



JESSE KORONA

Less than six years ago, Jesse Korona decided to get serious about pursuing his passion for breeding racehorses.

He had dabbled in claiming the occasional filly, but in 2020 he set out to buy the best broodmare he could afford. That mare was Belatrix, a daughter of Giant's Causeway carrying a foal by one of Korona's favourite young stallions, Omaha Beach. Acting on the advice of his friend and mentor, Hall of Fame trainer Reade Baker, Korona paid \$40,000 (US) for Belatrix. Within a year, he sold her resulting filly for \$65,000.

But that was only the beginning.

The filly, named Caitlinhergrtness, went on to win the 2024 King's Plate and two graded stakes, earn more than \$1 million and capture Sovereign Awards as Champion Three-Year-Old Female and 2025 Champion Older Main Track Female.

Following close behind was Dazzling Move, a daughter of Not This Time who was also purchased by Korona in utero in 2020. She earned her first graded stakes victory in 2025 and placed in Grade 1 company.

In early June, Korona received his second consecutive CTHS Ontario Breeder Recognition of Excellence Award at the CTHS Awards Ceremony. In 2024, he was also recognized as Canada's Small Breeder of the Year by the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association in Kentucky.

"Things in general have gone well in 2025, and this year too," said Korona. "Caitlinhergrtness and Dazzling Move both had excellent 2025 racing season which was tremendously exciting to watch. Both horses did great things and had some very near misses. The success of breeding these two has definitely helped me gain traction in the industry."

Korona discovered racing as a child through an uncle, watching the sport's biggest races on television with great interest. An athlete and animal lover, he played college baseball and studied history at the University of Toronto. In 2009, he opened Target Training, a business that helps people develop personalized fitness programs and assists professional athletes in improving and maintaining their fitness.

Before turning his attention to Thoroughbreds, Korona bred show canaries. Once drawn into the racing world, he immersed himself in pedigrees and market trends, learning everything he could about breeding commercially successful horses.

He is not resting on his early success. Korona has expanded his involvement beyond breeding horses for sale and now attends auctions to advise fellow Ontario breeders and purchase horses on their behalf.

"Right now, I breed my own horses and have a number more in different partnership breeding arrangements as well. I sold two yearlings in 2025; one is a filly by Classic Empire out of Polyanthus named Maria Sofia who was sold at the CTHS sale last August for \$12,000 and is currently in training with Matt Douglas. The other is a Drain the Clock filly out of Cleverness who I sold at Keeneland September for \$62,000 and is scheduled to sell at the Ocala Breeders' Sales June Sale."

Korona is particularly enthusiastic about his yearling offerings this year. They include a Mystic Guide colt out of the Montjeu mare Morilles at the CTHS sale, as well as a trio headed to Keeneland: two by Jackie's Warrior and one by Kentucky Derby winner Mage.

"The new thing for me is I have gone into helping others breed quality horses. When I was able to start actually getting involved with horses in 2018 and breeding my first horse in 2019, I was lucky enough to have met Reade Baker and we became great friends. Having him as a mentor helped with transferring all my years of book knowledge on pedigrees and commercial sales with the real-world knowledge of someone who has done those things at the highest level for over 60 years."

Last fall, Korona put that knowledge to work selecting mares for Evan Sandhu of the rapidly expanding Amplify Stables in Loretto. It is a role that reflects his growing ambition, not only to establish himself as a breeder, but also to help strengthen Ontario's Thoroughbred industry.

"All and all, I am going forward. Helping others with their breeding goals has been part of a bigger goal for myself to help grow the industry in Ontario into a powerhouse. I look forward to bigger and better things for myself and others."

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