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Indiana Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association



THE PLAYER DEVELOPING INTO A MAJOR PLAYER FOR INDIANA DERBY AT INDIANA GRAND RACING & CASINO



By Jennie Rees, Eclipse Award-winning freelance writer

SHELBYVILLE, Ind.; - July 15, 2016 - The Player isn't only a hunch bet for horse players in Saturday's \$500,000 Indiana Derby. He's a hunch bet.

The 3-year-old colt, trained by co-owner and breeder Buff Bradley, very well could prove the most talented horse in the Indiana Derby's capacity field of 12. But he already literally "laps" the field in personality.

Since he was a baby, The Player has done something that horses just don't do: Sitting up in his stall on his haunches as if he were a dog. He also became the playmate of Bradley's three children on the farm. They'd sit on him - not as he stood as if to ride, but as he laid down. Making themselves comfortable as if on an equine bean chair.



The Player "sits" in his stall at Bradley's farm, a position that is customary for the three-year-old full of personality. Photo by Jennie Rees

The Player loved to play and would chase after Buff Bradley as he bush-hogged a paddock, to where he'd have to call the house to get someone to call off the dog, er, horse, saying, "You all have to get him out of this paddock or he's going to climb up in the tractor with me."

True story, says Buff and Kim Bradley's 17-year-old son, Drew. "He chased me around, too, whenever it was feeding time, every day. It was very fun, though. He'd chase me because I had the feed bucket. Mom and I developed different strategies, like I'd have a decoy bucket. But he figured out pretty quickly that bucket didn't have any feed in it. He's really playful, and he's really smart, too."

Said Carl Hurst, co-owner and co-breeder in The Player with Bradley and the trainer's late dad, Fred: "I think he thinks he's a puppy. As long as he runs like a greyhound, that's fine."

Smart pet tricks aside, The Player is looking like a major Player. The 1 1/16-mile Indiana Derby will be his first stakes and first race around two turns. But he has become definitely a buzz horse at Churchill Downs and beyond, not just with his victories against maiden and allowance company in his last two starts at a mile under Shaun Bridgmohan, but with his fast but seemingly effortless works since.

"I love The Player," Michael Beychok, the 2012 Eclipse Award-winning Handicapper of the Year, told the weekly racing internet show Winning Ponies on Thursday night of his Indiana Derby pick. "This is a horse who is improving, has some tactical speed and I think he'll be able to control his destiny and get a nice trip. And probably also be a nice price. He just looks like he'll have a really nice set-up and get first jump on



the leaders, with horses like Star Hill and Cherry Wine trying to chase him down the stretch. That's my pick, and it's a strong pick."

Drew Bradley helped foal The Player. He recalls the colt being born on an extremely frigid night at the family's Indian Ridge Farm near Frankfort, Ky. The Bradley kids soon were calling him Angus, after Angus Young, lead guitarist for the rock band AC/DC.

"Because when he was born, and he sat down like a dog, we sent him to the vet and they said he's a rock star," Drew said. "So we named him that. He was born in 11 degrees, so we put a UK sweatshirt on him. He was very playful. He's still playful and he still sits down like a dog."

The Player elicits even more sentiment because of Fred Bradley's involvement. The elder Bradley was nearing death when the colt won for the first time, his second win coming not long after the funeral.

"With this one, we bred the whole family together," Buff Bradley said in a Thoroughbred Daily News article. "It's all a product of Fred, really, from way back when. You like to think he's got something to do with it, for sure."

Now as The Player steps up into the big time, Drew said, "We're very excited for him, to see what he can do."

Buff Bradley will be on Horse Racing Radio Network's Equine Forum at 9 ET Saturday morning discussing The Player and the Indiana Derby. Catch him on Sirius/XM 93, live streaming at horseracingradio.net as well as ESPN 680-AM in Louisville and 96.1-FM in Lexington, Ky.

Live Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse racing is conducted Tuesday through Friday at 2:05 PM EST with Saturday racing beginning at 6:05 PM. The 120-day season runs through Saturday, Oct. 29.

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The Player cruises to victory June 3, 2016 in an allowance race at Churchill Downs. Photo by Coady Photography