

## Yawen Wu

Yawen Wu has always loved horses. Over the last 18 years, she and her husband, James Mann, have dabbled in breeding, selling, and racing a few Thoroughbreds at their Spirit Run farm on the shore of Lake Scugog. Remarkably, from a broodmare band of fewer than five just a few years ago, they produced one of the leading contenders for the August 16 King's Plate at Woodbine.

Wu's homebred *Sedburys Ghost*, by Shaman Ghost out of the couple's homebred mare *Hurricane Mimi*, not only gave Wu her first stakes win when he captured the Plate Trial on July 20, but also earned them a ticket to the Plate with more than a ghost of a chance.

A CTHS Ontario yearling sale graduate, *Sedburys Ghost* was bought back by Wu for \$29,000 at the 2023 auction.

"We are all very excited," said Wu, about the Plate Trial win and upcoming Plate start. "I have never been before."

Originally from China, Wu is an engineer, as is her husband. In 2007, the couple purchased farmland near Port Perry and named it Spirit Run. They built a new barn, riding arena, and large paddocks, initially housing riding horses. The property also features a castle under construction—said to be Canada's largest private residence—though the family has not moved in.

Wu launched the Ajax Riding Academy and Mann Equestrian as side ventures while she and James built their renewable energy business, Mann Engineering.

It was Mann who first suggested buying a few broodmares after meeting Bernard McCormack, former manager of nearby Windfields Farm and owner of his own breeding operation. In 2007, the couple purchased three mares, including Bayou Mist, a Silver Deputy mare, for \$35,000. Their first big success came at the 2009 CTHS Ontario yearling sale when Bayou Mist's *Chapel Royal* colt sold for \$100,000.

Breeding and racing took a back seat for several years as the demands of their business and raising four children grew. They sold their small band but kept one—Bayou Mist's *Sligo Bay (Ire)* daughter *Hurricane Mimi*. Trained by Ross Armata, Jr., *Hurricane Mimi* earned over \$171,000 before being retired in 2017. By then, Wu was ready to return to breeding, learning to do much of the work herself.

*Hurricane Mimi* produced foals by Ami's Holiday, Giant Gizmo, and Silent Name (*JPN*) before foaling a flashy chestnut colt on April 9, 2022—a birth Wu assisted with personally.

“I picked Shaman Ghost for Hurricane Mimi,” said Wu. “I discuss with Bernard while picking stallions for my mares and Shaman Ghost was a good match according to True Nicks.”

Both Wu and McCormack saw *Sedburys Ghost* as not only a good sales prospect but also a promising racehorse.

“He was an interesting foal,” said Wu. “He was different than the other foals; he was focused. I kept asking him, ‘why so serious?’”

When the colt went unsold at the sale, Wu brought him home to grow up at Spirit Run.

Wu had also met Barbara Minshall, a Sovereign Award-winning trainer of many champions, and entrusted *Sedburys Ghost* to her care. The gelding won in just his second career start before a small hairline fracture in a leg sent him home to heal. In early June, he returned to win his seasonal debut at six furlongs, then finished a strong fourth in the Marine Stakes (G3) before romping in the Plate Trial under jockey Ryan Munger.

Wu now has about 20 horses, including retired racehorses. She has a 2-year-old full sister to *Sedburys Ghost*, *Hurricane Amelia*, in training with Minshall, and has entered a *Silent Name* (JPN) yearling filly—out of 14-time winner *Starship Sabrina*—in this year’s CTHS sale.

Following *Sedburys Ghost*’s Trial victory, Wu said the win has strengthened her commitment to breeding.

“It’s very exciting and I am thinking now, I will probably invest more.”