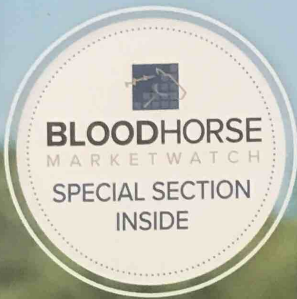


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Bal a Bali winning the March 11 Frank E. Kilgus Mile at Santa Anita



GREAT ADVENTURE

Comeback kid Bal a Bali gets his North American grade 1

BY LENNY SHULMAN

IF ONLY BAL A BALI could speak, what an adventure he could tell of his seven-year journey to the present.

He could talk about becoming a Triple Crown winner in his native Brazil and being named champion 3-year-old there.

He could relate the story of his sale and trip to North America, where he arrived to great promise only to be found gravely ill.

He could tell of the dedicated team

of doctors in various facilities who, bolstered by owners who had yet to run him, worked various therapies on him, bringing him back from the brink and curing his laminitis.

He could talk of his resuming training in Kentucky and California, and of win-

ning his first race—a grade 3 stakes—after 11 months on the shelf.

And then of feeling enough pain and having enough misgivings that prevented him putting his best foot forward. And then taking another break, perhaps overhearing the news of his purchase by a new owner and his plans to ship the horse back to Kentucky to become a stallion before making an 11th-hour decision

to give him a vacation instead, let him get his head and body right again, and bring him back to the races.

He could finally talk about winning the Frank E. Kilroe Mile Stakes (G1T) this past March after a nine-month break and becoming a millionaire in the process.

While Bal a Bali (Put It Back—In My Side, by Clackson) can still run, he, as far as we know, can't speak, so it is left to others to tell his story. And owners past and present, the physicians who have treated him, his trainer, and the bloodstock agent who all played roles in his life, do so willingly. They root for him full-throatedly and become emotional watching him perform. He is a character, a willing participant in his recovery, an extreme talent, and a shining example of how a horse can make so many humans do the right thing and in the process feel so much better about themselves.

We first told the tale of Bal a Bali in the July 25, 2015, issue of *BloodHorse*. In summary, Julio Bozano, a Brazilian banker and horseman, bred Bal a Bali, having brought the Florida-based stallion Put It Back (by Honour and Glory) to Brazil to stand at stud. Alvaro Novis, another successful Brazilian businessman and horseman, bought the colt as a yearling, and Bal a Bali won a stakes in his second start and a group 3 stakes in his third. From January–March 2014 he won the three group 1 races that constitute the Brazilian Triple Crown at Gavea. He had done almost everything there was to do in Brazil.

Bloodstock agent John Fulton brought the colt to the attention of Fox Hill Farms' Rick Porter, who balked at the \$2.5 million asking price. Subsequent discussions with Besilu Stables and Team Valor International failed to yield agreement,

and Porter's eventual offer of \$1.5 million sealed the deal. He sold a one-quarter interest in Bal a Bali to his friend Anthony Manganaro of Siena Farm.

When the horse arrived at the quarantine facility in Florida, he was uncomfortable and presenting for laminitic changes. A series of doctors took immediate and aggressive action, putting him

dorsal colitis; a gamut of issues. He was a pretty sick boy for awhile."

After two months' treatment in Florida, Bal a Bali was deemed healthy enough to van north to Siena Farm near Lexington, where he continued to get spa and stem cell treatments. Richard Mandella, who had trained star South American imports such as Siphon, Sandpit, and Gentlemen, was approached about training him.

"He was a beautiful horse," Mandella said of his first impression at Siena Farm. "I didn't need to spend a lot of time looking at his race tapes to know I wanted to get involved."

Near the end of 2014, Bal a Bali was sent to WinStar Farm to gallop. Dryden said at that point, "Most of the stretched laminae had grown out, and radiographically you couldn't tell that he had rotated and foundered."

