

Rob Whiteley

Upon first meeting Rob Whiteley, it becomes abundantly clear that he possesses a strong academic background. Articulate in his speech and deliberate in his actions, Whiteley has the appearance of a college professor rather than a horse industry professional.

Actually, both images are ideally suited to Whiteley. The director of operations at Foxfield, financier Carl Icahn's horse operations, is a product of academia who has transformed his lengthy interest and study of racing and horses into a second career.

Born in Michigan and raised in Southern California, Whiteley by age 24 had earned three college degrees and was director of graduate programs in counseling psychology at Rutgers University in Camden, N.J., a position he held from 1968-71. He first became acclimated to horse racing when he visited Golden Gate Fields while he was a graduate student at the University of California/Berkeley, where he earned a doctorate in counseling psychology.

"I became intrigued with the horses as athletes and with the action, motion, complexity, and color of the game," Whiteley said.

At Rutgers, Whiteley devoted considerable time and energy to the study of pedigrees and the sport of horse racing, as well as handicapping. He continued to balance his academic profession with his interest in horses until 1981, when he left academia and became president of Fasig-Tipton Appraisal Services, a division of the equine auction company.

His career took another abrupt turn five years later when Icahn, the financier who mastered corporate takeovers, hired Whiteley to oversee his Thoroughbred holdings. After rebuffing Icahn's initial of-



fers, Whiteley finally relented and over the past five years has helped build Foxfield into a leading commercial breeding enterprise. Following an initial program in which fillies were purchased for racing purposes with the ultimate goal of using them to form a broodmare band if they were successful on the track, Foxfield has expanded to where it is now comprised of 120 broodmares. As a commercial operation, Foxfield offers all of its foals for sale.

Foxfield also owns the stallion Ogygian; owns half of Blushing John, Crafty Prospector, Sunshine Forever, and Silver Deputy; 25% of Housebuster; 20% of Deputy Minister and Private Terms; and 15% of Gulch.

All six of the fillies initially purchased to form Foxfield's broodmare band have either won or placed in stakes, including 1990 champion 2-year-old filly Meadow Star and grade I winner Rose's Cantina. Whiteley has a personal fondness for

\$723,139-earner Rose's Cantina because of the manner in which she was acquired.

In an effort to provide his father, who was seriously ill at the time, with "something to look forward to each day," Whiteley arranged for him to tape races from Southern California. While perusing the tapes sent to him by his father, Whiteley observed Rose's Cantina making a strong move in an allowance race. Before he could locate the filly, John Stuart of Bluegrass Thoroughbred Services contacted Whiteley about a race filly for sale on behalf of a client, and the filly was Rose's Cantina (shown with Whiteley). "It was meant to be," said Whiteley.

Whiteley, who is a director of Fasig-Tipton and was recently elected a trustee of the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association, is a consummate professional known for fairness in his dealings. He credits

Foxfield's success to the effort given by everyone involved with the program, including the personnel at Tom Evans and Pam Clark's Trackside Farm near Versailles, Ky., where Foxfield's mares are boarded.

"Our operation has had a fair measure of success only because of the high quality and conscientious care given by the people we have handling our mares and young horses," said Whiteley, equating his position to that of an athletic team's coach.

Whiteley said Foxfield is operated on a principle that the success of the overall industry is dependent upon conducting business so that everyone has a chance to succeed. "To build a strong industry, we need to make it possible for participants at each level in the chain—stallion owner, commercial breeder, and racing prospect purchaser—to have a good shot at making a profitable return," he said.

The father of five children, Whiteley is married to JoAnn, his wife of 20 years. ■