



SOUTHEAST

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OK in Ocala

Ocala Breeders' Sales Co. key to Central Florida horsemen

BY DEIRDRE B. BILES

The Ocala Breeders' Sales Co.'s mission is simple, according to Mike O'Farrell, who has served as the Central Florida auction firm's chairman since October 2006 in addition to running Ocala Stud.

"It's here to provide the best facilities possible for people in the Ocala area to promote and sell their horses," he said.

Since the founding of OBS in the mid-1970s, the company has grown and diversified. Its ventures include an intertrack wagering teletheater, which generated a handle of \$18,383,344 during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2011, and a jai alai fronton, which is leased to an outside operator and had a handle of \$7,432,085 during the same time period. OBS, an agricultural cooperative that has 100 shares, also operates a feed and farm supplies business. In addition, it conducts an annual day of racing at its one-mile oval, which has a synthetic Safetrack surface. The four added-money events on the card are worth \$300,000.

"Even though there have been changes over the years, we have stayed true to the principles of the original shareholders," said OBS general manager Tom Ventura, who will succeed the company's retiring president, Tom Chiota, later this year. "We remain closely aligned to the local horse community, and we are very aware that the health of OBS is tied to the success of the farms that breed horses and the training centers that prepare the 2-year-olds for sales."



The Ocala Breeders' Sales Co. was host to six Thoroughbred auctions in 2011

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2012 Leading Sires in Florida

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 Florida (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through March 4, 2012. 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	2012 Stud Fee	Rnrs/Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2012 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	FULL MANDATE (99, A.P. Indy), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	54/11	1/1	0/1	(Ron the Greek, \$530,000)	\$707,908	*326	4	0.93	1.05
2	PUT IT BACK (98, Honour and Glory), Bridlewood Farm	\$5,000	79/14	2/2	1/2	(Yara, \$260,000)	\$682,074	*572	23	1.45	1.36
3	WILDCAT HEIR (00, Forest Wildcat), Journeyman Stud	\$10,000	93/25	0/0	0/0	(Wild Mia, \$42,710)	\$603,190	*292	14	1.62	1.54
4	CHAPEL ROYAL (01, Montbrook), Signature Stallions	\$10,000	92/26	0/0	0/0	(Power King, \$31,010)	\$474,199	*506	6	0.96	1.21
5	WITH DISTINCTION (01, Storm Cat), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$7,500	80/21	0/0	0/0	(Too Clever by Half, \$43,900)	\$461,337	*238	4	1.12	1.22
6	REPENT (99, Louis Quatorze), Cloverleaf Farms II	\$3,000	83/20	1/2	0/1	(Lotta Lovin, \$59,830)	\$434,181	*399	20	1.24	1.26
7	D'WILDCAT (98, Forest Wildcat), Vinery Florida	\$6,500	56/13	0/0	0/0	(D'pendable, \$34,800)	\$361,527	*273	6	1.52	1.36
8	A. P. WARRIOR (03, A.P. Indy), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$4,500	43/14	1/1	0/1	(Thunder Moccasin, \$90,000)	\$336,009	*99	3	0.89	1.51
9	LEROIDESANIMAUX (BRZ) (00, Candy Stripes), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$22,500	43/9	0/0	0/0	(Leroy's Dynameaux, \$64,260)	\$335,028	*184	5	2.33	1.78
10	GRAND REWARD (01, Storm Cat)	N/A	47/11	0/0	0/0	(Dilatory, \$56,900)	\$306,724	*407	4	1.24	1.42
11	VALUE PLUS (01, Unbridled's Song), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$2,500	53/18	0/0	0/0	(Titian, \$19,550)	\$285,609	*251	1	1.05	1.26
12	GRAEME HALL (97, Dehere), Winding Oaks Farm	\$5,000	54/12	0/0	0/0	(Belle of the Hall, \$44,750)	\$280,175	*322	19	1.56	1.31
13	WERBLIN (99, Unbridled's Song)	N/A	41/16	1/1	0/1	(Sabrina's Dance, \$46,275)	\$250,618	*172	3	0.82	1.05
14	AWESOME OF COURSE (00, Awesome Again), Journeyman Stud	\$5,000	12/4	1/1	1/1	(Awesome Feather, \$180,000)	\$246,345	*46	5	3.28	1.25
15	CITY PLACE (00, Storm Cat), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	44/14	0/0	0/0	(City Sage, \$25,200)	\$225,990	*176	6	1.45	1.08
16	THREE WONDERS (97, Storm Cat)	Died, 2008	43/10	0/0	0/0	(Trelawny, \$33,906)	\$202,184	*279	5	1.03	1.13
17	WEST ACRE (95, Forty Niner), Stonehedge Farm South	\$2,500	24/6	0/0	0/0	(Speak Easy Gal, \$41,700)	\$198,553	*301	12	1.43	1.21
18	IT'S NO JOKE (02, Distorted Humor), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$2,500	15/8	1/2	0/1	(Mr. Prankster, \$62,340)	\$189,838	*45	1	1.10	1.15
19	HALO'S IMAGE (91, Halo)	Died, 2010	33/5	0/0	0/0	(Joy of the Toy, \$48,400)	\$181,500	*543	22	1.33	1.33
20	SAINT ANDDAN (02, A.P. Indy), Journeyman Stud	\$4,500	34/6	0/0	0/0	(Bleu Darling, \$48,350)	\$179,182	*70	1	0.90	1.38
21	PROUD ACCOLADE (02, Yes It's True)	Died, 2009	23/7	0/0	0/0	(Jimmy Windows, \$38,000)	\$178,300	*117	3	1.37	1.27
22	POMEROY (01, Boundary), Vinery Florida	\$10,000	36/7	0/0	0/0	(Brooklyn Cowboy, \$23,970)	\$173,419	*149	6	1.37	1.44
23	EXCLUSIVE QUALITY (03, Elusive Quality), Journeyman Stud	\$4,000	27/9	0/0	0/0	(Christopher's Joy, \$28,200)	\$173,416	*100	1	0.82	1.11
24	GREATNESS (99, Mr. Prospector), Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$2,500	36/4	1/1	0/1	(Great Attack, \$57,000)	\$161,243	*172	7	1.46	1.07
25	ROAR OF THE TIGER (99, Storm Cat)	Died, 2010	37/6	0/0	0/0	(Starry Eyed Kate, \$31,438)	\$146,547	*289	5	0.84	1.21

