

SOUTHEAST



ANNE M. EBERHARDT

Trainer Eddie Plesa Jr.

Good and Lucky

Eddie Plesa Jr. rewarded with Itsmyluckyday

BY STEVE HASKIN

LIKE MANY OTHER trainers, Eddie Plesa Jr. believes in karma, good luck charms, and whatever other-worldly powers that might help give his horses an edge. After all, in a profession where you lose 80% of the time, any edge is much appreciated.

Therefore, when Plesa and his wife, Laurie, discovered that Eric Guillot, trainer of Moreno, their main rival for last year's Woodward Stakes (gr. I), had voodoo dolls hanging from a tree outside his barn, they felt compelled to neutralize that hex by hanging Eddie's St. Francis medal (to protect animals from harm) on the bridle of their Woodward contender Itsmyluckyday. It must have worked, as Itsmyluckyday ran

down Moreno in the final furlong to win one of America's most prestigious races for older horses.

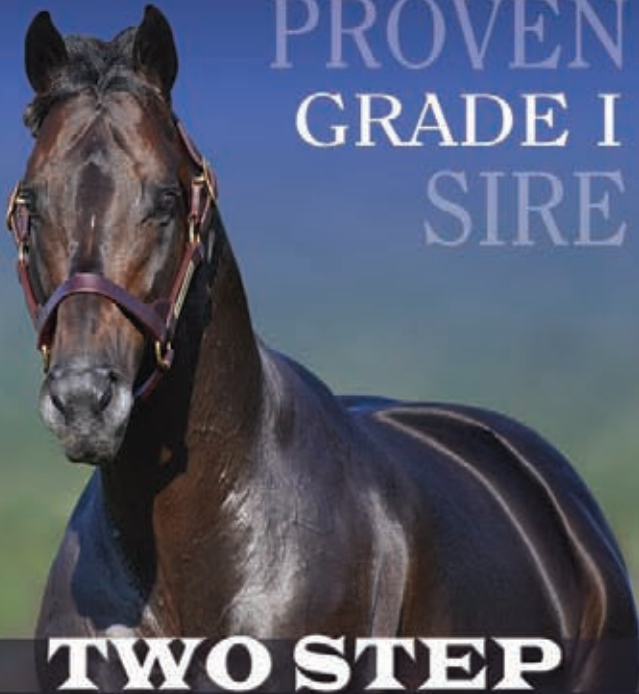
"We overpowered the voodoo," said Laurie Plesa, who is a part owner of Itsmyluckyday. "We figured we'd cover all bases. The St. Francis medal is more about a safe trip, but this time it was for the voodoo."

Of course, it could have been due to Eddie's training of the colt, such as equipping him with blinkers for the first time. But why interfere with a good story?

Itsmyluckyday has been the 65-year-old Plesa's crowning achievement as a trainer, winning more than \$1.7 million
(continued on page 50)

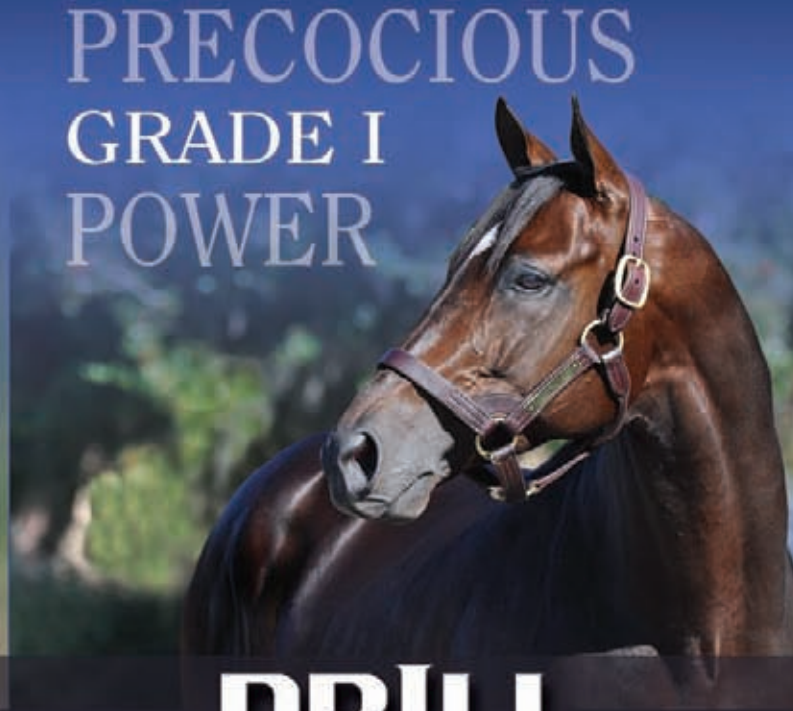
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GRADE I
SIRE

