

# WASHINGTON RACING HALL OF FAME

## Biggs

1960s West Coast racing star

by Susan van Dyke

Biggs was the final runner in a trio of outstanding Washington-breds to win the \$100,000 Californian Stakes in the 1960s. Campaigned prior to when stakes became graded, the red-toned son of \*Domingo—Blessed Art, by Artillery, would have won the equivalent of five graded stakes and placed in nine others which are graded today, more than any other Washington-bred runner in history. And the majority of his 18 wins, as well as 17 runner-up spots, came by a nose or head margin.

### Early Days

Bred by Sue Swenson of Ridgefield and foaled on February 22, 1960, Biggs was named after an Oregon whistle-stop – which was “little more than a post office, general store and bar, but a strategic point where two important sheep ranches adjoined” – located along the Columbia River. Although his early training would be done in his birth state, the grand chestnut would spend the vast majority of his race career in California.

Biggs was unraced at two and ran for as low as \$2,500 in his first season of racing. He made his inauspicious bow in a six-furlong

\$5,000 maiden claiming race on April 22, 1963, at Bay Meadows, in which he finished tenth of 11 with Merlin Volzke riding.

Biggs then went on a bit of a cross-country ramble, making his next start in Nebraska at Ak-Sar-Ben where he finished last in a field of 11 in a May maiden allowance. His third start came at Centennial Park in Denver where he ran fifth for a maiden \$2,500 tag.

Returning to California, Biggs, at odds of 38-to-one, won a six-furlong maiden \$3,500 claiming race on August 6 in a time of 1:13

2/5. Native Diver held the 1:08 2/5 track mark for the distance. Biggs would then add two cheap victories at Tanforan.

California trainer Leonard Dorfman had watched the Washington-bred for several races before persuading his clients Edward F. Gould, a cement contractor from Riverside, California, and Gould’s wife Marjorie, to take the plunge, and on October 22, 1963, the chestnut gelding was haltered for \$7,500 out of a second place finish in a mile and 70 yard race. Dorfman out-shook future National Hall of Fame trainer Ron McAnally for the claim.

“I’d been watching him for several races,” said Dorfman, “and I was sure he’d be a useful horse at Santa Anita where we could run him a route of ground.”

It was the second time Biggs had been claimed, as C. L. Utlley had taken him for \$3,500 just a month prior while the gelding was running for Swenson’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Swenson.

Biggs finished his first season at the races with a mile allowance win at Golden Gate Fields on November 21.

### Southern California Bound

Dorfman next took his new runner to Santa Anita where, in spite of being nervous in his stall, Biggs showed some improvement.

Biggs won his third start of the season, a 1 1/16-mile Santa Anita allowance on February 15, but it would be more than five months before he would win again. Dropped down to six furlongs, Biggs came home first in a July 25 allowance at Hollywood Park.

Sent north again, he won a 1 1/16-mile classified allowance at Bay Meadows on November 7. Two weeks later Biggs



Biggs’ first major Southern California win came at age five when he took the 1965 1 1/8-mile San Gabriel Handicap by a half-length over 1964 Californian Handicap winner – and fellow Washington-bred – Mustard Plaster with the California hero Native Diver third.

finished second in the 1 1/16-mile Carmel Handicap and just one week after that he won the \$15,000 Bay Meadows Handicap by a half-length after battling with Carmel Handicap winner Honored Sir “head to head all the way.”

Biggs finished his four-year-old season with another hard-fought race in the December 16, Children’s Hospital Handicap, when, at equal 120-pound weights, Honored Sir held the Washington-bred off to win by a neck.

### More Improvement

On January 1, 1965, Biggs, who was quickly becoming a fan favorite with his late-running rallies, took the nine-panel San Gabriel Handicap by a half-length in a time of 1:49 flat. *The Thoroughbred of California* called him “certainly one of the most improved Thoroughbreds currently racing in the West,” after his score over \*Polizonte and favored \*Colorado King – who had won the 1964 edition of the Hollywood Gold Cup Handicap, with Washington-bred star Mustard Plaster second and the great California-bred Native Diver, who would win the next three runnings of the 10-furlong race – finishing third.

