

**50**  
**YEARS**



**2024**

**YEAR IN REVIEW**

**RACE TRACK INDUSTRY PROGRAM**



**50 YEARS OF THE RACE TRACK INDUSTRY PROGRAM:  
A LEGACY IN MOTION**



**50**  
**YEARS**

Since its founding in 1974, the Race Track Industry Program (RTIP) at the University of Arizona has stood as a pioneer in shaping the horse racing and racetrack management industry. Rooted in a group spearheaded by Frank Vessels, Jr., of Los Alamitos Race Course, the program was created to formalize education and training in an industry that, until then, had relied heavily on experience and tradition. Over the past 50 years, the RTIP has built an enduring legacy, evolving to meet the ever-changing demands of the industry while remaining passionate about horse racing, equine management and racetrack operations.

## THE PAST: A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

In its early years, the RTIP quickly became known for its hands-on approach and strong industry connections. Through internships, industry guest speakers and events like the Global Symposium on Racing, students gained real-world experience and networking opportunities that set them apart. RTIP alumni have become prominent figures across all aspects of the industry, from track management to regulatory roles and training. The program's unique curriculum, blending business, legal and equine-focused studies, sets a gold standard. Prominent industry figures from all three horse racing breeds helped shape the program, including Jack Goodman, Stan Bergstein, Joe Harper, Don Essary, Calvin Rainey Sr., Taylor Powell, Joe Joyce, Nick Jemas, Gaston Valiquette, Leo Connelly, and Jack DeFee. From solid roots planted by the first program coordinators Chuck Nuber and Gary Amundson, the RTIP continued its upward trajectory under the unwavering leadership of Lonny Powell, Dave Hooper, Doug Reed and Wendy Davis.

## THE PRESENT: LEADING THROUGH INNOVATION

Today, the RTIP continues to evolve in response to the industry's modern challenges and innovations. Under the guidance of dedicated

faculty, including program chair Robert Hartman, the RTIP offers specialized courses reflecting the current landscape of horse racing, racinos and sports wagering. The annual Global Symposium on Racing remains a marquee event, bringing together professionals and students from across the globe to discuss key industry topics, network and explore career opportunities. The program's emphasis on technology, sustainability and integrity in racing aligns with the broader shift toward creating a more transparent, ethical and engaging industry.

## THE FUTURE: EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

Looking ahead, the RTIP is committed to adapting alongside an evolving industry. As horse racing intersects with emerging technology - from advanced track safety systems to enhanced data analytics - the program will continue to incorporate these advancements into its curriculum. Future initiatives aim to expand partnerships with international racing bodies, broaden internship opportunities and further integrate gaming insights as sports betting and interactive media grow in popularity. The RTIP's focus on cultivating future leaders who value both the tradition and the progression of horse racing will keep the program at the forefront for the next generation.

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS AND BEYOND

As the Race Track Industry Program marks its 50th anniversary, it stands as a testament to the strength of a program that has not only adapted but thrived amid change. With a legacy built on excellence, a present focused on innovation, and a future aimed at empowering leaders, the RTIP remains a vital institution for the horse racing industry, shaping it today and for years to come. **Here's to the next 50 years!**





## RTIP STUDENTS SHINE

# 2024 BREEDERS' CUP

The 2024 Breeders' Cup provided an invaluable opportunity for students from the Racing Track Industry Program (RTIP) to gain hands-on experience during one of the biggest events in racing. The prestigious two-day world championships, held at Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, gave eight RTIP students the chance to immerse themselves in the action and work alongside some of the industry's top breeders and owners.

As Owner Hosts, the students played a key role in assisting owners of horses competing at the Breeders' Cup. They had the unique opportunity to meet and interact with influential figures in the racing world, including principals from top stables such as Coolmore, Hronis Racing, Klaravich Stables, and Zedan Racing. Their responsibilities included answering questions, guiding owners to the paddock, and—hopefully—celebrating in the winners' circle after the races.

In addition to their work with owners, one RTIP student joined the Equine Security Team, learning from seasoned professionals responsible for maintaining safety and security throughout the event. This role involved supporting the surveillance team in both the barn area and on the front side, gaining invaluable insights into the behind-the-scenes operations that keep the Breeders' Cup running smoothly.

The students expressed gratitude for the hands-on experience and the industry connections they made during the event. It was an exciting opportunity to learn from some of the best in the business, solidifying their passion for the racing industry and preparing them for future careers in the sport.



RTIP professors and students pose for a picture with Caton Bredar at the Breeders' Cup.

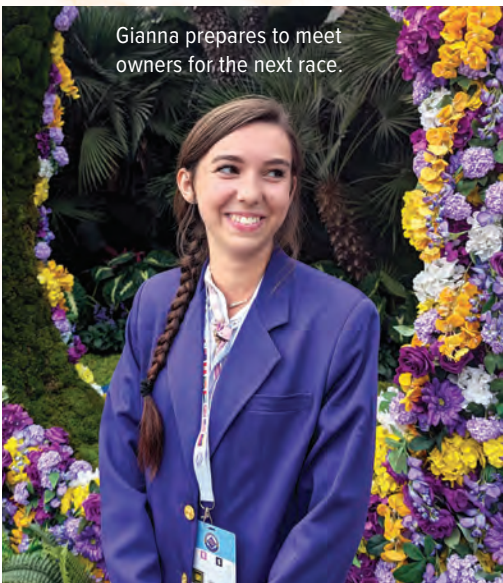




Mohanad in the Breeder's Cup Winners' Lounge.



Tashua and Emerald host Stephanie Hronis.



Gianna prepares to meet owners for the next race.



Won Ho and Nathan ready for hosting duties.

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Students with Peep at the Arizona Thoroughbred Breeders Association sale.



# A BRIGHT PROSPECT

**RTIP STUDENTS WORK ATBA SALE**



Bath time fun with Peep.





RTIP students attended the Arizona Thoroughbred Breeders Association (ATBA) sale in Queen Creek, AZ. For many of them, it was their first time attending a Thoroughbred sale. Students helped sales prep a bay yearling with the barn name *Peep*. Peep is a bay filly by Lotsa Mischief out of the Tizbud mare Tiz A Classy Lass.

Students prepared Peep's stall before the horse's arrival ensuring it was clean and ready. During the event, students kept the stall maintained, groomed Peep for showing, and provided her with food and water. Students took turns serving as showmen to present Peep to potential buyers. This involved quickly grooming her, leading her to a designated area, setting up the horse, and walking her in front of interested parties.

In addition to caring for Peep, students took advantage of the networking opportunities, connecting with breeders and buyers. There were one-on-one opportunities to spend time with bloodstock agents and prospective buyers to better understand what they look for. Students learned about horse conformation, what aspects to consider beyond pedigree, and the importance for agents to fully understand



Heading to the sales ring with confidence.

the specific preferences of their buyers.

On sale day, students observed the process of preparing Peep for transfer and witnessed her sell to a new owner. The experience left a strong impression on our students, fueling enthusiasm for the Arizona Thoroughbred industry, which they may be a part of in the future.



Practicing how to properly set up a horse for inspection.





# CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

Students pose with their University of Arizona-bred yearling “Kayak”.