TWO STEP SALSA



PRECOCIOUS
GRADE I
POWER

DRILL

2014
#3 National
Second-Crop
Sire by Grade 1 Earnings

2014 #1 FL Second-Crop Sire

2013 #1 FL Freshman Sire

Multiple
Graded SW

GRADE 1 WINNER AT 2

Finished in the Top Four in
12 Graded Stakes (five G1s)

Winner of the
Del Mar Futurity-G1

FLORIDA'S ONLY GRADE 1 SIRE IN 2014

DANCE WITH FATE

1st, Toyota Blue Grass S-G1

CONQUEST TWO STEP

2nd by a neck in the Malibu S-G1
to Eclipse Champion 3yo nominee Shared Belief

First dam is a \$1.4 million
broodmare ('11 FTK/NOV)
and a full sister to Grade 1 producer
MAGIC STORM (G2, G1SP)

Petionville — Two to Waltz, by Seattle Slew
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Lawyer Ron — Cat Dancer, by Storm Cat
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2014 LEADING SIRES IN FLORIDA

 Go to BloodHorse.com for daily updated sire lists

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2015 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstret SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2014 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	WILDCAT HEIR (00, Forest Wildcat), Journeyman Stud	Died, 2015	223/138	8/12	0/8	(Daring Kathy, \$356,366)	\$6,230,341	*501	27	1.45	1.49
2	WITH DISTINCTION (01, Storm Cat), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$7,500	190/111	4/4	0/4	(Decisive Moment, \$170,727)	\$4,455,964	*405	10	1.16	1.20
3	EXCLUSIVE QUALITY (03, Elusive Quality), Journeyman Stud	\$2,500	107/52	3/5	1/3	(Holywell, \$415,025)	\$2,410,621	208	7	1.12	1.15
4	POLLARD'S VISION (01, Carson City), Pleasant Acres Stallions	\$6,500	110/54	3/5	2/3	(Mister Pollard, \$246,603)	\$2,208,992	*511	17	1.40	1.28
5	REPENT (99, Louis Quatorze)	N/A	99/54	1/3	0/1	(Saythreethailmary's, \$135,100)	\$2,136,949	*475	25	1.13	1.17
6	MAGNA GRADUATE (02, Honor Grades), Woodford Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	79/46	5/6	4/5	(Jessica's Star, \$347,600)	\$1,999,111	*141	6	1.02	1.16
7	VALUE PLUS (01, Unbridled's Song), HallMarc Stallions at Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$4,500	91/51	1/2	0/1	(Long On Value, \$333,338)	\$1,636,031	*332	3	0.98	1.17
8	TWO STEP SALSA (05, Petionville), Get Away Farm	\$7,500	48/28	1/1	0/1	(Dance With Fate, \$524,800)	\$1,624,133	82	1	1.52	1.06
9	GREATNESS (99, Mr. Prospector), Prestige Stallions	\$6,000	53/32	1/3	0/1	(Good Lord, \$192,155)	\$1,460,265	*197	8	1.45	1.03
10	MONTBROOK (90, Buckaroo)	Died	84/39	0/0	0/0	(Schivarelli, \$161,750)	\$1,430,406	*871	49	1.52	1.53
11	HIGH COTTON (03, Dixie Union), Ocala Stud Farm	\$5,000	80/40	0/0	0/0	(Tarp's Goal, \$99,430)	\$1,262,569	*165	4	1.08	1.33
12	IN SUMMATION (03, Put It Back), Ocala Stud Farm	\$2,500	65/31	1/1	0/1	(Puntrooskie, \$134,400)	\$1,168,632	100	1	0.86	1.51
13	HEAR NO EVIL (00, Carson City), Journeyman Stud	\$2,500	39/19	3/7	0/3	(Sing Praises, \$408,370)	\$1,140,047	80	6	1.88	1.51
