

# Talent SCOUT

BY MICHAEL COMPTON



LYDIA WILLIAMS PHOTOS

**F**ar removed from the limelight at Churchill Downs during the running of the 138th Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I) May 5, Victor Davila watched the Run for the Roses without fanfare at home in Ocala, Fla., with his wife, Antonia, and his three children.

## **Victor Davila pinhooked I'll Have Another as a yearling and sold him at the OBS April 2-year-old sale**

Davila was excited but not surprised to see J. Paul Reddam's I'll Have Another collar pacesetter Bodemeister in deep stretch to win the Derby in front of a Churchill Downs record crowd of 165,307. Sent off at odds of 15-1, I'll Have Another was the ninth wagering choice in the Derby field of 20. He may have flown under the radar for many, but not for Davila, who knows I'll Have Another like no other outside of trainer Doug O'Neill's team.

Davila has worked as an exercise rider for Eisaman Equine Thoroughbred Sales and Training for 10 years after relocating from his native Mexico to Ocala. He purchased Kentucky Derby winner I'll Have Another as a yearling two years ago during the 12th of 14 sessions at the Keeneland

September sale for \$11,000. After being broken and trained at the Eisaman facility, Eisaman Equine, on behalf of Davila, resold the colt by Flower Alley—Arch's Gal Edith, by Arch, at the Ocala Breeders' Sales Co.'s April spring sale some seven months later for \$35,000. Agent Dennis O'Neill, Doug's brother, signed for the chestnut colt at OBS.

"I was very excited when the horses turned for home," said Davila from the Fasig-Tipton sale grounds at Timonium, Md., just days after the Derby. "I watched the race with my family, and it was amazing. I knew he had a good chance to win by the way he was running. It looked like he was getting stronger in the stretch."

Dr. Barry and Shari Eisaman, owners

of Eisaman Equine, have broken, trained, and sold scores of top stakes winners. Numbered among the Williston, Fla., operation's recent graduates are last year's Belmont Stakes (gr. I) winner Ruler On Ice, last year's Kentucky Oaks (gr. I) winner Plum Pretty, and this year's Fantasy Stakes (gr. II) winner Mamma Kimbo. Liaison, sixth-place finisher in this year's Kentucky Derby behind I'll Have Another, also graduated the Eisaman program.

"It is professionally rewarding to be attached to this great story," said Barry Eisaman. "There are so many storylines with this horse. Victor is a really good guy, a good horseman, and a family man. This is a successful pinhook that was bought for very little money as a yearling at Keeneland and sold at OBS. It shows you don't have to be a billionaire to land in this spot."

Eisaman recalled how Davila first became involved in selecting pinhook prospects.

"Victor came to us a few years ago and told us he had saved \$5,000," Eisaman said. "He asked us to help him buy a yearling. We were glad to help. We looked at X-rays for him and that sort of thing. That first venture worked, and he returned the next year with \$7,000. That also worked out well. He came to us last year and upped

the ante to a \$10,000 budget. He stretched it to \$11,000 to get the horse.”

I'll Have Another has proved to be worth the extra commitment. He is undefeated this season at age 3. He captured the Robert B. Lewis Stakes (gr. II) at Santa Anita in February. He returned in April to annex the Santa Anita Derby (gr. I) by a scant nose following a stirring stretch duel with Creative Cause. He kept the winning streak intact on the first Saturday in May.

With courageous victories on racing's biggest stages, I'll Have Another, named for Reddam's affinity for an extra cookie for dessert, is fast becoming a household name. Davila was among the first to recognize the colt's promise as a youngster.

“I really liked his body and the way he walked,” Davila said. “I liked his balance. I always thought he would be a nice 2-year-old. He had everything.”

Davila was correct. I'll Have Another was a precocious juvenile. He broke his maiden in his debut at Hollywood Park in July of his 2-year-old year, wiring a maiden special weight field at 5½ furlongs. He then finished second to Creative Cause in the 6½-furlong Best Pal Stakes (gr. II) at Del Mar. His only poor performance came in the Three Chimneys Hopeful Stakes (gr. I) at Saratoga where he finished sixth of 10 over a sloppy track.

Two days after the Kentucky Derby, I'll Have Another took up residence in Barn D at Pimlico Race Course. As is the case with the Derby winner each year, I'll Have Another heads into the May 19 Preakness Stakes (gr. I) with a chance to become the



Barry and Shari Eisaman with Victor Davila at the Timonium sale grounds

first runner since Affirmed in 1978 to win the Triple Crown.

“I like him a lot,” Davila said, unable to hide his enthusiasm. “I think he can win the Triple Crown. His last race shows me he is getting better and better.”

Davila's Preakness Stakes experience promises to be much different than watching the Derby at home on television. Eisaman Equine is selling 36 head at the May 21-22 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic sale at Timonium, and both Davila and Eisaman have been in Maryland since shortly

after the Derby. Davila is expected to join Eisaman and the O'Neill entourage for I'll Have Another's walkover from the Pimlico stable area to the saddling ring for the Preakness.

“We're all looking forward to the walkover Saturday night,” Eisaman said. “Victor has worked hard and educated himself about how to take care of a horse. Now he is a national celebrity. It's great. We're excited.”

In winning four of his six lifetime starts, I'll Have Another has demonstrated the tenacity of a potential champion despite his relatively low price tags in the auction ring.

“I'll Have Another is a nice horse,” Eisaman added. “Everyone who has been around the horse will tell you he is a really good mover, and he has a good mind. No one could have said he was going to be a Derby winner. I think even Dennis figured at that price he was buying a useful horse he could run up the ladder.”

Run up the ladder he has. I'll Have Another has already cemented his name in racing annals as a Kentucky Derby winner. His place in history secured, the one-time \$11,000 yearling likely has more chapters to contribute to his compelling tale. It's a safe bet Davila and the team at Eisaman Equine will be keeping close tabs on the formidable horse they broke and trained.

“To win a race like the Kentucky Derby means a lot to me and my career,” said Davila, who is still adjusting to the attention. “I plan to keep buying and selling horses. I have learned so much working for the Eisamans. I am appreciative of their support. I hope I can keep improving and buy even better horses in the future.”

Buying more desirable horses may prove challenging for Davila. I'll Have Another has set the bar as high as it goes. 



I'll Have Another runs past Bodemeister in the stretch of the Kentucky Derby