## SUNSHINE, PALM TREES, AND A YEARLING SALE

This fall, students made a trip to Pomona, California, to attend the Fasig-Tipton California Fall Yearling sale. While there, they were quickly recruited by office staff to assist in the identification process of all the yearlings and learned that Fasig-Tipton is the only major sales company in the United States to utilize tail tags as part of the identification process. The tail tags act as a double check to ensure on sale day that each horse receives the correct hip number sticker and when the horse leaves the grounds, the new owners have the correct

horse. On sale day, the students assisted further by applying the hip numbers on each horse after a double check of the tail tag.

Students spent time speaking with Tom Clark, owner of Rancho San Miguel, and watched as the well-oiled machine of Tom and his team expertly cared for and showed their string of nearly forty horses. Amongst that string was Hip#139, a University of Arizona-bred, by Danzing Candy out of Savvy Lady. This colt is affectionately known as “Kayak” to the students who have helped raise





and train him over the past year at the Al Marah Equine Center in Tucson.

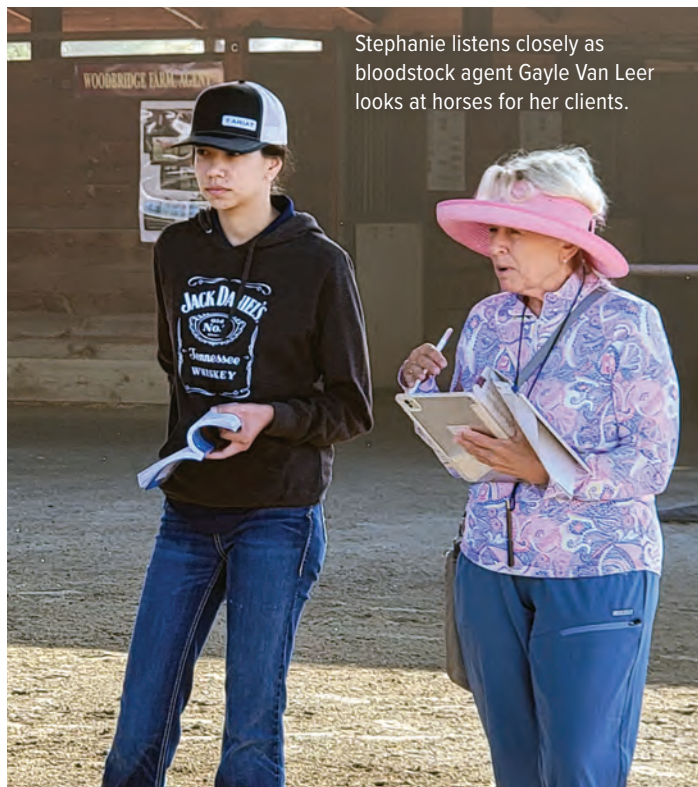
When not assisting the Fasig-Tipton office or the Rancho San Miguel team, students met up with bloodstock agent Gayle Van Leer, who brought them along as she observed several yearlings for her clients. Students learned about what to look for in a prospective racehorse, what can be lived with and what is an automatic no. As the first horses entered the ring on sale day students excitedly checked their observation notes to try to guess what each horse would sell for based on their earlier observations.

As the time for Kayak to enter the ring neared, students gathered at the Rancho San Miguel barn to observe the final moments of prep and escort their yearling. Kayak was a professional in the ring and was ultimately purchased by Luis Quinones Jr.

We extend our thanks to the Fasig-Tipton office, Susann and Candice, Tom Clark, and Gayle Van Leer for all the opportunities and wish the best of luck to Mr. Quinones and Kayak.



Alli shows the hip number stickers that will be put on each horse.



Stephanie listens closely as bloodstock agent Gayle Van Leer looks at horses for her clients.



Students took an impromptu trip to Los Alamitos Race Course.



Rancho San Miguel consigned Hip#139.

# HORSEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

## DEBUT

**THIS FALL, A GROUP OF UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA STUDENTS WITH A COMMON INTEREST IN HORSES MET TO FORM THE UNIVERSITY'S FIRST HORSEMEN'S ASSOCIATION**

The University of Arizona Horsemen's Association is a student-led organization that aids in preparing the next generation of horse enthusiasts to network and achieve their career goals. Being a new club, we have assembled our first-ever officer team and welcomed many members who share the same passion for the horse, as well as the desire to make an impact on the equine industry. In October, White Stallion Ranch hosted our club, taking our members on a trail ride through the Tucson desert and invited us to participate in other outdoor activities. We will be returning to White Stallion Ranch in November to learn about the ranch operations from owner Russell True. As we continue throughout the year, our club is working to establish connections by obtaining guest speakers and hands-on experience within the industry. We look forward to what the future holds for this club and are excited to grow within the industry.

- Horsemen's Association Officers



### **MEGAN SCHWARZ PRESIDENT**

**Degree:** Animal Science with an Equine Emphasis

**Career Path:** Veterinary Medicine/  
Owning and operating a rehabilitation and rehoming service for off-the-track Thoroughbreds.

**Hobbies:** Hanging out with my horse Elvis and my dog Ranger, going line dancing, baking, watching scary movies.





## ELIZABETH BANKS VICE PRESIDENT

**Degree:** Animal Science with an Equine Emphasis

**Career Path:** Position in the equine industry, whether that be training, managing, or sales

**Hobbies:** Powerlifting, cooking, hiking/camping, and swing dancing!



## JULIA ORTEGA REPRESENTATIVE

**Degree:** Agribusiness Management and Economics

**Career Path:** Aspiring to start and manage a cattle ranch in Montana, with a focus on sustainable agricultural practices and economic management.

**Hobbies:** Training and working with horses, spending time with friends and family, scuba diving.



## TASHUA SPIESS REPRESENTATIVE

**Degree:** Animal Science with an emphasis in Racetrack Industry

**Career Path:** Start to finish in the Thoroughbred racing industry. Starting with breeding, training, racing and aftercare for the off-the-track Thoroughbred when their career ends.

**Hobbies:** Hanging out at the barn with my horse Jett.



## KAITLYN CARLSON TREASURER

**Degree:** Veterinary Science

**Career Path:** Large Animal Veterinarian

**Hobbies:** Being around my horses, taking my dog on car drives, and being with my family.



## MELISSA BUCHANAN HISTORIAN

**Degree:** Veterinary Science

**Career Path:** Large Animal Veterinarian

**Hobbies:** Spending time with friends and family, taking my dog Duke on hikes, cooking, and I love going to farmers markets!





