

# STABLE TOUR The November

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## With Barclay Tagg and Robin Smullen

The Special didn't have a Fasig-Tipton Stable Tour when Funny Cide was around. Man that would have been fun. You can almost hear Barclay Tagg and Robin Smullen talking about the robust chestnut 2-year-old as part of the 2002 string.

"New York-bred, we kind of like him but he won't run at Saratoga. Maybe Belmont. We'll let him tell us and, who knows, maybe we'll really be talking about him this time next year."

Something like that anyway. Funny Cide won his first three starts as a 2-year-old – at Belmont Sept. 8, Sept. 29 and Oct. 19 – then won the Kentucky Derby and Preakness the next season, the Jockey Club Gold Cup at 4 and retired with 11 wins and \$3,529,412 in the bank for Sackatoga Stable.

Tagg and Smullen are Saratoga fixtures from their barns on the main-track side, beyond the Morning Line Kitchen along the side road to Greentree. Funny Cide was there, 2020 Travers Stakes winner Tiz The Law too, plus Grade 1 winners Showing Up, Tale Of Ekati, Nobiz Like Shobiz, Bit Of Whimsy, Jersey Town and turf fillies for days. Never in a hurry with horses or much else, Tagg and Smullen don't just train horses. They study them, figure out what they like, learn what they don't and try to bring out their best.

"We like the animals," said Tagg, who saddled his first runners in 1972 and has won 1,607 races. "You're always hoping for something special and we've been lucky enough to have a few. That's the way the game is. Nobody puts pressure on us. We hear, 'Take your time, do whatever you think.' That makes it easier. You can just train the horses."

Smullen doesn't breeze horses like she used to, but still gallops and loves to see horses develop.

"I like to see the babies come to fruition, it's rewarding," she said. "You want them to find whatever their best is. You like to see it and say, 'Oh wow now this horse is really starting to come around, is he going to be nice or not nice?' You don't know, you hope but you don't know until you go out there. You breeze one in behind horses like we did with Tiz, out of the gate, make him eat dirt and he splits horses and goes in :59 you kind of go, 'Ooh, this might work.'" But it takes time, and then you just hope the next ones coming along are good."



Connie Bush

**Tapple Cider is one of three winners at the meet for trainer Barclay Tagg.**

Smullen and Tagg took The Special's Joe Clancy on a tour of the barns Monday morning. She had the paperwork so handled most of the details, with Tagg jumping in for a few.

**Highland Grace.** Royalty. Bonner Young's fourth-generation homebred 2-year-old filly occupies the stall next to the tack room after meeting the stable in Saratoga via prep work at Webster Training Center in Florida. Daughter of American Pharoah looks a year older and sports a big hip, big body and classic look. Her dam Caroline Thomas won a Grade 2. Her second dam Bit Of Whimsy won a Grade 1. The third and fourth dams, Krisi B and Highland Mills, didn't win anything but started a dynasty. "She's a beautiful mover. She's got two more open gallops and then she can breeze. She's got a great brain. She goes out there and stands. Caroline Thomas would shake a little bit. None of that with her. She makes you look. She's probably better looking than the mares, both of them, and they were nice. They were not that broad. They were tall, but not that broad. She might make Aqueduct right before we go south, if everything goes forward from here. We're not going to rush her. We'll just let her take us where she can, when she can."

**Social Sidekick.** A \$70,000 purchase at Fasig-Tipton's New York-bred sale here last year, 2-year-old Tapizar gelding finished ninth in his debut here July 29 going 6 furlongs on the

dirt for owners Bill and Carrington Price. "He's not a good gate horse, we've got to work on that, but he's breezed on the grass twice now (5-furlong moves Aug. 14 and 21) and liked it. He's kind of a neat horse and he'll run when we get back down to Belmont. He's a nice size, has to grow into himself some. Bill used to work for Barclay years and years and years ago. He came to us and said he wanted us to buy him a horse and it never came to fruition until he came to the barn last year and said, 'I want you to buy me a horse.' So we bought him a horse."