*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.

In 2011 OBS conducted six auctions. They included a winter mixed sale in January, a yearling sale in August, and a fall mixed sale in October. The other auctions on the calendar were a select sale of 2-year-olds in training in March, an open sale of 2-year-olds in training in April, and an open sale of 2-year-olds and older horses of racing age in June. The gross for all six auctions combined exceeded \$70 million. The record for the company, established before America's Great Recession of the late 2000s sent Thoroughbred prices

tumbling, was the gross of nearly \$122.6 million in 2006. At that time OBS conducted two additional auctions—a February select juvenile sale and a sale of 2-year-olds in training for Adena Springs—that no longer are on the calendar.

"There is no question OBS is very important to any commercial breeder or pinhooker based in Central Florida," said Nick de Meric, a well-known consignor of 2-year-olds and a director of OBS. "It is an integral part of all those people's business plans, and its location is critical to its use-

fulness; it is as local as local can be. The alternative for us is to go somewhere else like South Florida, Kentucky, or Texas, and that all involves considerable expense. Besides, I've always felt that I've been fairly treated by OBS, even when I had a two- or three-horse consignment and was no different from anybody else. They have a blue-collar team that understands what it's like for the working horseman."

O'Farrell, 64, is a bridge from OBS' past to the present. His late father, Joe O'Farrell, who served as the vice president and general manager of one of the Sunshine State's most prominent Thoroughbred nurseries, Ocala Stud, was among the founders of OBS.

