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Curtis Training Small Stable

With All American Success

RUIDOSO DOWNS, New Mexico (August 30, 2008) - Eric Curtis, who trains undefeated Jet Black Patriot, third-fastest qualifier to Monday's 50th All American Futurity (G1), has taken what many would consider an unusual path to becoming a trainer.

Curtis, 32, didn't grow up around horses in his hometown of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He didn't have a relative involved in the sport; he never attended the races. He said that he annually watched the Kentucky Derby on TV and he always liked horses. Ten years ago, Curtis purchased a riding horse that he boarded at a place where he met some people who happened to be involved in Quarter Horse racing. The exposure hooked Curtis on the sport, and he began his education to pursue a career as a trainer in part by watching TVG and reading everything he could about racing on the Internet.

"A lot of people think because you weren't born in the businesses you can't be successful," said Curtis. "I feel if you can be a doctor in eight years, why can't I be a horse trainer in eight years?"

In 2002, Curtis made his first trip to Ruidoso with several buddies. While they went fishing and hiking, he attended the Ruidoso Select Yearling Sale, where he trailed Jack Brooks – unbeknown to Brooks – at the sale grounds while the legendary trainer inspected yearlings to see what horses interested Brooks. That weekend, Curtis watched AB What A Runner win the All American Futurity.

Back home, Curtis received a hands-on education with racehorses while he was also "flipping" (buying, fixing up and reselling) houses. His official training career began in 2004 with allowance runner Village Katie Cash at Delta Downs. Now, four years later, Curtis has a horse in the All American. He also trains Firecracker Futurity (G1) winner Swingin N Ease, the third-fastest qualifier to the Sam Houston Futurity (G1) on September 5. Both horses are based at Randy Stone's Stone Farms near Baton Rouge, where Curtis leases stalls, then ships to race.

Jet Black Patriot, a Louisiana-bred son of Game Patriot, is a homebred racing for Richard and Janelle Simon of Zachary. A full brother to multiple Louisiana-bred stakes qualifier Hez Jet Black, the colt survived a near-fatal bout of salmonella as a foal. The Simons consigned him to the Louisiana QHBA Yearling Sale, but bought him back when he was only bid up to \$20,000.

In February, Jet Black Patriot opened his career by winning his trial to the Grade 2 Mardi Gras

Futurity at Louisiana Downs and then breaking the 300-yard track record while winning the final. He returned in late June to win a trial to the Grade 1 Lee Berwick Memorial Louisiana Bred Futurity at Delta Downs, and he captured the July 13 final by one-and-a-half lengths. Four days later, Jet Black Patriot arrived in Ruidoso, and Curtis was at the track for the first time with a racehorse.

Because Jet Black Patriot had earned nearly \$340,000 in his first four races, his connections believed he had paid his way into the trials to the All American. They spent \$50,000 to supplement the colt and were rewarded when he won the 14th of 15 trials on August 14 by nearly three lengths. Jet Black Patriot is the only undefeated horse in Monday's final.

To date, Curtis has won nine races with 15 starters this year. His \$389,920 in earnings rank him 33rd among the sport's leading trainers, but no trainer with fewer starters is ranked ahead of him by earnings.

Even with his growing success, Curtis says he wants to continue to train a small, select stable of runners while remaining in Baton Rouge.

“If I'm at the track, there's things I can't do, like pick my kids up from school,” said Curtis, who has a four-year-old daughter and a 19-month-old son with girlfriend April Vallet. “That's why I want to keep this on the smaller side. I do it because I want to do it, not because I have to do it.”