

= Mucho Macho Man =

Mucho Macho Man ( foaled June 15 , 2008 ) is a retired American Thoroughbred racehorse notable as the winner of the 2013 Breeders ' Cup Classic . He was foaled in Florida and named after the Village People song " Macho Man " . His breeders were Carole and John Rio of Florida , who owned his dam . His foalhood nickname was " Lazarus " because he appeared lifeless at birth , but spontaneously revived . He grew to be a very large horse , standing over 17 hands ( 68 inches , 173 cm ) high . Throughout most of his racing career , Mucho Macho Man was primarily owned by Dean and Patti Reeves of Reeves Thoroughbred Racing of Suwanee , Georgia . They purchased a majority interest in him after his first race in 2010 , and in 2012 became his sole owners . In February 2014 , Frank Stronach purchased an undisclosed share in the horse on behalf of his Adena Springs Farms , owner of Mucho Macho Man 's sire , Macho Uno . The stallion now lives at Adena Springs and began to stand at stud in the 2015 breeding season .

When Dean and Patti Reeves purchased the horse , they placed him with horse trainer Tim Ritvo , who shortly thereafter began a job with Gulfstream Park . Training duties were turned over to Tim 's wife and fellow trainer Kathy Ritvo , who trained Mucho Macho Man from his fourth race on . His racing career was supported by a close @-@ knit team , led by Ritvo and the Reeves as well as Reeves ' racing manager Finn Green . Mucho Macho Man was ridden in races by several top jockeys , including Rajiv Maragh , Ramon Dominguez , Mike Smith , Edgar Prado and Gary Stevens .

Because Mucho Macho Man was born late in the year for a Thoroughbred foal , as a growing two- and three @-@ year @-@ old he had to compete against horses that were several months older and more mature . He was also very tall , and as a young racehorse sometimes got in his own way ; as a three @-@ year @-@ old , he stepped on his front feet with his hind feet and tore off a horseshoe in two different races . In 2011 , he competed in all three Triple Crown races , coming in third in the Kentucky Derby . Following a five @-@ month layoff due to surgery that addressed a problem with his breathing , he returned to the track in November 2011 with a win , won three graded stakes races in 2012 , and finished a close second to Fort Larned in that year 's Breeders ' Cup Classic .

In 2013 , after overcoming a respiratory virus early in the year , he ran two races on the east coast , finishing third both times , and then was shipped early to Santa Anita Park to prepare for that year 's Breeders ' Cup . He won a preparatory race , the Awesome Again Stakes , his seventh win overall and his first Grade I win . This qualified him for the 2013 Breeders ' Cup Classic , which he won , narrowly defeating Will Take Charge and Declaration of War . His success earned him the Secretariat Vox Populi Award and the National Thoroughbred Racing Association Moment of the Year as well as two Eclipse Award nominations and 2013 Florida @-@ bred Horse of the Year . Sportswriter Steve Haskin , who followed the horse 's career for The Blood @-@ Horse , stated that the saga " provided enough uplifting human interest stories to fill a book " . Mucho Macho Man returned to the track in January 2014 with a decisive win in the Sunshine Millions Classic , but finished fourth in the Santa Anita Handicap . He remained in training , still essentially sound , but following the discovery of bruising on his fetlocks and other signs of " wear and tear " , he was retired in July 2014 .

= = Background = =

Mucho Macho Man is a bay horse with white markings that include a star and stripe on his face , a sock on his left hind leg , and a coronet on his front right leg . He stands over 17 hands ( 68 inches , 173 cm ) high . He was sired by Macho Uno , who won the Breeders ' Cup Juvenile and was named American Champion Two @-@ Year @-@ Old Colt in 2000 . Macho Uno was a son of Hall of Fame champion Holy Bull . Mucho Macho Man 's dam is the 2001 Anoakia Stakes winner Ponche de Leona . Both sire and dam were owned by Frank Stronach 's Adena Springs Farms at the time of mating ; the pregnant mare was subsequently purchased by John and Carole Rio of Florida , where Mucho Macho Man was foaled , and thus the Rios are officially listed as his breeders . Mucho

Macho Man was Ponche de Leona 's second foal and was born extremely late in the foaling season on June 15 , 2008 ; this meant that as a two- and three @-@ year @-@ old , not yet fully grown , he had to compete on equal terms with horses who were as much as five months older than he .

