to date when she scored in the \$75,000 Tax Free Shopping Distaff Stakes for Delaware certified fillies and mares on August 22 at Delaware Park. The Haney family acquired their interest in her privately after she was sold for \$110,000 at the 2007 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic Eastern Fall Yearling sale to dissolve a breeding partnership. In seven starts, three wins, she has earned \$81,560.

Going to the races to watch their horses run is "one of the favorite activities we do as a family, rated right up there with attending our boys ball games," says Haney. He and Amie attend "almost all" the races with their daughters, while their sons sometimes opt for other interests.

Now that his own racing and breeding operation is becoming well-established, Haney is looking to bring additional new owners into the business. Partnership opportunities are detailed at www.twolegendsfarm.com.

"We've introduced at least a dozen people who had never even been to the races," Haney says. "I tell them all: 'Don't expect to get rich owning horses. It's entertainment-like buying season tickets to the Ravens.'"