

## RAISING THE RACEHORSE

By Julie Witt

*Kip Elser has been educating racehorses for more than four decades, and while his roles have changed, the joy Elser gets from working with young Thoroughbreds has not waned. Elser started Kirkwood Stables, a full-service breaking and training operation that also offers consignments and lay-up/rehab services, at Springdale Racecourse in Camden, S.C. Graduates of Kirkwood include Alphabet Soup, Smoke Glacken, Memories of Silver, Winter Memories, Keeper Hill, and Plum Pretty. Elser spoke with BloodHorse Marketwatch to discuss his program, the recent success of Darby Dan's Manitoulin in the Hollywood Turf Cup Stakes (G2T), and more.*

**BloodHorse:** Springdale has an interesting setup, with several turf courses available and two dirt courses. What went into the decision to set up shop there?

**Kip Elser:** It was set up back in the '30s as both a flat and steeplechasing facility. It's set on 500 acres, and its very much like it was in the old days, when everyone had their own barn set back in the woods and you can't see each other. We have everything you could ask for here. We have two very different dirt surfaces at our disposal, the turf course and the gallops, and lots of trails we can take the horses out on.



COGLIANESE PHOTOS/WIOLA JASKO

**Cigar Mile contender Tom's Ready (shown winning the grade 3 Bold Ruler Handicap) is a graduate of Kirkwood**



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**Kip Elser of Kirkwood Stables**

I was originally a steeplechase rider and came here to school horses and loved it. I eventually stopped that and my partner at the time, Charlie Cushman, and I, decided this would be a great place to do it.

**BH:** One of your graduates, Manitoulin, just got his first graded stakes score in the Nov. 24 Hollywood Turf Cup at Del Mar. What was he like?

**KE:** I kind of wish Manitoulin had come around quicker—we all did. But sometimes they have to go to summer school, and he was one of those cases. John (Phillips, owner of Darby Dan) put together a group of people—all friends of his—and they own him, and John had the hopes, given his family, of racing him and bringing him back to Darby Dan as a stallion. He always showed plenty of talent, but he was just kind of a dumb, playful kid.

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