



Recovering from traumatic injury

Florida filly defies all odds in rare farm accident

NO ONE knew how long the filly had struggled. Her desperation was obvious from the large bloodstains and the slashes her frantic hooves had left on the tree trunks.

When Y-Lo Racing Stables' yearling manager, Israel Chavez, arrived for work early on the morning of September 19, 2008, he saw a horrifying sight in one of the pastures. A bay yearling's head and neck were wedged between the trunks of two oak trees. Suddenly, her head came free and she slid to the ground in exhaustion. When he reached her moments later, it was obvious the filly had been caught in the trees for some time. Bloodied and battered, her head was swelling and one eye was already swollen shut.

Sandra Gosselin-Calhoun, D.V.M., of Foil Equine, quickly arrived at the farm just west of Ocala. She treated the filly for shock and arranged for admission to a large equine hospital in Ocala. Once the filly, Pico Cat, a yearling by Pico Central (Brz), arrived, she was stabilized and began receiving intravenous fluids. Radiographs were taken, but extreme swelling made diagnosis difficult. Examination revealed multiple facial fractures, paralysis of the jaw, lip and tongue, and a dislocated jaw, including malocclusion of the lower jaw (her lower jaw jutted forward so her top and bottom teeth would not meet evenly).

Lolita Raquiza, co-owner of Y-Lo Racing Stables, was at the farm's home office in Sherman Oaks, California, when she received the news. She already knew the filly was a fighter; at barely one month of age, Pico Cat had been kicked in the head by a mare at pasture. She recovered without surgery, although the injury left a slight dent in the bone above her right eye.

Now Raquiza's homebred filly was clinging to life 2,500 miles away and the clinic veterinarian presiding over her case was recommending euthanasia.

She sent Katherine Devall, a Florida horsewoman who had done other rehabilitation cases for Y-Lo Racing Stables, to see Pico Cat.

Devall has over 15 years' experience working in the equine hospital and rehabilitation setting, and had recently been doing rehab work at

her Tot Hill Farm in Summerfield, Florida. As soon as she saw the filly, she knew the situation was grave. Looking into the yearling's one open eye, she also saw the horse still had fight in her. On September 19, with Raquiza's consent, Pico Cat was trailered to Devall's farm to begin Devall's most difficult rehab case.

Grueling rehab

"Pico Cat's prognosis for survival was initially only about 25% and that was simply to recover and be a 'pasture ornament,'" said Allison Foil, D.V.M., of Foil Equine, who is the regular veterinarian for Y-Lo Racing Stables, but was in Kentucky when Pico Cat's accident occurred. "With this kind of trauma, a horse can lose their will to live."

Getting enough nourishment into the filly when she could not chew was a challenge. The threat of infection was another.

Using a blender, Devall ground up the filly's normal pelleted ration, adding Karo syrup, water, and a handful of alfalfa leaves. Then she painstakingly fed Pico Cat round the clock using a large-dose syringe to squirt the concoction into her mouth.

"I knew if we could get through that initial stage—so long as no infection set in—we could give her a chance," recalled Devall, who slept by the filly's stall the first several nights. "She lost some weight, but not badly. After two weeks, she started trying to chew the alfalfa leaves I'd put in her mouth. After 30 days, she was 'talking' to me when I walked into the barn."

"This horse had a team of people who came together to help keep her drive to live," Foil said. "The daily caretakers need to be able to 'read' the horse. As long as the horse is humanely comfortable and can take in the nutrients they need, then you can move forward. You're looking for a little bit of improvement every day, even if very slight."

Foil kept Pico Cat on a series of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication (NSAIDs) and antibiotics. By week three, the filly was trailered three times a week to The Sanc-



Pico Cat suffered severe damage to her head in September 2008

Courtesy Y-Lo Racing Stables

tuary, a rehab center in Ocala, where she began receiving hyperbaric oxygen chamber treatments and laser therapy to encourage healing. This continued for almost seven weeks.

"She was a trooper; she has a big heart and it shows," Devall said. "She figured out that if she got in the trailer, she was going somewhere that would make her feel better and she would jump in that trailer."

