

Churchill Downs jockey for a day



Ailing Boy Visits Heroes of the Track

By PAUL BALDWIN
The Courier Journal

It was the kind of hop-to-it attention usually saved for horse racing's finest.

As jockey Pat Day slipped a pair of black riding boots onto 8-year-old Ryan Dant's feet, a fellow jockey, dressed in a plaid bathrobe, helped Ryan put on green and blue diamond silks and a pair of white riding pants from jockey Dean Kutz.

In the middle of the jockey room at Churchill Downs yesterday morning, Ryan clutching a black riding crop Day had given him, looked like competition for any jockey.

Ryan and his family are used to racing—against time.

Four years ago, Ryan's family who live in Carrollton, Texas, learned that he had Hurler's Disease, a rare genetic condition that allows deposits to form in his cells because he lacks a certain enzyme. As the deposits accumulate, the organs weaken and eventually fail, usually when a child is ten years old.

Ryan's father, Mark Dant, a police officer originally from Louisville, said his son's strain of the disease gives him a life expectancy of 15.

Bringing him to Churchill Downs yesterday gave Dant a chance to fulfill his son's dreams of meeting a jockey.

"He had so many questions about jockeys I've no answer for," Mark Dant said.

What did Ryan ask Day?

"Do you ever fall off?"

"Well," said Day. "They buck me off once in awhile, and sometimes I just fall off."

Seated between Day and jockey Willie Martinez and with his blue riding helmet on a coffee table, Ryan listened with his eyes closed as Downs Chaplain Dan Powell offered prayers for him and the jockeys. Ryan's father and several others in the room wiped away tears.

"I can assure you that the jockeys can keep you in their prayers," Powell said.

Other jockeys introduced themselves to the freckle-faced Ryan, who responded with a polite "thank you" to the com-

pliments they gave him on his racing attire. One of the men working the grill in the jockeys room smiled at Ryan and handed him a pack of M&Ms.

Later with his grandparents, Joe and Jean Dan of Louisville, Ryan made it down to the paddock area. There, trainer Walter Bindner had his horse, Carter's Trolley, a beautiful chestnut thoroughbred, out for Ryan's inspection. Faced with such a towering animal, Ryan decided to keep his distance most of the time.

But eventually, Ryan was coaxed into the gentle horse's reins for a few photos. As camera shutters clicked, Carter's Trolley bent down and softly tapped the back of Ryan's helmet with his nose.

Bindner, whose wife, Peggy, knew of Ryan through mutual friends, helped set up the meeting with Day.

"Churchill Downs bent over backwards to help," Walter Bindner said. "And we knew Pat would do it."

Photos from yesterday's visit will be used to promote the

Ryan Foundation, which sponsors an annual golf scramble in Texas to raise money for research into Hurler's Disease.

"The only day we could book was on Derby Day," Dant said. "We decided to build a theme around that."

The money goes to support research at UCLA, where two scientists have located an enzyme that could help Ryan. Tests could start in about two years.

Yesterday, however, Ryan's attention was focused on jockeys. Watching a broadcast of the second race, Ryan—when he wasn't cheering for Day—kept asking: "Do I know him?" about each jockey he saw.

— This article is reprinted from:
The Courier-Journal
Louisville, Kentucky
Sunday, Nov. 17, 1996.



**Ryan's Run
for the Roses
benefits all
MPS children.**



Ryan bowed between jockeys Willie Martinez, left, and Pat Day in the jockeys' quarters as the track chaplain prayed for the youngster, who suffers from a rare and usually fatal disease.



The Ryan Foundation Charity Classic Weekend

Saturday, May 3, 1997

Ryan's Run for the Roses Gala

at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Irving, Texas

Featuring:

RYANBUCKS horse wagering and
thoroughbred ownership

A Buffet, including:
Steamship Round of Texas Beef and
Stuffed Pork Loin
Peppercorn Smoked Turkey Breast
Prawns, Crab, and Stuffed Mussels on Ice
Wild Mushroom Ravioli
with Roasted Garlic & Leek Cream
Crab Cannelloni
Penne Pasta Pepperocini
Caviar Stuffed Eggs
Smoked Pheasant
Shrimp & Cucumber Rondelles
Smoked Duck & Boursin in Phyllo
Grilled Pork & Shrimp Dumplings
Viennes Dessert Displays
Beer and Wine Included
Cash Bar Available

Music:

The Bill Tillman Band
Master of Ceremonies:
Kidd Kraddick, KISS FM

Live and Silent Auction
for items ranging from trips, cruises and
jewelry to sports memorabilia

Monday, May 5, 1997

Ryan Foundation Golf Classic
at the Glen Eagles Country Club
in Plano, Texas

144 Player Morning Shotgun
Two 144 Player Afternoon Shotguns

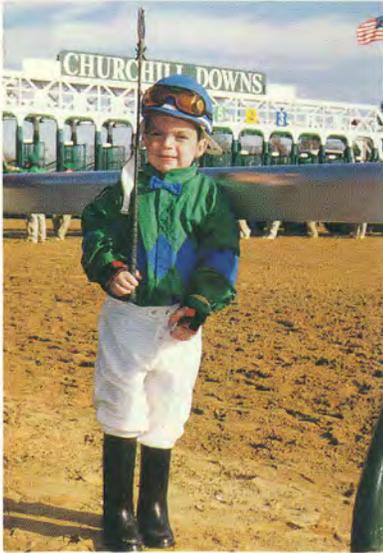
Individual prizes to top teams
on each shotgun
Over \$15,000 in tournament prizes and
giveaways
Two \$10,000 cash hole-in-one prizes
Hole-in-one 1997 Lexus

All tournament participants receive buffet
breakfast, lunch and dinner

After tournament party with music by
Texas' #1 Party Bank "Emerald City"

Ryan's Day at Churchill Downs

We will forever be grateful to Walter Bindner, Pat Day, and the wonderful people at Churchill Downs for the kindness and generosity they extended to Ryan in his quest for the winner's circle.
Mark and Jeanne Dant



Ryan in the heart of Churchill Downs



Ryan gets a ride on the practice horse with help from the jockeys



Pat Day gives Ryan tips for winning the Run for the Roses



Ryan is ready for the run with help from Pat Day



Ryan expresses determination to win HIS race



Ryan gets a "good luck" hug at the end of a "great day"



The final outcome of the race against MPS is unknown. With your help, we can put Ryan and all MPS children in the winner's circle. We must win--there is no "place" or "show."