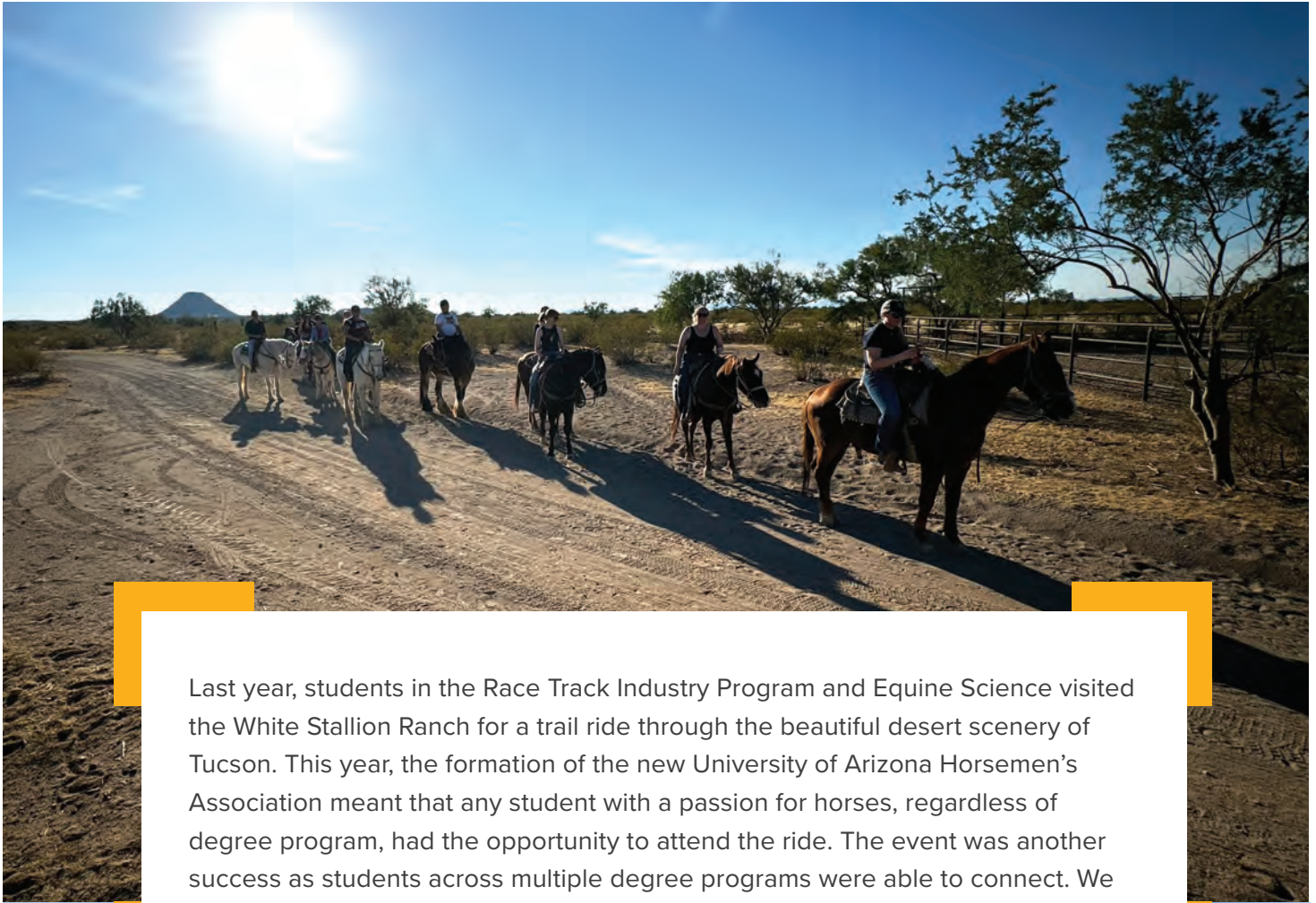


# TRAIL RIDE

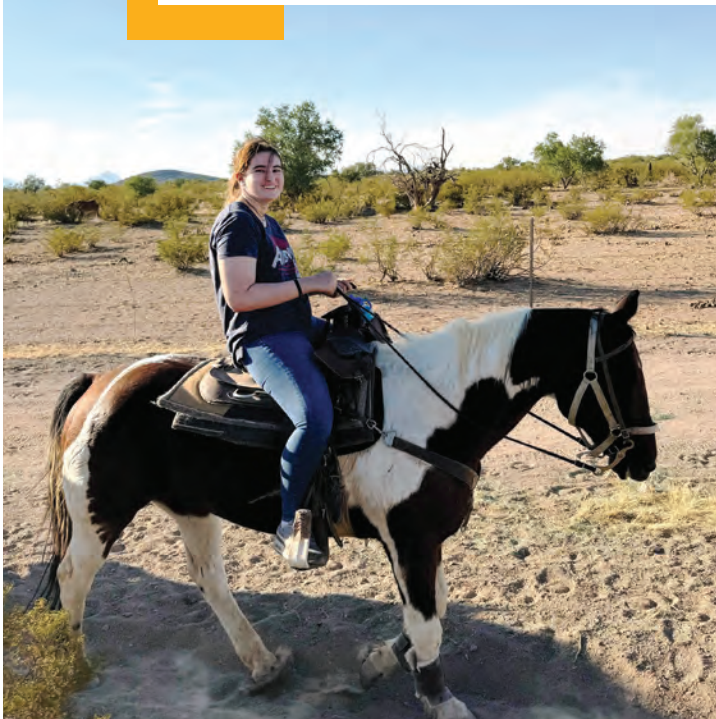
## RETURN TO **WHITE STALLION RANCH**







Last year, students in the Race Track Industry Program and Equine Science visited the White Stallion Ranch for a trail ride through the beautiful desert scenery of Tucson. This year, the formation of the new University of Arizona Horsemen's Association meant that any student with a passion for horses, regardless of degree program, had the opportunity to attend the ride. The event was another success as students across multiple degree programs were able to connect. We are grateful to ranch owner Russell True for his continued support of our students.







*“It’s an honor to have a racehorse named after me. Having ‘Legacy’ in the name feels right, as one of my goals is to continue to build on the legacy of our basketball program here in the Tucson community.”*

– University of Arizona Head Basketball Coach Tommy Lloyd

# FROM MIDNIGHT LUTE TO COACH LLOYD’S LEGACY

## THE ARIZONA BASKETBALL & HORSE RACING CONNECTION LIVES ON



In 2007, Midnight Lute, American Sprint Horse Champion, became the first notable link between the University of Arizona men’s basketball program and horse racing. This back-to-back winner of the Breeders’ Cup Sprint (2007 and 2008) was named in honor of Hall of Fame basketball coach Lute Olson, who left an indelible mark on Arizona basketball.

During his 25-year tenure, Coach Olson guided the Wildcats to remarkable success including a national title in 1997.

The horse Midnight Lute was owned by Paul Weitman, Karl Watson, and Mike Pegram, and trained by Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert—a former student in the University of Arizona’s Race Track Industry Program (RTIP). The nickname “Midnight Lute” was coined by rival UNLV coach Jerry Tarkanian, alluding to Olson’s knack for securing top recruits just before signing deadlines. “Coach Tarkanian used to call him ‘Midnight Lute’ because of his ability



to bring recruits over to the Wildcats at the 11th hour,” said current Arizona Head Basketball Coach Tommy Lloyd. “The rivalry between Arizona and UNLV was fierce, and players like [Tom] Tolbert switched to Arizona instead of heading to UNLV.”

Now, a new horse is named in honor of Coach Lloyd himself, aptly named **Coach Lloyd’s Legacy**. As Lloyd enters his fourth season as Arizona’s head coach, he already achieved a historic milestone with 61 wins in his first two seasons—the most for any Division I head coach.

“It’s an honor to have a racehorse named after me,” Lloyd said. “Having ‘Legacy’ in the name feels right, as one of my goals is to continue to build on the legacy of our basketball program here in the Tucson community.”

Though at first glance horse racing and basketball may seem worlds apart, Coach Lloyd and Baffert share similar philosophies in scouting talent. “Athleticism is key,” says Baffert. “Pedigree tells you the cost, but it’s about balance and speed.”

Coach Lloyd agreed, adding, “I look for physical maturity and all-around talent in players. You can measure athleticism, but you can’t measure heart and determination.”

