

Shelby Barnes

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Places: Beaver Dam, Kentucky;
Columbus, Ohio

Birth: June 1871 **Death:** January 6, 1908

Professions: Jockey



Childhood and Family

Shelby “Pike” Barnes was born to Joseph and Susan (Austin) Barnes in Beaver Dam, Kentucky.¹ He may have had as many as seven siblings.² Barnes began riding horses when he was fourteen years old.³

Records Set in 1888

Barnes got established as a star in the Thoroughbred racing world in 1888. In that year alone, he achieved the following records:

- 206 total wins (the most of any jockey that year)
- 32.9% win percentage (the highest of any jockey that year)
- Won the Futurity Stakes (the biggest prize of any race ever held)⁴

The Futurity Stakes highlighted Barnes’ talent. Barnes, employed by Elias “Lucky” Baldwin, rode the horse Proctor Knott to a stunning victory in the inaugural event. The purse that year was worth \$41,675, which was the largest of any race held in the country at that time.

The race took place on Labor Day Weekend at Sheepshead Bay Race Track in Elmont, New York. It had the largest attendance of any race held at that location.

Short But Successful Career

Barnes enjoyed continued achievements for a few more years. In 1889 alone, he achieved 170 wins and a 25.7% win percentage. Other notable wins included:

- Travers Stakes and Champagne Stakes in 1889
- Belmont Stakes, Brooklyn Derby, and Sheridan Stakes in 1890
- Brooklyn Derby aboard Tenny in 1891

See Related Research for more races he won and horses he was associated with.⁵

Early Retirement

By 1891, Barnes' racing career slowed down. He owned a farm in his hometown of Beaver Dam, Kentucky, and contemplated a return to racing that did not occur. Instead, he maintained partial ownership of a saloon in Columbus, Ohio.⁶

Legacy

Barnes passed away in 1908 at the age of 37 due to tuberculosis.⁷ A newspaper article which reported on his death described him as "a fearless rider of great skill and good judgment."⁸ He was survived by his wife Mary whom he had married in 1897.

In 2011, the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame honored him with a permanent place among the racing greats of his generation and all time.

Sources

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Footnotes

¹Memorial Page for Shelby D 'Pike' Barnes (1871-1908)."

²"1870 United States Federal Census."

³Reported Death of 'Pike' Barnes."

⁴BloodHorse Staff, "Three 19th Century Stars to Hall of Fame."

⁵BloodHorse Staff.

⁶"Epitome of Horsemen."

⁷Chase, "Paragraphic News."

⁸Reported Death of 'Pike' Barnes."