In February, Biggs “never threatened” and was a well-beaten eighth in a 1 1/16-mile allowance test. Unfortunately, soon afterwards Biggs was found to have suffered a hairline fracture of a sesamoid. Gould was advised to retire his veteran runner, but instead sent him to Farrell Jones’ J-S Ranch for daily whirlpool treatments. He would return to competition the following year running out of Jones’ barn and Jones would condition the runner from 1966 until his retirement in 1969.

Though the chestnut gelding wouldn’t win a stakes in 1966, Biggs did take a pair of allowance races at Del Mar and Tanforan and finished second or third in four stakes, including the runner-up spot behind Old Mose in the Del Mar Handicap.

### Big-time Biggs

Biggs’ best year came at age seven, when after finishing second in the Arcadia (dead-heating with The Dancer and only a nose behind winner Fleet Host), San Bernardino (a nose behind Sermon) and just four days following the San Bernardino, the San Juan Capistrano (behind Argentine-bred \*Niarkos, but ahead of Pretense and Quicken Tree in the field of 12) handicaps, he took the prestigious Californian Stakes by three-quarters of a length at Hollywood Park on June 3. In the beaten field of 14 (the largest field in the race’s history) were Pretense, \*Aurelius II (a future Washington sire who was raced by Washington Hall of Fame breeder Wilbur Stadelman), Fleet Host and Native Diver.

Though Jones was a highly successful trainer, it marked the first time one of his charges had won a hundred-grander.

According to the *Daily Racing Form* chart

of the Californian, “Biggs, slow moving early, found his best stride while nearing the half-mile pole, rallied steadily along the inside and wore down \*Make Money from the outside in the final sixteenth.”

Biggs earned \$74,200 for his efforts in the 1 1/16-mile race. In doing so, Biggs became the third Washington-bred in four years, following Mustard Plaster in 1964 (at 14-to-one and with Kelso finishing unplaced) and Travel Orb in 1966 (at 26-to-one), to take the \$100,000 stakes.

Going into the Californian, Biggs – who went off at 11-to-one odds – had started off the year by reeling off three consecutive wins at Santa Anita in two \$30,000 claimers (both on the turf) and one allowance.

In the big race, Biggs was ridden by William Harmatz, who had been on Travel Orb for his victory in the race the year before.

“He’s something,” said Harmatz after the race. “What an honest old dude.”

When comparing the two Washington-breds, Harmatz added, “You could do anything with Travel Orb. He was an easy horse to ride. But Biggs, you do what he wants.”

For the big race, “Gould reserved a big block of seats in the clubhouse, chartered a couple of buses [sounds a bit like Funny Cide’s connections in the 2003 Triple Crown] and brought his entire staff of employees to be his guest and watch Biggs run. For sheer fun, few if any group junkets to Hollywood have surpassed it.”

In addition to Harmatz, Biggs was also ridden by Washington Hall of Famer Paul Frey and Don Pierce during his Southern California campaigns.

The late West Coast industry leader Bob Benoit wrote in the July 1967 *The Washington Horse* that a suggestion had been made by one “Fourth Estate” historian at Hollywood Park in a post-race discussion of the Californian: “They’d better change the name of this race to the Washingtonian.” Benoit added, “The

pattern of Biggs’ victory and that of Travel Orb was so similar, a Hollywood scriptwriter would have junked the thought . . . and it added another plume to the bonnet of Washington breeders.”

Robert Hebert, in his recap of the Californian in a June 10, 1967, article in *The Blood-Horse* titled “Unbelievably Biggs,” wrote: “The winner was the most unbelievable horse imaginable – a seven-year-old gelding, an ex-claimer which had run as cheaply as \$2,500, and a horse which had broken down so badly two years ago that he had not been expected to race again.”

