



Nick Sallusto

EDITORS' NOTE Nick Sallusto graduated from Stony Brook University with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. Immediately after graduating, he joined his family in building what would become a nationally recognized leader in the equine sports performance nutrition industry, Vita Flex Nutrition. Simultaneously, Sallusto developed two other equine industry companies including his own brand of equine apparel, Mill Crossing. He later divested both companies with a plan for reentering the racing industry as a bloodstock agent. Sallusto has purchased more than 20 horses that went on to win or place in Grade 1 events that had not performed at that level previously and, in total, more than 60 stakes performers.

COMPANY BRIEF Sallusto & Albina (sallustoalbina.com) are premier bloodstock agents specializing in sales representation, breeding, racing management, and private purchases including the likes of Kentucky Derby winner Big Brown.

How did Sallusto & Albina come about?

I was born into a racing family – my father trained thoroughbred racehorses. His interest in racing was bred out of a love for the animal and a love for winning.

He decided to go from being a police officer to a horse trainer in the late '70s. He did that for about a decade. I grew up predominantly training horses. I quickly sized up that it's really not a great way to make a living in that part of the game. I also thought that being a horse trainer wasn't a great lifestyle.

So I zeroed in on what some other people in the industry were doing, which was being a bloodstock agent. I thought it was a unique area where we could guide people in decisions on how they invest and how they select, and be advisors and managers/procurers of horses.

I started at very small levels with some of my own funds and I had success very early. I parlayed that into a situation with a

The Business of Horses

An Interview with
Nick Sallusto, Sallusto & Albina LLC

group of guys out of New York that were approaching the horse-racing business in a new way. They were coming in and trying to buy horses that were semi-proven.

They asked me to come onboard and help them. I had an affinity for it and started to purchase a lot of horses privately off the racetrack. We had an unbelievable run; historic in terms of what was accomplished in a short time.

During that time, I met my business partner in Dubai. He is of Arab descent and spent a lot of time in Dubai. He knew the lay of the land and he showed me around. The following year, we started to work together in a partnership.

Since then, the clients we have procured have been those who are approaching the business in a businesslike fashion – not just for entertainment purposes – and that is the way we look at the business.

We've been able to come up with strategies that are financially lucrative in many different parts of the business: racing, breeding, buying, and reselling at auction.

The platform we've built allows an investor to make a return. We're about to move into a four-year cycle during which we've consistently made gains, especially in a very good climate.

We have a platform where we take care of a high-end luxury person who wants to have his own brand and race. We also have platforms for those who want to look at the racing and breeding industry in a serious financial way. People can give this a try in whatever vein they are interested in developing.

What has made your particular partnership work so well?

While I grew up on the racing side of the business, my partner grew up on the breeding side, and we're working backward from there in different directions. The Kentucky community is a pretty closed circle and it helped to bypass building all of the initial relationships.

Is horse-racing at a challenged point today?

The gambling platform and people not having to be on track to be involved in what is going on has greatly changed the landscape of what modern horse-racing has become. It is now built around the Breeder's Cup and classic races, and not everyday racing anymore.

What's missing now is that a lot of people have invested in the breeding end of the business and we need more investors on the racing side.

For sustainability, we need to be active in all areas of the business, including investing in our own product.

We need more money, better retention, and more support for our own product better.

Do you know what you're getting when you find a horse?

It's like anybody in any industry used to sniffing out deals. We develop a criteria and we try to narrow it down.

I put horses in a category. I consider all the criteria for a horse to become a top talent: physically, pedigree-wise, and mentally.

We have very good criteria concerning what a horse should look like and how it should be bred. We are part of just a small percentage of those who can reduce them to that group. Then we need money to acquire them, and we need luck.

It's also important to have a good veterinary team go over what we're buying.

Would you touch on the internationalization of horse-racing and the impact that has had?

A lot of work in this regard has already been done and is continuing. Interested parties in other countries look at us and think we overuse drugs. That has hurt our business in terms of selling more horses to other countries.

They see that our breeding stock has genetically produced top-level horses but there is still hesitancy that we may have chemically induced some of that. Specifically, of the racing stock in the one and two-year-old market, there has been a lot of skepticism from outside markets.

Still, we have had some new global players put their feet on the ground over the past two years and make large investments into the American market. We had a big Chilean operation come in and make a huge investment in land and horses. We also had a Brazilian group invest similarly. I'm currently bringing in a major American citizen of Irish descent who will buy a farm in Kentucky.

The more big players we bring into the business, the more solid foundation we have, which makes the business better for everybody. ●