There are myriad stories of horses that turned the corner into national prominence after being claimed by the right connections, but in 1983 a botched claim kept the horse Win Stat on the path to becoming a graded stakes winner and world record-holder.

The story of Win Stat’s failed claim started with a successful one. The South Dakota-bred was already a three-time stakes winner in Nebraska when owner Herb Riecken and trainer Ron Murphy dropped him in for a $35,000 claiming tag at Oaklawn Park. The class drop didn’t end his now three-race losing skid – he finished third – but it did get the attention of Oaklawn’s training ranks, who lined up to drop claim slips on the 5-year-old.

When the pill was pulled, trainer Don Von Hemel ended up with Win Stat in his barn for a pair of longtime clients: retired real estate and lumber executive Russell Caston Jr., of Edmond, Okla., and grocer Norman Ruback of Omaha, Neb. Von Hemel said the horse’s reputation in the region, paired with a pedigree that had been successful in the Great Plains states, had the new owners bullish heading to the claim box.

“I tried to buy him the fall before and they didn’t want to sell him,” the trainer said. “They sent him to Turf Paradise with another trainer, and he showed up at Hot Springs, so I remembered the horse for a year before.”

The new connections took Win Stat to Ak-Sar-Ben in Omaha at the end of the Oaklawn meet, where he ranrespectably, winning an allowance and placing in a stakes race. However, the claim looked like it was going to be a financial disaster after Win Stat came out of his graded stakes debut, the Grade 3 Ak-Sar-Ben Board of Governors’ Stakes, with a fractured sesamoid.

That injury has ended the on-track careers of most who suffered it, but under the treatment of Dr. Marvin Beaman of Littleton, Colo., and the benefit of an 11-month layoff, Win Stat returned to the races to win an Ak-Sar-Ben allowance.

Win Stat continued to run honestly, finishing worse than second just once in his first five starts of 1983. The connections had the G2 Ak-Sar-Ben Cornhusker Handicap in mind for the horse, but they wanted to put one more start under him before the race. Three weeks before the Cornhusker, the horse was entered in a $50,000 claiming race at Ak-Sar-Ben.

Von Hemel admitted he didn’t think anyone would take the bait on the then-6-year-old with a serious injury on his record, but that hubris backfired when a claim was announced as Win Stat was led into the winner’s circle.
Outwork has an imposing presence at the end of the shank, and his representation in the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July Yearling Sale is just as towering.

The 6-year-old son of Uncle Mo has 13 yearlings entered in the July catalog, tying him with fellow WinStar Farm newcomer Speightster for the most in this year’s sale. In a deep class of sires, getting so many foals into the market early in the yearling season can help set the pace for Outwork’s commercial future in a big way as the calendar rolls on.

Outwork will be at the forefront of rookie stallions working to prove out Uncle Mo as a sire of sires, which is a fitting place for him. Uncle Mo’s debut crop of 2-year-olds produced unprecedented success, and Outwork was both his first starter and first winner, scoring on debut by 2½ lengths during Keeneland’s spring meet.

He kept the momentum going at age three, winning an optional claimer at Tampa Bay Downs in his seasonal debut before finishing second in the G2 Tampa Bay Derby. Outwork continued to make history for his sire by winning the G1 Wood Memorial Stakes and securing a spot in the 2016 Kentucky Derby, becoming one of Uncle Mo’s three first-crop runners in the classic race, along with eventual winner Nyquist and Mo Tom.

Outwork retired after the Derby with three wins in five starts for earnings of $701,800.

He joined the WinStar Farm roster for the 2017 season with one of the stronger pages from the first wave of Uncle Mo colts headed to stud. Out of the G1-placed Empire Maker mare Nonna Mia, Outwork is a half-brother to stakes-placed Nonna’s Boy. Nonna Mia is herself a half-sister to G2 winner Cairo Prince, who has established himself as a coveted commercial sire in his young career.

The page, the on-track performance, and the buzz generated by Uncle Mo’s historic first crop meant Outwork had a long line of mares waiting for him. He finished 2017 with 168 mares bred, the 14th most in North America, and the second-highest total for a first-year stallion behind Speightster.

When Outwork’s first foals entered the sale ring last fall, he was once again a leader in bulk numbers, with his 20 weanlings sold being the second-most among first-cropers. Their average sale price of $52,400 marked a healthy rise from Outwork’s initial stud fee of $15,000.

The top price from Outwork’s weanlings came from a colt out of the stakes-placed Tactical Cat mare Adore You who sold to Ted Campion for $140,000 at the Keeneland November Breeding Stock Sale. The gray or roan colt is a half-brother to multiple G1 winner Piedi Bianchi and stakes winner Mind Reader, from the family of Puerto Rican champion Vivaldi Girl.

Outwork kept the six-figure momentum going into the short yearling season earlier this year, topped off by a colt out of the placed Eskeendereyamare Semillon who sold to Chris White for $120,000 at the Keeneland January Horses of All Ages Sale. The Louisiana-bred’s page includes G1 winner Cotton Blossom and G3 winner Vicarage, along with the G2-placed Moana, who is herself by Uncle Mo.**

** CG Racing Stables

Outwork’s Army Invades FT July

By Joe Nevills
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uestion: Do you offer any options for off-track Thoroughbreds, or strictly ones that are active/potentially active in racing and breeding?

