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Star of Louisiana

BY JASON SHANDLER

Evelyn Benoit climbs even higher up the charts with her Star Guitar

Though she has been a major Thoroughbred breeder and owner in Louisiana for nearly three decades, Evelyn Benoit says until recently some people in the industry saw her as a bit of a laughing stock.

“People used to laugh at me when I’d go to these sales at Keeneland or in Florida and I’d tell them I breed horses in Louisiana,” Benoit said. “I’d walk into the sale and they’d say, ‘Oh God, there is that woman with those little Louisiana horses.’ Then I’d tell them one of my major goals is to save racing in Louisiana and they would laugh even harder.”

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Evelyn Benoit, center, in the winner's circle at Fair Grounds with, from left, jockey Corey Lanerie, trainer Al Stall Jr. and Benoit's son, Tab

COADY PHOTOGRAPHY

2009 Leading Sires in Louisiana

State sire lists updated daily online.

Go to <http://breeding.bloodhorse.com/sirelists.asp>

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Louisiana (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through February 11, 2009. As supplied to The Blood-Horse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., earnings exclude monies from Japan and Hong Kong. *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	2009 Stud Fee	Rnrs/Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2009 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	YONAGUSKA (98, Cherokee Run), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$4,000	79/21	1/1	0/1	(Earth Living, \$50,000)	\$455,508	*342	7	1.16	1.31
2	LEESTOWN (94, Seattle Slew)	Died, 2008	86/13	1/1	1/1	(Lee's Spirit, \$40,000)	\$393,009	431	15	0.97	0.98
3	BRAHMS (97, Danzig), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$3,500	58/15	0/0	0/0	(Red Rhapsody, \$33,600)	\$290,216	*438	7	1.09	1.04
4	IDE (93, Forty Niner), Clear Creek Stud	\$3,000	55/11	0/0	0/0	(Tensas Yucatan, \$31,200)	\$273,890	392	14	1.30	1.19
5	TIME BANDIT (96, Time for a Change), Heritage Stud	\$2,500	39/13	0/0	0/0	(Bandido, \$36,900)	\$265,024	174	3	1.05	1.01
6	STORM DAY (97, Storm Cat), Clear Creek Stud	\$1,500	59/11	1/1	1/1	(Stormin' Sox, \$36,120)	\$251,825	227	3	0.73	1.08
7	GOLD TRIBUTE (94, Mr. Prospector), Red River Farms	\$2,000	53/9	0/0	0/0	(Dancing Rebecca, \$60,000)	\$237,837	*352	4	1.06	1.20
8	AFTERNOON DEELITES (92, Private Terms), Clear Creek Stud	\$3,000	45/9	0/0	0/0	(Classy Deelites, \$43,200)	\$210,161	*489	22	1.28	1.53
9	ZARBYEV (84, Nureyev), Foxwood Plantation	\$3,500	34/6	1/1	1/1	(Zarb's Ballerina, \$61,500)	\$187,910	*287	13	1.15	0.90