Throughout the first four to six weeks, all of the skin sloughed off the yearling's face. Abscesses continually formed on her head as pieces of bone and debris from the tree worked their way out.

Additional therapies

After Pico Cat finished with the hyperbaric treatments, she began receiving acupuncture and Chinese medicine therapy from Julia Simonson, D.V.M. Acupuncture was done twice a week initially, then spaced out to once a week and eventually to every other week, and continued for about four months.

"When a horse is in pain, they tense up all over and acupuncture really seemed to help," Devall noted. "It also improved her eating, helped the lymph nodes drain and boosted her immune system."

"It was six months before she looked anything like a normal horse," Foil said. "It's so important to have a support team, but in the long run it was really the filly's determination and heart that kept her going. She could have given up."

Over time, and after extensive treatment from equine dental professionals with the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine and later, Bo Pierpont, an equine dental technician based in



Cynthia McFarland photo

Pico Cat today with scarring still evident, but better than expected

Ocala, Pico Cat's teeth gradually came back into closer alignment, although her jaw still cannot function completely normally. She is able to graze, but she cannot chew hay like other horses, so she is fed alfalfa pellets or alfalfa cubes softened in water. She eats multiple small meals throughout the day.

In January 2010, the filly who was never expected to be more than a pasture ornament went into training. (A rubber bit was used for many months because of her sensitive mouth.) In March 2011, she ran in her first race at Tampa Bay Downs. On June 18, Pico Cat walked into the winner's circle at Colonial Downs after winning a one-mile, \$7,500 maiden-claiming race in her fifth start.

"Pico Cat is an inspiration," said Raquiza, who was a nurse in plastic/reconstructive surgery for 35 years. "It was an expensive venture, but the horse was young and had a good ability to heal and recover. It could have been harder on an older horse. These horses give us 100% all the time."

"This is a difficult business, but we all wanted the best for this horse

and it was well worth our efforts. Pico Cat has a huge fan base. She may never be a stakes winner, but she tries hard and she's a star in my eyes. When she's done racing, she'll be retired to be a broodmare and will be with us forever."

Protocol to follow

Foil believes the lesson to be learned from Pico Cat's remarkable story is that horses can often recover from seemingly insurmountable injury, if given the chance.

Although traumatic injuries can vary greatly, veterinarians follow a basic protocol in most cases:

- Stabilize the horse and treat for shock;
- Take X-rays to determine the extent of injuries that may not be visible;
- Determine prognosis for the future;
- Undergo surgery, if necessary;
- Administer drug therapy as long as needed (antibiotics and NSAIDs, etc.);
- Keep horse on anti-ulcer medication throughout treatment;
- Provide attentive supportive care;

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STAKES NOMINATIONS

■ TWO-YEAR-OLDS

8 October
Jean Lafitte S., Delta (run 10/22), \$200,000g, f, 7f.
My Trusty Cat S., Delta (run 10/22), \$150,000g, f, 7f.
Bertram F. Bongard S., Belmont (run 10/22), \$100,000a, f, 8f.
Joseph A. Gimma S., Belmont (run 10/22), \$100,000a, f, 7f.

12 October
Pocahontas S. (G2), Churchill (run 10/30), \$150,000a, f, 8f, \$150.
Iroquois S. (G3), Churchill (run 10/30), \$100,000a, f, \$100.
Showtime Deb S., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, f, Illinois-bred, 6f, \$100.
Sun Power S., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, c&g, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 6f, \$100.

■ THREE-YEAR-OLDS

12 October
Lexus Raven Run S. (G2), Keeneland (run 10/22), \$250,000g, f, 7f, \$150.
Pin Oak Valley View S. (G3), Keeneland (run 10/21), \$150,000g, f, 8.5f, \$100.