Later that season Biggs would be runner-up to Pretense in the second division of the Inglewood Handicap (but finish ahead of \*Aurelius II, Fleet Host, Sledge and Native Diver) and run third in the \$150,000 Hollywood Gold Cup (behind Native Diver and Pretense, but ahead of Quicken Tree) and American Handicap (this time behind

							Phalaris
							Waffles
	Colombo						Chaucer
		Lady Naime					Lemmermuir
	*Domingo						Swynford
		Sarisovino					Gondolette
	*Oronsay						Spion Kop
		Ben in Or					Jura
<b>Biggs</b>		*Albhai					Hyperion
ch. gelding							Teresina
1960-1992		Artillery					*Teddy
		Tediana					Binnacle
	Blessed Art						Pharos
		Nearco					Nogara
	Blessed Isle						Friar Marcus
		*Notley Abbey					Tangy
<b>RACE RECORD</b>							
<b>Year</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Starts</b>	<b>1sts</b>	<b>2nds</b>	<b>3rds</b>	<b>Earnings</b>	
1963	3	14	4	3	2	\$ 8,245	
1964	4	16	5	4	0	29,377	
1965	5	2	1	0	0	17,000	
1966	6	12	2	4	2	21,600	
1967	7	15	4	4	2	166,625	
1968	8	8	2	1	0	49,900	
1969	9	5	0	1	1	13,050	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>72</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>\$305,797</b>	
<b>STAKES RECORD</b>							
At 4 – Won Bay Meadows H.; 2nd Carmel H., Children’s Hospital H.							
At 5 – Won San Gabriel H.							
At 6 – 2nd Del Mar H., Monterey Peninsula H., Peninsula H.; 3rd Leland Stanford H.							
At 7 – Won Californian S.; 2nd Arcadia H., San Bernardino H., San Juan Capistrano H., Inglewood H. (2nd div.); 3rd Hollywood Gold Cup H., American H.							
At 8 – Won San Luis Rey H. (1st div.), San Marcos H.; 2nd San Luis Obispo H. (1st div.).							
At 9 – 3rd San Gabriel H.							

## English Class Top to Bottom

Although the pedigree of the 2010 Washington Racing Hall of Fame inductee might seem a bit obscure, both now and in 1960 when he was foaled, it is rife with English classic lines.

Biggs was conceived when his sire \*Domingo was aged 20 and standing at Vernon L. Swenson's Ridgefield ranch. The following year the stallion was returned to California to stand at Shasta Butte Ranch near Mount Shasta.

\*Domingo had been imported from England by movie mogul Louis B. Mayer as a yearling in 1940. The bay colt did not distinguish himself as a racehorse, winning only one of 23 starts and retiring with earnings of just \$3,400. He sired 120 foals in 19 crops before his death in 1966 at age 27. Of those foals, which included seven stakes winners – with Biggs being far and away the best – \*Domingo had 84 winners among his 109 starters. His best runner outside of Biggs was the useful Drumbeat. Foaled 15 years before Biggs hit the ground, Drumbeat won eight races and earned \$100,385. His biggest tally came in the \$50,000 Sunset Handicap in 1948, where he defeated On Trust and \*Shannon II. Drumbeat also finished third behind Salmagundi and Call Bell in the \$100,000 Santa Anita Derby that season. \*Domingo also sired 1951 Golden Gate Mile Handicap winner Pension Plan and two Oregon Derby winners.

\*Domingo was from one of the first crops sired by 1934 English Two Thousand Guineas winner Colombo, who went unbeaten into the Epsom Derby as the heavy favorite, but finished fourth to Windsor Lad in the "Blue Riband of the Turf." In 11 lifetime starts, Colombo earned £26,228 for Lord Glanely and his Derby placement was the only time the son of Manna finished further back than second. Unfortunately, his career as a stallion would be far below his exemplary race record. Though Colombo did sire 1941 English One Thousand Guineas heroine Dancing Times and 1946 English Two Thousand Guineas winner Happy Knight, there were the conditions caused by World War II to take into the equation.