10	SEFAPIANO (89, Fappiano), Landlock Equine Center	\$2,500	29/10	2/2	1/2	(Rolling Sea, \$36,000)	\$184,453	292	21	1.37	0.97
11	SNUCK IN (97, Montbrook), Matthews Thoroughbred Farm	\$2,500	61/12	0/0	0/0	(Gentsfinishfirst, \$26,900)	\$182,844	245	3	0.95	1.00
12	HONOR GLIDE (94, Honor Grades), Fanlew Farms	\$2,500	29/8	0/0	0/0	(Euroglide, \$31,800)	\$129,982	132	1	0.67	1.20
13	RUNNING STAG (94, Cozzene), Judice Farms	\$5,000	48/8	0/0	0/0	(Close the Deal, \$16,800)	\$123,891	328	6	1.12	1.52
14	FINEST HOUR (94, Forty Niner), Camelot Farm	\$2,000	37/4	0/0	0/0	(Miracleinthemaking, \$27,600)	\$106,885	252	4	0.73	0.81
15	GOOD AND TOUGH (95, Carson City), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	38/5	0/0	0/0	(Spicy McHaggis, \$15,880)	\$106,393	*286	11	1.35	1.26
16	BELEK (86, Irish Tower)	Died, 2006	13/2	1/1	1/1	(John Charles, \$63,120)	\$104,036	215	13	0.95	0.85
17	PRINCE OF THE MT. (91, Mt. Livermore), Red River Farms	\$1,000	22/4	1/1	1/1	(Jeanne's Sweep, \$35,400)	\$100,307	125	6	0.82	0.83
18	IN A WALK (89, Chief's Crown), Averett's Farm	\$750	22/6	0/0	0/0	(Maddy Walk, \$15,000)	\$95,045	206	4	0.74	0.83
19	LIKE A SOLDIER (95, Deputy Minister)	N/A	12/5	0/0	0/0	(Jenny's Say, \$24,000)	\$84,125	73	1	0.92	1.04
20	EASYFROMTHEGITGO (99, Dehere), 519 Thoroughbreds	\$3,500	17/5	0/0	0/0	(Stylinfromthegitgo, \$12,730)	\$79,011	78	0	0.65	1.10
21	ROBYN DANCER (87, Crafty Prospector), Shady Lane Farm	N/A	42/4	0/0	0/0	(Champagne Brunch, \$10,296)	\$78,916	623	21	1.15	1.38
22	FORTY WON (91, Forty Niner), Averett's Farm	\$1,000	17/3	0/0	0/0	(Carol's Specialwon, \$17,600)	\$77,780	166	3	0.85	0.88
23	DEPUTY DIAMOND (95, Deputy Minister)	N/A	27/3	0/0	0/0	(Retief, \$26,400)	\$75,820	160	0	0.59	0.91
24	HALOS AND HORNS (95, Saint Ballado), Aucoin Farms	\$1,500	13/6	0/0	0/0	(Hello Poochi Pooh, \$17,100)	\$74,719	90	1	0.90	0.98
25	ERLTON (96, Buckaroo), Red River Farms	\$1,500	23/2	0/0	0/0	(Dessy, \$16,620)	\$72,952	85	0	0.83	1.08
26	RICHTER SCALE (94, Habitony), Chad White Farm	\$2,500	42/6	0/0	0/0	(Scalding Hot, \$12,000)	\$71,230	297	7	0.86	1.46
27	WIRE ME COLLECT (93, Clever Trick), Traders Rest Farm	\$1,500	19/3	0/0	0/0	(Wiremeallicheck, \$21,000)	\$70,455	109	3	1.00	0.82
28	SILKY SWEEP (96, End Sweep)	N/A	13/3	0/0	0/0	(Sweepnoval, \$29,800)	\$68,840	58	0	0.87	1.06
29	MILLENNIUM WIND (98, Cryptoclearance), 519 Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	29/3	0/0	0/0	(Credit Storm, \$9,750)	\$67,732	*203	2	0.61	1.42
30	TOOLIGHTTOQUIT (92, Dixieland Brass), Ryder River Ridge Farm	\$2,500	13/2	0/0	0/0	(Coach Mike, \$20,000)	\$67,685	128	6	1.10	1.13