Mandella received Bal a Bali in California in early 2015, paying particular attention to his feet. On May 9 of that year, Mandella sent Bal a Bali out in the American Stakes (G3T), and he quickened late to win. Porter, who has won plenty of grade 1 events, said about the American Stakes, "It was an unbelievable feeling to win that race." Added Manganaro,

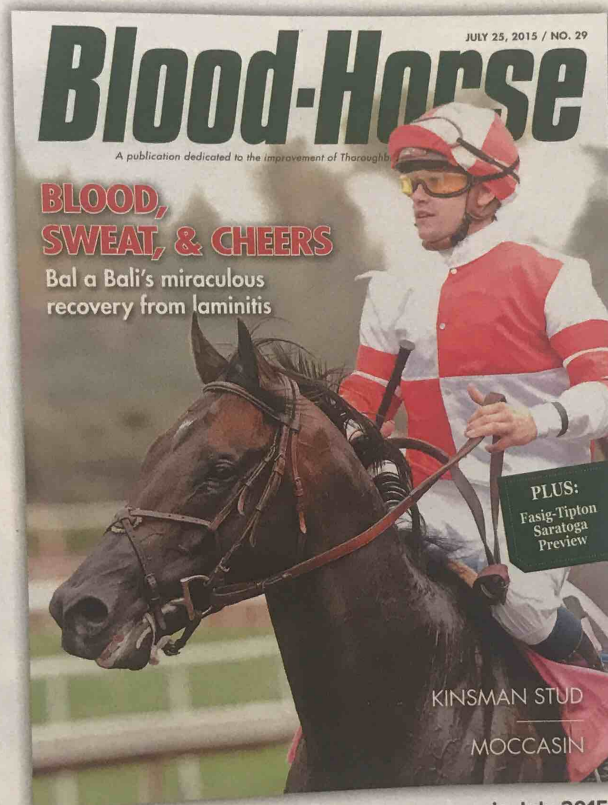
"It was very emotional with what the horse had been through."

Dryden couldn't bear to watch the race live. He got the good news via text message.

"It's miraculous that this horse came back as good as he did," Dryden said shortly afterward.

In July 2015 Brad Kelley's Calumet Farm signed a deal with Porter and Manganaro to acquire the breeding rights to Bal a Bali, with the idea that Calumet would stand the horse in 2017.

"We feel that Bal a Bali presents breeders with a great outcross, an athletic



Bal a Bali appeared on the *Blood-Horse* cover in July 2015

into critical care and treating him with anti-inflammatories and a cold water spa that Manganaro arranged to be brought to him.

"We got him in the cold water spa eight hours a day for three days and injected him with stem cells into the bone marrow," said Dr. Vern Dryden, who recently opened Bur Oak Veterinary & Podiatry Services in Lexington and Florida after having practiced at Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington. "He had coffin bone displacement and rotation. We treated that with sterile maggots. He also had issues with his kidneys and

physical, and an incredible race record," said Calumet's director of stallions Jak Knelman. "He showed so much speed in South America and shattered two records while winning the Brazilian Triple Crown. Plus, he had shown tremendous heart to overcome laminitis. This is a world-class horse who we believe will prove to be both a dirt and grass sire who will bring a lot of speed to any mating."

Bal a Bali continued to run well, but not up to the hopes that he had given his connections. After unplaced finishes in the Shoemaker Mile Stakes (G1T) and Del Mar Mile Handicap (G2T) in the summer of 2015, Mandella dropped him into allowance optional claiming company to score at Del Mar; then Bal a Bali ran second in the Seabiscuit Handicap (G2T) to close the year.

Bal a Bali began 2016 with a trio of thirds in graded stakes before running unplaced in the Charles Whittingham Stakes (G2T) in late May. Mandella tried him on dirt in the June 25 Gold Cup at Santa Anita Stakes (G1), but that move resulted in a last-place finish.