14	† KANTHAROS (08, Lion Heart), Ocala Stud Farm	\$5,000	31/18	1/2	0/1	(Mr. Jordan, \$139,215)	\$868,968	48	1	1.39	1.25
15	CONCORDE'S TUNE (89, Concorde Bound)	Died, 2011	46/29	1/1	0/1	(Wicked Tune, \$94,350)	\$835,133	486	29	1.26	1.12
16	SWEET RETURN (GB) (00, Elmaumul), Ocala Stud Farm	\$3,500	41/17	0/0	0/0	(Sweet Abandon, \$159,380)	\$699,486	81	0	0.70	0.87
17	AWESOME OF COURSE (00, Awesome Again), Journeyman Stud	\$5,000	27/11	1/1	1/1	(Twotwentyfive A, \$203,038)	\$681,232	74	6	2.50	1.40
18	BENNY THE BULL (03, Lucky Lionel), Bridlewood Farm	TBA	36/22	1/1	0/1	(Libby'sluckycharm, \$66,413)	\$654,947	56	1	0.96	1.02
19	ROAR OF THE TIGER (99, Storm Cat)	Died, 2010	38/19	0/0	0/0	(Voodoo Spell, \$102,320)	\$648,961	*307	7	0.86	1.17
20	HALO'S IMAGE (91, Halo)	Died, 2010	33/19	0/0	0/0	(Blonde On Blonde, \$78,417)	\$583,670	*554	22	1.30	1.29
21	BLACK MAMBO (99, Kingmambo)	Died, 2009	21/12	2/2	0/2	(Grande Shores, \$173,468)	\$563,844	*185	4	0.95	1.27
22	WEST ACRE (95, Forty Niner)	Died, 2012	33/20	1/1	1/1	(Vespertini, \$51,530)	\$544,734	331	14	1.38	1.20
23	INDY WIND (02, A.P. Indy), Journeyman Stud	\$2,000	27/15	0/0	0/0	(Perfect Wind, \$57,445)	\$509,297	44	1	1.08	1.12
24	THE GREEN MONKEY (04, Forestry), Hartley/De Renzo Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	19/13	2/2	1/2	(Green Doctor, \$171,024)	\$504,988	33	3	1.20	1.03
25	WAGON LIMIT (94, Conquistador Cielo), Bridlewood Farm	\$2,000	15/9	1/1	1/1	(Wagson, \$67,808)	\$461,045	188	6	1.30	1.12
26	UNBRIDLED TIME (98, Unbridled's Song)	Died, 2012	18/12	0/0	0/0	(Valley King, \$62,935)	\$330,382	200	1	0.78	1.01
27	SARAVA (99, Wild Again)	Pnsd	31/13	1/0	0/1	(One Fast Sarava, \$79,846)	\$323,737	184	2	0.67	1.15
28	† COOL COAL MAN (05, Mineshaft), Journeyman Stud	\$3,500	30/9	1/1	0/1	(Scindia, \$60,232)	\$317,639	39	1	0.62	1.12
29	SCORPION (98, Seattle Slew)	N/A	24/8	0/0	0/0	(Tryer, \$82,359)	\$310,683	*123	1	0.80	1.08
30	MARQUETRY (87, Conquistador Cielo)	Died, 2013	22/8	0/0	0/0	(Uncle Jeep, \$63,310)	\$253,548	*893	34	1.11	1.40
31	HELLO BROADWAY (06, Broken Vow), Ups and Downs Farm	\$3,000	12/6	0/0	0/0	(Tiz Showbiz, \$57,172)	\$223,280	16	1	1.06	1.08
32	SPELLBINDER (01, Tale of the Cat), HallMarc Stallions at Stonewall Farm Ocala	\$2,000	19/6	0/0	0/0	(Out of Spells, \$29,883)	\$207,582	29	1	1.12	1.11
33	FLASHSTORM (04, Storm Cat), Northwest Stud	\$2,500	13/5	0/0	0/0	(Flash Glory, \$47,619)	\$199,010	20	0	0.74	1.00
34	BOASTFUL (98, Cozzene), Covington Oaks Farm	\$1,000	13/6	0/0	0/0	(Bold Tango, \$49,780)	\$178,454	31	0	0.61	0.94
35	LIFESTYLE (00, Indian Charlie)	N/A	7/5	0/0	0/0	(Right Now Richie, \$89,397)	\$160,365	9	1	1.44	1.14
36	ROCK HAMPTON (04, Storm Cat), Ric Deg Farm	Private	14/3	0/0	0/0	(Condestable, \$60,661)	\$147,560	22	0	0.47	1.07
37	INDIAN EXPRESS (00, Indian Charlie)	N/A	11/5	0/0	0/0	(Strongbaksteeltloes, \$38,250)	\$126,990	33	2	0.86	0.65
38	COLONY LIGHT (89, Pleasant Colony), Rising Hill Farm	Private	10/5	0/0	0/0	(Hugo Light, \$30,189)	\$117,703	410	13	1.00	1.04
