

# SOUTHEAST

## IN THIS SECTION

LEADING SIRES IN FLORIDA  
BY 2013 PROGENY EARNINGS

LEADING SIRES IN FLORIDA  
BY 2012 WINNERS

LEADING SIRES IN FLORIDA  
BY 2012 STAKES WINNERS

## ADVERTISERS' INDEX

7

AIKEN TRIALS  
[WWW.THEAIKENTRAININGTRACK.COM](http://WWW.THEAIKENTRAININGTRACK.COM)

59

BRIDLEWOOD FARM  
[WWW.BRIDLEWOODFARM.COM](http://WWW.BRIDLEWOODFARM.COM)

61

DOUBLE DIAMOND FARM  
[WWW.DOUBLEDIAMONDFARM.COM](http://WWW.DOUBLEDIAMONDFARM.COM)

63

NORTHWEST STUD  
[WWW.NORTHWESTSTUD.COM](http://WWW.NORTHWESTSTUD.COM)

65

OCALA STUD FARM  
[WWW.OCALASTUD.COM](http://WWW.OCALASTUD.COM)

# On the Square

*Plain-talking Eddie Plesa Jr. may be having his lucky day*

BY MIKE BERARDINO

**LIKE HER HUSBAND,** Laurie Plesa grew up around Thoroughbred horse racing. Her father, Joe Servis, was a Hall of Fame jockey. Her two younger brothers, John and Jason Servis, are trainers, with John just missing out on training a Triple Crown winner with Smarty Jones in 2004.

She gets it. So when asked what people should know about Eddie Plesa Jr., her husband of 33-plus years, Laurie Plesa doesn't hesitate.

"He's honest," she said. "You meet a lot of people in this business that aren't." These words aren't spoken out of bitterness. With more than 2,000 victories in a training career that began while working under his father in the 1970s, Plesa has enjoyed success beyond his wildest dreams, even if he has saddled just one Kentucky Derby (gr. I) starter (Three Ring in 1999).

Besides Three Ring some of Plesa's top horses over the years have been Best of the Rest, who earned more than \$1.4 million in his career and finished out of the money just six times in 32 starts; B. B Best, a multiple stakes winner with career earnings of nearly \$800,000; J J'sdream (\$1 million in career earnings); Donthelumbertrader, a 15-time winner in the 1990s; seven-time stakes winner Yesbyjimmy; and three-time 2012 stakes winner Brave Dave.

It's just that in an industry that runs on ego as much as pre-dawn coffee, Plesa has carved out a well-earned reputation for bluntness even while maintaining a larger-than-normal Rolodex of friends.



PHOTOS BY Z



ADAM COGLIANESE

Eddie Plesa Jr. and his wife, Laurie, and friends celebrate a milestone in April 2012

FLORIDA'S  
**No. 1**

2012 SIRE by:

**Progeny Earnings: \$4.5M**

**Stakes Winners: 11**

**Graded Winners: 5**

**2YO Progeny Earnings: \$1.2M**

**2YO Winners: 23**

PUT IT  
**Back**



**In 2012, PUT IT BACK sired  
more 2YO winners than:**

Medaglia d'Oro • Malibu Moon  
Elusive Quality • Kitten's Joy  
Speightstown • Unbridled's Song  
More Than Ready • Giant's Causeway  
Hard Spun • Street Sense and Tiznow

**2013**

**TWO STAKES WINNERS  
TWO CONTINENTS  
CLAWBACK captures  
Jimmy Winkfield S. at AQU  
TARTAN HALL (ARG) wins G3**

**PUT IT BACK**

Honour and Glory / Miss Shoplifter,  
by Exuberant

2013 fee: \$6,000 stands and nurses

\* SOURCE: BLOODHORSE.COM



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# 2013 LEADING SIRES IN FLORIDA