"He had gotten us all excited winning that first race, and he continued to run well in all his races, but he just didn't win," said Mandella. "It was frustrating because we thought he should be winning them. We kept experimenting with him, and eventually I ran him on the dirt, which he trains well on, but didn't run well on."

"He was getting kind of tired and sour. He had overcome so much and did so well. But he's not brand new. He's a used model, and I think after a few races he

kind of got tired of it. Even though he trained well, I think he was holding back in his races, so I rested him and swam him a lot."

When it became evident Bal a Bali was not going to make it back to the races for the remainder of 2016, plans were made to fly him to Calumet to start his stud

horse we believe he is," said Knelman of the decision to return Bal a Bali to the races for another season.

Mandella sent Bal a Bali to the San Luis Rey Downs training center where Michelle Dollase, a daughter of the late trainer Wally Dollase, freshened him up and continued swimming him. Dryden

was again called in to oversee Bal a Bali along with Dr. Jeff Blea, who is Mandella's vet.

"I wanted to focus on getting the horse back underneath himself," said Dryden. "We hit the reset button, took some time, gave him a nice hiatus and some swimming, and I saw the horse change after that. His top line improved. He had been sore and sour and needed time to refresh. Horses guard themselves. They're a lot smarter than we give them credit for, and they know what's going to hurt. So some of his problems were probably mental, him not wanting to go all out if it was going to hurt."

"We used two different glue-on shoes on him. The first set was an easy-care shoe with a wide base and frog support to help distribute the load across the whole bottom of the foot. He needed to put his foot to use in a more productive

manner, so we worked on building mass to that foot, get everything pulled back and put him back to his center of force so he had less stress. Then we went to a poly-flex shoe. It wasn't the race plate type, but a wider shoe that's used on a lot of hunter/jumpers. It has a wider rim so it engages more of the foot. Once he started galloping, I put him into the shoe he's currently in, a square toe poly-flex race-type shoe."

Bal a Bali came back to Mandella's barn



Richard Mandella has trained Bal a Bali since the horse has been in the U.S.

© BENOTT PHOTO

career.

"We had him lined up to get on the plane," said Mandella. "I got a phone call from Calumet the day before he was going to leave, and they asked me if I thought, after giving him some time off, he had a decent shot of running again. I thought he did, and they told me to go ahead and do that."

"We wanted to show to the American racing community the kind of world-class

and worked strongly. Now under Calumet's silks, Bal a Bali, after a nearly nine-month layoff, returned to win the Kilroe by a head, rewarding Calumet for its belief in him by delivering a North American grade 1 victory to his already impressive résumé.

"It is really spectacular to be involved with a horse that has overcome so much and has returned to top form," Knelman said. "Mr. Mandella has done an incredible job with Bali, and we look forward to seeing him continue to perform."

"We were thrilled he won that race for them," said Victoria Keith, speaking on behalf of Porter's Fox Hill Farms.

"I was thrilled over the moon when he won the Kilroe," added Dryden. "I didn't

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Some of his problems were probably mental, him not wanting to go all out if it was going to hurt.”

— DR. VERN DRYDEN

watch that race either because I had taken my family to Disney World. But I received a text that read 'We did it,' so I watched the replay and it was great to see him back in top form."

Mandella said Bal a Bali has been training up a storm since the Kilroe. "We're anxious to get him to Kentucky and run in the Woodford Reserve (Turf Classic Stakes, GI) Derby day," he said. Bal a Bali checked in fifth in the Woodford Reserve May 6. He has now won 14 of his 24 starts and \$1,017,923.

Whatever his future on the racetrack holds, Bal a Bali has rewarded everyone who has been connected to him on two continents, not only in treasure and accomplishment on the track but in the satisfaction of having helped such a remarkable creature in his will to live. **GH**



COURTESY OF DR. VERN DRYDEN

Dr. Vern Dryden with Bal a Bali at Churchill Downs