■ THREE-YEAR-OLDS AND UP

8 October
Empire Classic H., Belmont (run 10/22), \$200,000g, New York-bred, 9f.
Hudson H., Belmont (run 10/22), \$125,000g, New York-bred, 6f.
Iroquois H., Belmont (run 10/22), \$125,000g, f&m, New York-bred, 7f.
Mohawk S., Belmont (run 10/22), \$125,000g, New York-bred, 8.5f.
Ticonderoga S., Belmont (run 10/22), \$125,000g, f&m, New York-bred, 8.5f.

12 October
Sycamore S. (G3), Keeneland (run 10/20), \$100,000g, 12f, \$100.
Ontario Fashion S., Woodbine (run 10/30), \$153,870g, f&m, 6f, \$150.
Rood and Riddle Dowager S., Keeneland (run 10/23), \$125,000g, f&m, 12f, \$100.
Buck's Boy H., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 8.5f, \$100.
Illini Princess H., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, f&m, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 8.5f, \$100.
Lightning Jet H., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 6f, \$100.
Powerless H., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, f&m, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 6f, \$100.

13 October
Frank J. De Francis Memorial Dash S., Laurel (run 10/22), \$150,000g, 6f.

15 October
Bold Ruler H. (G3), Belmont (run 10/29), \$100,000g, 7f.
Turnback the Alarm H. (G3), Belmont (run 10/29), \$100,000a, f&m, 8.5f.

18 October
New Mexico Classic Cup Rocky Gulch Championship S., Zia (run 10/30), \$180,000a, New Mexico-bred, 8f.
New Mexico Classic Cup Peppers Pride Filly/Mare Championship S., Zia (run 10/30), \$170,000a, f&m, New Mexico-bred, 8f.
New Mexico Classic Cup Sprint Championship S., Zia (run 10/30), \$170,000a, New Mexico-bred, 6f.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOMINATIONS

12 October
E. P. Taylor S. (G1), Woodbine (run 10/16), \$1,025,800g, f&m, 10f, \$20,000.
Nearctic S. (G1), Woodbine (run 10/16), \$512,900g, 6f, \$10,000.
Pattison Canadian International S. (G1), Woodbine (run 10/16), \$1,538,700g, 12f, \$40,000.
TVG Hawthorne Derby (G3), Hawthorne (run 10/15), \$200,000g, 9f, \$4,000.

15 October
Buck's Boy H., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 8.5f, \$2,500.
Illini Princess H., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, f&m, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 8.5f, \$2,500.
Lightning Jet H., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 6f, \$2,500.
Powerless H., Hawthorne (run 10/22), \$125,000a, f&m, Illinois-registered, -conceived, and/or-foaled, 6f, \$2,500.

UPCOMING STAKES

8 October
The Age Caulfield Guineas (Aus-G1), Caulfield, \$1,078,000, 3yo, 8f.
Shadwell Turf Mile S. (G1), Keeneland, \$600,000g, 3&up, 8f.
Dubai Dewhurst S. (Eng-G1), Newmarket, \$570,360, 2yo, c&f, 7f.
Caulfield S. (Aus-G1), Caulfield, \$431,200, 3&up, 10f.
Dixiana Breeders' Futurity (G1), Keeneland, \$400,000g, 2yo, 8.5f.
Toorak H. (Aus-G1), Caulfield, \$377,300, 3&up, 8f.
First Lady S. (G1), Keeneland, \$350,000g, 3&up, f&m, 8f.
Champagne S. (G1), Belmont, \$300,000g, 2yo, 8f.
Frizette S. (G1), Belmont, \$300,000g, 2yo, f, 8f.
Jamaica H. (G1), Belmont, \$250,000g, 3yo, 9f.