**Winter Mischief.** Owner/breeder Ann Backer's gray 3-year-old filly looks a picture standing across the back of her stall. Daughter of Into Mischief and stakes winner Winter was training toward a debut last year, but had to hit the pause button and is just about ready again off a string of breezes at Belmont Park and Saratoga. "She had a minor issue in the fall, and we sent her back home and we've got her pretty much turned around now. She looks just like her mother, who we saw at the farm."

Tagg: "She's got the largest girth of any horse we have, a beautiful filly."

**Blitz To Win:** A \$60,000 purchase at Fasig-Tipton's New York-bred yearling sale in 2019, Sackatoga Stable's Speightster gelding finished fifth here Aug. 20, his first start since a maiden

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# Stable Tour —

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win at Belmont in October. Nicknamed “Diablo” for the two small bumps on his forehead, he’ll move forward for that race. “It was such a long layoff that it kind of wasn’t fair, but he ran OK. We had him ready to run at Belmont in May and three days after he got there he popped a splint so then we had to wait another couple months.”

Tagg: “The horses have to be ready. You can’t just run them.”

**Highland Lord.** Another homebred for Young, 2-year-old Lord Nelson gelding is out of Kristi With A K, a three-time winner who placed in a Grade 3 stakes. Her foals include Highland Sky, who earned \$784,794 and placed in multiple graded stakes, and stakes winner Highland Glory. Has breezed seven times at Saratoga, including a half-mile from the gate in :48.76 Monday. Pointing for a maiden race on the turf here Sept. 3. “He’s not very big but he’s a real nice package. He was gelded at the farm. He was a bad stall-walker and he still does it now. We just tie him up, hang his hay rack and he eats hay all day. When it’s quiet you can turn him loose and he’s fine, after he chills out.”

**Scramble.** Also aiming for that maiden race on the turf Sept. 3, the 2-year-old Gleneagles colt was bred in Pennsylvania by new owner Peter McCausland, who owns historic Erdenheim Farm near Philadelphia. McCausland purchased Irish-bred Tilly’s Chilli at Tattersalls in 2018 for \$534,366 to help start a broodmare band. Colt came to Tagg and Smullen after early work at Payson Park in Florida. Breezed with Highland Lord Monday. “He’s not a fancy-looking horse but he sure does his job right. They stayed together in the work, they both have decent strides and it’s nice to see them progressing like that. We have two horses pointing for that race so I hope they split it because you hate to run two against each other. They’re both ready to run and you have to get horses like that started.”

Tagg: “When I was a little, tiny kid you heard about Erdenheim Farm (owned by Widener family) all the time. I told him I grew up in Abington and he said that’s about 10 minutes away. I grew up there and I’ve never seen it. Jaipur was probably there, some others I’m sure. They had great horses.”

**Parquetry.** Another Backer homebred, 3-year-old Temple City gelding won at Gulfstream

Park in February and has run twice at the meet – 12th in an optional claimer July 16 and second for a \$35,000 tag Aug. 10. “He’s really tall, he’s still growing into himself. He’s 3 and probably almost 17 hands. There’s a starter race on the last day.”

Tagg (who trained for Backer’s husband Bill): “She’s just a great owner and a really nice person to train for. Before Bill died, he told her to sell all the horses. She’s kept some mares, they raise nice horses and she’s doing it herself now. She enjoys the horses and it’s great to have her still in it.”

**Truancy.** A \$50,000 yearling purchase by Tagg for Eric Dattner at Fasig-Tipton Midlantic’s sale in 2020, New York-bred 3-year-old filly finished second in her debut at Belmont in June (behind \$500,000 juvenile purchase Let Her Inspire U, who runs in Friday’s Fleet Indian Stakes) and then won here for jockey John Velazquez July 31. “She won a nice race here. She was hounded the whole way and then just walked away from them. Johnny came back and said, ‘Well that was easy.’ She’s a nice filly and we think she’s probably a stake horse. If we do the right thing for her, she’ll do the right thing for us. We were pointing for (the Fleet Indian) but she just needs a little more time between races. Her heinie is still 2 inches taller than her withers. She’s 3 but she still has some growing to do.”