*Biggs was the star runner among the 19 crops sired by the well-bred British import Domingo.*



*Both Colombo and his Epsom Derby-winning sire Manna were English 2,000 Guineas winners.*

Colombo was a son of 1925 Epsom Derby winner Manna, one of a host of good runners sired by two-time leading English sire Phalaris. Manna, who also won the Two Thousand Guineas, was one of a trio of stakes winners produced out of Waffles, a daughter of Buckwheat (who was out of Sesame, a daughter of Maize), who produced 1931 St. Leger winner Sandwich. It is also interesting to note that Waffle's first foal, the filly Bunworry, was retrieved from India by none other than Federico Tesio for whom she produced three-time Italian classic winner Bernina – grandam of 1955 Ascot Gold Cup and Italian classic winner Botticelli – and leading sires Bozzetto (Italy) and Brueghel (in Australia). Yet another sign of the brilliance of Señor Tesio.

Foaled in 1950, Bigg's dam, Blessed Art, was bred in California by Warren G. McCarty. She took the first of her two wins in a \$1,000 maiden claiming race at Longacres in 1953 and won an \$800 claiming race at Portland Meadows in her final start. She retired after 19 starts with a meager \$2,780 total. A full sister to stakes-placed Blessed Gal and three-quarter sister to stakes-placed Safe Anchorage (by \*Alibhai), Blessed Art was one of six winners from nine foals out of the unraced Nearco matron Blessed Isle. With Phalaris as his fourth generation sire on the top side of his pedigree and Nearco – a grandson of Phalaris though

Pharos – as the sire of his second dam, Biggs was inbred 4x5 to five-time leading English sire Polymelus's best son at stud, who was one of the leading sire influences of the 20th century.

Both Blessed Art and Blessed Gal were sired by three-time California stakes winner and \$99,455 earner Artillery, a colt from the second crop of \*Alibhai – who was also imported by Mayer – out of a daughter of prominent imported French sire \*Teddy. Artillery would sire three minor stakes winners and two stakes-placed runners from his 26 winners and 31 starters in his five crops

An unraced son of Hyperion, the brilliant racehorse (who won both the Epsom Derby and English St. Leger) and sire (led English and Irish ranks for six years and broodmare sire ranks for another four), \*Alibhai's distinguished record as a stallion has given hope for over 65 years to all those who stand well-bred, but unraced, stallions.

During her 15 years as a broodmare, Blessed Art only produced two other foals besides Biggs. His four-year-old full sister Arts First, who won one race in seven starts, earning \$1,690, produced only two foals and no winners in seven tries; and Bart, an unraced son of Barouche in 1962.

\*Notley Abbey, who was carrying Blessed Isle when she was imported to the US in 1940, was sired by the speedy racehorse and good sire Friar Marcus. From the immediate female line of 1916 English One Thousand Guineas inner Canyon, \*Notley Abbey produced three colts in England who would have an impact as racehorses and/or sires: stakes winner Monty (1937), stakes winner and sire \*King's Abbey (1939) and stakes-placed sire \*Old English (1940).

Blessed Art was written up as "Dam of the Week" in the June 10, 1967, edition of the *Daily Racing Form* by noted pedigree expert and frequent *The Washington Horse* contributor Leon Rassmussen. He summed up her profile with these words:

"While Biggs is the most important winner to be produced by this family in four or five generations, the family has a strong taproot mare and this is probably the reason mares from this family were sent to such sires as Friar Marcus and Nearco. Bigg's sixth dam was Glasalt, the daughter of Isinglass who produced One Thousand Guineas winner and classic producer Canyon; the stakes winner King William; the stakes winner Glaccis; and the great matron Glacier, dam of Oaks winner Toboggan; the Yorkshire winner Blue Ice and Doncaster Cup winner Sil-Urian. Toboggan became the second dam of Citation..." ■



At eight, Biggs defeated Australian champion \*Tobin Bronze in the 12-furlong San Luis Rey Handicap in what would be his final stakes score of his 72-race career.

Pretense and Native Diver, but nearly two lengths the better of the dead-heating Quicken Tree and Strawberry Drive).

On the year-end *Daily Racing Form* and *The Morning Telegraph* free handicap for male runners four and up, Biggs was given 111 pounds. Buckpasser led the group at 136, followed by Pretense (130) and Native Diver (129).