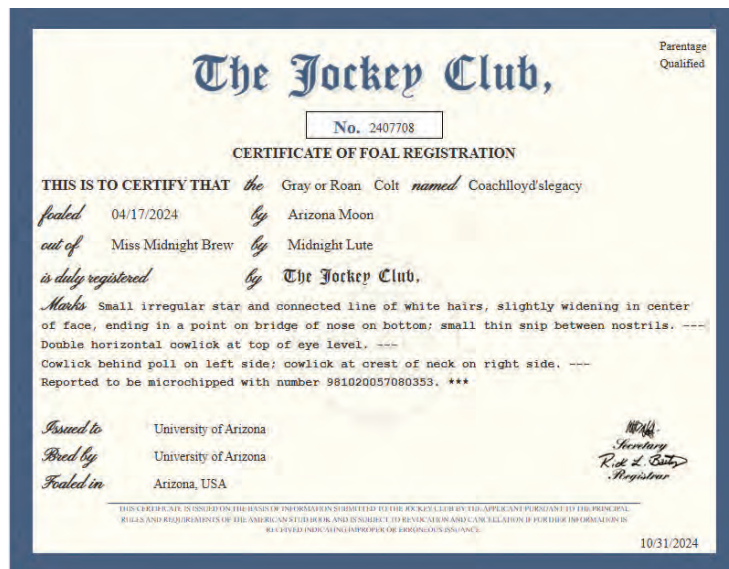
Baffert did note a word of caution when selecting a race horse “Stay away from tall, lanky horses. We don’t need to dunk in horse racing.”

In a fitting twist, Coach Lloyd’s Legacy is by Arizona Moon and out of the Midnight Lute mare Miss Midnight Brew, forging yet another connection to Olson’s legacy.



**“Stay away from tall, lanky horses. We don’t need to dunk in horse racing.”**

— Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert



Coach Lloyd’s Legacy is fittingly by Arizona Moon out of the Midnight Lute mare Miss Midnight Brew.

Although still a only a weanling, Coach Lloyd’s Legacy carries the potential of both his namesake and his pedigree.

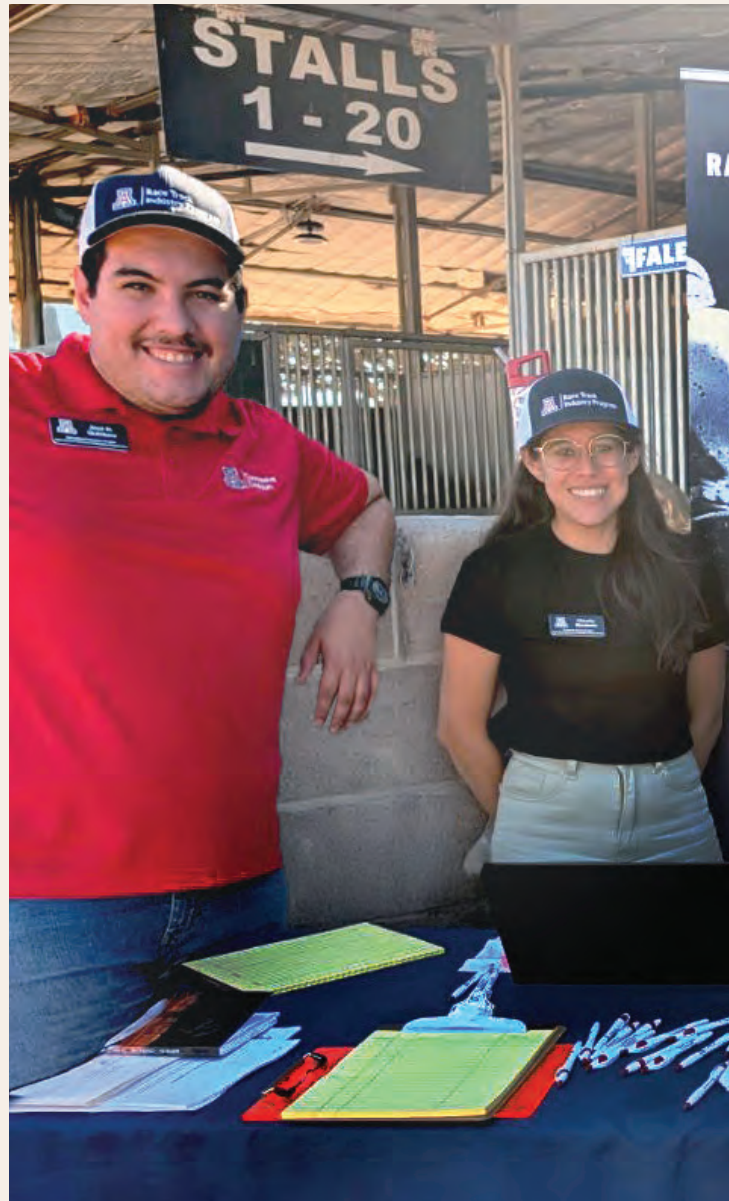
“I’m looking forward to following this horse and seeing what he can do on the track,” Coach Lloyd said.



Coach Lloyd’s Legacy meets his namesake, Coach Lloyd.

# ARIZONA HORSE RACING ECONOMIC STUDY

**ON-GOING STUDY WILL PROVIDE  
VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO ARIZONA'S  
HORSE RACING INDUSTRY**







The Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics and RTIP students attended the Arizona Thoroughbred Breeders Association Fall Mixed Sale to directly connect with horse racing participants about the economic study.

The University of Arizona's Race Track Industry Program (RTIP) and the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics are conducting the *Arizona Horse Racing Economic Contribution Study* on behalf of the Arizona Thoroughbred Breeders Association (ATBA), Arizona Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association (AZHBPA) and Arizona Quarter Racing Association (AZQRA).

The study will provide an estimate of the size of the horse racing industry in Arizona, as well as its full contribution to the state economy through multiplier effects.

It will capture the economic activity of key industry groups, including horse owners, breeders, trainers, race tracks, industry associations, the Arizona Department of

Gaming's racing division, the off-track betting (OTB) network and businesses indirectly supporting the industry providing goods and services.

The estimates rely on a statewide survey of key horse racing industry stakeholders conducted in cooperation with the ATBA, AZHBPA and the AZQRA.

In addition to the economic contribution estimates, the study will provide a profile of the industry and its structure. This offers an opportunity to better understand how the Arizona racing industry works, as well as how it is connected within the state economy.

Findings are expected to be released in January 2025.



# 2024 SUMMER INTERNSHIPS



Each summer students have unique opportunities to put their classroom knowledge to practical use, thereby enhancing their educational experience and making them better prepared for employment in the racing industry upon graduation.

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## **RYLIN MEDCOFF | NORMANDY, FRANCE**

I recently spent two months doing an internship in Normandy, France. I lived and worked at Haras Du Lieu Des Champs, owned and managed by Richard Powell. Living and working abroad gave me a unique perspective of how a foreign thoroughbred farm operates. I lived on-site above one of the barns and helped monitor, clean, feed, and care for all the farm's horses. My daily routine consisted of feeding and examining mares and foals in different paddocks each morning and helping with daily chores including mixing and preparing feed for the next day. I also assisted with daily medical procedures including providing small wound care, administering reproductive medications, respiration treatments on foals when prescribed, administering vaccines, assisting with post-surgical care, X-rays and ultrasounds, and assisting the farrier. In the afternoons, I helped feed and examine all the broodmares, yearlings, and retired horses in paddocks around the farm.