• UPCOMING SALES •

9 October, River View Farms complete dispersal, muscogee, Oklahoma.
11-12 October, Barretts Equine Ltd. California Cup yearling sale at Hinds Pavilion, Fairplex Park, Pomona, California.
11-12 October, Tattersalls Ltd. October yearling sale part 2 in Newmarket, Suffolk, England.
14 October, Tattersalls Ltd. October yearling sale part 3 in Newmarket, Suffolk, England.
18-19 October, Ocala Breeders' Sales Co. fall mixed sale at Ocala Breeders' Sales complex, Ocala, Florida.
20 October, Arizona Thoroughbred Breeders Association fall mixed sale at Westworld, Scottsdale, Arizona.
24-26 October, Fasig-Tipton Kentucky October yearling sale at Newtown Paddocks, Lexington, Kentucky.
24-27 October, Tattersalls Ltd. Autumn horses in training sale in Newmarket, Suffolk, England.
6 November, Fasig-Tipton Kentucky November selected mixed sale at Newtown Paddocks, Lexington, Kentucky.
7-17 November, Keeneland November breeding stock sale at Keeneland sales pavilion, Lexington, Kentucky.

Ancient Title S. (G1), Santa Anita, \$250,000g, 3&up, 6f.
Middle Park S. (Eng-G1), Newmarket, \$228,144, 2yo, c, 6f.
Hawthorne Gold Cup H. (G2), Hawthorne, \$500,000g, 3&up, 10f.
Schillaci S. (Aus-G2), Caulfield, \$215,600, 3&up, 5f.
Herbert Power S. (Aus-G2), Caulfield, \$215,600, 3&up, 12f.
Thoroughbred Club of America S. (G2), Keeneland, \$200,000g, 3&up, f&m, 6f.
Oak Tree Mile S. (G2), Santa Anita, \$150,000g, 3&up, 8f.
Rockfel S. (Eng-G2), Newmarket, \$130,368, 2yo, f, 7f.
Challenge S. (Eng-G2), Newmarket, \$130,368, 3&up, 7f.
Thoroughbred Club S. (Aus-G3), Caulfield, \$134,750, 3yo, f, 6f.
Woodford S. (G3), Keeneland, \$100,000g, 3&up, 5.5f.
Darley S. (Eng-G3), Newmarket, \$81,480, 3&up, 9f.
Baden-Wurtemberg Trophy (Ger-G3), Baden Baden, \$78,375, 3&up, 12f.
Windsor Park Stud Taranaki Breeders' S. (NZ-G3), Hawera, \$62,064, 3&up, f&m, 7f.
Autumn S. (Eng-G3), Newmarket, \$57,036, 5f, 8f.
Mazarine S., Woodbine, \$205,160g, 2yo, f, 8.5f.
Alphabet Soup H., Parx Racing, \$75,000g, 3&up, Pennsylvania-bred, 8.5f.
Dover S., Delaware, \$75,000g, 2yo, 8.32f.
Laurel Futurity, Laurel, \$75,000g, 2yo, 6f.
Kenny Noe Jr. H., Calder, \$75,000g, 3&up, 6.5f.
Formal Gold S., Monmouth, \$70,000g, 3&up, 8.5f.
Swingtime S., Santa Anita, \$65,000a, 3&up, f&m, 8f.
Indian Maid S., Hawthorne, \$60,000a, 3&up, f&m, 8.5f.
Robert F. Carey Memorial H., Hawthorne, \$60,000a, 3&up, 8.5f.
Freedom of the City S., Northlands, \$52,020g, 2yo, f, 8f.

9 October
Juddmonte Spinster S. (G1), Keeneland, \$500,000g, 3&up, f&m, 9f.
Premio Gran Criterium (Ity-G1), Milan, \$423,225, 2yo, c&f, 8f.
Mainichi Okan (Jpn-G2), Tokyo, \$1,748,535, 3&up, 9f.
Kyoto Daishoten (Jpn-G2), Kyoto, \$1,748,535, 3&up, 9f.
Grey S. (Can-G3), Woodbine, \$205,160g, 2yo, 8.5f.
Preis der Winterkonigin (Ger-G3), Baden Baden, \$149,625, 2yo, f, 8f.
Premio Verziere (Ity-G3), Milan, \$125,400, 3&up, f&m, 10f.
Bourbon S. (G3), Keeneland, \$100,000g, 2yo, 8.5f.
Soviet Problem S., Fresno, \$75,000g, 2yo, f, 8.5f.
Louis R. Rowan S., Santa Anita, \$65,000a, 3&up, f&m, 6.5f.
Duck Dance S., Belmont, \$60,000a, 3&up, 6.5f.
Stormy West S., Belmont, \$60,000a, 3&up, f&m, 7f.
Canadian Juvenile S., Northlands, \$52,020g, 2yo, 8f.