39	SPENSIVE (00, Ponche), Y-Lo Racing Stables	\$1,500	8/3	0/0	0/0	(Vanuatu, \$56,900)	\$111,977	36	0	0.50	0.77
40	MARCO BAY (90, Copelan)	N/A	7/4	0/0	0/0	(True Marco, \$53,490)	\$109,777	96	2	1.43	0.76
41	WEKIVA SPRINGS (91, Runaway Groom)	Died, 2014	11/5	0/0	0/0	(Classic Speed, \$39,100)	\$106,751	405	15	0.87	1.20
42	THE KAISER (95, Tasso)	N/A	8/4	0/0	0/0	(Push Kaiser, \$31,850)	\$104,451	34	0	0.75	0.90
43	WEEKEND CRUISE (97, A.P. Indy)	N/A	10/5	0/0	0/0	(Cruisenforlove, \$34,098)	\$95,588	144	0	0.56	0.78
44	ORCHARD PARK (99, Hennessy)	Pnsd	4/2	0/0	0/0	(Sweeping Victory, \$70,196)	\$90,927	24	0	0.55	2.06
45	UNTUTTABLE (96, Unbridled)	Pnsd	13/2	0/0	0/0	(Time for Tutt, \$38,168)	\$86,796	195	11	1.06	1.26
46	SUCCESSFUL WAYS (04, Successful Appeal)	N/A	4/3	0/0	0/0	(Whateverworks, \$52,970)	\$80,519	14	0	0.59	0.75
47	† MACH RIDE (03, Pentelicus), Bridlewood Farm	\$2,000	4/2	0/0	0/0	(Ackerlet, \$60,600)	\$80,320	7	0	0.97	1.14
48	CONSCIENCE CLEAR (97, Relaunch)	N/A	5/3	0/0	0/0	(Lucy's Finale, \$32,030)	\$78,318	51	0	0.82	0.68
49	SKIP TRIAL (82, Bailjumper)	Died, 2012	6/4	0/0	0/0	(Skiptotheadgold, \$40,401)	\$77,855	*460	28	1.93	1.56
50	AWESOME SWORD (00, Awesome Again)	N/A	5/1	0/0	0/0	(Awesome Eclipse, \$62,399)	\$67,199	50	1	0.81	0.98
51	DARK KESTREL (03, Stormy Atlantic), University of Florida Vet Medical Ctr	\$1,500	3/1	0/0	0/0	(Stormofthecentury, \$49,776)	\$58,101	16	1	1.65	1.37
52	DOWN THE AISLE (93, Runaway Groom)	N/A	6/2	0/0	0/0	(Virginia Cavalier, \$30,344)	\$50,052	144	0	0.50	0.80
53	TOO SHY WILL FLY (04, Wild Event)	N/A	1/1	0/0	0/0	(Shy's Aly, \$46,719)	\$46,719	1	0	1.68	1.60
54	DON RIGO (04, Straight Man)	N/A	6/3	0/0	0/0	(Exclusive Moon, \$15,763)	\$44,021	12	0	0.36	0.51
55	DILIGENCE (93, Miswaki)	Pnsd	4/4	0/0	0/0	(Samson Road, \$22,900)	\$43,919	194	8	0.92	1.13
56	SKIP TO THE STONE (98, Skip Trial)	N/A	8/2	0/0	0/0	(Lo Gin and Tonic, \$9,269)	\$31,214	81	1	0.56	0.91
57	J TOWN (01, Jules)	N/A	3/1	0/0	0/0	(Mining Town, \$18,664)	\$30,379	8	0	1.08	1.18
58	AMERICAN SPIRIT (96, Storm Boot), Double Diamond Farm	Private	11/3	0/0	0/0	(Cashel Back, \$13,165)	\$30,311	60	2	0.74	0.85
59	ADMIRAL'S CRUISE (02, A.P. Indy)	Died, 2011	5/1	0/1	0/0	(Aly Cruise, \$11,870)	\$28,750	*75	0	0.55	0.76
60	BLOWING ROCK (98, Kris S.), Blowing Rock Ranch	\$5,000	3/1	0/0	0/0	(Flightriskcowgirl, \$21,642)	\$25,488	21	0	0.34	0.77
61	HALO'S STRIDE (98, Strodes Creek)	N/A	1/1	0/0	0/0	(Party Halo, \$22,465)	\$22,465	4	0	1.68	0.89
62	RATIONALEXUBERANCE (02, Unbridled's Song)	N/A	1/1	0/0	0/0	(Rapid Runner, \$20,986)	\$20,986	23	1	1.05	0.76
63	OPS SMILE (92, Caveat)	N/A	1/1	0/0	0/0	(Hot Smile, \$18,950)	\$18,950	111	1	0.93	1.02
64	MR. ELWAY (97, Saint Ballado)	N/A	2/0	0/0	0/0	(Tia Lupe, \$12,880)	\$17,985	6	1	0.84	0.46
65	SEÑOR EDUARDO (05, Holy Bull)	N/A	1/1	0/0	0/0	(She's From Dixie, \$14,404)	\$14,404	6	0	0.17	0.54

Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in North America (stallions exported prior to the 2010 breeding season are excluded), and have runners in North America. All available statistics listed for the Northern Hemisphere through December 31, 2014. 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 pure 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.

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By One of the Fastest-Ever Sons of
MR. PROSPECTOR
- ▶ Ten Triple Digit Beyer
- ▶ **THE** Leading Money Earner in Florida
No Florida Stallion Has More G1 Wins



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By STREET BOSS \$4,000 LFSN

- ▶ **G1 2YO**
Placed in Breeders' Cup Juvenile-G1
& FrontRunner S.-G1; TDN Rising
Star in debut
- ▶ **G1 Winner at 3**
King's Bishop S.-G1, Top-rated 3YO
Sprinter of 2013



CITY WOLF

By GIANT'S CAUSEWAY \$4,000 LFSN

- ▶ **Graded SW**
Won Durham Cup S.-G3 in Stakes
Debut
- ▶ **Half-Brother to Leading Sires**
GHOSTZAPPER and CITY ZIP



HUNTERS BAY

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**CLASSIC
PERFORMANCE**

(continued from page 46)

while capturing the Woodward, Salvatore Mile Stakes (gr. III), Holy Bull Stakes (gr. III), Gulfstream Park Derby, as well as four other stakes, and finishing second in the grade I Preakness Stakes, Whitney Stakes, and Besilu Stables Florida Derby.

Preceding the son of Lawyer Ron, whom Plesa purchased for Trilogy Stable (Marion Montanari and David Melin) and Laurie for \$110,000 at the 2012 Ocala Breeders' Sales Co.'s March 2-year-olds in training sale, were the ill-fated Three Ring, winner of the grade I Acorn Stakes and grade II Bonnie Miss and Davona Dale stakes; and multiple graded stakes winner Gottcha Gold, earner of more than \$930,000; as well as a number of other stakes horses.

Plesa was riding high in 2014 with Itsmyluckyday; Concealedwithakiss, winner of Monmouth Park's Sorority Stakes; and Sapling Stakes winner Souper Colossal. Plesa also captured the grade III Jersey Shore Stakes with Prudhoe Bay.

Plesa, thanks in great part to Itsmyluckyday, has elevated his status on a national level, as the country now is well aware of what racing fans and horsemen in Florida and New Jersey have known for a long time—Eddie Plesa is a dangerous competitor who knows how to train a horse.