Besides enjoying the experience of living in a foreign country, I fed my passion by spending all my waking hours working with mares and foals. I formed strong bonds with the foals and loved their reactions each morning. In addition to learning to live on a farm, I was fortunate to help prep 2-year-old horses for sales as well as exhibiting horses at the July Arqana sale. It was an amazing and life-changing two months, and it reaffirmed my desire to pursue bloodstock, consignment, and breeding work. Finally, I attended several horse races with Mr. Powell where I not only observed the spoils of his hard work (i.e., watching his horses race), but I also learned what he did behind the scenes as a racehorse owner and manager of horses owned by others. Throughout my experience in France, I learned so much about breeding, raising, selling, and owning racehorses. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity only happened because of Mr. Powell's generosity—he opened his home and farm to me, and I will forever be grateful. I am blessed to have lived in France for two months to pursue my passion.





### **NATHAN KLEIN | COLONIAL DOWNS**

For the second summer in a row, I was able to intern at Colonial Downs. This year most of my time was spent shadowing and learning from their chart caller, Jon Miller.

With Jon, I experienced the meticulous and sometimes hectic routine required of a chart caller to get accurate information to the public in a timely manner. This included tasks like getting the scratches, the reasons for the scratches, and checking all the equipment to make sure it matched the program. During the running of the race, the chart caller quickly called and recorded the positions of horses in the race to be posted on Equibase. There is an incredible amount of responsibility that comes with keeping and updating the records of every horse that runs on the track.

I was also introduced to Gmax, a horse racing GPS system used to track horses through two trackers in a saddle towel. It was a team effort to relay information - especially in unusual situations (i.e., low battery/unresponsive trackers) and to fetch and publish the information the trackers sent to our computer system.

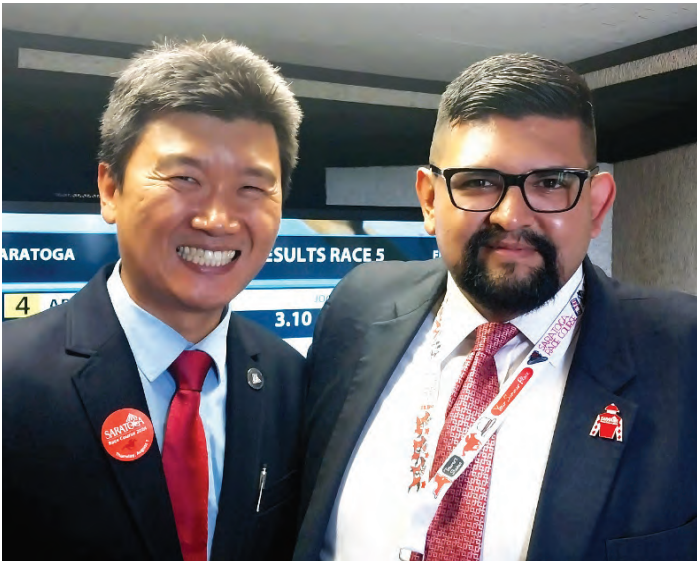
I also worked the gap in the mornings, allowing horses to enter the racetrack to train. If someone wanted a timed workout, I ensured that the clocker had been notified. It gave me the opportunity to experience working on the backside. It made me feel like a real member of the team working together to keep a racetrack's operations running smoothly.

### **ALDO ZAMORA | DEL MAR**

I spent five weeks at the beautiful Del Mar Thoroughbred Club. I worked Wednesdays through Sundays, from 8AM until the job was done. And I enjoyed every second of it. I worked in the race office in the mornings, where I took entries, verified eligibility, sent out digital and physical papers, made sure the ownership information was up to date, and silks information was correct. In the afternoon, I headed to the frontside to shadow the stewards and see how the placing judges handled the photo finish. I also got on a pole next to the track and, with a set of binoculars and headphones, communicated with the stewards if there was any type of bumping that I could see. I also worked in the paddock to make sure the correct equipment was on each horse. I had a busy five weeks and I would definitely recommend it to any student who is leaning towards the race track operations of the program. Thank you to David Jerkens and the team for teaching me so much over a short period of time.







## ERIC PARK | GULFSTREAM PARK, THE JOCKEY CLUB, SARATOGA RACECOURSE

This past summer, I had the incredible opportunity to immerse myself in the heart of the U.S. horse racing industry through internships at Gulfstream Park, The Jockey Club, and Saratoga Racecourse.

At Gulfstream Park, I worked in the racing office, where I assisted with entries and claiming administration. I also shadowed the stewards and placing judges, learning about the processes that ensure fairness and integrity in racing. A particularly thrilling moment was presenting trophy to the winning connections, which brought me closer to the excitement of the sport. Mike Costanzo, the racing secretary and a proud RTIP alumnus, played a pivotal role during my time at Gulfstream. His extensive knowledge of racetrack operations and willingness to share advice provided invaluable lessons that will stay with me throughout my career.

My time working with The Jockey Club under the guidance of Andrew Chesser gave me a deep appreciation for the administrative and regulatory backbone of the U.S. horse racing industry. Andrew's mentorship was invaluable—he provided insights into the International Forum for the Aftercare of Racehorses (IFAR) and the detailed horse registration process.

At the Kentucky Racing Commission, I had the chance to explore its mission, understand its challenges, and observe its regulatory processes, all of which offered valuable insights into how a decentralized regulatory system operates.

I also learned about cataloging systems, gained strategic insights at the Breeders' Cup office, and

discussed ways to grow the sport's appeal with passionate leaders. Each conversation reinforced the importance of innovation and adaptability in horse racing, broadening my perspective and deepening my understanding of the sport's global ecosystem.

My Saratoga experience began by attending The Jockey Club's Annual Round Table Conference, where I gained insights into key topics such as racetrack modernization, sports betting integration, and equine safety.

I also worked in the racing office with Keith Doleshel, a distinguished RTIP alumnus. Keith not only introduced me to the vibrant morning track work at the Oklahoma Training Center but also guided me through the intricacies of race planning and entries.

The Whitney Stakes was a highlight of my Saratoga experience, as was the Fasig-Tipton sale.

This internship was more than just a learning opportunity—it was a transformative chapter in my career.

These experiences have already begun to shape my contributions to the Korea Racing Authority, where I work on the race planning team. The knowledge I gained has allowed me to approach my role with a global perspective and a commitment to innovation. I am confident that the lessons I learned will help bridge the gap between Korean practices and global standards, ensuring the continued growth of horse racing in Korea.



## ALI EVANS | SPY COAST FARM

I spent two-weeks as an intern at Spy Coast Farm in Lexington, KY, in late May of this year. I spent most of my time in one barn with the same team, working with young warmbloods aged four to six in their Young Horse Development Program. On my first day, mere minutes after being introduced to the manager, I was sent out to a pasture with others to catch a few horses and bring them into the barn as part of their seasonal rotation. I was able to spend time with and get to know each horse, their preferences and how to handle them properly. After a while, I was asked to hold two-year-olds in a pasture - in the rain, without a proper halter - for a farrier. We had a bucket of pellets to lure them to us and had to make a makeshift halter out of a lead rope and hold them steady. Toward the end of my time there, I went to a different barn where I got to handle two- to three-year-olds and see how they broke them. I got to be involved in the process of getting them used to things being thrown over their backs, having a saddle sitting there, and even putting weight on their backs.