Before OBS came along, the Florida Breeders' Sales Co. served the Sunshine State's horsemen. It had been around since the late 1950s, but by the early 1970s consignors were growing increasingly dissatisfied with that auction firm's efforts.

"There were a number of people who thought changes needed to be made, my father being one of them," said Mike O'Farrell, who was in his 20s at the time. "They felt like they (FBSC officials) were taking the money they were making and putting it in their pockets rather than taking it and putting it into new and better facilities that would be good for everybody. In other words, they didn't feel like they (FBSC officials) were being progressive enough."

At Hialeah Park, when the FBSC conduct-



Aerial view of OBS and the Ocala airport in 1975

ARTHUR KUNKEL

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2011 Leading Sires in Florida

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 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).

Rank	Stallion (Foaling Year, Sire), Farm Standing	2012 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2011 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	*A-E Index	*Comp Index	*A-E Index
1	WILDCAT HEIR (00, Forest Wildcat), Journeyman Stud	\$10,000	181/110	8/13	3/8	(John Johnny 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)	N/A	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	81/40	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	(Pomeroy's 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	22	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	\$6,500	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

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ed a sale of 2-year-olds in training, there weren't enough barns to accommodate all the horses being offered by the growing community of Florida farm owners.

"Tents had to be put up in a parking lot," Mike O'Farrell remembered. "You had a whole lot of new people involved in the (Florida) horse business, but the company was controlled by only a handful of people, and they got preferential treatment as far as stabling was concerned. If you had only been in the business for five years, chances were that you weren't a shareholder (in FBSC), so you ended up in a tent. The conditions there were poor at best. The tents weren't very good back then, and the portable stalls weren't anything close to the quality of the portable stalls

that you see today."

Meanwhile, when the FBSC sold mares and weanlings in Ocala, it used a livestock pavilion and the environment there was "pretty rough," O'Farrell said.

Norman Casse of Cardinal Hill Farm was among the FBSC's disgruntled consignors.

"We were taking mares and foals over to that livestock pavilion and putting them in cattle pens; that just wasn't right," Casse said. "It didn't have the atmosphere for a sale that would have any class at all."

Casse, 75, also was unhappy because FBSC officials wouldn't listen to horsemen who had suggestions for improvements and wanted to be involved in the

decision-making process.

"I remember standing in the walking ring with Roy Kennedy (who owned Gateway Farm) at Hialeah around 1973," Casse said. "The 2-year-old sale was about to begin, and they were still putting up lights. I said, 'You know what, they don't want to take in any outside investors and they won't do anything to make the circumstances better, so we just really need to start a sale company of our own.'"

Based on Mike O'Farrell's recollections, "One year there was a shouting match and this and that at Hialeah. One thing led to another, and push came to shove," he said, "and a group of people decided, 'We're going to start our own damn sales company. The hell with you all.'"

The timing wasn't the best to be launching a new auction venture. The nation's financial health was weak in the first half of the 1970s. Ocala Stud was foreclosed on in 1971, and Joe O'Farrell, who had spearheaded the founding of the FBSC and served as its first president, had to sell his stake in that company, his son said. But even though his roots were with the FBSC and he was busy trying to rebuild Ocala Stud from the ashes, O'Farrell was committed to the OBS cause.

"He thought a sale company shouldn't be run just to make money," Mike O'Farrell said.

According to an article written by Jay Friedman, who is in charge of publicity for OBS, 10 Ocala-area breeders held the first organizational meeting for OBS in June 1974. The company got its initial funding when 25 horsemen put up



Buyers and horsemen have flocked to OBS since 1975

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JOE DIORIO

More than \$70 million worth of Thoroughbreds were sold at OBS in 2011

\$25,000 apiece. Kennedy, who died in 1980, was the inaugural OBS president. Joe O'Farrell, who died in 1983, also was among the first officers.

Another key figure in the early days of OBS was Bob Gaudio, who died in 2003. He was a former player for the Cleveland Browns football team and an Ocala farm owner.

"OBS needed additional funds and had trouble getting a loan from the banks, so he loaned the company quite a bit of money," Mike O'Farrell said.