Ponche de Leona delivered Mucho Macho Man three weeks after her due date . At birth , the foal was lifeless with no heartbeat . Farm staff tried to revive him by massaging and shaking him . He was unresponsive for several minutes , then his eyes opened and he " just got up and galloped away " . As a result , his foalhood nickname was " Lazarus " . In addition to being a late foal , he was very big and hence slow to reach full development . Because the young horse was so tall and skinny , John Rio called him " Mr. Green Jeans " , though no one else did . His official name is derived from the Village People song " Macho Man " , and owner Dean Reeves ' nickname for him is " Macho " .

The Rios sold the horse as a two @-@ year @-@ old to Jim Culver of Dream Team One Racing Stable , keeping an ownership share for themselves . After Mucho Macho Man 's first race in 2010 , a majority share in the colt was purchased by Dean and Patti Reeves , owners of Reeves Thoroughbred Racing of Suwanee , Georgia , near Atlanta . When the Reeves purchased their controlling interest , he was sent into training with Tim Ritvo , but when Ritvo was appointed director of racing at Gulfstream Park in Florida , the conditioning of the colt was turned over to his wife and fellow trainer , Kathy . Jonathan " Finn " Green joined the Reeves ' program as racing manager in September 2011 .

Mucho Macho Man overcame several health issues in 2011 and 2013 . He had surgery to address a breathing problem in 2011 , and suffered from a respiratory virus and hoof problems , including a quarter crack , in 2013 .

Not only did the horse survive near @-@ death in 2008 , so did Kathy Ritvo , who had a heart transplant in November 2008 . She was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy in 2001 , limiting her horse training career . By 2008 her condition deteriorated to the point where she was hospitalized for several months , and she was near death when an organ became available . Less than six months after transplant surgery , she returned to training race horses . In a 2011 interview , she compared her own rapid recovery to the spontaneous recovery of the horse as a foal , and stated , " from the moment I opened my eyes [ following surgery ] , I felt fantastic . He 's Mucho Macho Man and I 'm Macho Woman . "

In 2012 , Reeves Thoroughbred Racing bought out Dream Team One 's 30 @-@ percent interest and became the sole owners of Mucho Macho Man . Later , Mike and Laura Sivo obtained a minority share . Also in 2012 , the team added a permanent exercise rider to their roster : Ritvo 's nephew , former jockey Nick Petro , Jr . Petro actually rode Mucho Macho Man more than anyone else . A strong support staff also worked consistently with the horse , including assistant trainer Marcelino Valencia , stable groom Valietal Tapia , and hot walker Karina Lopez . The horse 's connections remained unchanged through 2013 . In February 2014 , anticipating the stallion 's future retirement to a stud career after the 2014 season , Adena Springs Farms purchased an interest in Mucho Macho Man , but he remained in training with the same team and raced under Reeves ' colors . Frank Stronach , noting that Adena arranged the mating between Macho Uno and Ponche de Leona , described the sale as " a homecoming of sorts " .

Mucho Macho Man was given his basic start under saddle by Carole and John Rio . Still tall and lanky , he was sent to Bill White for race training , with Carole telling the trainer , " physically this horse is late , but mentally he 's way ahead . " Throughout his racing career , Mucho Macho Man has been described as a generally calm horse with a good temperament , a " happy " horse who " likes his job " , " businesslike " and easy to rate . However , he disliked being whipped , and was notorious for his dislike of wet conditions , performing poorly when asked to run in the mud ; his worst races were on sloppy tracks . Though viewed as " laid back " , he was generally very fast out of the starting gate , which caused him problems twice in his three @-@ year @-@ old season when he tore off a front horseshoe by stepping on his own front heels with his hind feet . Ritvo said " I think he 's so excited to get out of the gate that he 's springing before his front feet are gone . " His quickness out of the gate , described by one of his jockeys as akin to that of a Quarter Horse , became an asset once he matured . Steve Haskin noted that the horse was undefeated whenever he had the lead by the eighth pole but had never won when he did not .