And why shouldn't he? Saying the Plesa family has been involved in racing is like saying the Kennedys have been involved in politics.

Plesa's father, Eddie Sr., left home at age 12 and eventually became a jockey and trainer. Plesa's son Kyle has his Masters degree and aspires to be in racing, currently working in the marketing department at Gulfstream. Plesa's daughter, Kelsey, has grown up around horses and worked at the barn with trainer Kelly Breen when Breen had Pants On Fire in the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I). Plesa's oldest son, Luke, also has his Masters, having studied criminal justice. He currently is a detective in Sunny Isles, Fla., but follows the stable diligently and knows everything about every horse in his father's barn.

Laurie's father, Joe Servis, was a jockey, a steward at Charles Town for almost 25 years, and manager of the Jockeys' Guild, and was elected to the Charles Town Hall of Fame in 2010. Laurie's two brothers, John and Jason, are both successful trainers, with John gaining national fame as trainer of Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes (gr. I) winner Smarty Jones.

"My father, who is still alive at age 87, won his first race at Ak-Sar-Ben when he was 13. He rode on the West Coast, in Ohio, and was the leading rider in Cleve-



Plesa with Itsmyluckyday at Churchill Downs in 2013

land and Detroit," Eddie Plesa said. "He was from a very poor family in Omaha, Neb., and by leaving home at age 12, his family was able to feed one less person, and there was money being sent home.

"When my mother, who was from Chicago, was growing up, she moved around a lot, so it was important for her that I would go to school in one place, and that one place was Hollywood, Fla. We moved there when I was 4. I remember we used to play in a park off Hallandale Beach Boulevard near the railroad and horses would arrive by rail car and they'd walk them to Gulfstream. Back then you couldn't drive anywhere in Hallandale without driving over a land crab; they were everywhere. The town would close after the winter. Once Calder opened up it was a big thing having year-round racing in Florida. I remember my father saying, 'I don't care if I have to gallop horses, we're not moving

2014 FLORIDA SIRES BY WINNERS

Sire	Rnrs	Wnrs
Wildcat Heir	223	138
With Distinction	190	111
Pollard's Vision	110	54
Repent	99	54
Exclusive Quality	107	52
Value Plus	91	51
Magna Graduate	79	46
High Cotton	80	40
Montbrook	84	39
Greatness	53	32
In Summation	65	31
Concorde's Tune	46	29
Two Step Salsa	48	28
Benny the Bull	36	22
West Acre	33	20
Hear No Evil	39	19
Roar of the Tiger	38	19
Halo's Image	33	19
Kantharos	31	18
Sweet Return (GB)	41	17
Indy Wind	27	15
Sarava	31	13
The Green Monkey	19	13
Black Mambo	21	12
Unbridled Time	18	12
Awesome of Course	27	11
Cool Coal Man	30	9
Wagon Limit	15	9
Scorpion	24	8
Marquetry	22	8
Spellbinder	19	6
Boastful	13	6
Hello Broadway	12	6
Flashstorm	13	5
Indian Express	11	5
Wekiva Springs	11	5
Colony Light	10	5
Weekend Cruise	10	5
Lifestyle	7	5
The Kaiser	8	4
Marco Bay	7	4
Skip Trial	6	4
Diligence	4	4
Rock Hampton	14	3
American Spirit	11	3
Spensive	8	3
Don Rigo	6	3
Conscience Clear	5	3
Successful Ways	4	3

2014 FLORIDA SIRES BY STAKES WINNERS

Sire	Stks Wnrs	Stks Wins
Wildcat Heir	8	12
Magna Graduate	5	6
With Distinction	4	4
Hear No Evil	3	7
Exclusive Quality	3	5
Pollard's Vision	3	5
Black Mambo	2	2
The Green Monkey	2	2

UNDEFEATED 2YO / WON OR PLACED IN STAKES AT 3, 4 AND 5
GRADED STAKES-WINNING HALF-BROTHER TO #1 FRESHMAN SIRE OF BLACKTYPE RUNNERS

