

Garcia, Martin: Born: Oct. 23, 1984. From: Veracruz, Mexico.

Grew up in a very poor area of Mexico and was abandoned by his 14 year old mother at age 11. He never knew his father. Was raised by his grandmother and had to work construction in Mexico as an 11 year old child.

In their spare time, he and his brothers rode everything they could with 4 legs: donkeys, horses, cows... Moved to the U.S. in 2003 and spoke zero English at that time. His U.S. connections found him working at a deli in Northern CA and it was while working there that he first had access to horses. It was in 2004 that he found out that one of the deli's owners, Terry Terri, had riding horses. He still didn't speak English and she spoke no Spanish but he managed the opportunity to go out to where her horse was boarded with her. Terry brought the horse out to the riding arena (jumps in the arena) with nothing more than a halter on it. She asked Martin to hold the horse while she went in to get the saddle and bridle.

However, Martin didn't understand what he was supposed to do and he thought he was supposed to ride the horse. When she came back from retrieving the saddle and bridle, he was aboard the horse riding around the arena—including jumping the jumps—with nothing more than a halter on. Terry was impressed with his riding and got him connected someone who had thoroughbreds and, still unable to speak English, started getting on horses but, apparently, pissing some people off for not following instructions.

Finally he started working with another rider who spoke English and Spanish and this guy helped him to understand what was being asked of him. In the fall of 2005, at age 20, he started riding races and in 2006 shifted his tack to Bay Meadows. He rode there through the spring of 2007 and then moved on to Santa Anita Park. Through persistency and hard work, he finally worked his way into Baffert's barn and by the spring of 2008 started riding for Baffert consistently. Of Baffert he says, "He's more than a boss or a friend. He's both of those things but he's also acted as a father for me. He really helps me and he really looks out for me."

Has now won around 100 graded stakes races and nearly 30 Grade 1 races—almost all of them for Baffert.