



BOB BAFFERT

Born: January 13, 1953, in Nogales, Ariz.

Resident: Arcadia, Calif.

Family: Wife Jill; sons Taylor, Canyon, Forest and Bode; daughter Savannah.

Triple Crown victories: Kentucky Derby – Silver Charm (1997), Real Quiet (1998), War Emblem (2002); Preakness Stakes – Silver Charm (1997), Real Quiet (1998), Point Given (2001), War Emblem (2002); Belmont Stakes – Point Given (2001).

Breeders' Cup victories: Juvenile – Vindication (2002), Midshipman (2008); Juvenile Fillies – Silverbulletday (1998), Indian Blessing (2007); Sprint – Thirty Slews (1992), Midnight Lute (2007-2008).

Eclipse Award: 1997, '98 and '99.

National Museum of Racing Hall of Fame: Inducted in 2009.



The trainer has become one of the most prominent conditioners in the sport as a result of his stunning run of success beginning in 1996. That's the year he didn't win a Triple Crown race, but burst onto the Kentucky Derby scene by losing on the wire to perennial Triple Crown hero D. Wayne Lukas, whose Grindstone chased down Baffert's Cavonnier and won by the tiniest of noses.

Undaunted, Baffert returned in 1997 to win the Derby with Silver Charm and in 1998 with Real Quiet. So, but for a nose, Baffert would have accomplished something no one has done – three Kentucky Derby victories in a row.

The Arizona native stood on the threshold of greatness with his first two Derby winners as they went on to capture the Preakness Stakes and head toward history as possible Triple Crown winners as the Belmont Stakes approached. However, both were denied equine immortality by two fast finishers – Touch Gold and Victory Gallop, respectively – in the 1 ½-mile “Test of the Champion.” Both Baffert trainees finished second.

In 2002, Baffert was at history's door again as War Emblem, whom he had in his barn for only three weeks before the Kentucky Derby, scored a front-running victory in Churchill Downs' 1 ¼-mile classic and returned two weeks later to capture the 1 3/16-mile Preakness Stakes. But the son of Our Emblem stumbled out of the gate and was a dismal eighth in the Belmont.

Baffert was involved in another near miss in 2001, but it began following a puzzling fifth-place finish by Point Given, the heavy favorite to win the Run for the Roses. The strapping son of 1995 Derby winner Thunder Gulch roared back to dominate the Preakness and Belmont fields and claim the Eclipse Awards as the year's top 3-year-old male and Horse of the Year.

All in all, Baffert won eight Triple Crown races in the space of six years, leaving the silver-haired, 57-year-old conditioner only one behind the legendary Max Hirsch and B.A. "Plain Ben" Jones. His three Derby victories put him on a plateau with such greats as Hirsch and James "Sunny Jim" Fitzsimmons and just one behind Lukas and H.J. "Dick" Thompson. Jones leads the Derby winners' list with six.

After not having a starter in any of 2004's Triple Crown races, Baffert was back with one starter in the 2005 Kentucky Derby. That one, Sort It Out, finished a floundering 17th in the field of 20. He came back with three runners in 2006, but failed to menace, finishing ninth with Santa Anita Derby runner-up Point Determined, 16th with Toyota Blue Grass victor Sinister Minister and 17th with Wood Memorial winner Bob and John.

For the first time since his arrival on the Kentucky Derby scene, Baffert went two years (2007 and 2008) without a Run for the Roses entrant, but Pioneerof the Nile put him back in the race in 2009, finishing second behind 50-1 longshot stretch-runner Mine That Bird.

Baffert scored a personal threeppeat in 1999 when he won his third consecutive Eclipse Award for being the nation's leading trainer. He won the earnings title for four straight years, before finishing second to Robert Frankel in 2002. His purse earnings totaled \$12,029,115 to Frankel's \$17,748,340.

He has been the recipient of the Mr. Fitz Award given by the National Turf Writers Association and the Big Sport of Turfdom Award given by the Turf Publicists of America.

His career purse earnings of \$144.3 million put him in fifth place among active trainers, and sixth overall.

Baffert spent his early years as a trainer with quarter horses in Arizona and Southern California, but took on a few Thoroughbreds in the late 1980s through the encouragement of, first, Hal Earnhardt and, shortly after, Mike Pegram. Baffert gave up all his quarter horses following the 1991 California Cup races, when he won three Cal Cup championships -- the Sprint, Juvenile and Classic.

It hasn't taken Baffert long to put together a healthy string of stakes victories at Santa Anita, Hollywood Park, Del Mar and Oak Tree at Santa Anita. At Santa Anita, for example, he has won six Santa Anita Derbys, with Cavonnier in 1996, Indian Charlie in 1998, General Challenge in 1999, Point Given in 2001, Fusaichi Rock Star in 2005 and Pioneerof the Nile in 2009.

Baffert, who grew up on his family's cattle ranch and is a graduate of the University of Arizona's racetrack industry program, won his first Thoroughbred training title during Santa Anita's 1996-97 winter-spring meeting and ran his consecutive meet-title string to seven before falling short in 2004. He won seven titles in a row at Del Mar before finishing third in 2004.

Among his other top runners in 2009: Lookin At Lucky, winner of the Del Mar Futurity and Norfolk Stakes but beaten a head in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile after breaking from post 13; triple-Grade I winner Zensational, who drew the rail in the Breeders' Cup Sprint as the 9-5 favorite and wound up fifth after a troubled trip, and Richard's Kid, who won the \$1-million Pacific Classic and finished sixth in the Breeders' Cup Classic, and Always a Princess, who led most of the way before fading to fifth in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies.

Despite his close loss in the Juvenile, Lookin At Lucky won the Eclipse Award as the nation's top 2-year-old male of 2009.

Among other major races won: Dubai World Cup with Silver Charm (1998) and Captain Steve (2001); Del Mar Futurity seven straight years (1996-2002); Hollywood Gold Cup with Real Quiet (1999); Kentucky Oaks with Silverbulletday (1999); Pacific Classic with General Challenge (1999) and Richard's Kid; Travers Stakes with Point Given (2001) and Haskell Invitational with Point Given (2001).

Besides Point Given's championship year in 2001, Baffert also has saddled these other Eclipse Award winners: Silver Charm, 1997 3-year-old colt; Real Quiet, 1998 3-year-old colt; Silverbulletday, 1998 2-year-old filly and 1999 3-year-old filly; Chilukki, 1999 2-year-old filly; Vindication, 2002 2-year-old male; War Emblem, 2002 3-year-old male; Indian Blessing, 2007 2-year-old filly; Midshipman, 2008 2-year-old male; Midnight Lute, 2007 sprinter, and Lookin At Lucky.

Other top Thoroughbred runners for Baffert include Congaree, Joe Who, Exploit, Kafwain, Prime Timber, Tuzla, Caffe Latte, Senor Swinger, El Corredor, Tout Charmant, Roman Ruler, Officer, River Keen, Wimbledon, Woke Up Dreamin, Pussycat Doll, Victory USA, Broadway's Top Gun, Charmonnier, Letthebighossroll, Arches of Gold, Batroyale, Gundaghia, Isitingood, Souvenir Copy, Worldly Manner, Anet, Excellent Meeting and Commitisize.