

Evan Sandhu

It's going to be an exciting spring for Evan Sandhu, who will set out on his journey as Thoroughbred breeder at his Amplify Stables in Loretto, ON.

The young man, 28, has dived headfirst into Ontario racing and breeding, first with the training centre he opened in 2022 and now with his first few broodmares which he will breed this spring.

“This will be my first time getting into the breeding aspect,” said Sandhu, who came to Ontario from India with his parents and brother in 2005. “The Ontario breeding programs are fantastic.”

Horse racing is a popular sport in India and horses are part of the country's culture.

“My love of racing comes from always being involved in sports,” said Sandhu. “My grandfather and father were accomplished field hockey players in Punjab; my brother upheld that tradition playing for Ontario. I inherited the sports genes also, but let's just say I 'bowed a tendon' when I had just started playing a bit in the US, so I decided to get on the business path and own a sports team of my own.”

Sandhu realized acquiring a sports team would take years and when his father had an idea to buy a farm – his family had an agricultural background – he visited Ballycroy Training Centre owned by Steven and Kathleen Kemp.

“I was surprised as to how many horses were stabled there,” said Sandhu. “The Kemps were gracious to hand over their amazing facility to us. I would come in to intern in the early days when manager and trainer Terry Brooker was helping us make the transition into developing the farm.”

Sandhu believes his love for animals, the farm and breeding came in part from his paternal grandfather. “He was an engineer by trade, but having come up in PAU [Punjabi Agriculture University], the largest agriculture university in Asia, he had a passion for farming, livestock, and infrastructure development. He led projects by many American companies to build canals, bridges, water overpasses. His passion for animals led him to regularly breed greyhounds, farm dogs and white German Shepherds.”

“When I got into [owning the farm and horses] I visited India to meet the family for a few weeks, I had let [my grandfather] know that I will be racing horses one day at a large scale and that I had five or six under the saddle at the farm. He gave me two large texts from the 1960s and '70s, not on horse racing but tractors and how they play a crucial role in managing "farming" surfaces. My father has also mentioned to me to keep things simple; managing the track like it's a field of crops, keeping the best asset we have happy – our great team at Amplify – and breeding mares to stallions with the "best walk.” Here were two of the most important men in my life, not knowing a thing about horses, using their vast life experience to give me valuable advice.”

This gave Sandhu the confidence to jump into horse breeding. He works at his family's thriving trucking business, but admits horses are always on his mind. “My brother, being the first person I usually call with the words he is scared of the most, "Hey Pawel, I just bought a horse", supports my venture and also

emphasizes the importance of keeping the numbers in check and running the barn like a business, so for the generations to come, our family can have horses to run in Canada, perhaps the globe.”

Sandhu is quick to credit many experienced horsepeople and breeders who have helped him along the way, in particular Hill 'n' Dale Farms' Glenn Sikura, “without whose guidance I would be as lost as a horse on skates.”

Sandhu has almost a dozen mares for clients ready to foal at Amplify in addition to his small band. Through last fall's CTHS digital mixed sale, Sandhu purchased the mares Miss Lovely, by Smart Strike, and Hatmaker Holiday, a daughter of Ami's Holiday. He also owns a stormy Atlantic mare named Ahbee.

Miss Lovely is a half-sister 2004 Horse of the Year A Bit O'Gold and Coronation Futurity winner Arco's Gold. “I am going to breed her to Mucho Macho Man at Adena. And Hatmaker Holiday, who won about \$150,000, is going to Ghostzapper.”

Sandhu said Ahbee, a four-year-old half-sister to 2024 Niagara Stakes winner Lac Macaza, will visit Silent Name (Jpn).

“The breeding industry here works very well. If you have good mares for the very solid, breed-to-race stallions in Ontario, it's perfect.”

Sandhu, who can often be found helping out in the barn with a small staff, knows the breeding business is a 'patience game' but he is excited to fulfill his love for horses and the sport through breeding. While he has been concentrating on buying a small number of affordable mares, Sandhu is also a co-owner of a few racing prospects with Sikura and others.

“I want to be part of that younger generation who loves horses and wants to get involved in racing. For me, I want to try and breed the next class horse.”