= = Racing career = =

= = = 2010 : two @-@ year @-@ old season = = =

Mucho Macho Man first raced at Calder Race Course . He was scratched by the track veterinarian from the first race into which he was entered ; he had been slightly injured when the horse next to him reared and flipped over in the starting gate . He was entered in another race a week later , a maiden race in which he finished second , losing to a colt named Gourmet Dinner . After that race , Mucho Macho Man was purchased by Reeves Thoroughbred Racing . Dean and Patti Reeves had considered purchasing Gourmet Dinner , but Dean Reeves recalled saying at the time , " Call me crazy , but I like the second horse . " After the sale , Tim Ritvo took over the training of Mucho Macho Man from his original trainer , Bill White . The colt came in third at his next race , at Saratoga in New York state ; he won his first race on September 19 , 2010 , at Monmouth Park in New Jersey . After that race , the colt 's training was turned over to Kathy Ritvo when Tim began working for Gulfstream Park . In November 2010 , Mucho Macho Man moved up to graded class and finished second behind To Honor and Serve twice in a row at Aqueduct Racetrack in New York City , first in the Nashua Stakes and then in the Remsen Stakes . Throughout his two @-@ year @-@ old year the young horse was easily distracted , so he raced with blinkers for both White and Ritvo .

= = = 2011 : three @-@ year @-@ old season = = =

Mucho Macho Man began his second year of racing by finishing fourth behind winner Dialed In in the Grade III Holy Bull Stakes at Gulfstream Park , and once again finished behind Gourmet Dinner , who was third . Mucho Macho Man was then sent to New Orleans for the Risen Star Stakes at the Fair Grounds Race Course . Ridden by Rajiv Maragh , he recorded his first graded stakes win , prevailing by one and a half lengths over Santiva . Ritvo took away the blinkers for a workout prior to the race and kept them off , stating that the colt had matured and was more at ease without them . At the Risen Star , he first came to the notice of one of his future jockeys , Gary Stevens , then a sports analyst , who noted the colt 's calm demeanor , describing him as " a chilled out customer ... very relaxed " . The next race was the Louisiana Derby , a major preparatory race for the Kentucky Derby . In that race , he lost his right front horseshoe at the start when he " grabbed a quarter " ? tearing off the shoe and a bit of his hoof when he stepped on the heel of his front foot with one of his back feet . He finished third behind Pants on Fire and Nehro .

Before he was a full 36 calendar months old , Mucho Macho Man contested all three legs of the American Triple Crown . He finished third to Animal Kingdom and Nehro in the Kentucky Derby . He was described as having a " babyish look " prior to the Derby , and Ritvo said that he was still growing , but Stevens noted during the Derby 's television broadcast , " when he fills into this frame , he 's going to be a big , powerful horse . " Mucho Macho Man was sixth behind Shackleford in the Preakness . At the start , he again tore off a shoe , this time from his left front hoof , even though Ritvo had switched him to glued @-@ on horseshoes . The misstep may have accounted for his low placing . Before the Belmont , Ritvo brought in a farrier specialist , who gave the horse custom made glued @-@ on horseshoes made of a wire @-@ framed synthetic composite and who also squared off the toes of Mucho Macho Man 's hind shoes to make it harder for him to accidentally step on his front heels . At the Belmont , Ramon Dominguez took over from Maragh as the colt 's jockey , and went on to ride him for a total of five races . That day , the track was sloppy and the horse ran seventh behind winner Ruler on Ice . After the Belmont , he did not race for several months because he needed surgery to fix a problem with his breathing .

In September , Finn Green , a recovering alcoholic with his own story of triumph over adversity , began working for Reeves . A knowledgeable horseman , Green insisted that as a condition of employment he had the right to advocate for what was best for a horse under his management , even if that meant expressing disagreement and imposing " tough love " on the owners . He and

Ritvo saw eye to eye on Mucho Macho Man , and they began planning the colt 's return to the track . After a break of almost five months , Mucho Macho Man raced in November and won an allowance race at Aqueduct , beginning a three @-@ race winning streak . He had lost his " babyish " look , put on weight , and as Ritvo put it , " His shoulders [ caught ] up with his behind . " Ritvo and Green then mapped out a 2012 workout and racing schedule for Mucho Macho Man , intending to run him every six to ten weeks with recovery time after each race .

