



NORTHEAST/
 MID-ATLANTIC

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Bucking the Trend

*Tough-as-nails "Buck" Woodson
 is making his own way in West Virginia*

BY JASON SHANDLER

The year was 2003, and Charles "Buck" Woodson Jr. finally had had just about enough.

For more than 30 years the tough-as-nails Woodson, a no-nonsense horseman known for his colorful personality, had been making ends meet by breeding, owning, and training mostly lower-end claimers in West Virginia. Sure, back in the 1980s Woodson had campaigned Onion Juice, the legendary West Virginia-bred who won 27 races including the inaugural \$100,000 Jim Beam Breeders' Classic and earned more than \$225,000, but besides that there wasn't much else he had to show for dedicating the second half of his life to Thoroughbreds. Julianna, his loyal wife of more than three decades, was just about fed up with the way things were going, too.

On this particular winter afternoon Woodson, who to this day at age 84 still does most of the work himself on his 40-acre Buckstud Farm, hopped off his tractor, having finished another long day of work in biting winds and frigid winter temperatures, his hands numb from the cold. He clearly remembers that day—one that changed his life.

"I was sitting there thinking, 'I don't know how I've done this for so long, but I'm not sure about this anymore,'" Woodson recalled. "I wasn't overly spiritual or religious before that, but I felt like someone was telling me something. I really believe it was the Lord conversing with me. He was telling me what to do. He told me to put my life in His hands and that He would guide me.

"I told my wife that night, 'Just help me get through the rest of this year and everything will change. I promise.' And you know what? From that point on it has."

Seventy-six at the time, Woodson felt reborn after his epiphany. At an age when many people are playing bingo and canasta, Woodson was just about to get started.

Just as the voice had told him, his fortunes began to change the following year when he purchased Ghostly Minister privately in California for around \$8,000. The son of Deputy Minister, who was bred by Sid Craig, was not a particularly successful racehorse, but he sure has been a useful stallion. In 2005 Ghostly Minister sired Ghostly Thunder, whom Woodson sold at the Ocala Breeders' Sales Co.'s 2007 April sale of 2-year-olds in training for \$13,000—a nice chunk of change at the time. Ghostly Thunder would go on to win four stakes in 2008 including the West Virginia Breeders' Classic, making Ghostly Minister the state's leading second-crop sire that



Charles "Buck" Woodson Jr. with Helena Handbasket, a half sister to Ginger Punch, at his Buckstud Farm

LYDIA A. WILLIAMS PHOTOS



Highcliff ranks among the nation's leaders and **#1** in NY by average earnings per starter, \$22,492, as well as third in NY by money won, \$4,363,361 in 2010—all from just 194 starters.

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2011 Leading Sires in New York

State sire lists updated daily online. Go to <http://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/thoroughbred-breeding/sire-lists>

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in New York (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through March 9, 2011. As supplied to The Blood-Horse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., earnings exclude monies from Japan and Hong Kong. Current year stakes winners include all N.H.-foaled stakes winners worldwide and any S.H.-foaled horses that won a N.H. stakes. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A ♯) indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race).