➤ Go to BloodHorse.com for daily updated sire lists

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2013 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstret SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2013 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	<b>WITH DISTINCTION</b> (01, Storm Cat), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$7,500	60/11	3/3	1/3	(Merit Man, \$100,000)	<b>\$416,397</b>	*302	7	1.11	1.23
2	<b>PUT IT BACK</b> (98, Honour and Glory), Bridlewood Farm	\$6,000	64/12	1/1	0/1	(Clawback, \$45,000)	<b>\$281,175</b>	*699	28	1.45	1.38
3	<b>WILDCAT HEIR</b> (00, Forest Wildcat), Journeyman Stud	\$8,000	51/9	0/0	0/0	(Starship Wildcat, \$32,550)	<b>\$226,759</b>	*374	18	1.54	1.55
4	<b>REPENT</b> (99, Louis Quatorze), Woodford Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	50/7	1/1	0/1	(Lotta Lovin, \$29,140)	<b>\$182,307</b>	*429	22	1.17	1.24
5	<b>EXCLUSIVE QUALITY</b> (03, Elusive Quality), Journeyman Stud	\$2,500	45/10	0/0	0/0	(Quality Lass, \$23,400)	<b>\$180,942</b>	144	2	0.94	1.10
6	<b>LEROIDESANIMAUX (BRZ)</b> (00, Candy Stripes), Woodford Stallions @ Stonewall	\$25,000	27/5	1/1	0/1	(Sky High Gal, \$48,300)	<b>\$138,272</b>	*222	9	2.07	1.71
7	<b>VALUE PLUS</b> (01, Unbridled's Song), Woodford Stallions @ Stonewall	\$4,500	38/10	0/0	0/0	(Persnickity, \$19,200)	<b>\$138,162</b>	*293	1	1.02	1.23
8	<b>A. P. WARRIOR</b> (03, A.P. Indy), Woodford Stallions @ Stonewall	\$4,500	24/3	0/0	0/0	(Siete de Oros, \$40,000)	<b>\$136,778</b>	125	3	0.90	1.45
9	<b>GRAEME HALL</b> (97, Dehere), Winding Oaks Farm	\$5,000	44/2	0/0	0/0	(Trinidad Lady, \$16,848)	<b>\$123,131</b>	*378	20	1.51	1.28
10	<b>CONCORDE'S TUNE</b> (89, Concorde Bound)	Died, 2011	26/5	0/0	0/0	(She's Gospel, \$17,600)	<b>\$99,072</b>	482	26	1.28	1.14
11	<b>BURNING ROMA</b> (98, Rubiano), Woodford Stallions @ Stonewall	\$1,000	22/6	0/0	0/0	(Bos'n Alwyne, \$18,000)	<b>\$97,763</b>	*156	4	0.84	1.26
12	<b>CITY PLACE</b> (00, Storm Cat), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	27/6	0/0	0/0	(Starship Titan, \$16,240)	<b>\$92,542</b>	199	10	1.35	1.05
13	<b>WEST ACRE</b> (95, Forty Niner)	Died, 2012	16/1	0/0	0/0	(Speak Easy Gal, \$60,000)	<b>\$85,194</b>	304	12	1.42	1.22