University of New Mexico H., Albuquerque, \$50,000g, 3&up, New Mexico-bred, 8f.
10 October
Morvich S. (G3), Santa Anita, \$100,000g, 3&up, a6.5f.
Bull Page S., Woodbine, \$128,225g, 2yo, c&g, progeny of eligible Ontario stallions, 6f.
Pebbles S., Belmont, \$100,000a, 3yo, f, 8f.
Jack Goodman S., Santa Anita, \$65,000a, 2yo, 6f.
Duchess of York H., Northlands, \$52,020g, 3&up, f&m, 8.5f.
Harvest Gold Plate H., Northlands, \$52,020g, 3&up, 8.5f.
CTHS Sales S., Hastings, \$51,085g, 3yo, f, Canadian-breds who have passed through a CTHS (BC Division) sale, 8.5f.
Longshots OTB Cup S., Fort Erie, \$26,338g, 2yo, f, 6f.
12 October
Schwepes Thousand Guineas (Aus-G1), Caulfield, \$539,000, 3yo, f, 8f.
Mt. Sassafras S., Woodbine, \$98,170g, 3&up, Ontario-foaled, 7f.
13 October
Prix Andre Baboin-Grand Prix des Provinces (Fr-G3), Marseille-Borely, \$114,000, 3&up, 10f.
JPMorgan Chase Jessamine S., Keeneland, \$150,000g, 2yo, f, 8.5f.
14 October
Buffalo Trace Franklin County S., Keeneland, \$100,000g, 3&up, f&m, 5.5f.
Nepal S., Penn National, \$75,000g, 3&up, Pennsylvania-bred, 6f.
Ligature S., Penn National, \$75,000g, 3&up, f&m, Pennsylvania-bred, 6f.
E. L. Gaylord Memorial S., Remington, \$50,000g, 2yo, f, 6.5f.

CURRENT MEETINGS

Aqueduct (36 days)—Nov. 4-Dec. 31
Belmont Park (37 days)—Sept. 10-Oct. 30
Beulah Park (53 days)—Oct. 10-Dec. 21
Calder Race Course (136 days)—Apr. 25-Dec. 2
Delaware Park (106 days)—Apr. 30-Nov. 5
Delta Downs (88 days)—Oct. 19-Mar. 17
Finger Lakes Gaming and Race Track (163 days)—Apr. 16-Dec. 3
Fort Erie (82 days)—May 7-Nov. 1
Fresno (10 days)—Oct. 6-Oct. 16
Hawthorne Race Course (64 days)—Oct. 1-Dec. 31
Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races (235 days)—Jan. 4-Dec. 30
Hoosier Park (63 days)—Aug. 2-Oct. 23
Keeneland Race Course (17 days)—Oct. 7-Oct. 29
Laurel Park (68 days)—Sept. 9-Dec. 17
Lethbridge (23 days)—Sept. 2-Oct. 16
Los Alamitos Race Course (158 days)—Jan. 1-Dec. 31
Meadowlands (6 days)—Aug. 22-Nov. 22
Monmouth Park (74 days)—May 14-Nov. 6
Mountaineer Race Track and Gaming Resort (209 days)—Mar. 1-Dec. 23
Mt. Pleasant Meadows—Jul. 23-Oct. 30
Parx Racing (209 days)—Jan. 1-Dec. 31
Penn National Race Course (202 days)—Jan. 3-Dec. 30
Portland Meadows (55 days)—Oct. 17-Mar. 14
Remington Park (67 days)—Aug. 18-Dec. 10
Retama Park (34 days)—Sept. 1-Nov. 5
Santa Anita Park (24 days)—Sept. 30-Nov. 6
Suffolk Downs (80 days)—May 21-Nov. 5
The Downs at Albuquerque (54 days)—Aug. 13-Nov. 13
Thistledown (122 days)—Apr. 23-Nov. 5
Turf Paradise (156 days)—Oct. 1-May 6
Woodbine (167 days)—Apr. 2-Dec. 4
Zia Park (50 days)—Sept. 10-Dec. 4