After that, I shadowed their veterinarian to various farms and got to learn many different things. Our first stop was Burleson Farms to treat a weanling for a respiratory infection; he was not happy about how many people were in the stall. They eventually got the needed blood sample and went on to do many caslick's procedures and ultrasounds. Dr. Modesty Burleson showed me how to ultrasound a horse and she taught me the meaning of the different densities and sizes, how to do a caslick's procedure, why we go through the process, and everything that goes into breeding Thoroughbreds. She took me through the process of booking a stallion to breed to her mare including how she picked them, the importance of timing, and the medications to aid in the timing of each breeding. She even took me to watch the covering and the aftercare for the mare. It was at that time she got a call about a horse colicing at Spy Coast, so we rushed over there. Another intern and I stood with the horse to ensure she didn't roll. I got to witness and aid in the treatment and care of this horse, which was a little scary at the beginning, but I just tried to stay out of the way at first. The horse ended up being fine, thanks to Dr. Burleson and her help with NG tube placement.

On one of my last days there, I got to help with a foaling during which the mare had a difficult birth. She had a red bag, and I got to watch as the tech on duty called the vet and followed her instructions. We got to stay with the mare and foal for a couple hours, and the foal would even stand up and walk around while mom was still on the floor. He was suckling on our fingers and was said to be super friendly as he grew up a little bit, likely due to those initial moments of human interaction.







Each year during the **Global Symposium on Racing**, students have the opportunity to participate in the Mentor Luncheon. This event brings students together with industry professionals who put scholastic knowledge into context. The opportunity to be in a one-on-one setting with industry leaders allow the students to gain insights and focus on their personal goals.

# MENTOR LUNCHEON

## THANK YOU TO THE 2023 MENTORS

### AIDAN BUTLER

President,  
1/ST Racing

### KEITH DOLESHEL

Racing Secretary,  
NYRA

### MATT FEIG

General Manager,  
NYRA Bets

### GEMMA FREEMAN

Industry Relations Manager,  
Stonestreet Farm

### KIRSTEN GREEN

Executive Director,  
Retired Racehorse Project

### LISA LAZARUS

Chief Executive Officer,  
HISA

### BILL NADER

President & CEO,  
Thoroughbred Owners  
of California

### JESSICA PAQUETTE

Track Announcer,  
Parx Racing

### MARY SCOLLAY

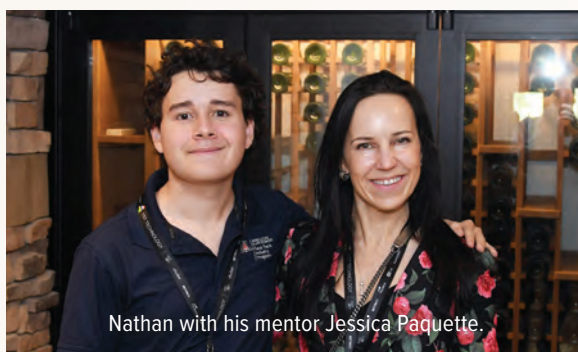
Chief of Science,  
Horseracing Integrity  
& Welfare Unit

### NAJJA THOMPSON

Executive Director,  
New York Thoroughbred  
Breeders, Inc.

### JANET VANBEBBER

Chief Racing Officer,  
AQHA



Nathan with his mentor Jessica Paquette.



Alonso with his mentor Janet VanBebber.



# REAL WORLD MEETS THE CLASSROOM



Teena Appleby teaches horse identification.



Tom Clark speaks to students about Thoroughbred farm operations.



Alex Waldrop discusses racing regulation with students.

Each semester, the RTIP brings guest lectures into the classroom to provide students with exceptional networking opportunities with industry leaders. These professionals bring together their expertise and real-world experiences and provide students a diversity of knowledge that enhances the program experience.

## THANK YOU TO THE 2024 GUEST SPEAKERS

### ALEXA RAVIT

Director of Communications & Outreach, Horseracing Integrity & Welfare Unit

### ERIC SINDLER

General Counsel for California Racing Operations, 1/ST

### LESLIE JANECKA

Coordinator, Kentucky Equine Management Internship (KEMI)

### GARY FENTON

Managing Partner, Little Red Feather Racing

### ARTHUR COOPER

International Racehorse Commentator

### DR. ABBIE HAFFNER

Equine Veterinarian

### ERICH ZIMNY

GM/VP of Operations, Hollywood Gaming Mahoning Valley Race Course

### PETER ROTONDO

Senior VP of Racing & Wagering, 1/ST

### ANDREW OFFERMAN

Senior VP of Racing and Operations, New York Racing Association (NYRA)

### BILL NADER

President, Thoroughbred Owners of California (TOC)

### MIKE TANNER

Executive VP & CEO, United States Trotting Association (USTA)

### TOM CLARK

Owner, Rancho San Miguel

### J CURTIS LINNELL

Executive Vice President, Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau (TRPB)

### ALEX WALDROP

Former CEO, National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA)

### TEENA APPLEBY

Operations & Investigations Technician, Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau (TRPB)



# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF RTIP











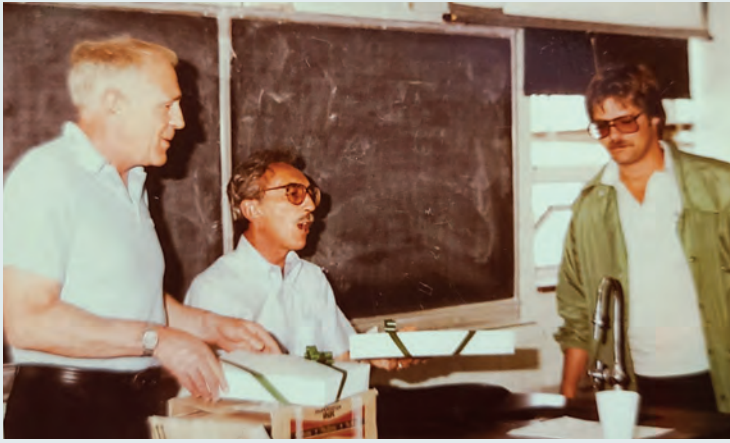




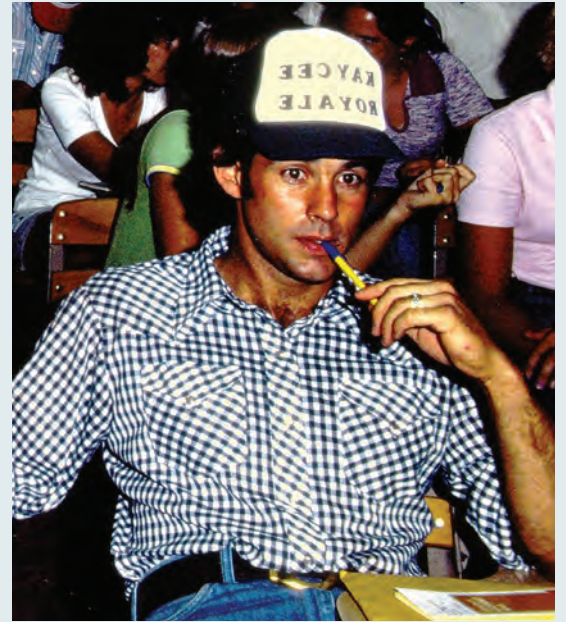


















## MOHANAD ALMOKHADM



Mohanad Almokhadm is a dedicated equine professional originally from Saudi Arabia. After earning his B.S. in mechanical engineering, he worked in the oil sector but found himself inspired to shift his career after witnessing Arrogate's remarkable performance at the Dubai Cup.