BRETHREN



Half-Brother
to
SUPER SAVER

A LEADING SIRE BY QUALITY OF MARES BRED

Among the stallions bred to their first crop of mares in 2014 BRETHREN ranked among the NAT'L TOP TEN by CI and CPI.
(BLOOD-HORSE MARKET WATCH NOV. 14)

MARES BRED TO BRETHREN IN 2014 INCLUDE:

SARA'S SUCCESS - stakes winner of \$422,337 and dam of AMEN HALLELUJAH (multiple G2 SW, \$610,081) • Hear This - dam of SCHOOL YARD DREAMS (Graded SW, \$414,949) • Darby Rose - dam of AFRICAN ROSE (multiple SW) and Mewannarose (GSP)
A ROSE FOR YOU - stakes winner and dam of HARLINGTON'S ROSE (SW, \$277,680) • Boa - dam of Liquidity (G1 SP, \$240,520)

BRETHREN's first dam is half-sister to Grade 1 winner of the Vosburgh Stakes **GIROLAMO** and the dam of 2014 & 2013 NY Leading Sire **BLUEGRASS CAT** (G1, \$1,761,280). This is also the immediate family of champion 2yo **RHYTHM** (G1, \$1,592,532).

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Plesa with Three Ring in 1999

SNP DICKSTEIN

to Rockingham. They claimed me out of business, so I went back to Florida. The racing secretary at Calder, Gary Smith, liked me and offered me a job working in the office. My first reaction was, ‘You mean I get a day off?’ That sold it to me. So I went to work in the office and eventually became assistant racing secretary at Calder and Hialeah. I was assistant when Kenny Noe and Terry Meyocks came in and took over Calder.”

While working in the office, Plesa met Laurie.

The main reason the Plesas got involved in horse ownership was to have something to fall back on and help eliminate the risk of being left with nothing. Plesa had always wanted to own horses, even if it was just one horse. In his mind, if you wanted to hit a home run in this business, or even a double or triple, you needed to own a horse.

“You look at trainers who are successful and they don’t own anything, and when the dust settles and the luster is off,

anymore.’ I went to a school called Little Flower from kindergarten to eighth grade and then I went to high school down there. My father in the meantime had been riding horses and went back to training, which was the next logical step. But from the time I was 5, school would get out and my mother would close down the house and we would drive to wherever he was.”

Plesa’s most indelible memory growing up was when his family lived in Detroit and Ohio and he was walking horses at age 8 for Marion Van Berg, father of Jack Van Berg. When Plesa was 14, his father began training at Charles Town, which seemed like another world after living in South Florida for so many years.

“My father had the fourth-string horses for Fred Hooper, who would send him the worst of the worst in Ohio,” Plesa recalled. “He did well and I was working for him. When I got out of school, I would leave and take the bad horses to Tampa, and I’d be there by myself with about 20 horses. We’d get rid of whatever we could and bring others back. Just before Rockingham Park burned down (July 1980), I decided I was going to go off by myself and train. I decided to go to Rockingham, but I needed to go somewhere for 30 days first and the place I went to was Beulah Park.

“I was the second-leading trainer at Tampa and was the second-leading trainer at Beulah with 20 live horses. Every time I ran a horse there would be five or six claims in for it. The reason was, Beulah opened twice a year and they never had any fresh stock and here came these young, fresh horses. Because I was having my horses claimed from me, I was looking to claim others back, but they’re all 9, 10,

and 11 years old. I couldn’t claim them and replace the ones I lost. Of the 20 horses I had, they claimed 16 and I only had four left, so it wasn’t worth it to go up north

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Sire	Foals	Rnrs	Wnrs	SWnrs	Earnings
Kantharos	48	31	18	1	\$868,968
Cool Coal Man	39	30	9	1	\$317,639
Mach Ride	7	4	2	0	\$80,320
United States	3	3	1	0	\$13,147
Kiss the Kid	16	3	0	0	\$9,841



ADAM COGLIANESE

From left, Kelsey, Laurie, and Eddie Plesa Jr., owner Bea Oxenberg, jockey C.C. Lopez, and William Croll after Hey Byrn’s win in the 2008 Holy Bull Stakes

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PHOTO BY SERITA HULT

what do you have to show for it?" he explained. "I can drive a nice car and go out to dinner, but now I don't have anything. I remember when Buddy Lepman, who was leading trainer many times at Monmouth, retired because he trained a horse named Eillo, who was the champion sprinter and the first Breeders' Cup Sprint (gr. I) winner. In his mind, he had two or three shares and he could collect the horse's stud fee for the next 10 years. So he retired and the horse died and he wound up broke. He had given up all his horses. I look at the game and I say I'm no longer a young trainer; I remember being at Monmouth with all the old-timers, and I'm not stupid; I know in five or 10 years, maybe I'll be the old-timer. I've always said I need to have a horse."