Tagg, who trained half-brother Confrontation to five wins and three graded-stakes placings: “She hasn’t done anything wrong, she’s just taken some baby steps and had things. She’s still growing and it’s hard to remember that sometimes.”

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Tod Marks

Robin Smullen and Barclay Tagg make a good team.

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# Stable Tour —

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**Shinsun.** Owned by breeder Edition Farm and Linda Conroy, 3-year-old A Shin Forward gelding surprised pretty much everyone when he won his debut at Belmont for jockey Luis Saez in June, then finished third in a starter allowance here July 23. Sixth in a New York Stallion Stakes here Aug. 17, he'll aim for a starter allowance at Aqueduct. "He was the least likely to succeed, he showed nothing in any of his works, the fastest he could go was :50 (for a half-mile). We ran him for maiden \$40,000 and we said to Luis, 'You've got to take him away from the pony in the post parade and wake him up because he's slow. He breaks slow, he runs slow and he only gives you what you ask for.' He breaks, last, and he's trailing the field and all of the sudden on the backside he starts passing horses. He turns for home and Luis got into him a little bit and he wins easy. He came back up here in the open starter, which is a tough race, and he wound up third. He could have been second, but got stopped a little bit. Then we ran him in the stake and he was a little naughty in the post parade and the inner turf favors horses that have speed so he couldn't make up a whole lot of ground. He's still growing, so we look forward to seeing him as a 4-year-old. It was fun, a pleasant surprise because you get enough unpleasant surprises."

**Leftembehind.** A \$130,000 purchase at Fasig-Tipton's New York-bred sale here last year, Sackatoga Stable's Accelerate colt has breezed six times here and is nearing a race. "He's kind of a heavy horse but he's starting to trim up now. There was a time, not so long ago, that you could not get him out of the hay rack up here to say hello. Now he leaves a little hay on

his own and comes to see you. He's just about there, going to breeze 5 furlongs Wednesday out of the gate and if all goes well he's going to run the last day of the meet."

Tagg: "Obviously, we don't rush them. We never rush them. We let them tell us when they can run."

**Tapple Cider.** Sackatoga Stable's 4-year-old Tonalist filly was purchased at Fasig-Tipton Midlantic's 2-year-old sale in 2020 and finished fourth in her first four starts (all last year). She graduated the maiden ranks here Aug. 12, her second start of 2022, and was eyeing another start at the meet. Tagg: "We paid a ton of money for her, she hasn't lived up to it yet. But she doesn't know that. She tries and we like her."

**Union Trail.** Another Sackatoga yearling purchase, this one for \$190,000 at Fasig-Tipton's New York-bred sale last year, Constitution colt out of Forest Trail (a half-sister to Grade 1 winner Carriage Trail) was moving forward in Florida this winter until sidelined by surgery to remove a small flake in an ankle. He's galloping and will start breezing in a month or so. "He's a pretty cool dude. He'll be 3 when he gets to the races. He acted the way you wanted a baby to act when we were at Palm Meadows. He galloped with everybody, did his job, wasn't coltish, just went out there and did his job. You just have to start over after things like that. He's not going to make it as a 2-year-old. Maybe this time next year he'll have won a couple races and we'll be talking about big things. He's a nice horse. We vetted him at the sale, but had written him off and pointed to horses because we didn't think we'd be able to afford him."

**Dromoland.** Dave Stack's 2-year-old Accelerate colt cost \$300,000 at Fasig-Tipton's New York-bred sale here last year and is gearing up for a debut even if he's still figuring out life as a racehorse. "He's a little slow coming around, not in a bad

way. He breezed out of the gate today, a half in :50, which is fine. He's not studdish, he's just not paying his full attention. He's continuing to train and progress, and hopefully this work out of the gate is going to wake him up a little bit."

