

**Velazquez, John R. (HOF 2012):** Born: November 24, 1971. From: Carolina, Puerto Rico.

Began his riding career when he entered jockey school in Puerto Rico in June 1988 and was riding in his native country a year and a half later. His first winner came at El Comandante in 1990. Launched his New York career in March 1990 under the guidance of retired Hall of Fame jockey Angel Cordero Jr., who works as his agent to this day. First U.S. win was on My Brother Jay, March 12, 1990 at Aqueduct.

Earned the Eclipse Award as Outstanding jockey in 2004-05.

Has 4 Triple Crown races: In 2007, won the Belmont Stakes (and his first Triple Crown race) on Rags to Riches. In 2011, won his first Kentucky Derby-G1, riding Animal Kingdom; he picked up the mount the day before the race when early Derby favorite Uncle Mo was scratched because of illness. Uncle Mo was Velazquez' third Derby mount to scratch close to the race; he was the regular rider for Quality Road and Eskendereya, who were both scratched a week before the Kentucky Derby, in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Won his third Triple Crown race on Union Rags in the Belmont in 2012. He replaced Julien Leparoux, who had ridden Union Rags in the Kentucky Derby. In 2017 he won his second Kentucky Derby (and first with longtime friend and colleague, Todd Pletcher) on Always Dreaming.

In 2009, was awarded the George Woolf Memorial Jockey Award, an honor granted by his peers. The Woolf Award goes to a rider whose careers and personal character earn esteem for the individual and the sport of Thoroughbred horse racing.

Inducted into the **Hall of Fame in 2012**, offering an emotional acceptance speech that highlighted his commitment to his family and his gratitude towards those who supported him and helped launch his career, particularly Ralph Theroux Sr., whom he credits with preventing him from abandoning his jockey career during its rough early years.

Marked three important milestones in 2013. On June 14, he rode his 5,000th winner, aboard Galloping Giraffe at Belmont Park, on July 27, he broke Jerry Bailey's record to become the winningest rider in the history of Saratoga Race Course (he broke the record with his 694th winner, Unitarian). On Oct. 13, Velazquez broke Pay Day's record for lifetime earnings when he finished second in the ninth race at Belmont Park aboard Bit Bustin, reaching \$297,922,320 in career purses. Day's record was \$297,914,839.

In 2014 rode 13 Grade 1 winners, including eventual Male Turf champion Main Sequence in the Breeders' Cup Turf and reigning two-time Horse of the Year Wise Dan in the Shadwell Turf Mile and the Maker's Mark 46 Mile.

Owns 26 NYRA riding titles (as of 2015). He is Saratoga's winningest rider, all time and on August 22, 2015 the five-time leading Saratoga Race Course rider reached the career milestone of 800 wins at the Spa.

He and agent, former jockey and HOFer, Angel Cordero, Jr., have been working together since 1998. Velazquez vows that he'll scale back a bit this year (2018)... we shall see. Going to Italy with his family in Feb. 2018 so that's a good beginning to scaling back.

Breeders' Cup winners are: Ashado (Distaff, 2004), Caressing (Juvenile Fillies, 2000), Da Hoss (Mile 1998), Eldaafer (Marathon, 2010), English Channel (Turf, 2007), Main Sequence (Turf, 2014), Perfect Shirl (Filly & Mare Turf, 2011), Speightstown (Sprint, 2004), Starine (Filly & Mare Turf, 2002), Stephanie's Kitten (Juvenile Fillies Turf, 2011), Storm Flag Flying (Juvenile Fillies, 2002), Uncle Mo (Juvenile, 2010), Wise Dan (Mile, 2012).

Board member of the Permanently Disabled Jockeys Fund. Chief advocate for his nephew, Liam O'Brien and the anti-bullying campaign: "If you see something, say something."

Family: Wife, Leona. Daughter Lerina, son Michael Patrick. Leona is the daughter of trainer Leo O'Brien and the sister of trainer Keith O'Brien.