



Neil J. Howard

Born: Feb. 23, 1949 in Riverdale, N.Y.

Resident: Louisville, Ky.

Family: Susan (wife), Ashleigh (daughter), Jared (son).

Neil J. Howard's record at Keeneland

Total wins: 143

Stakes Wins: (19)

- Trained Horse of the Year Mineshaft to win seven stakes in 2003, four of which were Grade 1.
- Trained Summer Squall, who won the 1990 Preakness and Blue Grass.
- Scored career win No. 1,000 on Oct. 12, 2005 at Keeneland with Soul Search.
- Won the 2000 Kentucky Oaks (G1) with Secret Status.
- Tied as the leading trainer at Keeneland in the spring of 1994.
- Two-time leading trainer at Churchill Downs, in the fall of 1997 and 1998 (tied with Bobby Barnett).
- Saddled six straight winners during a six-day span at Churchill Downs in 1997.
- Tied for fourth at Keeneland in career stakes victories with 19 and tied for eighth with 143 wins.

Since going to work for Will Farish's Lane's End Farm in 1984, Neil Howard has developed a long list of stakes-winning horses. One of the top horses he has trained was Mineshaft, whose seven stakes victories in 2003 included the Jockey Club Gold Cup, Woodward, Suburban and Pimlico Special, all Grade 1 events. He earned Eclipse Awards as Horse of the Year and champion older male.

In addition, Howard also won the Bayou Breeders' Cup that year with Quick Tip and the Sea O Erin Breeders' Cup Mile with Rock Slide. His stable combined to earn \$3,620,359 during the season.

"Yeah, there's a void without him," Howard told *Daily Racing* about Mineshaft's retirement to stud. "When you get the horse of a lifetime, how could you not miss him when he's gone. But we're all lucky back here because we love what we do. You keep working to develop the horses you have."

In 2004, Howard won the Ben Ali Stakes (G3) and the Fayette Stakes (G3) with Midway Road. He also won graded stakes with Gradepoint (the Risen Star Stakes) and Shadow Cast (the Silverbulletday Stakes) and won the Black Tie Affair Handicap with Alumni Hall. He saddled 37 winners and the earners of \$1,938,175.

He saddled the winners of 43 races and the earners of \$3.1 million in 2005, which ranked him 30th. Topping the stable's 13 stakes victories were the Personal Ensign Stakes (G1) won by Shadow Cast and the Woodford Reserve Turf Classic (G1) won by America Alive. Alumni Hall and Reunited added Grade 3 wins at Keeneland in the Fayette Stakes and Thoroughbred Club of America Stakes, respectively. Howard also scored the 1,000th victory of his career on Oct. 12 at Keeneland with Soul Search.

Last year, the star of Howard's stable was Brilliant, who won the Kent Breeders' Cup (G3) and Jefferson Cup (G2). He saddled the winners of 25 races and the earners of \$1,751,161 during the year.

Howard, a native of Riverdale, N.Y., spent two years in the Navy after finishing high

school. He explained how he ended up at the racetrack: "I was riding show horses and went to Waterford Park to look for horses to buy for showing. Soon after that, I was at Belmont Park looking for a job.

"I got my first job working for trainer John Cotter in 1969," he said. "After a year or so, I worked for Woody Stephens and his brother, Bill, for about a year. I rubbed horses for Bill in South Carolina during the winter months. Cannonade and Judger were yearlings turning 2 that winter."

He then worked for Joe Cantey for about a year as an assistant, and then it was on to Mack Miller. During his seven years with Miller, he gained valuable experience while working his way up to stable foreman. "Mack was just a fabulous person to work for. I learned just about everything I know about the game from him."

Taking his first trainer's job on the Ohio circuit (River Downs and Beulah Park), Howard won his first race with Knock Knock Bird at River Downs in 1979 soon after he obtained his license. He saddled his first stakes winner, Hasty Tam, in the 1980 Ohio Open Championship Handicap at Beulah Park.

Prior to Mineshaft, Howard was best known for his skillful handling of Dogwood Stable's Summer Squall, who won 13 of 20 starts and earned more than \$1.8 million. It was a "special arrangement" that enabled him to train the talented colt.

"Mr. Campbell (Dogwood president Cot Campbell) bought this colt from the Lane's End summer consignment," he explained. "Of course, Mr. Farish bred and raised the colt, and Mr. Campbell took the colt to Dogwood Stable in Aiken, S.C., and their trainer down there, Ron Stevens, broke the colt and got him ready. And then when they were ready to send him to the races, Mr. Campbell asked Mr. Farish if he possibly would put the horse with us. Fortunately and flattering to me, it all worked out. Mr. Farish said that would be fine."

Summer Squall won four races at Keeneland during his career, including an

impressive victory in the 1990 Blue Grass Stakes. After running second to Unbridled in the Kentucky Derby, Summer Squall then won the Preakness Stakes.

As for the benefits of running in the Blue Grass, Howard replied: "Being second in the Derby and winning the Preakness off prepping in the Blue Grass says it all. The timing is good. You're just a hop, skip and a jump from coming over to Churchill Downs. Your horse is already in Kentucky, he's already acclimated, settled in."

Campbell had high praise for Howard. "As far as I'm concerned, he's a marvelous horse trainer. His dedication is enormous, he came up under the best and his attention to detail is unbelievable. The Summer Squall saga was a wonderful experience, and going through it with Neil made it better. Summer Squall's classic campaign was a masterpiece of horse training on the part of Neil Howard, with a lot of credit going also to a very high-class barn force."

In 1998, Howard had three Kentucky Derby prospects—Fountain of Youth (G2) winner Lil's Lad, Tampa Bay Derby winner Parade Ground and Louisiana Derby (G3) winner Comic Strip. Lil's Lad then was disqualified after winning the Florida Derby (G1) and ran second in the Blue Grass. Only Parade Ground made it to the race, finishing sixth.

Among the other good horses Howard has trained are Secret Status (2000 Kentucky Oaks), Prospectors Delite (1992 Ashland and Acorn), Grand Jewel (Lexington Stakes and the Fayette), multiple stakes winner Dove Hunt and one of his personal favorites, Weekend Delight.

Howard, who also trains for some of Farish's clients, said of his boss: "He's a breeding genius, as far as I'm concerned, and I'm very fortunate to be working for him."

He met his wife, Sue, at the racetrack where she was galloping horses for Hall of Fame trainer P.G. Johnson. She formerly galloped horses for Neil and still shows horses.

Prior to training Mineshaft, he said: "Obviously winning the Preakness with Summer Squall was one of the highlights. But from a personal standpoint, winning the Kentucky Oaks with Secret Status and the (1997) Alabama with Runup the Colors enabled me to give something back to the family that's been so generous to Sue and I. These two races have a lot of meaning to a breeder."

Though he said it's hard to set goals in racing, Howard said: "We try to get the most black type on our fillies because they're going to the broodmare band. We try to win as many races and stakes as we can with an emphasis on developing nice fillies, as well as colts."

Howard had 26 horses with him at Fair Grounds during the winter, including Patriot Act and Brilliant, of whom he told *Daily Racing Form*: "He's one of the best horses I've been around."

Through Jan. 9, 2007, EquineLine.com had him with 1,035 wins, earnings of \$41,190,368 and 71 stakes winners.

