

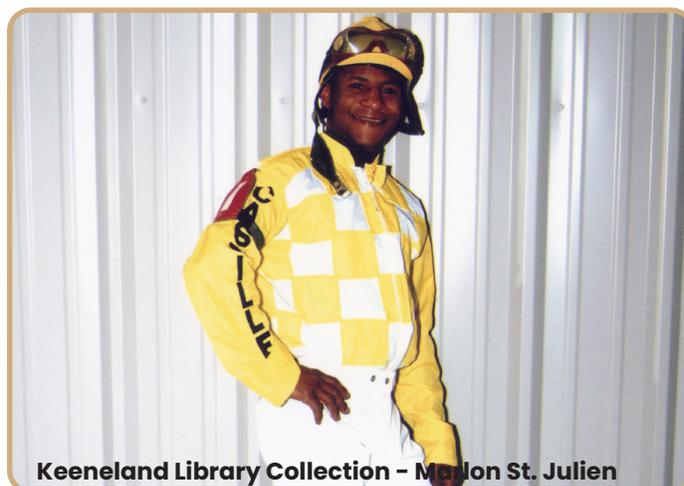
Marlon St. Julien

Author: Emily Hudson, Story Catcher

Places: Lafayette, Louisiana; Grand Prairie, Texas; Louisville, Kentucky

Birth: February 13, 1972 **Death:**

Professions: Jockey



Birth, Childhood, and Family

Marlon St. Julien was born in Lafayette, Louisiana on February 13, 1972 to Even St. Julien and Cynthia Sargent.¹ St. Julien married Denise.² They have two children; daughter Jasmin and son Even.

Choosing a Career

St. Julien played football during his freshman and sophomore years in high school. He also had a growing interest in becoming a jockey. His mother took him to the racetrack, exposing him to the equestrian world. St. Julien made the decision to pursue a career as a jockey and left football behind. He explained, "I'm either going to be too big to be a jockey or too small to be a football player."³ With the help of Don Cormier, Evangeline Downs leading trainer, Marlon St. Julien got his apprentice jockey license at age seventeen.

Mindset

St. Julien began his professional riding career in 1989 at Evangeline Downs where he won his first race riding Sadie's Sensation. Still a senior in high school, he was incredibly determined. Early in his career, St. Julien found he did not get the breaks white jockeys got. At one point, he became paranoid.⁴ He believed that the color of his skin did not limit victories on the track. He set his mind to win.

Career and Notable Achievements

Throughout the 1990s, St. Julien increased his winning record and accomplishments. He won the:

- \$20,000 Coca-Cola Classic Handicap
- Grand Prairie Premier Stakes

- \$100,000 stakes Grand Prairie Gold Cup
- A.P. Indy
- Warfield
- Grade 3 Fayette Breeders' Cup
- Grade 3 Iroquois at Churchill Downs
- Ellis Park Juvenile Stakes

These and other wins helped increase his ranking as a rider.

St. Julien was coached by jockey agent Harry Hacek who was known for helping jockeys rise to the next level. Recognized as one of the top riders in 1999, St. Julien ranked fifth in rider standings.

Making History in 2000

St. Julien committed to racing full-time in Kentucky at Keeneland and Churchill Downs.⁵ He added a history-setting milestone in 2000 when he became the first African American jockey to ride in the Kentucky Derby since 1921. He rode Godolphin Racing's, Curule, They finished in seventh place in a field of nineteen. For the next eighteen years, St. Julien was mounted on Thoroughbreds in races at Chicago, Texas, California, Louisiana among others.

In addition, St. Julien rode a circuit that included Oaklawn Park, Arkansas, Prairie Meadows, Iowa and Remington Park, Oklahoma.

Life Changing Event

On May 19, 2018 St. Julien was riding Carbaugh at Prairie Meadows when he suffered a life-changing accident and injury. When he came out of the 9-gate, the 8-horse collided with Carbaugh sending St. Julien to the ground. He fractured his cervical spine. He underwent emergency surgery and has spent many months in rehabilitation.

In an interview with his son in December 2018, St. Julien talked about his future. "I hope to go back to riding again. But if I don't go back to riding, there's a lot of things that I can do. I'm actually in the process of writing a book. I could go back to school. But my main goal is to get back to riding and I think that's possible. I'm not going to stop until I accomplish that if I can."⁶

Post-Career and Legacy

Marlon St. Julien was head-lined in national news stories in 2000. He became the first African American jockey to ride in the Kentucky Derby in seventy-nine years. St. Julien's determination to be the best in his chosen career has earned him recognition and respect. In twenty-nine years, he had 23,767 starts for career earnings just short of \$47,000,000. St. Julien shared his aspirations, "I just want to be considered as one of the best riders in the country, whether black, white, purple, blue or brown."⁷

Sources

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Footnotes

¹Lyons, "The Saint."

²Drape, "Horse Racing: It's a Long, Uphill Ride to Racing's Big Leagues; But St. Julien, a Black Jockey, Is on His Way."

³"Marlon St. Julien 1972 Jockey."

⁴Drape, "Horse Racing: It's a Long, Uphill Ride to Racing's Big Leagues; But St. Julien, a Black Jockey, Is on His Way."

⁵"Marlon St. Julien 1972 Jockey."

⁶St. Julien, Marlon St. Julien Interview December 16, 2018.

⁷Harris, "Color Secondary To Black Jockey/Marlon St. Julien, The First Black Jockey in the Kentucky Derby in 79 Years, Just Wants To Be Considered One of the Nation's Best Riders."