14	<b>B L'S APPEAL</b> (97, Valid Appeal)	N/A	22/4	0/0	0/0	(Shaye Appeal, \$18,000)	<b>\$79,841</b>	213	2	1.00	1.19
15	<b>PROUD ACCOLADE</b> (02, Yes It's True)	Died, 2009	22/3	0/0	0/0	(My Charming Clyde, \$19,220)	<b>\$69,939</b>	*122	5	1.29	1.24
16	<b>CIRCULAR QUAY</b> (04, Thunder Gulch), Journeyman Stud	\$4,000	14/3	0/0	0/0	(Salesman, \$30,600)	<b>\$68,607</b>	68	1	1.10	1.50
17	<b>GREATNESS</b> (99, Mr. Prospector), Woodford Stallions @ Stonewall	\$4,000	20/2	1/1	0/1	(Great Attack, \$45,000)	<b>\$66,541</b>	*185	8	1.48	1.07
18	<b>HALO'S IMAGE</b> (91, Halo)	Died, 2010	22/4	0/0	0/0	(Wink At the Girls, \$18,000)	<b>\$64,263</b>	*548	22	1.35	1.31
19	<b>STRONG CONTENDER</b> (03, Maria's Mon), Woodford Stallions @ Stonewall	\$3,000	17/3	1/1	0/1	(Cindys Casino, \$20,000)	<b>\$61,939</b>	*123	4	0.89	1.10
20	<b>MONTBROOK</b> (90, Buckaroo), Ocala Stud Farm	\$7,500	18/5	0/0	0/0	(Great Escape, \$12,600)	<b>\$56,636</b>	*785	47	1.60	1.57
21	<b>HIGH COTTON</b> (03, Dixie Union), Ocala Stud Farm	\$7,500	21/2	0/0	0/0	(Thefivesecondrule, \$10,200)	<b>\$55,041</b>	*109	4	1.48	1.21
22	<b>BLACK MAMBO</b> (99, Kingmambo)	Died, 2009	19/3	0/0	0/0	(Argentine Tango, \$12,540)	<b>\$53,846</b>	*184	2	0.92	1.31
23	<b>DONERAILE COURT</b> (96, Seattle Slew), Woodford Stallions @ Stonewall	\$1,000	23/4	0/0	0/0	(Prior Restraint, \$23,400)	<b>\$53,227</b>	*659	24	1.06	1.34
24	<b>UNBRIDLED TIME</b> (98, Unbridled's Song)	N/A	11/3	0/0	0/0	(Fast Time, \$12,420)	<b>\$50,570</b>	197	1	0.77	1.03
25	<b>GOTCHA GOLD</b> (03, Coronado's Quest), Ocala Stud Farm	\$2,500	14/2	0/0	0/0	(Mucho Mans Gold, \$24,600)	<b>\$49,929</b>	*45	0	0.94	1.48
26	<b>DOUBLE HONOR</b> (95, Gone West), Get Away Farm	\$2,500	28/4	0/0	0/0	(So Honored, \$13,980)	<b>\$49,002</b>	*573	20	1.10	1.20
27	<b>WAGON LIMIT</b> (94, Conquistador Cielo), Bridlewood Farm	\$2,000	9/1	0/0	0/0	(Breckenridge, \$32,400)	<b>\$46,062</b>	181	5	1.32	1.16
28	<b>AWESOME OF COURSE</b> (00, Awesome Again), Journeyman Stud	\$7,500	5/1	0/0	0/0	(Fort Loudon, \$40,000)	<b>\$44,233</b>	48	5	3.14	1.19
29	<b>MASS MEDIA</b> (01, Touch Gold), Journeyman Stud	\$2,000	17/1	0/0	0/0	(The Waco Kid, \$10,970)	<b>\$40,177</b>	*85	3	1.30	1.13
30	<b>ROAR OF THE TIGER</b> (99, Storm Cat)	Died, 2010	16/4	0/0	0/0	(Angel's Sea, \$10,850)	<b>\$38,814</b>	*303	6	0.85	1.19

