

TEAM VALOR PARTNER JIM GRIBBINS COMES HOME WITH ROSY CHANCE WENT THE DAY WELL IS FIRST DERBY STARTER FOR LOUISVILLE NATIVE

From the Louisville *Courier-Journal* comes the following:

Went the Day Well Could Be First Derby Starter for Louisville native Jim Gribbins

It's a huge deal for anyone to own even part of a Kentucky Derby horse. But consider the added layer of emotion for 53-year-old Jim Gribbins, a 5 percent partner in Turfway's Vinery Racing Spiral winner Went the Day Well, who grew up 1½ miles from Churchill Downs.



Jim Gribbins, right, with his son, Grant (middle), and friend Brenton Rettig in the winner's circle at Turfway Park after Went the Day Well's Spiral triumph

"I'd ride my bike when I was 12, 13 to Churchill Downs to get in free after the seventh race," said the Doss High School and University of Louisville graduate. "You were supposed to be 16 to bet. But I was always tall so I did that for years, riding my bike over there to bet the eighth, ninth race."

The one day Gribbins never went to Churchill was Derby Day. That's when he and his cousins made their annual bankrolls by handling parking at \$20 a car at Gribbins Auction House, the business owned by his dad and grandfather at Taylor Blvd. and Central Ave.

"I'd make \$300 or \$400 that one day that would pretty well last me through the year as a 10-year-old," said Gribbins, the president of Gribbins Insulation in Evansville, Ind. "I never went to the Derby as a kid, just watched all these people come and go, all dressed up and stuff."

On Saturday, Gribbins will park his car at the same place — now a Speedway store — where he used to hustle Derby parking. He has parked there the previous four times he's been to the Derby as a spectator.

"And believe it or not, the price has not changed," he said "It's still \$20 ... like it was 40 years ago."

While syndicate owner Team Valor International, trainer Graham Motion and jockey John Velazquez are seeking an extremely unusual repeat after last year's triumph by Animal Kingdom, Went the Day Well is Gribbins' first

Derby starter.

As a Team Valor investor, he said he declined the chance to buy into the Animal Kingdom partnership before the colt ever ran, preferring to invest in horses who have already competed. (But he did hit the 2011 Derby trifecta.)

Gribbins inherited his late father's love of racing and betting horses.

"We'd go quite often when I was a kid," said Gribbins, whose business insulates commercial and industrial mechanical systems, including at Papa John's Cardinal Stadium and the KFC Yum! Center. "One memory I have is him giving me a note to get out of school early when I was in first grade so I could go to Churchill Downs with him. He was an avid racing fan, and I turned into one. My dad died at an early age, so I kind of carried the torch.

"I never, ever expected to be in this position. I'm still kind of pinching myself. I still have a lot of family here. There are a lot of Derby fans in my family, and they're all excited."

Gribbins turned down Animal Kingdom but jumped in when Team Valor President Barry Irwin offered up a New York-bred son of Proud Citizen who had finished second in his debut in England last year. (He would finish second again before coming to the U.S.)

"Barry — moreso than usual — was very confident in this horse," Gribbins said. "The way he talked about this horse led me to believe he was something special."



Cartoon by Marcy Leonard of Daily Racing Funnies.

Gribbins saw Went the Day Well run in person for the first time in the Spiral, a race the colt had to win to be sure of making the Derby field. Went the Day Well went into that Grade III stakes off a maiden victory March 3 at Gulfstream Park. He prevailed by 3½ lengths at Turfway.

Team Valor and Motion didn't know for sure they even had a Derby entrant last year until Animal Kingdom, who had never raced on dirt, uncorked a superb workout at Churchill the week before the race.

Though Went the Day Well ran on grass in England, Gribbins said Irwin "was touting him as his Derby horse even after he finished fourth in his first start at Gulfstream. He never lost confidence."

Only once before have the same owner, trainer and jockey repeated in the Derby, that coming with Riva Ridge and Secretariat in 1972-73.

"It's an extremely unlikely scenario," Motion said. "But I certainly feel very good about running the horse. I think he's a legitimate contender. I don't know if he's good enough. But I didn't know if Animal Kingdom was good enough last year, either."

As for Gribbins, Saturday could be a real daily double.

"Saturday is the due date of my first grandchild," he said. "So if my daughter delivers a baby on that day — the same day my horse is running in the Derby — I don't know what I'd ever do to top that."