Rank	Stallion (Foaling Year, Sire), Farm Standing	2011 Stud Fee	Rnrs/Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2011 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Sks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	POSSE (00, Silver Deputy), Vinery New York	\$10,000	98/34	2/2	0/2	(No Advantage, \$100,000)	\$806,542	364	14	1.49	1.40
2	TOUCH GOLD (94, Deputy Minister), Adena Springs at McMahon of Saratoga Threds	\$10,000	105/22	0/0	0/0	(Power Bid, \$28,800)	\$403,019	*736	30	1.39	2.11
3	REPENT (99, Louis Quatorze), Vinery New York	\$5,000	77/13	0/0	0/0	(It's Never to Late, \$41,700)	\$330,895	*336	13	1.31	1.26
4	CONGAREE (98, Arazi), Highcliff Farm	\$7,500	42/11	0/0	0/0	(Jeranimo, \$57,000)	\$316,237	*209	9	1.45	1.52
5	FREUD (98, Storm Cat), Sequel Stallions at Keane Stud	\$8,500	44/10	0/0	0/0	(Good Habits, \$31,200)	\$310,566	326	22	1.77	1.31
6	GOLDEN MISSILE (95, A.P. Indy), Milfer Farm	\$7,500	60/14	0/0	0/0	(Stealth Missile, \$41,300)	\$304,132	*530	13	1.10	1.71
7	READ THE FOOTNOTES (01, Smoke Glacken), Sequel Stallions at Keane Stud	\$6,500	28/11	1/1	1/1	(Eminent Tale, \$48,000)	\$281,942	*157	7	1.50	1.25
8	PURGE (01, Pulpit), Vinery New York	\$5,000	63/11	0/0	0/0	(Perfect Drive, \$33,900)	\$260,342	*269	3	0.92	1.76
9	ROARING FEVER (00, Storm Cat), Dutchess Views Farm/Metropolitan Stud	\$3,500	37/11	1/1	1/1	(Spa City Princess, \$36,000)	\$238,455	136	3	1.25	0.99
10	GOLD TOKEN (93, Mr. Prospector)	Died, 2006	21/6	1/1	1/1	(Inherit the Gold, \$63,000)	\$199,302	*281	10	1.35	1.14
11	CATIENUS (94, Storm Cat), McMahon of Saratoga Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	50/13	0/0	0/0	(Dapper Gene, \$43,200)	\$184,371	*438	22	1.34	1.29
12	DISCO RICO (97, Citiidancer), Keane Stud Operations	\$5,000	21/8	0/0	0/0	(Dr Disco, \$32,800)	\$173,926	188	7	1.44	1.25
13	ALPHABET SOUP (91, Cozzene), Adena Springs at McMahon of Saratoga Threds	\$6,000	48/6	0/0	0/0	(Cause of Freedom, \$25,800)	\$130,161	*720	39	1.33	1.40
14	ELTISH (92, Cox's Ridge), Keane Stud Operations	\$3,500	21/5	0/0	0/0	(Eltish Star, \$24,250)	\$106,091	282	12	1.22	1.34
15	RAFFIE'S MAJESTY (95, Cormorant), Sugar Maple Farm	\$3,000	15/4	0/0	0/0	(Raffinator, \$29,100)	\$101,108	139	10	1.60	1.10

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year and helping Woodson earn his first Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association West Virginia Breeder of the Year award. Six-year-old Ghostly Thunder, West Virginia's Horse of the Year in 2008, has gone on to earn more than \$500,000 in his career.

Ghostly Minister is currently the only stallion standing at Buckstud, which is located near Charles Town, about five minutes from the racetrack. The farm supports 13 broodmares. Woodson sends his yearlings to Melissa Hunt in Florida to be broken.

Though Ghostly Minister got Woodson jump-started, in recent years Woodson's keen eye for mares has paid the biggest dividends. The same year he acquired

Ghostly Minister, he bought the mare Numerous Moves from the Keeneland November breeding stock sale for \$25,000. The daughter of Numerous has produced four winners including We're in the Money, a filly Woodson sold for \$28,000 and who went on to win three state-bred races as a juvenile en route to being named West Virginia champion 2-year-old filly in 2007. Numerous Moves later produced several other foals that Woodson sold for more than \$20,000 each. She is currently in foal to Bluegrass Cat and is booked to Hold Me Back in 2011.

"I finally figured out that I had to get some good mares," Woodson said. "Ghostly Minister helped me to be able to afford some better horses. Before that, I was buy-

ing cheap mares for about \$1,000 or so."

Woodson, who usually buys only one or two mares per year, has bought a couple of others he hopes will continue his string of success. In 2008 he snapped up Dancing Trieste for \$20,000 and her first foal became a winner. She recently produced a colt by War Front, whose potential has been boosted by the success of Triple Crown prospect Soldat.