= = = 2012 : four @-@ year @-@ old season = = =

For his four @-@ year @-@ old debut , Mucho Macho Man ran at Gulfstream Park , defeating Ron the Greek in the Sunshine Millions Classic , a race restricted to horses bred in Florida or California . He had finally grown into his tall frame . Dominguez returned as his jockey and was pleased with what he saw , saying , " You can really tell how much he 's grown up since I rode him in the Belmont . Back then , he was just a big skinny horse that had a lot of maturing to do . Now he looks like he 's grown up and has everything figured out . " Dominguez further described him as " forward " out of the gate and said the race was an " easy " win . He raced again in March , winning the Grade II Gulfstream Park Handicap by two lengths . In May at Churchill Downs , he finished third behind Successful Dan and Fort Larned in the Grade II Alysheba Stakes , carrying top weight of 123 pounds ( 56 kg ) . His next race was the Grade II Suburban Handicap at Belmont Park on July 7 . Ridden for the first time by Mike Smith , who was his jockey for the remainder of the year , he took the lead in the straight and won by 2 @.@ 5 lengths . It was considered his most significant win of the year . In the Woodward Stakes at Saratoga on September 1 , he finished second by a neck , having been pushed toward the outside of the track by the winner , To Honor and Serve , in the final furlong . On November 3 , Mucho Macho Man was one of twelve horses to contest the Breeders ' Cup Classic at Santa Anita in California . Starting at odds of 6 ? 1 , he was always in the first two and finished second , half a length behind Fort Larned . There was a 6 1 ? 2 @-@ length gap back to the other runners , who included Flat Out , Game On Dude , To Honor and Serve , and Ron The Greek . He ended the year seventh in the nation for total race earnings , and tied for thirteenth in the World Thoroughbred Rankings .

= = = 2013 : five @-@ year @-@ old season = = =

Mucho Macho Man began his 2013 season by running again in the Sunshine Millions Classic , but the track was sloppy , and on this occasion he was pulled up in the homestretch and placed last in the race . As the horse was not visibly lame , jockey Smith told Ritvo , " It 's gotta be something inside . " Though speculation was that he simply did not like the wet track , shortly thereafter he was diagnosed with a respiratory virus . He also developed a quarter crack in his hoof and spent the rest of the spring recuperating at Fair Hill Training Center in Maryland .

In June , he returned to the track . Ridden by Edgar Prado , he started as the odds @-@ on favorite for the Criminal Type Stakes at Belmont Park but finished third of the five runners . On August 3 , he finished third to Cross Traffic and Successful Dan in the Whitney Handicap at Saratoga , with Ron The Greek fourth and Fort Larned fifth . It was at this time that his proclivity to win only when in front at the eighth pole was first commented upon in the racing press . He was once again entered in the Woodward Stakes at Saratoga on August 31 , but Ritvo scratched him on the day of the race due to the wet track , described as a " sea of slop " .

Ritvo then moved Mucho Macho Man to Santa Anita Park almost two months before the Breeders ' Cup races because she felt he " thrived " in California . It was a major commitment for the horse 's team , as Ritvo , Green , Petro , Tapia and Lopez had to leave their home base in Florida , and Reeves had to cover the expenses . Dean Reeves said , " Everybody has basically put their lives and their family second to the benefit and the best we can do for Macho . " The horse 's next race was the Awesome Again Stakes at Santa Anita on September 28 . Because both Smith and Prado had prior riding commitments , Ritvo and Green decided to contact Gary Stevens . Stevens ' contribution to the human interest saga included a comeback in 2013 after having been forced to