**Special Note For Sire Lists:**

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in North America (stallions exported prior to the 2009 breeding season are excluded), and have runners in North America. All available statistics listed for the Northern Hemisphere through January 29, 2013. 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.)

\*AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX and COMPARABLE INDEX: Lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX indicates how much purse money the progeny of one sire has earned 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; 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 AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX higher than their mares' COMPARABLE INDEX.

“He’s very personable. He always returns calls,” Laurie Plesa added. “He has no problem giving bad news as well as good, which a lot of people don’t like to do. He always lets you know exactly where

your horse is and what’s happening with them and it makes it much easier.”

What was the famous Jack Nicholson line in *A Few Good Men*? “You can’t handle the truth!”

Plesa, 63, doesn’t care whether you can handle it or not. He’s going to give his closest associates the unvarnished truth the way he sees it.

Truthfully, he knows no other way.

“Eddie always does that,” said David Melin, the 85-year-old co-owner of Trilogy Stable, for whom Plesa has trained since 1990. “He never overstates the value of the horse. I appreciate that very much. I don’t want to visit that other world. It’s tough enough in this business as it is.”

When Melin and his wife, Olga, met with Plesa an hour or so before the Holy Bull Stakes (gr. III) Jan. 26 at Gulfstream Park, they asked a simple question about Itsmyluckyday, their fast-rising 3-year-old.

“Is the horse fit?”

Plesa nodded. “Yes, the horse is fit.”

No hyperbole. No blowing smoke. Just a straightforward, honest assessment of the son of Lawyer Ron that convinced Plesa to recommend Trilogy pay \$110,000 at the Ocala Breeders’ Sales Co. auction in March 2012.

Fit? Later that afternoon, Itsmyluckyday handed 2-year-old male champion Shanghai Bobby his first career loss, smashing the Gulfstream record for 1½