*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.

It is Benoit who is getting the last laugh now, however, thanks to her multiple state-bred stakes winners. Included among those is 4-year-old Star Guitar,

who has now won six of seven lifetime starts after romping to a seven-length victory Feb. 7 in the \$200,000 Louisiana Premier Night Championship Stakes at Delta

Downs Racetrack Casino & Hotel. The Quiet American colt has now earned more than \$330,000 for Benoit and her husband, Maurice, who race their horses under the name Brittlyn Stables.

Star Guitar is the true definition of a homebred. Not only did Brittlyn breed and race the colt's dam, Minit Towinit, but also raced his granddam, Roaring Fireplace.

"She was the first winner I ever had," Benoit said of Roaring Fireplace. "She had a cracked sesamoid when I bought her, and the owner didn't want her. After she couldn't race anymore, she gave me Minit Towinit. I raised her in my backyard."

Benoit, a Louisiana native whose love of horses began when she was 5 after her parents gave her Shetland ponies for her birthday, used to raise all of her horses in their "backyard." A 30-acre farm 17 miles from the Gulf of Mexico near the town of Houma, La., Brittlyn Stables is not your average place to raise horses.

"We have mosquitoes as big as saddles and huge snakes and possums running around," Benoit said. "By the time our horses got to the racetrack and all they had to see were other horses, they would think it was nothing. They were just happy to be out of Africa."

After Hurricane Katrina, Benoit de-



Star Guitar winning the Feb. 7 Louisiana Premier Night Championship

CODY PHOTOGRAPHY

2009 Leading Sires in New Mexico

State sire lists updated daily online.
Go to <http://breeding.bloodhorse.com/sirelists.asp>

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in New Mexico (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through February 11, 2009. As supplied to The Blood-Horse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., earnings exclude monies from Japan and Hong Kong. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A ♯) indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race.

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								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	CHIMES BAND (91, Dixieland Band)	Died, 2005	27/5	0/0	0/0	(Daddy O., \$44,400)	\$166,007	311	21	1.20	1.34
2	IN EXCESSIVE BULL (94, In Excess)	Died, 2006	31/5	1/1	1/1	(Excessive Victory, \$75,000)	\$153,686	249	8	0.72	0.77
3	GHOSTLY MOVES (92, Silver Ghost), Callaway Farm	\$4,000	28/3	1/1	1/1	(Some Ghost, \$60,000)	\$151,630	153	14	1.26	1.07
4	PRECOCITY (94, Aferd), Mesa Vista Stud	\$4,000	17/2	1/1	1/1	(Waymore's Blues, \$75,000)	\$121,158	145	6	1.04	0.99
5	FAVORITE TRICK (95, Phone Trick)	Died, 2006	26/8	0/0	0/0	(F Swoop Trick, \$21,000)	\$99,486	*471	19	1.07	1.72
6	DESERT GOD (91, Fappiano), A & A Horse Ranch	\$6,000	17/4	0/0	0/0	(Betternilook, \$25,975)	\$97,306	163	11	1.20	0.69
7	GOLD CASE (94, Forty Niner), Mesa Vista Stud	\$5,000	34/7	0/0	0/0	(Gold Goddess, \$24,500)	\$96,308	*457	20	1.21	1.20
8	MR. GROUSH (94, Crafty Prospector), Weathery Horse Farms	\$1,000	8/4	0/0	0/0	(Kiss Craft, \$23,748)	\$77,378	36	0	0.59	0.79
9	COMIC GENIUS (98, Unbridled), Doubletree Farm	\$2,500	13/4	0/0	0/0	(McKenna Boy, \$20,650)	\$72,376	72	1	0.67	0.64
10	SILVER SEASON (96, Silver Ghost)	N/A	8/2	0/0	0/0	(Doodat, \$37,200)	\$67,524	34	3	1.60	1.09

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2009 Leading Sires in Texas

State sire lists updated daily online.
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For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Texas (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through February 11, 2009. As supplied to The Blood-Horse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., earnings exclude monies from Japan and Hong Kong. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A ♯) indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race.

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								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	VALID EXPECTATIONS (93, Valid Appeal), Lane's End Texas	\$10,000	49/9	0/0	0/0	(Tres Dangereux, \$34,700)	\$211,290	470	32	1.39	1.32
2	PINE BLUFF (89, Danzig), Duncan 21 and Change Farm	N/A	24/3	0/0	0/0	(Stopbluffing, \$28,425)	\$100,691	*566	34	1.61	1.69
3	SWAMP (96, Slew City Slew), Collier Vet Clinic	\$1,000	10/3	1/1	1/1	(Snug, \$67,000)	\$94,532	23	1	1.33	1.20
4	OPEN FORUM (94, Deputy Minister), Delta Equine Center	\$2,500	17/7	0/0	0/0	(Glitter's Forum, \$22,800)	\$60,929	*412	11	0.99	1.34
5	EARLY FLYER (98, Gilded Time), Valor Farm	\$3,500	18/4	0/0	0/0	(Elmer's Girl, \$14,450)	\$54,608	89	3	1.33	0.94
6	DIXIELAND HEAT (90, Dixieland Band), Key Ranch	\$2,000	16/2	0/0	0/0	(Dixie Dust, \$18,960)	\$47,436	*244	9	1.19	1.05
7	MAGIC CAT (95, Storm Cat), Valor Farm	\$2,500	25/2	0/0	0/0	(Pacific Tsunami, \$16,800)	\$40,240	176	10	0.77	1.02
8	HADIF (86, Clever Trick)	Pnsd	12/2	0/0	0/0	(Austin Lights, \$17,480)	\$39,189	372	24	0.85	1.08
9	FESTIVAL OF LIGHT (97, A.P. Indy)	Pnsd	6/2	0/0	0/0	(Light Lace, \$15,120)	\$35,901	54	1	0.78	1.26
10	CAPTAIN COUNTDOWN (96, Relaunch), Double S Tbred Farm	\$1,500	14/3	0/0	0/0	(Captain Kite, \$9,300)	\$35,863	78	1	0.71	0.72

