

Castellano, Javier (HOF 2017): Born: Oct. 23, 1977. From: Maracaibo, Venezuela.

Born and raised in Venezuela, Javier's father, Abel Castellano (deceased), was a jockey. Neither Javier's mother or father wanted him to follow in his father's footsteps. Multiple injuries, the hard life of a jockey, etc...his family wanted him to have a proper education and go into another line of work. Javier didn't really grow up idealizing about becoming a jockey, instead, his first love was baseball and he grew up wanting to be a professional baseball player. That is until all of his friends kept growing and he stayed small.

At age 16 Javier told his parents about his new goal—to become a jockey—and that's when he began to train for that. No jockey school in Venezuela so he went to the track and learned to ride...He calls his father, a former jockey who died in 2000, the biggest influence on his career. His uncle also was a jockey, as is his brother Abel (Abel hasn't ridden since 2015).

Started riding in Venezuela in 1996 and moved to the United States in June 1997, riding on the South Florida circuit. On the advice of his then-agent Steve Adika, Castellano moved to New York in 2001 and was immediately successful, finishing sixth in the New York jockey standings. He was second in 2002. Agent Matt Muzikar picked up his book in the spring of 2009.

Castellano won on his first Breeders' Cup mount when Ghostzapper won the Breeders' Cup Classic in 2004 at Lone Star Park.

His lone Triple Crown wins have come in the Preakness Stakes: 2006, Bernardini (a race marred by the breakdown of Barbaro, winner of that year's G1 Kentucky Derby) and 2017 on Cloud Computing.

Castellano won his first Belmont spring-summer and first Saratoga riding title in 2013. Earned back-to-back-to-back-to back **Eclipse Awards** as Champion Jockey in 2013, '14, '15 and '16 after leading all riders in North America in wins and earnings. Finished 2nd in the national jockeys standings in 2017 (behind Jose Ortiz).

Inducted into the National Horse Racing **Hall of Fame in 2017**.

Throughout his career, Castellano has dedicated his efforts to his father, Abel, who rode in Venezuela and inspired him. He is often seen looking to the heavens after major victories. Abel was murdered during a robbery attempt in Venezuela in 2000.

“He was my hero. He was my role model. I always looked up to him,” Castellano said. “When I was a kid, I couldn't wait for my father to come home, to open his bag and take out his saddle and clean his saddle.”

When Abel spoke, Castellano listened so intently that he still recalls every word.

“Son, work hard every single day and get on horses,” Abel told him. “The more you get on, the more you learn. This game is about practice, it's not about theory.”

Pre-HOF induction: He wants badly to fill two significant holes in his resume, the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes.

“You always have some target,” he said. “My dream would be winning the Kentucky Derby. That's my goal for many years and, hopefully, one day I can say, ‘Okay, I won the Derby.’“

Family: wife Abby; daughters Kayla Marie and Sienna Grace; son Brady Ryan.