### Eight Years Young

At eight, the impressive gelding returned to the races in an abbreviated season (which ended in May) to take the ten-furlong San Marcos Handicap in early February, defeating future Washington stallion French Fox by a nose. Biggs was partnered in the win by rider Jerry Lambert, the regular rider of the great California runner Native Diver. In the recap of the race in *The Thoroughbred of California*, Biggs was called the "game old Biggs" and also noted as being "very reliable and hard-knocking."

In the first division of the 12-furlong San Luis Rey Handicap, run over Santa Anita's turf course, Biggs raced as a team with heavy favorite \*Tobin Bronze throughout each furlong and went on to defeat the Australian runner in "a desperate decision" and by a "thin" nose. Biggs again had the services of Lambert in the saddle. Old Bob Bowers (future sire of the mighty John Henry), finished just a neck further back in third.

Biggs would also finish second by a half-length in a division of the San Luis Obispo Handicap to four-year-old Dr. Isby.

The senior Washington-bred gelding would be rated at 115 pounds on the 1968 *Daily Racing Form* and *The Morning Telegraph* free handicap for three and up turf performers, a list that was topped by Dr. Fager's 136 pound allotment.

### All Good Things . . .

Biggs would make five more starts as a nine-year-old, which would include a close second in a 1 1/16-mile allowance and a third in the San Gabriel Handicap. His final outing was in the Santa Anita Handicap, where he finished 11th of 16 in a race won by future champion Nodouble.

The grand gelding was then retired to Gould's ten-acre farm, El Rancho Biggs, and his own special "Biggs' paddock" where he lived until his death in 1992 at age 32.

According to Gould's daughter, Donna Gould Edwards, "Biggs was a beautiful, loyal and loving horse who gave so much of himself to us. He never quit trying and always finished with a thrill. He was the greatest horse my family ever owned."

Biggs was successful at distances ranging

from six to 12 furlongs (and ran second in the 14-furlong San Juan Capistrano Handicap), though at three-quarters of a mile, he "hardly had time to get out the gate" and he preferred a stretch of ground to employ "his customary late-inning rally."

According to a profile in the February 1968 *The Washington Horse* "Biggs was never entirely sound of limb, though his courage and stamina have never been in question."

From 1968 until 1981, when he was overtaken by fellow Hall of Famer Trooper Seven, Biggs stood at the top of all Washington-bred earners with \$305,797. His SSI was 16.23.

Upon his retirement from racing, *The Washington Horse* carried a tribute to the gallant runner written by Ralph Vacca in which he sums up Biggs and his contribution to Washington racing.

"Biggs did a lot, not only for Thoroughbred racing, but for the whole Northwest Thoroughbred industry. He was one of those rare horses which come along every so often; one of those horses which always give a good accounting of themselves; one of those rare horses which truly deserves the title of THOROUGHBRED." ■

## Californian Stakes

**EIGHTH RACE**  
**Hol 31326**  
**June 3, 1967**

**1 1-16 MILES. (Swaps, June 23, 1956, 1:39.4, 130.)**

Fourteenth Running CALIFORNIAN. \$100,000 Added. Allowances. Stakes. 3-year-olds and upward. By subscription of \$100 each, which shall accompany the nomination. Supplementary nominations may be made by midnight, Tuesday, May 30, 1967, by payment of an eligibility fee of \$5,000. \$500 to pass the entry box and \$500 additional to start, with \$100,000 added, of which \$20,000 to second, \$15,000 to third and \$10,000 to fourth. 3-year-olds, 113 lbs.; older, 127 lbs. Winners of \$70,000 twice since September 15, 1966, to carry 3 lbs. additional. Non-winners of \$85,000 since May 9, 1966 or \$70,000 twice since July 27, 1966 allowed 3 lbs.; of \$70,000 since July 27, 1966 or \$30,000 twice since December 25, 1966, 6 lbs.; of \$50,000 once or \$20,000 twice since December 25, 1965 or \$35,000 since May 9, 1966, 9 lbs.; of \$30,000 since December 25, 1965 or \$20,000 twice since May 9, 1965, 12 lbs.; of \$15,000 since May 9, 1965, 15 lbs. Starters to be named through the entry box the day before the race by closing time of the entries. A trophy will be presented to the owner of the winner. Closed Saturday, April 15, 1967, with 47 nominations.