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cided she could no longer keep her horses at their farm and now sends all of them to Clear Creek Farm and Considine Farm

in Central Kentucky. Currently, Brittlyn has more than 17 horses in training and seven mares. Included among them are

the newest additions, Our New Empire and Uncommon Queen, who are in foal to Mr. Greeley and Quiet American, respectively. Benoit also purchased a colt by Smarty Jones and a filly by Fusaichi Pegasus at the 2008 Keeneland September yearling sale.

The mares were bought to replace Minit Towinit and X Strawdnair, who started Brittlyn's success but are now deceased. X Strawdnair's first two foals were stakes winners for Benoit: Mean Butterbean and Brother Bean. Minit Towinit has also produced stakes winners Favorite Minit and Grand Minit, who most recently finished fourth to Star Guitar in the Louisiana Premier Night Championship Stakes despite losing a shoe.

Although Benoit has had several state-bred stakes winners, she says Star Guitar is the best horse she has ever had. In fact, both Benoit and the colt's trainer, Al Stall Jr., admit that Star Guitar is not your average Louisiana-bred.

"I've always been high on him," said Stall, one of three trainers that Brittlyn uses—all of them with Louisiana roots. Victor Arceneaux and Doris Hebert are the others. "When you look at him, he fits

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2009 Leading Sires in Oklahoma

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For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Oklahoma (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through February 11, 2009. As supplied to The Blood-Horse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., earnings exclude monies from Japan and Hong Kong. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A #) indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race.

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								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	TACTICAL CAT (96, Storm Cat), Diamond G Ranch	\$2,500	61/15	1/1	0/1	(Tacky Cat, \$28,830)	\$234,506	418	22	1.21	1.38
2	DIAMOND (95, Mr. Prospector), Oklahoma Equine	\$2,500	33/5	0/0	0/0	(Movin' Out, \$54,600)	\$124,042	227	5	1.23	1.16
3	MALABAR GOLD (97, Unbridled), Winner's Circle Farms	N/A	43/5	0/0	0/0	(Stettler, \$28,500)	\$106,242	*202	3	0.69	1.13
4	ARTAX (95, Marquetry), Diamond G Ranch	\$2,500	37/6	0/0	0/0	(Living Out a Dream, \$13,372)	\$102,200	368	6	1.12	1.46
5	EVANSVILLE SLEW (92, Slew City Slew), Diamond G Ranch	\$2,500	32/4	0/0	0/0	(Foxy's Boy, \$25,200)	\$77,709	*385	26	1.23	0.95

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"I took my time with him because I thought it was the best thing for him," said Stall, who hasn't decided on the next step for Star Guitar, but may run him in open company somewhere down the line. "A lot of owners would have said, 'When are you going to run him?' After all, I kept sending her bills for \$3,000 a month and it was adding up. Evelyn never pressured me once. That is one of the things that everyone loves about her; she always has the best interests of her horses at heart. She just loves horses.

"She is a great woman with a lot of personality. She also has a lot of horse sense, too."

TRAINER AL STALL JR.

"She is a great woman with a lot of personality. She also has a lot of horse sense, too."

Though Benoit's love of horses is without question, they are only one part of her extraordinary life. She also runs the family oil and gas service business, Benoit Machines, and manages the family's 13 real estate properties in the Southeast region. All of this in addition to running Brittlly Stables.