Last year Woodson stepped up to \$40,000 for Helena Handbasket at the Keeneland November sale, a potentially shrewd purchase given that she is a half sister to 2007 champion older mare Ginger Punch. Woodson bred Helena Handbasket to Awesome Again in 2011, which will make the foal closely related to Ginger Punch.

"My philosophy was to upgrade," said Woodson, West Virginia's leading breeder in 2007 and 2008. "I have been studying pedigrees for a long time but hadn't made any money from it—until recently. I really feel like I'm finally breeding horses that are good enough to win big races.

"I just turned 84, and my wife said to me the other day, 'When are we going to the Kentucky Derby.' I told her, 'Not until we have one running in there.' With the good Lord's help, I think it can happen."

Don't put anything past him, says longtime friend Dick Watson, who served with Woodson on the West Virginia Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association for several years.

"He may not have had a Derby winner yet, but he's done very well with a small operation; he's had a considerable amount of luck," said Watson, a former HBPA president. "He breeds sturdy horses, and they usually outdo what might be another person's common assessment of his stock.

"But what has impressed me the most



Woodson and Onion Juice in the winner's circle at Charles Town in 1987

McMahon of Saratoga

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New to NY

ALPHABET SOUP

\$6,000

Champion Sire of 12 Graded stakes winners,
\$33-million in progeny earnings.
A leading NY sire in 2010, stakes winners include
3YO Graded winner **FUGITIVE ANGEL**.

CATIENUS

\$5,000

Sire of **G1** stakes performers on all surfaces,
including **G1** winners **PRECIOUS KITTEN**
and **DAWN OF WAR** at 2.
Ranks among NY's leaders in 2011.

Enters stud 2011

HARLEM ROCKER

\$3,500

Classic winner and NY Graded stakes winner
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Withers S.-**G3** by 2 lengths, and the
Prince of Wales S., 2nd Cigar Mile H.-**G1**.

New to NY

SILENT NAME

\$5,000

Multiple Graded stakes winner is the most
accomplished American runner by the legendary
Sunday Silence to ever stand in North America.
Won the Commonwealth Breeders' Cup-**G2** in
1:21 1/5, just 1/5 off the track record.
First foals are 2YO of 2011.

New to NY

TIAGO

\$5,000

Classic-placed multiple **G1** stakes winner of \$2.3 million
with a 110 Beyer Speed Figure. Wins include Santa Anita
Derby-**G1** (dirt) and the Goodwood S.-**G1**(synthetic).

New to NY

TOUCH GOLD

\$10,000

Sire of four **G1** stakes winners,
double digit stakes horses in 2010,
including four 2YO stakes horses.
Sired a \$320,000 2YO filly sales topper.
Limited seasons available.

UTOPIA

\$7,500

The Leading Money Earner by **FORTY NINER**
at stud, nearly \$5-million. Bred more mares in
2010 than any other sire in NY.
First foals are 2YO of 2011.

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2011 Leading Sires in Pennsylvania

State sire lists updated daily online. Go to <http://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/thoroughbred-breeding/sire-lists>

