

### SOUTHEAST

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# **Blockbuster**

### Ocala Stud roars back among top breeders

BY BILL GIAUQUE

cala Stud is the setting for the longest-running Thoroughbred epic in Florida, which features tragedy and triumph, struggle and success. The story began in 1956 with the founding of the farm by Joe O'Farrell, followed quickly by the hosting of the world's first 2-year-old in training sale, and the emergence of Rough'n Tumble as a leading sire and the sire of champions My Dear Girl and Dr. Fager.

Next came the Ocala Stud-bred Horse of the Year Roman Brother. Eventually, though, Florida's keystone farm fell on hard times and bankruptcy in the 1970s, followed by the

long struggle to return to national prominence.

The Ocala Stud story is still unfolding. That is what you would expect from a blockbuster about Thoroughbred racehorses and a family that raises them.

"Things are better today than at any time since I came back from college to help my father run Ocala Stud," Mike O'Farrell, the general manager of the family-owned farm, explained recently. In talk-





Mike O'Farrell, general manager of the family-owned Ocala Stud; inset, entry to the 185-acre farm

# if you want a runner, look to **Ocala Stud**

### Gottcha Gold

Coronado's Quest - Gottcha Last, by Pleasant Tap \$2,500

## **High Cotton**

Dixie Union - Happy Tune, by A.P. Indy \$5,000 - BOOK FULL

## **In Summation**

Put It Back - Fiesta Baby, by Dayjur \$4,000

## Montbrook

Buckaroo - Secret Papers, by Jet Diplomacy \$7,500

## **Silver Tree**

Hennessy - Blue Begum, by With Approval \$2.500

### Call for multiple mare discounts.

J. Michael O'Farrell, Jr. • P.O. Box 818, Ocala, FL 34478 352/237-2171 • FAX 352/873-3223

www.ocalastud.com

Ocala Stud

## **2011 Leading Sires in Florida**

State sire lists updated daily online. Go to http://www.bloodhorse.com/horseracing/thoroughbred-breeding/sire-lists

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Florida (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 31, 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).