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Aqueduct (36 days)—Nov. 4-Dec. 31
Beulah Park (53 days)—Oct. 10-Dec. 21
Churchill Downs (21 days)—Oct. 30-Nov. 27
Delta Downs (88 days)—Oct. 19-Mar. 17
Portland Meadows (55 days)—Oct. 17-Mar. 14

EVENTS

10-11 October—Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association Pedigree and Conformation Clinic in Lexington. For more information, call Erin Crady, (859) 276-2291; E-mail: ecrady@toba.org; Website: www.toba.org.

• TELEVISION COVERAGE •

ABC
November 05—Breeders' Cup World Championships, Churchill Downs, 2:00 p.m. (EDT)

ESPN
November 05—Breeders' Cup World Championships, Churchill Downs, 3:30 p.m. (EDT)

espn2
November 04—Breeders' Cup World Championships, Churchill Downs, 4:00 p.m. (EDT)

NBC
October 15—Keeneland 75th Anniversary S., Queen Elizabeth II Challenge Cup S. (G1), Keeneland, 5:00 p.m. (EDT)

Versus
October 08—Dixiana Breeders' Futurity (G1), Keeneland, 5:00 p.m. EDT
October 08—Shadwell Turf Mile S. (G1), Keeneland, 5:00 p.m. (EDT)
October 09—Bourbon S. (G3), Keeneland, 5:00 p.m. (EDT)
October 09—Juddmonte Spinster S. (G1), Keeneland, 5:00 p.m. (EDT)

NOTE: Listings are not a replacement for local TV schedules. Times are subject to change. Please check your local listings.

VETERINARY TOPICS

- Adjust diet, if necessary;
- Use alternative therapies, if applicable; and
- Be aware of insurance requirements.

Alternative therapies used in Pico Cat's recovery and shown to be helpful in other cases are hyperbaric oxygen chamber treatments, laser, acupuncture, and Chinese herbal medicine.

"Acupuncture can certainly help a horse's drive to live because it can help reduce pain and stimulate cells to heal, as well as promote overall well-being," Foil said. "Not every-

one's budget includes hyperbaric chamber treatments, but it definitely has value. We've seen impressive healing of wounds and soft tissue."

In the event of traumatic injury, the horse's owner and veterinarian(s) must determine if saving the horse is realistic—looking at both the horse's future and the owner's finances. Foil says she cannot fault owners who make the hard decision not to proceed in situations where the financial investment is more than they can justify. But she has seen amazing results when an owner is able to give the horse every

opportunity to pull through.

Owner and veterinarian should keep in mind the horse's level of pain and quality of life. They must consider if what the horse has to endure while healing is acceptable in light of the future the animal will be able to have. Horses live in the moment. Unlike a human, a severely injured horse can't think, *If I can just get through this tough time, I'm going to feel good again.*

Any time a horse is dealing with severe injury and must be on medication for an extended time, it is vital to monitor blood chemistry

and white cell count. In serious cases, such as Pico Cat's, the horse is usually confined to a stall for a long period, and many will be lying down a great deal. This can create more problems, so careful, consistent monitoring is crucial.

Stress, confinement, pain, and some medications all can contribute to stomach ulcers, so it is important to keep the horse on a product to prevent ulcers throughout the recovery process.

"Truthfully, there were several times I thought maybe it was time to stop, but the owners had faith in

her and knew she was still trying," said Foil of Pico Cat's long recovery. "I underestimated this horse's outcome. They don't all turn out this well, but you have to give them a fighting chance. My goal was for her to be comfortable in the pasture. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine she would make it to the racetrack and win. It just goes to show miracles do happen. She really beat the odds." *

Cynthia McFarland is a freelance writer based in Fairfield, Florida.