

Gutierrez, Mario: Born: Sept. 19, 1986. From: Veracruz, Mexico.

Mario grew up on a farm in the small town of El Higo in the state of Veracruz in the southeastern part of the country. He was one of four children. Caring for, and riding, horses were a part of his youth. Gutierrez comes by his riding knack naturally. His father, Mario Gutierrez Hernandez, Jr., was a Quarter Horse jockey and trainer in his native Mexico and his son decided early that he wanted to be like him. He began riding horses at age 12, and soon became his father's go-to rider in match races.

Came to the United States to ride after being noticed by a visiting Canadian trainer, Terry Jordan, while riding as an apprentice in Mexico City's premier racetrack, Hipodromo de las Americas. Trainer encouraged him to come north to Vancouver to try his hand at riding at Hastings Racecourse. Was an immediate success as an apprentice, winning 91 races in 2006. He followed that up with riding titles in 2007 and '08. Won 47 stakes races while riding there full time for six seasons. Rode first-call for Western Canada's leading trainer, Troy Taylor, and racing syndicate owner Glen Todd. The three became inseparable, sharing a house in Vancouver and becoming known as the "two and a half men."

Gutierrez, who had spent much of his racing life in North America at western Canadian venues, decided to try Santa Anita during its 2011-12 winter-spring meeting when Taylor took a string to the Southern California track. He was plucked out of obscurity by owner J. Paul Reddam, who was impressed when he saw the native of Mexico win a race at Santa Anita. He turned to trainer Doug O'Neill and suggested Gutierrez be given a try on I'll Have Another. The rest, as they say, is history. While he had some success at Santa Anita, was contemplating his return to Hastings when I'll Have Another came along.

Went on the ride of his life in the spring of 2012 when he rode I'll Have Another to victory in the Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes. His flirtation with horse racing immortality ended there, however, because the Derby-Preakness winner was scratched from the Belmont Stakes when tendinitis ended the run and his racing career. Rode first call for Paul Reddam's Reddam Racing Stable but after the I'll Have Another disappointment, he retreated to Hastings Park, he and his agent parted company, and his career slipped into a downward spiral.

Luckily, he reconnected with Rebecca (now his wife), a girl he had first met when he arrived in Canada from Mexico in 2006. She suggested he consult a Sport's Psychologist and after the first visit, he booked 10 more. His attitude began to improve and his confidence began to return. He and Rebecca headed back to Santa Anita where he soon after rode Nyquist for the first time.

In 2015 Gutierrez enjoyed his best year of his career (by money won) to date thanks in part to Breeders' Cup Juvenile winner, Nyquist. He and Nyquist come into the Derby on a 7 for 7 roll.

Wife, Rebecca had their first child—a son—in 2016.

Gutierrez used some of earnings from being a jockey to buy his parents a home—their first.