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								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	SMARTY JONES (01, Elusive Quality), Ghost Ridge Farms	\$10,000	78/26	0/0	0/0	(Gilded Gem, \$78,200)	\$809,697	*283	7	1.72	2.68
2	E DUBAI (98, Mr. Prospector), Ghost Ridge Farms	\$10,000	83/18	2/2	0/2	(Aggie Engineer, \$108,000)	\$707,071	*593	20	1.31	1.25
3	JUMP START (99, A.P. Indy), Ghost Ridge Farms	\$10,000	70/21	2/2	1/2	(Starjumpin Marnie, \$52,470)	\$485,165	*405	20	1.46	1.39
4	REAL QUIET (95, Quiet American), Penn Ridge Farms	Died	34/11	1/1	0/1	(Norman Asbjornson, \$89,480)	\$365,298	*506	12	1.21	1.27
5	TOCCET (00, Awesome Again), Dana Point Farm	\$3,500	59/16	1/1	0/1	(Hyperlink, \$60,800)	\$361,428	*233	8	1.24	1.33
6	EUROSILVER (01, Unbridled's Song), Penn Ridge Farms	\$3,500	64/17	0/0	0/0	(Sterling Outlook, \$51,520)	\$358,534	*234	3	0.93	1.45
7	GRAND REWARD (01, Storm Cat), Ghost Ridge Farms	\$4,000	61/16	0/0	0/0	(Miss Cherokee Cat, \$53,000)	\$315,795	*365	1	1.07	1.42
8	WISEMAN'S FERRY (99, Hennessy), Dana Point Farm	\$3,500	56/10	0/0	0/0	(Copper Forest, \$33,000)	\$270,567	*231	5	1.22	1.06
9	PARTNER'S HERO (94, Danzig), Northview PA	\$2,000	34/9	0/0	0/0	(Listentothewindblo, \$24,300)	\$178,792	381	18	1.30	1.39
10	DELAWARE TOWNSHIP (96, Notebook), Maui Meadow Farm	\$2,000	34/11	0/0	0/0	(Doasisay Notasisay, \$28,000)	\$176,762	243	7	1.16	1.33
11	CAT THIEF (96, Storm Cat), Penn Ridge Farms	\$4,000	39/10	0/0	0/0	(Prix de Karakorum, \$36,660)	\$163,973	*391	18	1.26	1.72
12	MEDALLIST (01, Touch Gold), Northview PA	\$4,000	24/9	0/0	0/0	(Sortano, \$26,000)	\$154,361	112	4	1.42	1.58
13	SNOW RIDGE (98, Tabasco Cat), Star Barn Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	37/9	0/0	0/0	(Snow Mon, \$26,940)	\$146,583	*240	7	1.12	1.23
14	ALBERT THE GREAT (97, Go for Gin), Pin Oak Lane Farm	\$3,500	41/10	0/0	0/0	(Shezagreatgal, \$18,320)	\$138,184	*287	5	1.22	1.20
15	RIMROD (00, Danzig), Castle Rock Farm	\$1,500	9/5	0/0	0/0	(Majestic Michelle, \$29,360)	\$132,976	41	1	1.21	1.37

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with Buck over the years is his skill as a horseman. He's as old school as they come; does everything himself. I remember I was standing there at Charles Town one morning in the 1980s and here comes Buck riding by on Onion Juice. He was still galloping horses and had to be about 65."

"How many people in their 80s drive their own tractor and trailer from West Virginia to Kentucky for horse sales?" asked Dr. Maurice Casey, a veterinarian who has been tending to Woodson's horses since 1985. "I said to him a couple of years ago, 'Buck, you can't be doing that at your age. What if you get a flat tire or something?' I said he was being cheap, but he said he wanted it done right. Last year I think he finally hired someone to do it.

"He still does almost everything himself—foals the mares, handles the stal-

lions, fixes the fencing on his farm. Even at age 84, he's not looking at the past but looking to the future. I take my hat off to him."

Though Woodson still has an eye toward the future, his past is etched clearly in his mind. Born in 1927, just a couple of years before the Great Depression, he knew from an early age what it was like to struggle. Born in Richmond, Va., Woodson bounced around from state to state for most of his childhood, landing wherever his father could get work. He doesn't remember his first experience with horses but has been told it was not a pleasant one.

"We were living in Yellow Creek, N.C., when I was 6 months old and the only way to get there was by train, and then someone had to pick you up on horseback to take you through the dirt trails to town. I was told

that I fell off the horse on the way to our house. I say house, but we lived in a shack made of slabs and it had a tar paper roof.