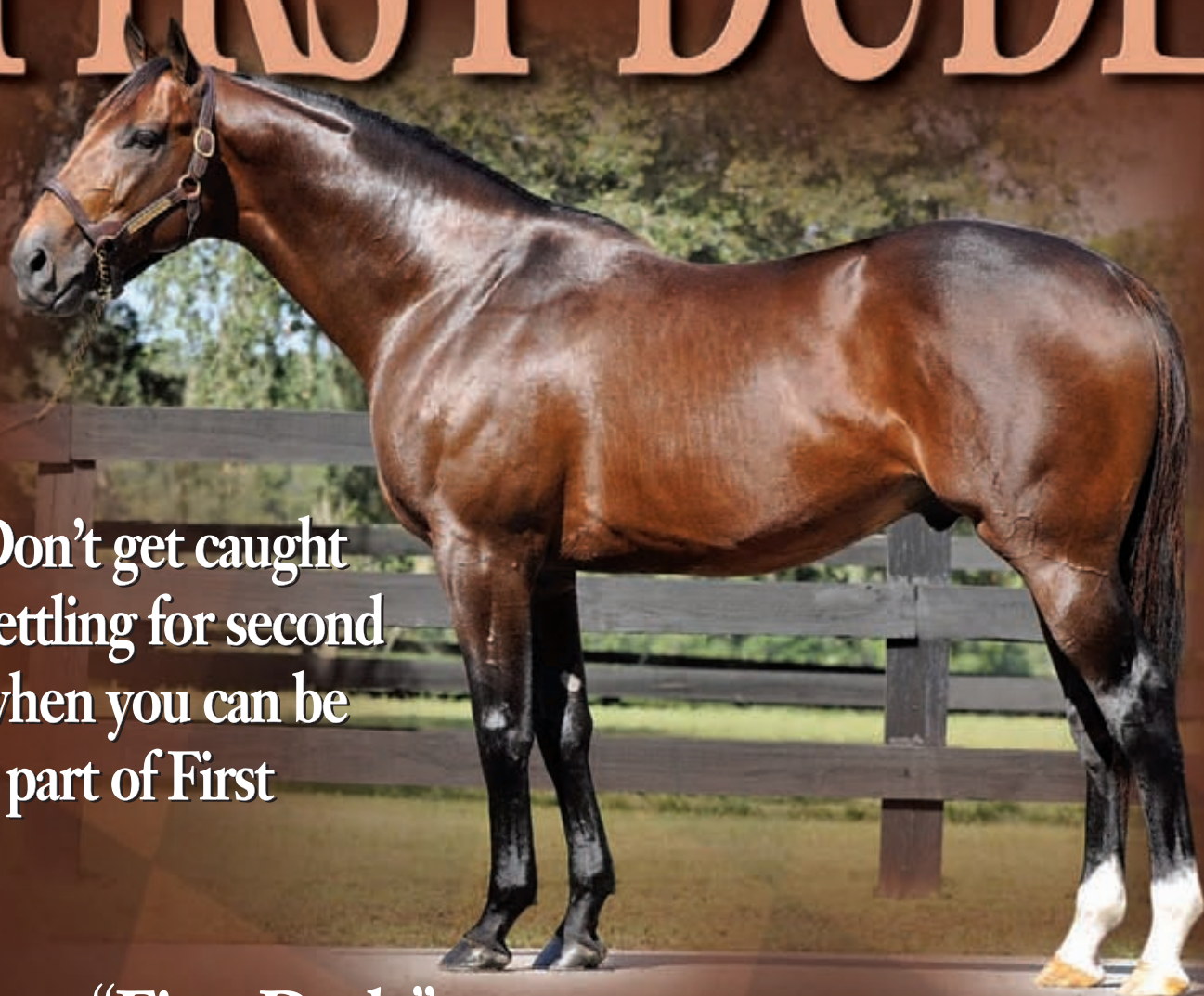


LESLIE MARTIN/ADAM OGLI/ANSE PHOTOGRAPHY

Itsmyluckyday is hot on the Derby Trail after defeating Shanghai Bobby in the Holy Bull

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SERITA HULT PHOTOS



Donald R. Dizney

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PHOTOS BY Z

Successful Song remains in training after her score in the Florida Sunshine Millions Distaff

miles by three-fifths of a second.

Before Itsmyluckyday could get on this two-race roll that began with a resounding victory in the Gulfstream Park Derby on New Year's Day, Plesa had to make a judgment call and take the colt off the turf for good.

"He's just been a horse that always showed us he had a lot of ability," he said. "He was up at Monmouth. We ran him on the turf because we had no place else to run him going five furlongs, which I knew wasn't his distance, and he ran a great race that day because he liked the turf. We brought him down here. He did everything we asked of him. We ran him in the turf race (in December), he had a rough trip...In my mind, he's a dirt horse."

He publicly admitted to a difference of opinion on that matter with jockey Paco Lopez, but in the end Plesa had it right—as he usually does.

They're not all feel-good recommendations, of course. Oftentimes it's Plesa's job to explain patiently to an owner that a certain horse isn't as full of potential as his connections might have thought.

If that winds up costing him a client, well, that sure beats the alternative of pushing a horse beyond his limits.

"If all trainers could conduct themselves like Eddie, there wouldn't be a grind behind owners and trainers," said Bruce Hill, general manager of Live Oak Plantation in Ocala. "He just conducts himself beautifully. He's not a 'yes' man. He tells you what he sees. He doesn't get any pleasure out of telling you that you have a slow horse."

Certainly not, but those things need to be said just the same.

"He's very good at letting you know, 'The horse is limited in talent. Here's what I would do. Tell me what you want to do,'"

Hill said. "He provides good counsel, good suggestions. What you do with it is up to you."

Luke Plesa can attest to that.

Now 30, the eldest of three Plesa children (Kyle and Kelsey are in college) is a police detective in Sunny Isles Beach, north of Miami. Growing up, Luke spent several summers learning the family business around Plesa's barns at Calder Race Course, where Eddie Jr. is a member of the track's Hall of Fame, and Monmouth Park, where he typically splits his summers.

The kid showed potential, but his father ended the apprenticeship before the sport's charms could seep into Luke's blood the way it had Eddie Jr.'s from the age of 5.

"He used to work for me. He was great," Plesa said. "This is the thing about this business. He's a very smart person. He would have made a fantastic assistant because he does everything that you needed to do."

So why isn't Luke working with his father?

"I pushed him away," Eddie said. "He went to college. He's got his degree. He's got a Master's. He does a fantastic job. He just got an award. But the most important thing is he goes to work with a gun on his hip, and I feel better than if he was coming out to the racetrack."

Eddie Plesa Jr. attended college for one year but found he missed the horses too much and never went back. When Luke finished his undergraduate work at Florida International University, he became the first member of his family to earn a college degree. He added a Master's at Barry University.

"I think he's proud of that," Luke said of his father. "He kind of pushed me that route."