Tagg: "At the sale, Dave told me, 'Don't bid anymore' and I went another \$25,000 and we got him. Dave was the happiest guy in the world."

**Get Respect.** Hayward Pressman's 3-year-old Get Stormy filly is winless in three starts, but progressing. "This is a long, tall drink of water. She goes to the front and kind of falters a little bit, but Get Stormys don't come around until later. We'll let her grow into herself. Maybe when we get to Aqueduct, we'll go 6 furlongs because they have it. Five-and-half here is just too fast. At 6, some horses come from off the pace and the speed horses start to come back a little bit."

Tagg: "She's kind of a gangly thing. You don't hold that against them, but you have to let them come along some."

**Dream Of A Day.** Sure Thing Stable's 3-year-old son of Carpe Diem is out of Unbelievable Dream, who won Keeneland's Grade 3 Appalachian for the same connections in 2013. "He runs the same way she did, drops way out of it and makes a late run. He won at Belmont (maiden claiming \$40,000 July 10) like that."

**Bourbon Diversion.** The Prices' homebred daughter of Belamy Road and Bourbon Twist hasn't run since January when seventh at Gulfstream Park. Three-year-old filly eyes a race here Aug. 31. "She'll be all right, she's a nice-looking filly. Her half-brother (Hurtgen Forest) has a win over jumps so if she doesn't make it at this, they can turn her into a jumper."

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**Glocca Morra.** Purchased for \$45,000 at Fasig-Tipton's select yearlings showcase in 2020, New York-bred 3-year-old Bernardini filly owned by The Three Colleens Stable has run twice including a sixth here July 31. "She's not very big, but a beautiful filly. She's going to run again for \$25,000 but we've entered three times and the race doesn't go. How can maiden New York-bred fillies for 25 not go? The 6-furlong race will go, but she's probably not a 6-furlong horse."

**Greek Strider.** A \$150,000 Sackatoga purchase at Fasig-Tipton Midlantic's 2-year-old sale in 2021, Kantharos filly has yet to race but she's working on other things — like a gleaming coat. "She's healthy. We're having a little trouble getting the weight off her. She gallops a mile-and-a-half every day, she had a few issues out of the sale and she's just a little slow coming around but she's beautiful and we'll get there."

**What A Mesa.** Two-year-old Sky Mesa colt has breezed six times at Saratoga and needs another gate work to finish off his debut preparations. "His owner Charles Barringer said the mare (Roaring Ghost) has never produced a turf horse and we said, 'But it's by Sky Mesa...' We'll see. Maybe we'll run him on the dirt and maybe we'll run him on the turf. He's almost ready. He's kind of a neat horse."

**Mr. Marlin.** Bred and owned by Barringer's Pinnacle Farm, 2-year-old Paynter colt finished third in his debut Aug. 11 after rallying from far back for Dylan Davis at 41-1. "We told Dylan he definitely wants to come from off the pace. Then he breaks quick out of there, goes from up close to last by many . . . then he gets to the middle of the turn and Dylan asks him and he comes flying and finishes third. What do we know? He probably will run the last day too. It's 6 furlongs. We wanted to stretch him out, but I don't think we're going to get that race. That was a good effort. His partners were all like, 'Well, he won't be 41-1 next time.'"

**Doswell.** Joe Allen's Grade 2 winner is on the mend at Webster Training Center in Florida with a suspensory injury. "Dos is getting repaired, and you'll see him again next year. He'll be 8, but Joe doesn't want to give up so he'll come back. Hopefully, he's as good as he ever was."

**Storm On The Moon.** The stable pony won two races for Tagg and Lael Stable, including a 6-furlong maiden at Gulfstream Park in 1:09 and change. "He looks pretty good for 15."

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