

Espinoza, Victor (HOF 2017): Born: May 23, 1972 From: Mexico City, Mexico.

Born on a dairy farm in Hidalgo, Mexico, the 11th of 12 children. He grew up riding horses and when he was 17 paid for Jockey School by driving a bus in Mexico City—that was 1989 (Quote: “It’s a lot easier riding horses than driving in that traffic in Mexico City.”). He shifted his tack North of the border all the way up to Northern CA in 1994 and, while he spoke no English when he arrived in the United States he managed to be the leading apprentice rider at Bay Meadows and Golden Gate Fields.

In 1995 he began riding in Southern CA. His first big win was in the 2000 Breeders’ Cup Distaff aboard Spain and then in 2002 he won his first of 3 Derbies and first Preakness Stakes (both aboard War Emblem). Espinoza is not married and he has no children. He donates 10% of his earnings to “City of Hope” to support pediatric cancer research.

In 2015, Espinoza earned his second straight Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes victory aboard American Pharoah and was finally able accomplish something he had failed to do in 2014 (California Chrome) and 2002 (War Emblem) – he won the Triple Crown. When he crossed the finish line first in the Belmont Stakes, American Pharoah became the 12th Triple Crown winner in history and the first in 37 years. In 2015 he won his second ESPY Award for Best Jockey after also winning in 2002.

Inducted into the National Horse Racing **Hall of Fame in 2017**—3rd year in a row to be nominated. Won the \$10 million Dubai World Cup in 2016 on California Chrome (2014 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes winner). Mentioned the word “retirement” at one point in 2016 but later retracted, ever so slightly. July 2018 Espinoza went down in a morning training incident and fractured a vertebra in his neck—was out for 7 months, finally returning to action in February 2019.

In the early aftermath of the injury Espinoza doubted he would ever make it back to riding—he couldn’t even shave his own face, let alone imagine himself riding a racehorse again. Finally made his return to action in February 2019.