

# The young and the rested

## Desormeaux excels with 2-year-olds and horses returning from layoffs

By MARY RAMPPELLINI

Trainer Keith Desormeaux can't wait for winter racing this year, and not because it means the heat will break in his home state of Louisiana.

"With the 2-year-olds we have, I'm very excited about the Fair Grounds season," he said. "We have some nice horses we laid off during the summer that we're redeveloping."

Young horses and horses returning from layoffs play to Desormeaux's strengths as a trainer, which is no surprise given how his barn is structured. Desormeaux has 16 horses at Louisiana Downs, and another 20 at a training facility he owns with his father, Harris, in south Louisiana.

"The two strings are totally different from each other," said Desormeaux, 36. "Louisiana Downs is geared on young horses, with the

priority being developing something that can race at a higher level, meaning allowance or high claimers."

At the farm, horses who can-

not compete on the Louisiana Downs-Fair Grounds-Lone Star Park circuit that Desormeaux follows find their level at either Delta Downs or Evangeline Downs.

The farm is also home to most of the barn's claims, and horses returning from layoffs.

It is there that Desormeaux has an exercise machine for his horses that works like a revolving door. The horses are allowed to be loose in separate compartments, and asked to move at controlled speeds.

"I think it's a great piece of equipment for legging up a horse before you put the rider on," Desormeaux said. "It keeps horses relatively fit without pounding on their legs, or on them mentally."

Desormeaux's young horses tend to improve dramatically from their first start to their second, and that in part is because when he buys young horses, he focuses on individuals with distance-oriented pedigrees. The goal for himself, he said, as well as one of his main clients, the partnership of Strode and Richey, is to find the "big" horse.

Desormeaux's background in racing makes the pursuit of classic-type horses a logical goal. The older brother of two-time Kentucky Derby-winning rider Kent Desormeaux, Keith had one of his most meaningful jobs on the racetrack as an assistant to trainer Charles Hadry in Maryland.

Keith followed Kent to the Maryland circuit in the 1980's after he earned a degree in animal science from Louisiana Tech. While working for Hadry, Keith got hands-on experience with Private Terms, winner of the Grade 1 Wood Memorial in 1988.

Being around class animals like Private Terms helped Desormeaux fine-tune his eye

for talent, and from a limited budget, he has selected at auction such eventual stakes winners as French Assault, a \$20,000 buy whom he saddled to victory in the \$100,000 El Joven at Retama Park and a strong sixth-place finish in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile; and It'sallinthechase, a \$27,000 purchase who was later resold and finished third to Repent in the Grade 2 Louisiana Derby.

Desormeaux's other success stories include Superpave, who won his first five starts at 2, including two stakes races, and Mr. Miesque, a stakes winner at Hawthorne.