"We lived all up and down the East Coast—Virginia, the Carolinas, Pennsylvania, New York, you name it. I went to 17 different elementary schools as a child."

Woodson's negative experience with horses did not deter him, however. Even though he never owned any as a child, he remembers going to his grandparents' farm in Richmond and riding their mules. By the time he was 13, he was showing horses, and in 1944, just before he joined the Navy, Woodson took a summer job at The Meadow, the legendary farm in Caroline Co., Va., where Secretariat was later born.

Woodson did about 18 months in the Navy as a combat air crewman before being discharged at the end of World War II. Though horses were his first love, it would be another 25 years before he would get to work with them. Instead, he completed his education and entered the workforce. Woodson first worked as a clerk for a railroad company in Richmond and later became a purchasing and distribution manager for a paper company.

It was a couple of years after marrying his second wife, Julianna, in 1967 that Woodson decided to follow his heart.

"I was in my 40s, but I couldn't fight it anymore. I had to work with horses," Woodson said.

And with that Woodson bought a few broodmares and a cheap stallion and relocated to a farm in West Virginia. He began breeding mares, raising foals, and training racehorses. In the early 1970s he bought what is now Buckstud Farm. His first winner came in 1971, but trips to the winner's circle were few



Mares graze at the 40-acre Buckstud Farm near Charles Town, W.Va.

2011 Leading Sires in West Virginia

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								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	DURING (00, Cherokee Run), O'Sullivan Farms	\$2,500	35/6	1/1	1/1	(Su Casa G Casa, \$110,000)	\$201,581	133	1	0.84	1.17
2	WINDSOR CASTLE (98, Lord Carson), Taylor Mountain Farm	\$2,500	28/8	0/0	0/0	(Lil Miss Jane, \$22,440)	\$133,060	116	4	1.45	1.28
3	BLACK TIE AFFAIR (IRE) (86, Miswaki)	Pnsd	43/12	0/0	0/0	(Belle of Camden, \$18,520)	\$127,180	*912	37	1.34	1.45
4	MEADOW MONSTER (91, Meadowlake), O'Sullivan Farms	\$2,000	15/6	0/0	0/0	(That's No Bargain, \$36,510)	\$116,538	338	9	1.01	1.10
5	PRIZED (86, Kris S.), O'Sullivan Farms	\$3,500	21/5	0/0	0/0	(Cat o' Nine Tails, \$20,900)	\$101,007	*727	29	1.40	1.37
6	LUFTIKUS (96, Meadowlake), Taylor Mountain Farm	\$2,500	38/6	0/0	0/0	(Bandi's Luv, \$16,900)	\$99,830	212	7	1.10	1.10
7	YARROW BRAE (95, Deputy Minister), O'Sullivan Farms	\$1,500	18/7	0/0	0/0	(Fagedaboudit Sal, \$15,726)	\$93,656	256	9	1.16	1.03
8	BOP (97, Rahy), O'Sullivan Farms	\$2,500	19/4	0/0	0/0	(Beboppin Betty, \$18,920)	\$87,130	*99	5	1.24	0.87
9	REPARATIONS (96, Forty Niner), Blue Spruce Farm	\$1,000	15/4	0/0	0/0	(Ruby's Red Socks, \$11,220)	\$73,570	79	2	1.28	0.88
10	PRINTS OF PEACE (01, Storm Cat), O'Sullivan Farms	\$750	11/4	0/0	0/0	(Printscess Poach, \$20,900)	\$66,270	36	0	0.86	0.76

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and far between in those early years.

"I only had two or three horses racing," Woodson said. "I really didn't know much about what I was doing."

Woodson, who raced most of his horses at Charles Town and the old Shenandoah Downs, gradually improved his skills and by the time the decade was over had turned into a successful trainer—mostly with low-level claimers. He was almost completely self-taught.

"I just had a strong desire to take good care of my horses," Woodson said. "I gave them good feed and spent all day taking care of their legs. I've always been against medication, never used Bute. I had my own way of doing things."

