

Santana, Jr., Ricardo: Born: November 19, 1992 From: Panama

Santana's father, was one of the top jockeys in Panama. Paralyzed from the waist down in a training accident after he had retired from riding. Then when he was 14 years old he lost a brother to gang violence. His parents managed to pull together enough money to send Santana, Jr. to the Panamanian jockey school—same graduating class as Luis Saez.

Rode in Panama for only 3 months before catching the eye of people who facilitated his move to the United States. When he first arrived (around 2011—2012) his English was not very good but his work ethic was unparalleled. He was leading rider at Delaware Park in 2012 and then eventually worked his way into Steve Asmussen's barn. Asmussen's 7,000th and 8,000th winners were both piloted by Santana, Jr.

Ricardo eventually brought his parents to the U.S. and he still turns to his father (and Asmussen) for riding advice and constructive criticism.