Currently enrolled in the Race Track Industry Program, Mohanad has gained extensive hands-on experience through internships at Rillito Park Racetrack. In 2023, he volunteered with the Breeders' Cup World Championships in Host Owner Program and officially served as Host Manager in 2024. He aspires to utilize his knowledge and experiences to enhance the burgeoning horse racing industry in Saudi Arabia.

## MARY KARLENE CISNEROS



Mary Karlene Cisneros was born and raised in Casper, Wyoming, and grew up watching the rodeo at Central Wyoming Fairgrounds. Without a horse or even a saddle to call her own, Mary Karlene joined the United States Air Force. Upon discharge, she worked as a civil servant for 20 years. She heard an advertisement for Santa Anita Park which drew her to the Great Race Place. The Santa Anita ushers provided an education about horse racing, and Trevor Denman's voice was her guide as he called the races and made the crowd come alive. Studying the Daily Racing Form became a passion, as did arriving early to watch the workouts at Clocker's Corner. After witnessing Zenyatta make history, she began school at North American Racing Academy and moved on to the Race Track Industry Program, following in the footsteps of Remi Bellocq, Todd Pletcher, and Bob Baffert.

## STELLA EBNER



Stella Ebner is an equine major at the University of Arizona with an emphasis in the race track industry. Her academic focus lies in the management and operations of racing organizations, where she aims to contribute innovative strategies to grow the sport. With a background in dressage and hands-on horse experience, she hopes to bring a unique and fresh perspective to the industry. Additionally, she has traveled to various race tracks which has deepened her understanding of the sport. She is passionate about combining her equine knowledge with operational insights to make a positive impact on the race track industry.

# 2024-2025

## RTIP STUDENTS



## ALICIA EVANS



Ali, from “up the road” in Phoenix, is a senior who joined the RTIP in the Fall of 2022. She has been working with horses for the past nine years in various disciplines, although she prefers western pleasure. Ali learned to ride while working for two local trainers. She also learned to play horseback polo while working for an equine vet clinic! She has a strong love of animals and a desire to care for them. Ali also worked at Rillito Park as a vet assistant this past spring, getting to know how the track vets work and meeting trainers trackside. Ali’s current career goal is to be a trainer, but she admits that may change as she learns about the different areas of the industry.

She has worked at Animal Kingdom as a Shift Lead for over 2 years, interned at TRAK (Therapeutic Ranch for Animals and Kids) this past spring semester, interned at Spy Coast Farms in Lexington, KY, for two weeks in May, and is moving to Lexington, KY, for the KEMI program in January of next year.

## TAYLER KENT



Tayler Kent, originally from Casa Grande, Arizona, is a college rodeo athlete for the University of Arizona. Tayler has been riding horses since the age of five, fostering a lifelong passion for horse racing. With experience in Quarter Horse racing, Tayler has always been eager to learn more about the racing industry.

In May 2024, Tayler graduated from the University of Arizona with a B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Pre-law. Aspiring to become an agricultural lawyer or equine attorney, Tayler decided to gain additional expertise in racetrack management while preparing for law school. Currently, Tayler is pursuing a major in Animal Sciences with a Race Track Industry Program Emphasis.

Some of Tayler’s favorite memories include watching the Kentucky Derby and the Breeders’ Cup. Tayler is eager for the opportunities and experiences yet to come.



**RTIP STUDENTS ARE UNITED BY PASSION.  
FOR THE HORSE. FOR RACING. FOR MAKING  
THEIR OWN MARK.**



## NATHAN KLEIN



Nathan is a Junior who calls Chapel Hill, North Carolina, home. The 2010 Breeders' Cup Marathon, called by Trevor Denman, was the first race he ever watched. It would spark a lifelong passion. Some of Nathan's fondest racing memories were watching racing on TV, sound muted, as he practiced race calling himself and learning horse racing history any way he could.

Since making it to college, he has learned and done more than he ever could have imagined.

He's called over 50 races at five race tracks, as well as calling international races remotely for 1/ST BET. He's spent two summers at Colonial Downs working marketing and then charts. Nathan's ultimate goal is to be a race track announcer.

## EMERALD KWINN



Emerald is a sophomore and a local from Tucson, Arizona. Before enrolling at the University of Arizona, she volunteered at several therapeutic riding programs. As she entered college life, she immersed herself deeper within the industry. Emerald continues to be inspired by all the opportunities given to her as she follows her dream and passion to work with horses. During her time at the university, Emerald learned to ride western through a university club and spent the summer working with horses during an internship at the Al Marah Farm. During her trip to the Retired Racehorse Project's Thoroughbred Makeover, Emerald found new inspiration for caring for race horses after they retire. Though her career goals are still being determined, Emerald continues to learn about new career options that she may pursue.

## ALESSANDRA MEJIA-RODRIGUEZ



Alessandra Mejia-Rodriguez is very passionate about becoming a jockey and working with horses. While growing up, her family owned a few horses, and she has been amazed with the formality and strength of these incredible equine athletes from a young age. She likes to ride horses in her spare time, and the biggest thrill of riding is building the connection between her and the horse. In the future, she plans to combine her passion for the horse industry with a strong commitment to understanding equine behavior and improving her riding skills. She hopes the Race Track Industry Program will offer her the opportunity to learn and grow in these areas.

**THE RTIP STUDENT BODY IS COMPRISED OF A DIVERSE GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS. MUCH LIKE THE MAKE-UP OF THE EQUINE INDUSTRY, OUR STUDENTS REPRESENT MANY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.**



## ALONSO PEÑA



Alonso, a senior at the university, grew up in the small border town of Douglas, Arizona. From ranching to the race track, he has been around horses for the majority of his life. From Thoroughbreds to Quarter Horses, he has been a part of several teams, working under different trainers in both breeds. Over the years, he has been around different aspects of the industry, from breaking yearlings, to grooming and exercise riding, to working as a valet and assistant starter at Rillito Park Racetrack. After interning with the racing investigations team at the Breeders' Cup, he is now focused on becoming an investigator. Upon graduating this December, Alonso plans on continuing his passion to improving horse racing and protecting the sport.

## GIANNA RINALDO



Gianna is a third-year student at the University of Arizona, studying both Veterinary Science and Race Track Industry Program coursework. After graduating from the university, she hopes to go to Vet School to become a Track Veterinarian. She has seen the shortage of equine vets from both her field trips and listening to guest speakers in the classroom. She wants to make a difference in the life of every horse and to fill the need for employees in this profession. Her interest in the industry stems from her off-track Thoroughbred, Ink Can Do, who she has retrained to compete in Dressage. Gianna enjoys competing in Dressage and takes pride in riding a Thoroughbred.

## WON HO SHIN



Won joined the RTIP for the 2024-2025 academic year as part of the Executive-In-Residence Program with the Korean Racing Authority (KRA). As a staff member of the KRA, he is responsible for racing development strategy, having previously worked in the breeding department at the KRA ranch.