				Stakes	Rstrct			Cumulative			
Rank	Stallion (Foaling Year, Sire), Farm Standing	2012 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Wnrs/ Wns	SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2011 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	WILDCAT HEIR (00, Forest Wildcat), Journeyman Stud	\$10,000	181/110	8/13	3/8	(John Johny Jak, \$215,061)	\$4,828,734	*258	14	1.64	1.55
2	LEROIDESANIMAUX (BRZ) (00, Candy Stripes), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$22,500	88/48	4/6	0/4	(Animal Kingdom, \$1,904,900)	\$4,034,567	*157	5	2.36	1.79
3	GRAEME HALL (97, Dehere), Winding Oaks Farm	\$5,000	125/77	4/4	0/4	(Duke of Mischief, \$721,681)	\$3,168,375	*286	19	1.57	1.31
4	CHAPEL ROYAL (01, Montbrook), Signature Stallions	\$10,000	225/102	1/3	1/1	(Navy Chapel, \$139,515)	\$3,103,519	*463	6	0.96	1.21
5	REPENT (99, Louis Quatorze), Cloverleaf Farms II	\$3,000	160/86	10/11	3/10	(It's Never to Late, \$165,050)	\$2,933,947	*367	20	1.25	1.26
6	WITH DISTINCTION (01, Storm Cat), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$7,500	136/67	4/6	2/4	(Decisive Moment, \$409,300)	\$2,745,427	202	4	1.13	1.22
7	GRAND REWARD (01, Storm Cat)		121/60	3/7	2/3	(Bad Debt, \$235,140)	\$2,564,691	*377	4	1.23	1.42
8	CONCORDE'S TUNE (89, Concorde Bound), Ocala Stud Farm	\$2,500		1/5	0/1	(Musical Romance, \$1,040,734)	\$2,493,514	449	25	1.28	1.14
9	GREATNESS (99, Mr. Prospector), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$2,500	73/43	3/10	0/3	(Immortal Eyes, \$271,215)	\$2,365,826	*161	6	1.47	1.07
10	PUT IT BACK (98, Honour and Glory), Bridlewood Farm	\$5,000	162/69	5/9	1/5	(It's Me Mom, \$206,500)	\$2,362,297	*516	23	1.44	1.35
11	POMEROY (01, Boundary), Vinery Florida	\$10,000	82/43	6/11	0/6	(Pomeroys Pistol, \$521,188)	\$2,182,075	*133	6	1.40	1.44
12	MONTBROOK (90, Buckaroo), Ocala Stud Farm	\$7,500	83/42	3/6	0/3	(Tackleberry, \$599,667)	\$2,137,336	*734	47	1.63	1.58
13	HALO'S IMAGE (91, Halo)	Died, 2010	83/43	5/8	1/5	(Atlantic Hurricane, \$391,033)	\$2,104,602	*527		1.33	1.33
14	FULL MANDATE (99, A.P. Indy), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	118/64	2/3	0/2	(Full of Gut, \$151,320)	\$2,064,225	*313	4	0.91	1.05
15	D'WILDCAT (98, Forest Wildcat), Vinery Florida		118/60	1/1	0/1	(D'cats Meow, \$134,446)	\$2,012,831	241	6	1.53	1.37
16	VALUE PLUS (01, Unbridled's Song), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$5,000	121/67	1/1	1/1	(All Due Respect, \$100,638)	\$1,915,540	208	1	1.05	1.26
17	ROAR OF THE TIGER (99, Storm Cat)	Died, 2010	117/59	3/4	1/3	(Tazz, \$134,691)	\$1,697,269	*249	5	0.84	1.21
18	THREE WONDERS (97, Storm Cat)	Died, 2008	106/59	1/2	0/1	(Trelawny, \$121,309)	\$1,661,085	278	5	1.03	1.14
19	BURNING ROMA (98, Rubiano), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$3,000	90/53	3/3	1/3	(Queen Drama, \$126,705)	\$1,469,193	137	4	0.84	1.31
20	SUAVE (01, A.P. Indy)	\$4,500	99/48	2/2	0/2	(Indy Tune, \$83,296)	\$1,436,815	*140	3	1.03	1.28
21	WEST ACRE (95, Forty Niner), Stonehedge Farm South	\$2,500	49/34	4/4	1/4	(Watch Me Go, \$258,070)	\$1,403,346	291	12	1.43	1.21
22	BLACK MAMBO (99, Kingmambo)	Died, 2009	89/46	1/1	0/1	(Argentine Tango, \$113,075)	\$1,362,310	*170	2	0.95	1.34
23	MASS MEDIA (01, Touch Gold), Journeyman Stud	\$2,000	44/33	3/8	1/3	(Manicero, \$271,500)	\$1,247,766	70	3	1.61	1.13
24	CITY PLACE (00, Storm Cat), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	65/37	2/2	1/2	(City Sage, \$123,042)	\$1,241,522	160	6	1.47	1.09
25	INDIAN OCEAN (02, Stormy Atlantic), Bridlewood Farm	\$2,500	89/48	1/1	0/1	(Ocean Princess, \$122,504)	\$1,226,567	*177	2	0.83	1.33
26	B L'S APPEAL (97, Valid Appeal), Randolph Thoroughbreds	\$2,000	72/42	0/0	0/0	(B L's Tsumani, \$76,988)	\$1,175,126	187	2	1.06	1.22
27	WERBLIN (99, Unbridled's Song)	N/A	81/37	1/1	1/1	(Philly Bound, \$153,612)	\$1,100,783	*165	2	0.81	1.05
28	AWESOME OF COURSE (00, Awesome Again), Journeyman Stud	\$5,000	18/8	4/8	3/4	(Fort Loudon, \$333,485)	\$1,065,961	40	5	3.26	1.25
29	ACT OF DUTY (00, Mr. Prospector), Bridlewood Farm	\$2,000	74/38	0/0	0/0	(Aintnothinbutakiss, \$71,940)	\$952,820	*114	1	0.79	1.25
30	SARAVA (99, Wild Again), Bridlewood Farm	\$1,500	57/31	1/1	0/1	(Gladding, \$133,375)	\$945,850	141	1_	0.75	1.25
31	GIBSON COUNTY (97, In Excess)	Died, 2008	62/36	2/2	1/2	(Gibson, \$143,545)	\$914,841	116	5	0.87	0.94
32	PROUD ACCOLADE (02, Yes It's True)	Died, 2009	50/26	0/0	0/0	(White Merlot, \$114,070)	\$907,579	*102	3	1.37	1.28
33	DONERAILE COURT (96, Seattle Slew), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$3,000	80/34	2/3	0/2	(Sporting Art, \$53,938)	\$866,853	*605	23	1.10	1.35
34	MARQUETRY (87, Conquistador Cielo)	N/A		0/0	0/0	(Marquet Rebel, \$65,912)	\$800,209	*876	34	1.14	1.44
35	STRAIGHT MAN (96, Saint Ballado), Signature Stallions	\$6,000	53/24	0/0	0/0	(Huntingman, \$65,439)	\$702,404	329	11	1.08	1.17
36	IMPERIALISM (01, Langfuhr), Get Away Farm	\$5,000	42/21	2/2	0/2	(Imperial Czar, \$101,000)	\$678,103	92		1.01	0.98
37	A. P. WARRIOR (03, A.P. Indy), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$6,000	55/26	1/1	0/1	(Battle of Love, \$98,241)	\$665,687	81	2	0.82	1.51
38	WAGON LIMIT (94, Conquistador Cielo), Bridlewood Farm	\$2,000	48/26	0/0	0/0	(Rehoboth, \$85,435)	\$661,546	170		1.42	1.18
39	HEAR NO EVIL (00, Carson City), Journeyman Stud	\$3,500	20/9	2/3	0/2	(Jackson Bend, \$422,000)	\$646,787	28	2	2.90	1.52
40	¶ HIGH COTTON (03, Dixie Union), Ocala Stud Farm	\$5,000	30/15	1/1	0/1	(Currency Swap, \$180,000)	\$644,743	41	1	1.28	1.24