retire seven years earlier due to debilitating knee pain . He also had his own near @-@ death experience , having survived a major riding accident in 2003 . In a twist of serendipity , Stevens ' agent , Craig O 'Brien , came by the barn to inquire about the horse 's availability about the same time Ritvo and Green had decided to see if Stevens was available . Stevens later claimed to be unaware of his agent 's machinations . Noting that Stevens had portrayed Seabiscuit 's jockey George Woolf in the eponymous film , Ritvo later joked , " I was in Hollywood . How could I not use a film star ? " In the course of the Awesome Again , Mucho Macho Man settled behind the leaders before making a bid on the final turn . The horse led by three lengths in the homestretch , and accelerated clear of the field to win easily by 4 1 ? 2 lengths over Paynter . It was his first win in 2013 and his first Grade I stakes win . The victory was also a " win and you 're in " qualifying race for the Breeders ' Cup Classic , which included a waiver of the \$ 100 @,@ 000 entry fee for the Classic .

On November 2 , Mucho Macho Man contested his second Breeders ' Cup Classic and was the second favorite at 4 ? 1 in a strong field that included Game On Dude ( the favorite ) , Paynter , Palace Malice , Fort Larned , Will Take Charge and Flat Out , as well as the European challenger Declaration of War . The horse broke quickly from the gate and took the lead , but Stevens decided to settle him just behind the leaders before going to the outside and moving to the front on the final turn . In the closing stages , he held off two strong late challenges to win by a slim nose over second @-@ place finisher Will Take Charge and by a head over third @-@ place finisher , the European contender Declaration of War . After Mucho Macho Man 's victory , the 50 @-@ year @-@ old Stevens , winning the Classic for the first time after 14 previous attempts , said , " this was a tremendous experience to win this race ... It 's the icing on the cake of my career . " Ritvo was credited with a " super " job of training the horse . In a moment of synchronicity , actress Elizabeth Banks , who co @-@ starred with Stevens in Seabiscuit , playing Marcella Howard , presented the Breeders ' Cup Classic trophy .

In December , Mucho Macho Man was awarded the 2013 Secretariat Vox Populi Award , recognizing the struggles the horse had overcome in reaching success , also noting the accomplishments of his connections , including trainer Ritvo 's success overcoming her own health issues to train him and Stevens ' comeback from retirement . Dean and Patti Reeves stated , " It is a great honor to think that a horse with such humble beginnings could intertwine the lives and stories of so many people , and tug at the heartstrings of racing fans from all over the world . " At the end of 2013 , Mucho Macho Man was the number one @-@ ranked horse for the year in North American purse winnings , higher than rivals Will Take Charge and Game On Dude as well as the other two top five contenders Orb and Wise Dan . He was also nominated for two Eclipse Awards , Horse of the Year and Older Male Horse , but finished second in both categories to Wise Dan .

He was named Florida @-@ bred Horse of the Year for 2013 , noting that he was only the third Florida @-@ bred horse to win the Classic , after Unbridled and Skip Away . In the 2013 World 's Best Racehorse Rankings , Mucho Macho Man was given a rating of 125 , the best horse in the world running solely on dirt , a five @-@ way tie as the seventh @-@ best racehorse in the world , and tied with Animal Kingdom as the second @-@ best racehorse in North America , behind Wise Dan . His win in the Classic was also selected as the National Thoroughbred Racing Association 's " Moment of the Year " . Participation in the online polling for that award , up by more than 50 percent from the previous year , was believed to be largely due to the popularity of Mucho Macho Man and the people around him .

= = = 2014 : six @-@ year @-@ old season = = =

In December 2013 , Ritvo and Green confirmed that Mucho Macho Man would return to race as a six @-@ year @-@ old , and their goal for the horse was to " target the Breeders ' Cup again " . Though presumed full @-@ grown , he still had continued to fill out from the previous year . Ritvo announced that the horse would begin his racing season for a third time with the Sunshine Millions Classic , if the track was dry . On January 18 , 2014 , Ritvo and the horse got a clear day and a fast track . Mucho Macho Man won the six @-@ horse race by 14 lengths . The field included his former

nemesis , Gourmet Dinner , who finished fifth . Stevens returned as his jockey and stated , " I geared him down at the end to try not to overdo it . "