One of Woodson's secrets was to make his own poultice, a treatment used to reduce inflammation and draw heat from horses' legs. Woodson's poultice was a little different than most other trainers'.

"They key ingredient is bentonite; I call it volcano dust," Woodson said. "They stopped making it so I had to order it from an arts supply place in Ohio. You mix it with water, and it turns into a thick Bowie mud—it's so messy that most people won't touch it. You put it on their legs like mold and it forms a clay. Then I put a bandage on it for about 48 hours and take it off. Wherever the dry spot is, that's where the heat is."

Onion Juice, named for Woodson's father-in-law, who loved eating onions and was nicknamed "Onion Juice," is the horse Woodson is most known for. Co-owned and bred in partnership with Donald Wilson, the son of Quartermaster raced 65 times in his seven-year career and won eight stakes.

"We had a lot of fun with him," said Woodson, who also campaigned Onion Juice's half brother, Wigtightner, winner of the 1989 West Virginia Futurity. "We took him all over and at the time Charles Town horses were considered bastard horses. Sometimes we couldn't even find a jockey willing to ride him. But he had a world of

speed and wouldn't let horses pass him. We nominated him to the Kentucky Derby, but he got sore and I had to back off.

"He was my best horse. To this day if I'm at the racetrack and people don't know my name they will yell, 'Hey, Onion Juice!'"

After Onion Juice's career ended in 1988, Woodson continued plugging along for another decade, still galloping most of his horses. "I got thrown off of my last horse when I was 72," he said.

After that, Woodson focused on breed-

ing, and the results have been exceptional. He has a little more help these days, but still does the majority of the work on his farm, which is complete with 27 stalls, run-in sheds, automatic water sprinklers in all of the fields, brand new fencing, and five stalls for broodmares, each complete with a camera.

"I want to do this as long as I can," said Woodson, who is a former president of the West Virginia division of the Racetrack Chaplaincy of America. "At my age if I stay down, I might not get back up." □

The Top Two Active Sires in West Virginia

LUFTIKUS

Meadowlake—Andora, by Conquistador Cielo

#1 Sire in West Virginia in 2010

Fee: \$2,500 LFSN

WINDSOR CASTLE

Lord Carson—Frigidette, by It's Freezing

#2 Sire in West Virginia in 2010

Fee: \$2,500 LFSN

Sire of **PLANTATION**—4 wins in 5 starts, including the 2010 **Private Terms S.**

Other 2010 runners include SWs **PEACEFUL BLISS** (\$381,025) and **SHEAGRUMPTOO** (\$451,105), as well as 2YO stakes performer **Strawberry Cupcake**

- 13% stakes horses from runners
- Over **\$6.1 Million** in progeny earnings

27 winners in 2010, including 4-time SW **DOWN TOWN ALLEN** (\$385,657), SWs **HENRY THE LOVER** (\$253,444) and **TAYLOR'S FLIGHT** (\$111,305), and 2YO stakes performer **Bonnie de Castle**

- 14% stakes horses from runners
- Over **\$2.1 Million** in progeny earnings

And introducing...

CHARITABLE MAN

Lemon Drop Kid—Charitable donation, by Saint Ballado

Multiple Graded Stakes Winner of \$475,800

Won the **Futurity S. (G2)** at two and the **Peter Pan S. (G2)** at three

From the family of leading sires

CAPOTE and **BALDSKI**

\$3,500* LFSN

Standing first year in 2011!

DENIS OF CORK

Harlan's Holiday—Unbridled Girl, by Unbridled

Graded Stakes Winner of \$613,252

A winner in his only start at two; graded SW at three and placed in both the **Kentucky Derby (G1)** and **Belmont S. (G1)**

From the family of **Belmont S. (G1)**

winner **DA' TARA**

\$2,500* LFSN

New to WV for 2011!

TAYLOR MOUNTAIN FARM

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