Up until late in 2007, Benoit had her husband to help with much of the work, especially Benoit Machines, which he ran for 35 years and turned into a world leader in the area of threaded tubing. But on Nov. 6, all of that changed. Maurice was involved in a horrible automobile crash while coming home from work.

"I was home making dinner when my youngest son called and told me my husband had been in an awful wreck," Benoit recalled. "I dropped straight to my knees.

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Apparently, an 18-wheeler was parked on the side of the road and pulled onto the highway without any lights on. My husband hit it at full speed and went right under. He was in such bad shape they said

he only had seconds to live. The doctors did a wonderful job just getting him to the hospital."

Maurice's injuries were catastrophic. In addition to his leg being crushed, he also

had all the fingers on his right hand severed, every rib in his body broken, and had holes in both lungs and his heart, among other things. In a coma for three months, Maurice miraculously came out of it. He is now resting at the family's Louisiana home with 24-hour nursing help, and though his recovery has been painstaking, he is able to get around with a walker.

"It's definitely taken its toll on him, but he is still very sharp mentally," Evelyn said. "All things considered, he is doing well. It has truly been a miracle. I mean, when he first came home, he had cuts on every part of his body from the neck down. He's had a couple of strokes since the accident but came back from them, too. He's been very strong.

"I never knew how one instant can change a family's life forever. I cried for 27 straight days after he got hurt, but eventually you just have to get up and take care of business."

Benoit said running Benoit Machines is a major challenge for her, especially since the industry is made up primarily of men. That's where being in the Thoroughbred business all of these years has helped her.


"For a woman to step in and become the president of this type of company is difficult," said Benoit. "I've had to learn a lot. But dealing with all those big egos in the horse racing industry has helped. You can't let people push you around."

Benoit's other passions are her children and music, which go hand-in-hand in the Benoit family. A mother of five, three of Benoit's sons are professional musicians, including her oldest, Tab, who is a Grammy Award-nominated Cajun/blues performer.

Winner of the Contemporary Blues Male Artist of the Year Award and the B.B. King Entertainer of the Year Award for best blues musician, Tab has written songs that have aired on prime time shows such as *Northern Exposure*, *Melrose Place*, and *Party of Five*. He even appeared on camera in the show *Baywatch Nights*. In fact, Benoit named Star Guitar after Tab, who is also very active in Voice of the Wetlands, an environmental group dedicated to preserving the nation's wetlands.

Evelyn is so multi-talented that she will even make an occasional appearance on stage at one of Tab's concerts to do a little singing. "They let me perform at special shows and jazzfests," Benoit said. "I'll close the shows once in a while."

But even performing at major concerts doesn't match the thrill that Benoit gets from racing. It is a passion she still finds time for, despite the family's recent tragedy.

"The night at Delta Downs was so exciting I wouldn't give it up for a million bucks," Benoit said. "It was great to see both horses run so well and to see Star Guitar beat the best in the state." 



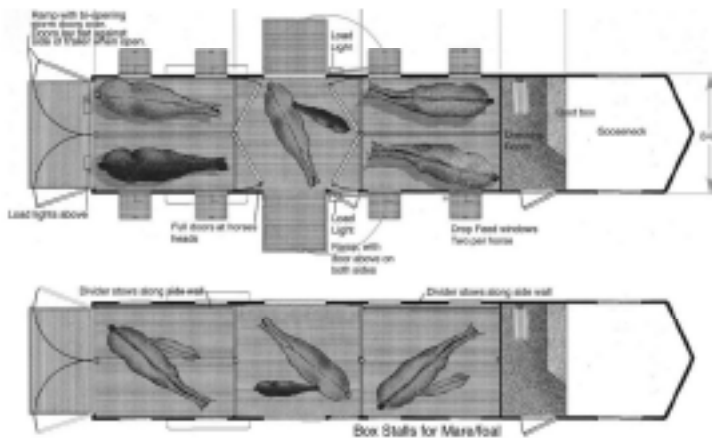
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Benoit's son is a Grammy Award-nominated Cajun/blues performer

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