His connections next entered him in the Santa Anita Handicap , nicknamed the " Big ' Cap " , on March 8 , returning to California rather than shipping him overseas to run in the \$ 10 million Dubai World Cup later that month , again stating that they considered it to be best for the horse . With the announcement that Will Take Charge was also coming to California , the 2014 race became the most highly anticipated running since the matchup of Alysheba and Ferdinand in 1988 , the only other time that the previous year 's Breeders ' Cup top two finishers returned to challenge one another at the Santa Anita Handicap . Additional interest came from the return of Game On Dude , who won the Big ' Cap in 2011 and 2013 . Mucho Macho Man was assigned the highest impost at 124 pounds ( 56 @. @ 2 kg ) . Will Take Charge was assigned 123 pounds ( 55 @. @ 8 kg ) and Game on Dude , 122 pounds ( 55 @. @ 3 kg ) . Eight horses entered , with Mucho Macho Man the morning line favorite . Game On Dude , described as " on fire " that day , won the race and broke the stakes record in doing so , Will Take Charge was second , but Mucho Macho Man started to lose energy at the three @- @ eighths pole and finished fourth behind Blingo . Ritvo had no excuses for his finish , noting only that he had missed a few training days due to rain , and the extra moisture had also changed the condition of the Santa Anita track . On May 1 , 2014 , Georgia Governor Nathan Deal proclaimed Mucho Macho Man Day in the state of Georgia , recognizing the accomplishments of the horse and the attention he and his owners brought to Georgia .

He returned to Florida for training after the Big ' Cap , but after performing poorly in a June workout was found to have some bruising of his fetlocks , and was given lighter duty . On July 15 it was announced that Mucho Macho Man was officially retired from racing and would stand at stud at Adena Springs beginning in the 2015 breeding year . In a further twist of synchronicity , in the same week Stevens announced he was taking a break from race riding due to the need for a total knee replacement . Ritvo explained that Mucho Macho Man was sound , but " [ a ] fter five seasons of training and racing , he shows signs of some minor wear and tear . He is still sound and happy , but we have decided that it is in his best interests to retire him . He has nothing more to prove to any of us . "

= = Racing statistics = =

Conversions of distance and abbreviations for the owners are given after the table .

= = Pedigree = =

Mucho Macho Man is sired by Macho Uno , who stands at stud at Adena Springs Farms in Kentucky . As of January 2014 , Macho Uno had sired 27 stakes winners . Besides Mucho Macho Man , they include : Potesta , winner of the Hollywood Oaks ; Macho Again ; and Wicked Style . Macho Uno is a son of Holy Bull , who was the 1994 American Horse of the Year , and Breeders ' Cup Classic winner Awesome Again is a half @- @ brother to Macho Uno ; both horses were out of the mare Primal Force . The sire line of Mucho Macho Man traces back to the 1898 Kentucky Derby winner , Plaudit . Because Macho Uno carries no lines to stallions Northern Dancer , Seattle Slew , Hail to Reason , or In Reality , who commonly appear in Thoroughbred pedigrees , he is valued as a near @- @ total outcross for most Thoroughbred mares in North America .

Mucho Macho Man 's dam is stakes @- @ winning Ponche de Leona , whose pedigree is not particularly well known . Her sire , Ponche , won five stakes races and sired five stakes winners . Her dam won one race in 19 starts . Mucho Macho Man thus has very little linebreeding ; only a 4 x 4 cross to the sire Mr. Prospector , meaning that this horse appears twice in the fourth generation of his pedigree . Ponche de Leona was purchased at the Keeneland sale in November 2007 by John and Carole Rio for \$ 33 @, @ 000 when in foal with Mucho Macho Man , the relatively low price partly owing to having been bred late in the year ; late foals are difficult to sell . However , by November 2011 , after the success of Mucho Macho Man in his three @- @ year @- @ old year , and in foal to Macho Uno again , the Rios resold her at Keeneland for \$ 300 @, @ 000 . Following

Mucho Macho Man 's Breeders ' Cup win in 2013 , and having also produced the stakes @-@ placed Mucho Man 's Gold , she was again sold at the Keeneland January 2014 sale , this time in foal to Distorted Humor , bringing \$ 775 @,@ 000 . In 2013 , she was named Florida broodmare of the year by the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders ' and Owners ' Association .