\*A-E and COMPARABLE INDEX: The lifetime Average-Earnings Index indicates how much purse money the progeny of one sire has earned, on the average, in relation to the average earnings of all runners in the same years; average earnings of all runners in any year is represented by an index of 1.00. The Comparable Index indicates the average earnings of progeny produced from mares bred to one sire, when these same mares were bred to other sires. Only 32% of all sires have a lifetime AEI higher than their mares Comparable Index.

ing with O'Farrell, three changes seem to be responsible for the transition from struggling to better times.

The first change occurred last year when the O'Farrell family sold the 185-acre home of Ocala Stud, located on the southwest border of Ocala, to developer and horseman John Brunetti for a reported \$9 million.

The terms of the sale to Brunetti provide Ocala Stud with a long-term lease of the farm. It also provided the family members some income.

"It is a family-owned business," O'Farrell said. "It's written that Mike O'Farrell is Ocala Stud, but that's because I run it. I'm kind of the man at the farm, but it's not mine. It's the family's."

The leading man at today's Ocala Stud, the 64-year-old O'Farrell would never admit to aspiring to that role. He thinks of himself as more of a behind-the-scenes type, working to make things better for his family and for the Florida industry.

The truth is O'Farrell is like a Jimmy Stewart character—quiet, even a bit shy most of the time. O'Farrell even resembles and sounds a bit like the tall, lean, legendary actor.

Since O'Farrell's mother, Nancy, died in 1987, the farm had belonged to O'Farrell and his sisters. As managing partner, O'Farrell had been caught between his goal to improve and grow the farm and his need to provide income to his sisters.

"When my mother passed away, my sisters inherited a portion of the only asset that the family had. They were part-owners, but they didn't get any money," O'Farrell explained. "I named a 2-year-old filly Penniless Heiress after my sister Bunny because she said, 'I'm just a damn penniless heiress.' And it was true."

The sale of the land preserves Ocala Stud's home and identity, and, at the same time, solves the "penniless heiress" problem for Mike's sisters.

"When we sold (the property), not a nickel of it went to the operation of the farm," O'Farrell said. "It didn't pay any bills. It hasn't bought us any mares or stallions. All the money went to the family members, of which I am one. The way it has made it easier for the farm is that it has fulfilled an obligation to my sisters and their families."

The return of his two sons, Joe and David, to work on the farm provided the second major change at Ocala Stud.

"The timing was good for them, and it was great for me," O'Farrell explained. "Because, to be honest, when they came back, it reinvigorated me. Their return was good for them, and it was good for me. It was good for the farm."

Obviously, the elder O'Farrell is proud of his sons and glad to have them back on the farm, but it was never his plan.

"When my boys graduated and went away to college, it

# BRING THE HEAT

(In Excess—One Hot Mama, by Incinderator

# LEADS THE PACK



82% Juvenile Winners From 2011 Starters

Higher than <u>ANY STALLION</u> listed in the 150 Leading Two-Year-Old Sires of 2011\*

### LET HIS NUMBERS DO THE TALKING:

- Improves his mares CI by over 27%
- Over 13% Stakes Horses
- 75% Winners/Runners
- Average earnings per runner over
   23-TIMES his current fee
- 11% 2YO Stakes Winners & 16% 2YO Stakes Horses
- Early earnings potential 2YOs average
   15-TIMES his current fee
- Nearly 1 IN 10 of his runners set a record

### WARD RANCH

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<sup>\*</sup> BloodHorse.com Jan. 11, 2012

changed my life," he explained. "They were my best friends. I went to all of their sporting events. I went to anything that they were involved in. When I was an empty-nester, I just kind of lost focus and desire.