Value of race \$119,200. Value to winner \$74,200; second, \$20,000; third, \$15,000; fourth, \$10,000.

Mutuel Pool, \$551,495.

Index	Horses	Eq't	A	Wt	PP	St	¼	½	¾	Str	Fin	Jockeys	Owners	Odds to \$1
31088Hol4	—Biggs	7	112	11	12	13h	111	6½	22	1½	W	Harmatz	E F Gould	11.70
31115Hol2	—Make Money	6	112	5	1	12	13	12	11½	23½	D	C Hall	La Quebrada Inc	17.30
31133Aqu7	—Pretense	b 4	130	4	11	122	9½	5½	5½	3h	W	Hartack	Llangollen Farm	3.10
31098Hol1	—Wingover	b 4	118	6	5	21	21½	27	31	4nk	W	Blum	Helen L Kenaston	f-15.60
31116Hol2	—Terry's Secret	5	118	3	9	10½	122	91	72	52	A	Maese	Poltex Stable	6.10
31134Hol1	—Chiclero	5	115	13	10	91	6½	3h	4½	6½	A	R Val'ia	Bingaman-Gheen	21.20
31115Hol1	—Traveling Dust	b 5	112	7	4	6½	3h	42	61	7½	R	Menell	Schulman-Bart'n-Levinson	f-15.60
31080Hol5	—Aurelius II.	b 6	115	9	14	14	11½	8½	8½	M	Valenz'ia	W Stadelman	25.50	
31053GG1	—Carang	6	115	14	13	11h	10½	10½	9½	91	M	Volzke	Mr or Mrs J T Forno	20.20
31044Hol3	—Old Mose	b 5	115	10	7	7h	8½	7½	11½	10h	A	Pineda	R E Hibbert	42.70
31116Hol4	—Nearco Blue	6	112	1	6	5½	7h	12½	10h	11½	J	Trujillo	Mr-Mrs J J Elmore	f-15.60
31080Hol7	—Fleet Host	b 4	121	2	8	8½	13½	14	12½	12½	I	Valenz'ia	Westerly Stud	24.30
31080Hol1	—Native Diver	8	127	12	2	4½	5½	8h	13½	131	D	Pierce	Mr-Mrs L K Shapiro	1.90
31105Hol1	—No Fooling	b 4	112	8	3	3h	4½	13½	14	14	W	Mah'ney	Mr-Mrs D Griegorian	15.90

f-Mutuel field.

Time, :23, :45%, 1:09%, 1:35½, 1:41%. Track fast.

**\$2 Mutuel Prices:** 8-BIGGS ..... 25.40 ..... 5.60  
4-MAKE MONEY ..... 15.60 ..... 9.40  
3-PRETENSE ..... 4.20

Ch. g, by Domingo—Blessed Art, by Artillery. Trainer, F. W. Jones. Bred by Miss S. Swenson.

**IN GATE—5:20. OFF AT 5:20 PACIFIC DAYLIGHT TIME. Start good. Won driving.**

BIGGS, slow moving early, caught his best stride while nearing the half mile pole, rallied steadily along the inside and wore down MAKE MONEY from the outside in the final sixteenth. The latter broke alertly, took a long lead without need of urging, was well rated, had something left when challenged by the winner but was not good enough. PRETENSE, unhurried until on the backstretch, maneuvered between horses to make up ground on the far turn, then lost much of his punch in the drive. WINGOVER broke in stride, raced closest the early pace and laced renewed energy for the drive. TERRY'S SECRET could make little headway when roused. CHICLERO raked close up on the final turn while saving ground, then gave out. TRAVELING DUST went between horses to offer his best bid on the backstretch and gradually tired. CARANG lost ground. AURELIUS II. was wide. NATIVE DIVER raced wide and gave way badly while on the stretch turn. NO FOOLING went to bearing out early.

Scratched—Sledge.