Bryce Burton: Full Mortality Insurance coverage, also known as All Risk Mortality coverage, is available for horse owners of all breeds, uses, and disciplines. As the name suggests, Full Mortality provides coverage on the animal for death due to any accident, illness, or condition. Whether you own a Thoroughbred racehorse or a Warmblood show jumper, there is a policy available in order for you, as a horse owner, to secure your equine assets. Off-track Thoroughbreds that are re-trained for their second careers are no exception to this. The Full Mortality policy rate that’s provided will be subject to the horse’s age, use, and value. The coverage will also be subject to either a veterinary certificate of a statement of health.

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Bryce Burton is a property and liability specialist for Muirfield Insurance. He is from Frankfort, Ky., where he grew up an avid race fan. His Thoroughbred racing fandom combined with a collegiate internship in the insurance industry, culminated in a start in the equine insurance field. Bryce has been with Muirfield Insurance since 2014, following his graduation from Transylvania University in Lexington.
The mood was low for the connections, but the claiming price nearly doubled what Win Stat had earned on the track for them, and it would have resulted in a profitable overall venture. Instead, someone came running toward the winner's circle saying that the claim fell through.

The person that submitted the winning claim, who went unnamed in reports after the matter, had exactly enough money in his horsemen’s account with the track to cover the cost of the claim: $50,000. What he didn’t have was enough money to cover the applicable taxes. The claim was immediately rendered null and void, and Win Stat remained with his connections.

“I was just sick before I found we got him back,” Ruback told the Des Moines Register. “I thought we’d lost him for sure.”

It’s impossible to know what direction Win Stat’s career would have gone if the horse changed hands that July day in Omaha. Switching barns can wildly alter a horse’s trajectory, both in terms of class placement and locales.

What actually played out with the horse staying put was just about the best-case scenario.

In his next start following the near-miss at the claim box, Win Stat won the Cornhusker, giving him his first career graded stakes victory and his first stakes score running for Von Hemel, Caston, and Ruback. A year later, Win Stat ventured to Arlington Park and came back with the G3 Equipoise Mile Handicap added to his list of major victories.

“I figured he’d just be a useful horse, and that was it,” Von Hemel said. “He was a South Dakota-bred and his dam had won one race going a half-mile, but he was by a horse named Doctor Stat who was prolific in the Nebraska breeding ranks. I had watched the horse here before and thought he had the opportunity to be a very nice horse, but I never thought he’d be a graded stakes winner.”

In between those starts, Win Stat added even more flair to his resume in an Oaklawn allowance race, where he completed a mile and 70 yards in a then-world-record 1:38 2/5. The mark still stands as an Oaklawn Park track record, though the global record time has since been lowered.

“They don’t race that distance anymore, but back then they did,” Von Hemel said. “The track was fast, and everything went just right for him. I didn’t know it was a world record until somebody hollered it at me afterward. He was such a kind old horse. He was easy to handle, and I wish I could find another like that.”

Win Stat raced until age nine, winning 22 of 84 career starts and earning $438,378; most of it coming after he was initially claimed. He retired to turnout at a farm in Ashland, Neb.
Ten to Watch: Fasig-Tipton July HORA
By Joe Nevills

Hip 411, Wooderson, Bay colt by Awesome Again x Lotta Kim, by Roar, consigned by Elite, agent. A 4-year-old half-brother to Hall of Famer Rachel Alexandra. He earned 90-plus Beyer Speed Figures in his two starts this year, both wins.

Hip 416, Allied Party, Bay filly by Tale of the Cat x Playful Love, by Tapit, consigned by Lane’s End, agent. A first-out 2-year-old winner at Presque Isle Downs whose dam is stakes-placed.

Hip 423, Army Scout, Bay colt by War Front x Take Charge Lady, by Dehere, consigned by Elite, agent. This 3-year-old is out of Broodmare of the Year Take Charge Lady, making him a half to champion Will Take Charge, G1 winner Take Charge Indy, and multiple G1 producer Charming.

Hip 492, Itsmyluckycharm, Dark bay or brown filly by Itsmyluckyday x Hard Hat, by Hard Spun, consigned by Elite, agent. A 3-year-old winner in seven of her 13 career starts, most recently taking the Portofino Bay Stakes and Azalea Stakes at Gulfstream Park.

Hip 494, Jalen Journey, Bay gelding by With Distinction x Petunia Face, by Congrats, consigned by Four Star Sales, agent. This Florida-bred has turned in a trio of 90-plus Bayers in his most recent starts, including a second in the G3 Smile Sprint Stakes.

Hip 508, Mean Sophia, Bay filly by Smarty Jones x Quite Dramatic, by Unusual Heat, consigned by C. G. Racing Stables, agent. After winning on debut at Keeneland by 10 ½ lengths, this 2-year-old filly ran fourth against males in the Kentucky Juvenile Stakes.

Hip 528, Proverb, Chestnut colt by Flatter x Peisinoc, by Yes It’s True, consigned by Elite, agent. The two most recent starts for this Florida-bred 3-year-old were third-place efforts in the Oaklawn Invitational Stakes and G3 Matt Winn Stakes.

Hip 548, Splashy Kisses, Dark bay or brown filly by Blame x Indian Valley, by Cherokee Run, consigned by Claiborne Farm, agent. A 3-year-old with in-the-money efforts in the G2 Pocahontas Stakes and G3 Sweet Life Stakes.

Hip 569 More Roses, Bay filly by Uncle Mo x Flattermewhorses, by Flatter, consigned by Claiborne Farm, agent. This 3-year-old filly is unbeaten in two starts, both off-the-turf efforts at Indiana Grand.

Hip 589, Fierce Lady, Dark bay or brown filly by Competitive Edge x Anjorie, by A. P. Jet, consigned by St. George Sales, agent. A New York-bred juvenile who won on debut at Belmont Park by six lengths.