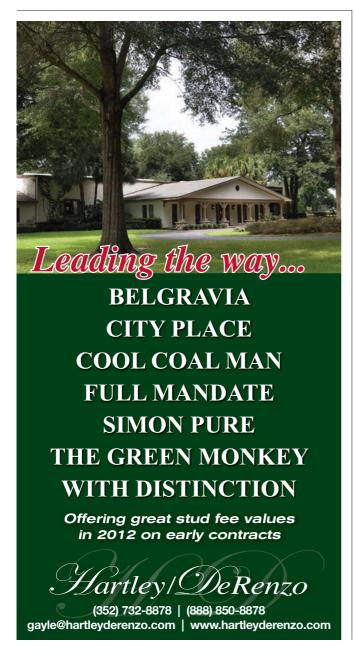
"When David graduated, he wanted to come back and work on the farm. He went to work right at the bottom—the broodmare crew."

Not long after David, 31, returned, his brother Joe, 34, decided to come back to work at the farm.

"(Joe) graduated in accounting," the proud father said. "My bookkeeper was in poor health, and (Joe) came back and went to work in the office."

Now, with both boys involved in key parts of the business, the future for Ocala Stud and for three generations of O'Farrells who have worked there looks as secure as the horse business can look

"(Farm manager) Bob Noble is getting older," O'Farrell said. "He will eventually retire, and David will be the farm manager. David is selling the seasons and he works on the broodmare end. He is the assistant broodmare guy. Joe knows the workings of the office. They would do extremely well. The farm would be in good hands if I was gone tomorrow."



Finally, winning is key to success in the horse business, and Ocala Stud has been winning.

For the last two years, four fillies that came off Ocala Stud have been lighting up tote boards across the nation.

Turbulent Descent, Rigoletta, and R Heat Lightning—all foals of 2008—have won grade I races, with Turbulent Descent becoming the star of the trio late in 2010. As a 2-year-old, the daughter of Congrats won the Hollywood Starlet Stakes (gr. I).

By the end of her 3-year-old campaign, Turbulent Descent had added two more grade Is—the Santa Anita Oaks and the prestigious Test Stakes—and was the 7-5 favorite for the Nov. 4 Sentient Jet Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (gr. I) at Churchill Downs.

Turbulent Descent lost that day, but Ocala Stud still won. Another Ocala Stud-bred, Musical Romance, won the seven-furlong race as a 20-1 shot.

Coming down the stretch, Musical Romance ran by Turbulent Descent and held off Switch and Her Smile to win by 11/4 lengths.

"I was pulling for Musical Romance, too. Musical Romance is from a family that we not only have her dam, but we have sisters and nieces—and all producing," noted O'Farrell. "From an economic standpoint, Musical Romance was more beneficial to Ocala Stud."

Musical Romance's win helped a number of Ocala Stud catalog pages, whereas Ocala Stud had already sold Roger's Sue, the dam of Turbulent Descent.

Another high-class filly, R Heat Lightning, was foaled, broken, and trained at Ocala Stud. She won the Spinaway Stakes (gr. I) and ran second in the 2010 Grey Goose Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (gr. I). R Heat Lightning was bred and raced by Joyce Robsham, who has been a major client for Ocala Stud over the years.

The third grade I-winning filly from the group was Rigoletta.

"She sold for \$35,000," O'Farrell said. "I tried to promote that filly to everybody I knew and everyone that I'd done business with, and they couldn't get over the fact she was so pigeon-toed. She won the Oak Leaf Stakes, a grade I."

In addition to those fillies, Ocala Stud has been recently represented by stakes winners Lisa's Booby Trap, Tackleberry, and Gourmet Dinner.

"We're among the leading breeders," O'Farrell pointed out with pride about the farm's rank nationally. "Now, granted, every year has not been as good as the last two years. And next year, and the following year, we might not be in the hunt. But you know what, we'll worry about that next year.

"So I'm tellin' my kids, 'You know we're the eighth-leading breeder nationally. And out of the top 20 we're the only people without a family fortune outside the horse business.' It's true. No one else has done it just in the horse business. They all got somethin'. We ain't got nothin' but horses."

On the basis of earnings per start, Ocala Stud with \$9,551 trailed only Aaron and Marie Jones.

Ranked by number of grade I wins, Ocala Stud was tied with Jack Ronan and Des Vere Hunt Farm, Nancy Dillman, Grapestock, and Old English Rancho with three each.