2012 Florida Sires by Winners

Sire	Rnrs	Wnrs
Wildcat Heir	177	107
Put It Back	193	103
With Distinction	169	103
Repent	165	82
Value Plus	115	62
Graeme Hall	110	61
City Place	81	55
Roar of the Tiger	95	47
Leroidesanimaux (BRZ)	90	45
Burning Roma	77	43
Concorde's Tune	77	43
A. P. Warrior	80	42
Doneraile Court	97	41
Three Wonders	70	41
Greatness	69	40
Concerto	72	39
Exclusive Quality	76	38
Black Mambo	67	38
Imperialism	84	37
Halo's Image	67	35
Double Honor	73	34
Strong Contender	55	34
Simon Pure	52	34
B L's Appeal	63	33
Seeking the Dia	65	31
Montbrook	76	30
Saint Anddan	60	29
Proud Accolade	59	29
Mass Media	54	29
High Cotton	52	27
West Acre	47	26
Gibson County	46	25
Sarava	64	24
Marquetry	56	23
Straight Man	48	23
Wagon Limit	49	20
Scorpion	34	20
It's No Joke	31	19
Da Stoops	25	18
Essence of Dubai	40	15
Gulf Storm	37	15
Cimarron Secret	30	15
Cowtown Cat	21	14
Unbridled Time	39	13
Western Pride	34	13
Leading the Parade	32	13
Awesome of Course	21	13
Untuttible	31	12
Colony Light	21	12
American Spirit	19	12
Wekiva Springs	33	11
Circular Quay	25	10
Gottcha Gold	17	10
Hear No Evil	18	9
Weekend Cruise	24	8
Keyed Entry	20	8
Boastful	15	8
Slaughter Beach	13	8
Spellbinder	11	8

Turns out father knew best—again. It's not just horses that Eddie Plesa Jr. knows how to assess and guide properly along the optimal career path.

"He's always been there," Luke Plesa said. "With everything he's just been brutally honest. That's what you look for. You don't want anything sugarcoated. You look to your father to get advice, and it's good to get candid advice."

More of that trademark commodity came from Plesa after Successful Song, a 6-year-old mare, won the \$300,000 Flori-



# GONE ASTRAY

## Millionaire Multiple G2SW by DIXIE UNION

### Won / Placed in 10 Stakes (6 Graded)

- At 2, won second start in Saratoga Maiden Special and finished on the board in the **Champagne S-G1**
- At 3, won the **Pennsylvania Derby-G2** by 9 1/2 lengths and the **Ohio Derby-G2** by 2 1/2 lengths.
- At 4, won the **Salvator Mile-G3** by 5 lengths and finished second by less than a length to BC Classic winner **BLAME** in the **Curlin S**. Record: 5-5-4 in 21 starts, with earnings of \$1,125,162.

## Superior Family

**1st dam**  
**ILLICIT**, by Mr. Prospector. Unraced. Dam of 8 foals, 4 to race, 2 winners—**GONE ASTRAY** (c. by Dixie Union). Beyer 104. **SUBJECT STALLION**  
**Contentious** (f. by Giant's Causeway). Beyer 91, TF 107. Winner at 3 and 4 in ENG and NA, placed in 1 start at 3 in GER. \$94,660 (USA), 2nd Kölner Herbst-Stuten-Meile [G3], Pomfret S., 3rd Space Property Rosemary S.

**2nd dam** **ECLIPSE CHAMPION / 119 BEYER**  
**INSIDE INFORMATION** (f. by Private Account). Beyer 119. 14 wins in 17 starts, 2 to 4, \$1,641,000. Champion older mare in U.S., Acorn S. [G1], Breeders' Cup Distaff [G1], Spinster S. Ashland S. [G1], Ruffian H. [G1], Shuvee H. [G1], Bonnie Miss S. [G2], Molly Pitcher S. [G2], etc. Half-sister to **EDUCATED RISK** (Beyer 114, \$1,163,717, Frizette S. [G1], etc.), **EDUCATED RISK** (Beyer 102, \$191,610, Skip Trial S. [L] (MED, \$30,000), etc., sire), **Hidden Reserve** (\$203,630, 2nd Demoiselle S. [G2], etc.), **Foreign Aid** (Beyer 101, \$94,469, 2nd Jockey Club S. [G1], \$7,561), etc.). Dam of 2 winners—**ECLIPSE CHAMPION**