After his time as a racing official, Plesa felt it was time to get back to the racetrack. When Noe and Meyocks came in at Calder and pretty much cleaned house, Plesa stayed on, but was shifted from assistant racing secretary to patrol judge, considered the lowest rung on the ladder of racing officials. Plesa was then offered a job at Monmouth as an official, and he and Laurie packed up, moved up north, and lived in a 35-foot trailer they drove up from Florida.

Plesa and trainer Stan Hough became good friends, and after two to three years in the racing office, he was offered a job as assistant to Hough, who had taken over the Harbor View Farm horses.

"I had missed training and having a day off wasn't as important to me anymore," Plesa said. "But providing for my family was. I was his assistant until Stan quit, and I found myself training 20 horses for Harbor View at Monmouth. But when Frank Martin took over the horses I knew I had no chance with him. Ollie Cohen of Crown Stable, owner of Eillo (Ollie spelled backward), was from Boston and my father had horses for him. He told me he hadn't had horses up in New England for a while and said he'd like to have horses there again. So he sent me \$100,000, and I claimed five or six horses for him, and I picked up some other horses for other people."

Plesa's career as a full-time trainer finally had begun, but he was a bit wary at first.



Plesa with Hall of Fame rider John Velazquez

"Laurie was pregnant and was due in about a month," Plesa said. "We went up there and I picked up the *Racing Form* and read that they had had a shootout in the clubhouse at Suffolk Downs. I'm thinking, 'Oh, my God, what am I doing coming to this place?' There were two indoor barns and (racing secretary) Bobby DeStasio put me in one of them next to the kitchen. Kathy Ritvo was up there. She was a little girl, around 10 years old, and her father had horses."

Plesa eventually became a fixture in Florida and New Jersey, splitting his time between the two tracks. He takes great pride in his job with his first million-dol-



Plesa signing a sales ticket at OBS in 2009

lar earner Best of the Rest, who raced until he was 8 while having to overcome a stress fracture. But knowing what a tough game this is, Plesa has managed to make sure his three children received an education and went in other directions.

Plesa reached his pinnacle with Itsmyluckyday, who brought him to the Kentucky Derby trail and into the national spotlight.

"He's just a horse that I liked," he said. "I buy a lot of horses from Barry Eisaman at Eisaman Equine. He's the kind of guy you can trust when he tells you something, and I have a great rapport with him. So he had the horse. He didn't tell me to buy the horse, but I had confidence in him that the horse was a keeper. He was the kind of horse I was looking for the partnership, and he fell in our price range. That's where luck comes in. I liked him, I wanted him, and I got him. But if he had gone for much more than \$110,000 I wouldn't have been able to buy him. We were looking to spend about \$100,000. He showed right away he was a class horse. He's just a neat horse to be around. He has a great personality and has become a celebrity around here. People are always stopping by to bring him carrots."

Life is good for the Plesa family these days. They have had success on a national scale, and Luke presented them with their first grandchild Dec. 21, 2014. They take great pride in all three of their children. Although Itsmyluckyday didn't make it to the Breeders' Cup, they still were able to participate in racing's biggest day, sending out Live Oak Plantation's Souper Colossal in the Sentient Jet Breeders' Cup Juvenile (gr. I), in which he pressed a brutal early pace before tiring.

"I don't know how my dad deals with the stress and the excitement, but he seems pretty calm and collected about it," daughter Kelsey said. "He never jumps ahead of things."

"My dad has been in this business for so long. He's given his whole life to it, and he always puts the horse first and doesn't cut corners. He doesn't have five barns of horses, but he still does really good with what he has, and he's been rewarded with success." **BH**

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