2011 Florida Second-Grop Sires By Farnings												
Sire	Named Foals	Rnrs	Wnrs	Stks	Earnings							
With Distinction												
Pomeroy					+ / -/							
Suave												
Mass Media	70	44	33	3	\$1,247,766							
Imperialism	92	42	21	2	\$678,103							
A. P. Warrior	81	55	26	1	\$665,687							
It's No Joke	39	27	20	0	\$631,446							
Da Stoops	44	33	21	0	\$519,912							
Strong Contender	81	40	18	0	\$518,482							
Leading the Parade	38	22	9	0	\$270,300							
J Town	5	3	3	0	\$157,821							

### OCALA STUD HIT PARADE









Recent grade I winners to come off Ocala Stud: from left, Musical Romance, R Heat Lightning, Rigoletta and Turbulent Descent

Ocala Stud achieved this with a limited number of foals.

"There are always good years and bad years," O'Farrell said looking back. "We are not large breeders. Most years we don't produce more than 28 foals. We had a year 10 or 12 years ago where we had six stakes winners and five of them were graded stakes winners, including Chapel Royal and Shake You Down. But that year (Harry) Mangurian (of Mockingbird Farm) had \$17 million in earnings as a breeder. Big breeders? You had Tartan Farms. They had 80-100 mares. You had John Franks. You had Dan Lasater. You had Farnsworth Farms. Those were big breeders.

'Since I've been managing the farm, up until five years ago, we never produced more than 35 foals in any one year," O'Farrell said. "Last two or three years we've produced 35-38 foals, but it is not like we are big breeders. To achieve what we've achieved, I feel pretty fortunate.

"We have more mares than we've had, and they are younger and they are from better-running families. It has been a long, slow process to get the broodmare band together. A lot of them we had bred and sold and then because we liked them, we

bought them back, either through sales or claimed them because of their athleticism and looks and the breeding. The breeding has been good for us."

Aside from the younger and improved broodmare band. Ocala Stud has also benefitted from the acquisition of the stallion High Cotton. The son of Dixie Union was the eighth-leading freshman sire nationally for 2011. As such, he offers a continuation of a line of solid stallions at Ocala Stud, which has included Explodent, On to Glory, Pentelicus, Notebook, Montbrook, Saint Ballado, and Trippi.

"Now we have High Cotton, who has done extremely well with his first crop," O'Farrell said. "He is the leading freshman sire in Florida for 2011 and didn't get the greatest opportunities. But he did extremely well with the opportunities given."

From only 44 foals in his first crop, High Cotton sired 15 winners, including grade I-winning Currency Swap, winner of the Three Chimneys Hopeful Stakes at Saratoga. In addition, he sired three stakesplaced horses, including Tarpy's Goal, third-place finisher in the Futurity Stakes

"He's by Dixie Union out of an A.P. Indy mare," noted O'Farrell. "So from a blood standpoint his dam, Happy Tune (A.P. Indy-Hum Along), is a half sister to champion Storm Song (Summer Squall—Hum Along)."

With the boys working at his side, a bigger, better broodmare band, and High Cotton on the brink of a successful stallion career, O'Farrell and Ocala Stud appear poised for a bright future.

"My goal has always been to make it another year in the business," O'Farrell explained. "Some of my earlier years were tougher than today.

"I cannot tell you how fortunate I feel. Somebody has been taking care of me. If I hadn't got a Notebook or a Montbrook or if I hadn't met clients like Izzy Cohen or I hadn't had a Carl Lizza, or the Robshams, we would not have made it.

"Somebody sent us a horse when we needed it. And if you don't get those kind, you are soon forgotten. If you don't come with a runner...listen, it's still all about getting a racehorse. If the good Lord doesn't give you one, you ain't going to make it.

"Think how times have changed," he said. "For us to still be here through a lot of difficult times, to me, it's quite an accomplishment. And I'm not braggin' on it. I'm just tellin' ya."

# Tael

Progeny earnings of more than \$3 million for the third straight year.

The only stallion to sire as many as three Florida-sired Graded stakes winners in 2011.

84% Winners / Starters

**GRAEME HALL** MILLIONAIRE MULTIPLE GRADED STAKES WINNER

Dehere - Win Crafty Lady, by Crafty Prospector 2012 fee: \$5,000 LF/SN

**Breeder Incentive:** Owners breeding more than one mare receive the second season for \$2,500.

#### 2011 Graded Stakes Winners Include:

### **DUKE OF MISCHIEF**

Winner of the \$1,000,000 Charles Town Classic S-G3 (G2, \$1,693,227).

### **TAMARIND HALL**

Winner of the Bed O'Roses Handicap-G3, Grade 1-placed in the Ballerina S. at Saratoga and second in the Foxwoods Gallant Bloom H-G2.

#### **JOE'S BLAZING AARON**

Winner of the Palm Beach Stakes-G3



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