**SMUGGLER** (f. by Unbridled). Beyer 98. 5 wins in 9 starts at 2 and 3, \$65,000. Champion 3-year-old filly in U.S., Coaching Club American Oaks [G1] (BEL, \$300,000), Goose S. [G1] (BEL, \$180,000), 2nd Acorn S. [G1] (BEL, \$50,000), Three Ring S. [L] (MED, \$20,000), 3rd Shuvee H. [G2] (BEL, \$15,000).  
**Manipulator** (c. by Unbridled). Beyer 84. 4 wins at 3 and 4 in ARG and NA, \$1,000 (USA). Sire.  
**Collusion** (f. by Broad Brush). Beyer 62. Placed at 2, \$6,930.  
**Illicit** (f. by Mr. Prospector). See above.

**3rd dam**  
**PURE PROFIT**, by Key to the Mint. 4 wins in 5 starts at 4, \$55,000. Sire to **STRATOSPHERIC** (\$43,821 (USA), 2nd hwt. filly at 2 on English Free Handicap S. [G2], Candelabra S.-G3, etc.).  
**QUICK AS LIGHTNING** (\$188,070 (USA), 1st in 2 starts, \$1,000,000, etc.), **INFINITE** (\$122,979, Garden City S., etc.). Dam of 7 winners—**INSIDE INFORMATION** (f. by Private Account). Beyer 119. See above.

**EDUCATED RISK** (f. by Mr. Prospector). Beyer 114. 11 wins, 2 to 5, \$1,163,717, Frizette S. [G1], Top Flight H. [G1], Churchill Downs Budweiser Breeders' Cup H. [G2], Rampart H. [G2], Virginia H. [G3], Shirley Jones H. [G3], 2nd Acorn S. [G1], Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies [G1], etc. Dam of—**MILLIONAIRE (G1) / 114 BEYER**  
**CONSEQUENCE** (f. by El Prado (RED). Beyer 57. Winner at 2 and 3, \$1,000,000 (American 1000 Stakes S. [G1], \$111,000, 3rd Emerald S. [G3], \$22,000, etc.).

Bred 110 mares in 2012



**GONE ASTRAY**

Dixie Union - Illicit, by Mr. Prospector  
2013 fee: \$4,500 stands and nurses  
— first foals arrive in 2013 —



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SNIP DICKSTEIN

Plesa with Three Ring at Churchill Downs in 1999

da Sunshine Millions Distaff Stakes Jan. 19.

The original plan was for the daughter of Successful Appeal to return to Live Oak and begin her new career as a broodmare. However, Plesa had seen such improvement in Successful Song, especially as she went 1½ miles to pocket her eighth career victory (and second straight) in 27 starts, that he felt he had to state his case to Hill and Live Oak owner Charlotte Weber.

“Eddie let Mrs. Weber know the filly is doing as well as she ever has,” Hill said. “Instead of begging or trying to find ways to manipulate her into a decision, he just told her, ‘Mrs. Weber, you need to make a decision that makes you comfortable and happy. If you decide to breed her, I understand completely.’”

After sleeping on the decision for a few restless nights, Weber opted to follow Plesa’s counsel and allow Successful Song to keep running.

“That’s a perfect example of Eddie’s style,” Hill said. “He stated it clearly with no hidden agendas and no uneasy feelings. It is what it is: straightforward, transparent, clear. You don’t have to speak in tongues or speak in code with Eddie. It just feels like it’s your teammate talking to you.”

The Melins might go even further with the analogy. For them, dealing with Eddie and Laurie, the latter of whom holds an ownership stake in Itsmyluckyday, is like spending time with friends.

