

Horseman Gallops to Rescue of Disabled Jockey Fund

Defying stereotypes, racehorse owner Michael Bello offers support to jockeys.

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Occasionally racehorse owners get a bad rap. Some can be seen as condescending or aloof toward those who provide them with services, like grooms and jockeys. But horseman Michael Bello is not in that group. The Orange County, Calif. building contractor and Thoroughbred owner recently donated \$58,000 to the nearly exhausted Permanently Disabled Jockeys Fund. The not-for-profit fund was established in 2006 by a consortium of racetracks and racing organizations, but its cash flow was severely threatened. Bello's contribution will allow the organization to provide 58 former riders with their \$1,000 relief payments for April. Bello will further support North American jockeys with a \$250,000 gift to the Jockeys' Guild, another struggling organization designed to represent current and former riders.

"As a racehorse owner, I've developed friendships with many of the riders, and that's given me the opportunity to see racing from a different perspective," Bello says. As an owner, Bello raced Megahertz, who won over \$2 million. "The jockeys are a group of hard-working, dedicated athletes who deserve more support."

Another donation to the Permanently Disabled Jockeys Fund will come from the sale of the saddle Edgar Prado used to pilot Barbaro to his Kentucky Derby win. Bello is considering bidding on the saddle, which will be auctioned off at the 2007 Mint Jubilee Gala on May 4, on the eve of the Kentucky Derby in Louisville, Ky.