Before joining RTIP, Won had limited opportunities to learn about American horse racing. However, through RTIP's exceptional education program, his knowledge and understanding of American racing, breeding, and wagering have significantly grown. In particular, he was able to observe the hands-on processes while attending yearling sales and learning how to select racehorses effectively.

Won is confident that the insights and connections he has gained during this time will not only advance his own career but also contribute to the growth of the Korean horse racing industry. He aims to help Korean racehorses improve their performance, with the ambitious goal of making them run an average of one second faster.



## TASHUA SPIESS



Tashua was born and raised in Tucson and is a third generation Tucsonan. This is her first year at the University of Arizona after transferring from Pima Community College. As a youth, Tashua fell in love with horses and started taking lessons. She joined 4-H and the Southern Arizona Youth Association, which led her to showing Arabian Horses. After an illness that left her unable to ride, she still attended shows to help and still be around the horses. After years of being out of the horse industry, Tashua decided to purchase an off-track Thoroughbred named Scheffler from Turf Paradise in May 2023. Scheffler, by Mineshaft out of Manki, was her first introduction to Thoroughbreds, and she fell in love with the breed. Her goal is to eventually open a rescue for OTTBs and retrain them for a discipline. She also hopes to be able to provide a therapeutic function because while she was sick, horses kept her going, and she wants to be able to do the same for other people.

## ALDO ZAMORA



Aldo was born in Mexico City and is the proud son of a jockey. Aldo always loved handicapping and reading the Daily Racing Form, so he jumped at the chance to become a jockey agent for his dad. After hustling for eight years at Emerald Downs, Aldo decided to pursue a managerial position at the track. This is his third year in the RTIP, studying the management side of the business. He believes in the importance of having a strong connection between the frontside and backside. He interned with the Washington Horse Racing Commission, where he worked in many roles including clocker, receiving barn assistant, and paddock judge during the 2023 season. This year, he interned at the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, where he worked as an entry clerk and did various jobs around the track, from patrol judge, to assisting in the paddock, and much more.





# AN RTIP ALUMNUS RETURNS

## MEET ELIZABETH ROGERS



### ELIZABETH ROGERS HAS RETURNED TO HER ALMA MATER—THIS TIME AS A MEMBER OF THE FACULTY.

Rogers has over a decade of racing industry experience, making significant strides in racing office roles at Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races and Hollywood Gaming Mahoning Valley Race Course. Her most recent role was as Director of Racing at Mahoning Valley. Additionally, she has been an active member of the Racing Operations Committee (ROCO), collaborating with her counterparts at other race tracks on challenges faced by the industry.

#### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER IN HORSE RACING?

I first experienced horse racing when I happened to see it on TV one day. It was the Preakness Stakes, and it was a horse named Afleet Alex. When they were coming out of the turn, another horse named Scrappy T cut off Afleet Alex, who stumbled and almost went to the ground – his nose nearly touched the ground. Somehow the horse recovered, the rider stayed on, and then they went on and won the race. For me, seeing that athleticism and that heart is what really drew me to horse racing.

#### YOU'VE HAD A SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN RACE TRACK OPERATIONS. WHAT DREW YOU BACK TO THE U OF A?

I was looking for a change of pace, and I've always enjoyed teaching. When I was at Charles Town, I was the primary person training people, and I really enjoyed being able to bring them into the world of horse racing. When the opportunity to come back and teach in the RTIP popped up, I decided to go for it. And I'm so happy to be back!

#### WHAT CLASSES DO YOU TEACH?

In the fall, I teach a class in racing business strategies, so we're looking at track management – day-to-day operations, casino race track operations and racing globally. I also teach a class on managing the racing animals. In the spring, I'll teach the race track operations class, which is the precursor to the business strategies class, where students learn about how track operations work – essentially, what I did at Mahoning. I'll also teach a class on equine conformation.

#### WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE RACEHORSE?

Probably Zenyatta. She was racing when I first came to the race track industry program, and she was almost undefeated in her entire career. In 2008, she won the Breeders' Cup Ladies Classic, and the following year she went up against the boys and beat them in the Breeders' Cup Classic, which is the big race. She was an incredible racehorse. She had a ton of personality, too – she was known for kind of dancing before a race.



Elizabeth meets  
Zenyatta at  
Churchill Downs  
in 2010.



# TODD PLETCHER



Todd Pletcher overseeing morning training activities.

While the Race Track Industry Program (RTIP) has no shortage of illustrious alumni, one in particular stands out as an example of the incredible caliber of program graduates we are proud to claim as Wildcats. **Todd Pletcher (RTIP '89)** is one of the winningest trainers in Thoroughbred racing history. His accolades are numerous, including eight *Eclipse Awards* for trainer of the year, all-time leading Thoroughbred trainer by money won amassing nearly \$500 million in earnings, numerous winners of Triple crown races, and his own place as an inductee to the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame.

Recently, the Pletcher-trained three-year-old, *Fierceness*, won the prestigious Travers Stakes at Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga Springs, NY. On the heels of his big win, we interviewed Pletcher to discuss his career and his time here at the U of A.

Pletcher self-describes as being “born into” horse racing, learning under his father and uncle from a very young age growing up in Texas. He always knew he wanted to train horses, but going to college was never in doubt.

“Both my parents were adamant about college education. They fully supported me training horses after I graduated, but felt strongly that getting a college degree was the way to get started,” he said.

Once he arrived in Tucson, he found that the RTIP helped him learn the skills he needed. In school, he embraced the campus atmosphere through Greek Life and Arizona Basketball, while soaking up everything he could in the classroom.





“I think the one thing about the Race Track Industry Program that I didn’t realize when I went there is you learn, as someone on the horse side of it, racetrack management from a pari-mutuel standpoint—from the business side of it as opposed to the backside work environment that I was familiar with,” he said. “It gave me a more well-rounded understanding of how racetracks work.”

In the summers, with the encouragement of RTIP faculty, Pletcher worked with a different trainer every summer, where he eventually met his future mentor and leading trainer, D. Wayne Lukas. That perseverance and drive has carried through to Pletcher’s career today.

In his words, training horses is “less of a job and more of a lifestyle.” His daily schedule is grueling.

“Each day generally starts with the alarm clock going off at 3.30 a.m. Then I come out to the barn and kind of start getting prepared for the day. Most of our main training hours are between 5.30 a.m. and 10 a.m. We use the same facility to train that we race at,” he said.

“The track will need to be closed and renovated and prepared for the races, which starts at 12:30 or 1:00 that afternoon. Depending on what our post times are, sometimes we’ll be wrapping things up at 6:30 or 7:00 at night, just in time to start over again.”

Top: Belmont Stakes Presentation, 2007, credit Patricia McQueen.



Students with Todd Pletcher.

Clearly, Pletcher’s grit and determination has paid off in spades. This year, he will add yet another award to his considerably packed trophy shelf—as Todd Pletcher has been named the **2025 CALES Alumnus of the Year**.

Each year, the University of Arizona Alumni Advisory Council has the privilege of conferring recognition upon individuals for outstanding achievement and contributions to their professions, their communities, and the University of Arizona. Todd will be honored among alumni from other colleges who are changing the world. We’re honored to celebrate Todd’s incredible achievements and dedication to his sport this February.

Top: Thunder Gulch, 1995 Preakness





THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, LIFE  
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

# Race Track Industry Program