“They’re a great couple; it’s enjoyable to be with them,” said Melin, who entrusted his horses with two other trainers before giving them to Plesa. “I call him up, ask him what he thinks. A lot of times we’ll have lunch together. We’ll talk about the race. Eddie will tell me what he’s told the jockey.”

There is no need for distance or plausible deniability. Plesa isn’t big on excuses or triangulation. He prefers a free flow of

information in all directions. That way, he figures, the horse’s best interest may be served while appreciating the fact most owners get into the racing business for enjoyment more than profit.

“David and I have been together 22 years now; it’s a great relationship,” Plesa said. “He’s the backbone of horse racing. He enjoys the game and makes me enjoy it. Makes it that much better.”

Melin might have given his horses to Plesa sooner, but he was wary of causing tension between Plesa and his close friend Stan Hough, for whom Plesa spent several years as an assistant trainer. Melin transferred his stable to Buddy Edwards for a period before seeking out Plesa.

“David came to me one day and said, ‘If you weren’t such great friends with Stan, I would have given them to you,’” Plesa recalled. “I said, ‘Well, don’t let that stop you,’ and about a year later I got them, and we’ve been together ever since.”

Melin is careful not to offer too many suggestions. The retired foam magnate respects the sport—and Plesa—too much for that.

“We talk all the time,” Plesa said. “We go to dinner. It’s more than a business relationship. It’s a friendship. In my business you meet all kinds of people. Some of them you like more than others just because that’s the way business is, but he’s truly a great guy and he deserves it.”

Funny, but many are saying the same thing about Plesa as he navigates the “Road to the Kentucky Derby” this time around with Itsmyluckyday.

“He’s a 3-year-old,” Plesa said. “Everybody’s excited because of the Kentucky Derby. It’s hard not to get wrapped up in that. What happens as far as the way the situation goes as far as points and everything, we’ll see what happens. I’m not going to say he’s the best 3-year-old. I’m

2012 Florida Sires by Stakes Winners

Sire	Stks Wnrs.	Stks Wins
Wildcat Heir	7	7
Put It Back	6	10
City Place	5	7
Awesome of Course	4	10
Greatness	4	10
High Cotton	4	5
Strong Contender	4	4
Repent	3	6
Slaughter Beach	3	5
Graeme Hall	3	4
Leroidesanimaux (BRZ)	3	4
Concorde’s Tune	2	5
Concerto	2	4
Halo’s Image	2	3
It’s No Joke	2	3
Saint Anndan	2	3
Double Honor	2	2
Proud Accolade	2	2
Simon Pure	2	2
West Acre	2	2

going to say he was the best 3-year-old here today (after the Holy Bull).

“Three Ring was just kind of a freak thing,” Plesa said. “She was pretty dominant as far as the fillies were concerned. I talked it over with the ownership. They felt they wanted to try the Derby. Listen, these people are in this game to enjoy it and whatever they want, unless there’s a reason as far as the horse is concerned, I feel we’re supposed to go ahead and give them that pleasure.”

Having lived through the tragic death of Three Ring, who reared and bumped her head before the Mother Goose Stakes (gr. I) at Belmont Park in June 1999, Plesa finds himself walking down what promises to be an emotional Triple Crown trail.

“He loves horses. This has been his whole life,” Melin said. “I wasn’t that close to him when he had the Three Ring experience, but knowing Eddie, I think he just went through life like it didn’t happen. Maybe deep down he does think about it, but I’ve never seen him talk about it. He may never talk about it. It had to be a traumatic experience for him.”

Luke Plesa wasn’t in the paddock that day at Belmont with his parents, but he remembers the phone call with the horrific news. He remembers the reports of his father’s white shirt being soaked with Three Ring’s blood before the beloved filly was euthanized.

Eddie Plesa Jr. was quoted that day saying he would give his right arm just to bring Three Ring back to life. That’s how much he loved that horse.

“Three Ring was tragic for him,” Luke Plesa said. “It was tough. He was distraught over the whole thing. It’s nice to see him rebound like he has. I’ve been watching him do this for a long time, and I’m proud of him. He deserves it.”

That’s the honest truth. **DH**



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