Construction of the \$1.7 million OBS sale pavilion began in August at a site located across the street from Ocala's airport, and the company conducted its first auction, which was for 2-year-olds in training, in January 1975.

"The last week before the sale Norman Casse and a bunch of people were out there grading and pushing dirt," Mike O'Farrell said. "They were putting up fence, getting the walking ring put together, and doing this and that to get everything ready."

During the inaugural auction 187 Florida-bred juveniles were sold for a gross of \$2,497,600 Jan. 20-21. The average price

was \$13,356. The top individual price for a horse was \$150,000.

"I was very happy with the results," Kennedy said afterward. "I thought we could consider the sale a success if it averaged as low as \$12,500 or as high as \$15,000, and we were between those two figures."

Kennedy sounded confident, but hidden by his brave words was a lot of worry.

"It was rather tough," Casse said. "We had a little bit of a difficult time getting a good portion of buyers to come to Ocala. They had never been there and didn't have any idea how good what was being offered was."

Mike O'Farrell described the first sale as a "scary situation." The barn where the Ocala Stud horses were stabled was full, he remembered, "and we weren't overrun with buyers."

OBS had only a small staff and much of the office work was done by volunteers. Hilmer Schmidt, who died in 2010, and his wife, Faye, who died in 2009, stepped in to help as did many other people. To survive and grow, OBS took in more investors as the years passed.

"We knew that first year wasn't going

to be easy but we hung in there, and after several years everything got better and better," said Casse, who was the chairman of OBS for more than 25 years. "This has been an achievement of not just one person, but an achievement of many."

In 1984 OBS merged with FBSC, with OBS acquiring the rival company's assets.

"OBS helped bring the community together," O'Farrell said. "As it took more and more shareholders, it got everybody pulling on the same rope in the same direction rather than pulling against each other. It brought about some camaraderie."

In Casse's opinion an important ingredient to the long-term success of OBS was the performance of its auction graduates at the races.

"They have done well enough that we can attract major buyers in the business to Ocala to purchase horses," Casse said. "We can get buyers from anywhere."

Both Lil E. Tee, winner of the 1992 Kentucky Derby (gr. I), and champion Silver Charm, who captured the 1997 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes (gr. I), were OBS sale graduates. OBS records show that more than 20 Eclipse Award winners have been offered at OBS. In addition to Silver Charm, they include Horses of the Year Favorite Trick and Skip Away; Blind Luck, Ginger Punch, Kitten's Joy, Kodiak Cowboy, Midnight Lute, Musical Romance, She Be Wild, and Forever Together.

The most expensive horse ever sold at OBS is Garifine. The son of Belong to Me commanded \$1.8 million during the 2006 March select juvenile auction. New Jersey bloodstock agent Buzz Chace, acting on behalf of Al Gold, bought Garifine from Wavertree Stables, agent. The horse later became a winner and finished third in the 2009 Duncan F. Kenner Stakes at Fair Grounds.

In the future "we hope to continue to operate the way we always have," O'Farrell said. "I wouldn't say we're frugal, but we've never gone crazy as far as the glitz. We just want to have a nice, workable facility to do what we need to get done."

Off and on over the years there has been talk in Ocala about offering an extended pari-mutuel race meeting in the area. The involvement in OBS in such a venture is "a possibility" down the road, O'Farrell said, "if there is a need. But today," he added, "I don't see the need for racing in Ocala (beyond the OBS day of competition). If Calder (Casino & Race Course) or Gulfstream Park would cut their days substantially, that would have a negative effect on the horsemen in Ocala. At that point there might be the necessity to have a Thoroughbred race meeting here. But right now, I believe that what we need is for the races that we already have in Florida to be worth more money. That's what would really benefit the people in the horse business here in Ocala." 



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A scene of the action at OBS in the mid-1980s



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KANTHAROS

By Lion Heart
Fee: \$5,000

MAIMONIDES

By Vindication
Fee: \$3,500

POMEROY

By Boundary
Fee: \$10,000

FLORIDA