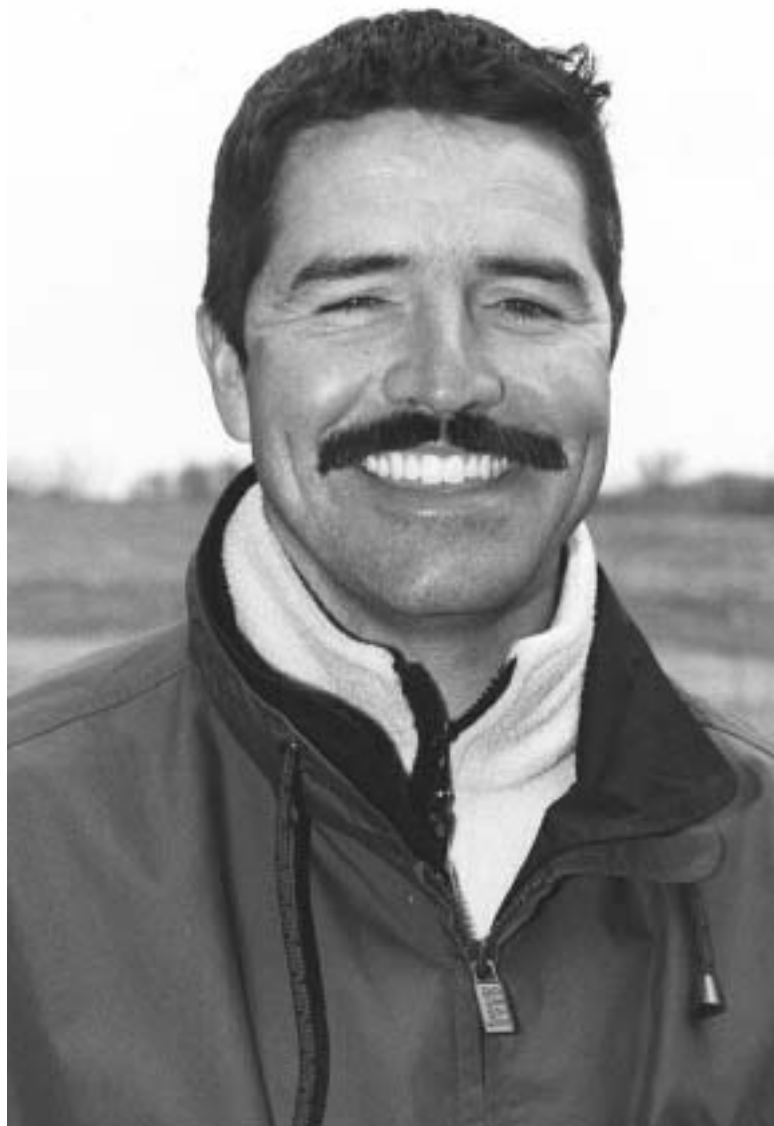
In his barn these days, Desormeaux's young talent includes Blondz Away, who in her last start was third in the \$100,000 La Senorita for 2-year-olds at Retama.

He also is looking for Lay it on Me, a 2-year-old son of Belong to Me, to move up considerably when placed on turf in the near future. Among his 3-year-olds are Conscious Contact, who is set to run in the \$50,000 Donnie Wilhite Memorial on turf on the Super Derby undercard on Sept. 20.

### VITAL STATISTICS

CATEGORY	STS.	W%	ROI
1st race after claim	36	.14	1.08
2nd race after claim	25	.20	1.90
1st race with trainer	50	.14	1.20
+180 days since last race	8	.25	1.40
60-180 days since last race	16	.13	2.24
Second off layoff 45-180 days	40	.08	0.46
Second off layoff +180 days	7	.29	2.11
1-7 days since last race	12	.25	4.07
1st time starter	20	.05	0.70
2nd start as maiden	19	.32	2.59
Maiden special to maiden claimer	6	.50	2.00
1st time turf	11	.09	0.80
1st time blinkers	3	.00	0.00
1st time Lasix	5	.00	0.00
2-year-olds	56	.14	1.11
Dirt to turf	26	.15	1.59
Turf to dirt	21	.00	0.00
Blinkers on	4	.25	1.85
Sprint to route	43	.12	1.61
Route to sprint	35	.11	0.94
Sprint-sprint-route	6	.00	0.00
31-60 days since last race	77	.16	1.21
Won last start	58	.19	1.21
Wet tracks	34	.09	0.49
Dirt	253	.19	1.53
Turf	67	.15	1.16
Sprints	197	.18	1.36
Routes	123	.17	1.60
Maiden claiming	57	.26	1.81
Maiden special weight	36	.08	0.85
Claiming	166	.19	1.44
Allowance	27	.15	1.39
Stakes	18	.11	2.09
Graded stakes	1	.00	0.00

Trainer statistics reflect North American starts from Jan. 1, 2002 through Sept. 14, 2003



Lone Star Park

Keith Desormeaux has had success maintaining two very different strings of horses, one at Louisiana Downs and the other at a farm.

### INSIDE THE STABLE

HORSE	AGE/SEX	LAST RACE	FINISH	LAST 3 BEYERS	CAREER RECORD	EARNINGS		
Assault Commander2c		Unraced juvenile by Deputy Commander						
Blondz Away	2f	\$100K La Senorita Stakes	3	61	61	59	4-1-1-1	\$29,000
Conscious Contact	3g	Alwn2x	2	80	84	78	10-4-3-1	65,210
Itsmybag	3f	Alwn\$y	7	53	74	82	17-6-1-5	171,524
Lay it on Me	2c	Msw	9	-0	46	18	3-0-0-1	1,430