

West Coast

CALIFORNIA IDAHO NEVADA OREGON UTAH
WASHINGTON WYOMING

Adrian and
Erin Gonzalez

Straight Arrow

**Adrian
Gonzalez
is bullish on
California
breeding**

BY TRACY GANTZ | PHOTOS COURTESY ADRIAN GONZALEZ

ADRIAN GONZALEZ COULD have continued down the bloodstock agent path for his entire career. He regularly brings major consignments to California sales under the Checkmate Thoroughbreds banner and has succeeded in forays to Kentucky as well.

For someone who loves every facet of the Thoroughbred industry, however, other aspects beckoned. What would it be like to own and run a farm, syndicate stallions, breed and foal mares? Gonzalez, 40, is pursuing all of those things, and in the process he is expanding the California breeding industry.

While he would be the first to say he isn't doing any of this alone, Gonzalez has been the catalyst for standing two popular new stallions in California. First, Gonzalez brokered the deal for multiple graded winner Danzing Candy, beginning in 2018, at Tom and Nancy Clark's Rancho San Miguel near San Miguel, Calif. Then, with the help of Rancho San Miguel

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Ridgeley Farm.....145
www.hebefirenice.com

Breed to win with the **HEART** & **SPEED** of a **CHAMPION**



Another winner by **HE BE FIRE N ICE**:

PERFECT ICE STORM

*leaves rivals frozen as she
romps to a 6 ½ length victory!*

Perfect Ice Storm

1.31.2019 • Santa Anita Park, CA

6-1/2 Furlongs • 1:16:17

Breeder/Owner **Cicero Farms**

Trainer **Peter Eurton**

Jockey **Edwin Maldonado**

HE BE FIRE N ICE
Unusual Heat - Deputy Tombe, by Deputy Commander



Proudly standing at CTBA Hall of Famer
Pat Thompson's Ridgeley Farm in Hemet, CA
(951) 654-7728 • ridgeleyfarm.com

Contact Barb on the FIRE Hotline
(424) 279-FIRE • Hotline@hebefirenice.com

\$5000 S&N  hebefirenice.com



Breed to win with **He Be Fire N Ice** - multiple G2 placed stakes
winning son of deceased **Unusual Heat**, CA's all time leading sire.

2019 LEADING SIRES IN CALIFORNIA



For daily updated sire lists
visit BloodHorse.com

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2019 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2019 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	STAY THIRSTY (08, Bernardini), Lovacres Ranch	\$6,000	174/95	4/10	0/4	(Coal Front, \$1,338,000)	\$5,707,444	*417	7	1.29	1.45
2	I'LL HAVE ANOTHER (09, Flower Alley), Ballena Vista Farm	\$6,000	212/91	1/1	0/1	(Another Truth, \$310,684)	\$3,514,830	291	1	0.87	1.12
3	GRAYDAR (09, Unbridled's Song), Milky Way Farm	To Be Announced	130/67	3/5	1/3	(Gray Magician, \$787,010)	\$3,456,918	*246	5	0.92	1.44
4	SQUARE EDDIE (06, Smart Strike), Ocean Breeze Ranch	\$25,000	82/39	4/7	1/4	(Eddie Haskell, \$318,104)	\$3,008,004	206	16	1.54	1.13
5	UNUSUAL HEAT (90, Nureyev)	Died, 2017	74/36	6/7	4/6	(Grecian Fire, \$212,591)	\$2,405,973	*828	49	1.88	1.18
6	LUCKY PULPIT (01, Pulpit)	Died, 2017	140/65	1/1	1/1	(Fashionably Fast, \$155,660)	\$1,977,373	*477	11	1.29	1.05
7	SMILING TIGER (07, Hold That Tiger), Harris Farms	\$7,500	78/44	4/6	0/4	(Spiced Perfection, \$404,500)	\$1,964,126	162	6	1.13	1.00
8	GRAZEN (06, Benchmark), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	45/21	5/8	3/5	(S Y Sky, \$355,620)	\$1,867,620	113	10	1.71	1.10
9	MINISTERS WILD CAT (00, Deputy Minister), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$4,000	95/53	2/2	0/2	(Minister of Soul, \$113,421)	\$1,587,495	476	19	0.97	0.90
10	JERSEY TOWN (06, Speightstown), Daehling Ranch	\$3,000	88/48	1/1	0/1	(Shakopee Town, \$124,003)	\$1,468,353	*160	3	1.00	1.16
11	VRONSKY (99, Danzig), Harris Farms	\$6,500	72/42	0/0	0/0	(Dr. Troutman, \$75,471)	\$1,317,211	261	10	1.29	1.08
12	ACCLAMATION (06, Unusual Heat), Harris Farms	\$7,500	50/21	1/2	0/1	(Acclimate, \$329,182)	\$1,005,071	122	3	1.03	1.24
13	EMPIRE WAY (09, Empire Maker), Heinz & Michelle Steinmann Farms	\$2,500	74/34	0/0	0/0	(Cholula Lips, \$90,250)	\$977,603	124	1	0.71	0.91
14	SLEW'S TIZNOW (05, Tiznow), Rancho San Miguel	\$3,000	44/24	4/4	1/4	(Summersimage, \$135,176)	\$954,988	124	6	0.97	1.05
15	MISREMEMBERED (06, Candy Ride), Barton Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	50/25	3/3	1/3	(Remember Daisy, \$85,770)	\$918,818	106	6	0.96	1.34
16	U S RANGER (04, Danzig), Rancho San Miguel	\$3,000	82/39	0/0	0/0	(Swing Thoughts, \$94,934)	\$875,195	*384	3	0.66	1.24
17	BOISTEROUS (07, Distorted Humor), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	41/18	0/0	0/0	(Loud Mouth, \$96,780)	\$778,503	82	1	0.76	1.09
18	COIL (08, Point Given)	N/A	43/16	0/0	0/0	(Principe Carlo, \$129,833)	\$733,428	148	0	0.67	1.18
19	DESERT CODE (04, E Dubai), Harris Farms	\$2,000	44/27	1/1	1/1	(Desert Law, \$125,382)	\$733,207	157	4	0.88	1.02
20	CYCLOTRON (00, Grand Slam)	N/A	40/22	0/0	0/0	(Dr Wysong, \$127,343)	\$692,392	148	2	1.01	1.19
21	CLUBHOUSE RIDE (08, Candy Ride), Harris Farms	\$2,500	25/19	1/1	0/1	(Warren's Showtime, \$104,271)	\$691,495	59	1	1.01	0.88
22	CHAMP PEGASUS (06, Fusaichi Pegasus), Barton Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	76/30	0/0	0/0	(Wild Bean, \$60,791)	\$601,338	161	0	0.31	1.03
23	EDDINGTON (01, Unbridled), Ballena Vista Farm	\$3,500	44/21	0/0	0/0	(Opus Won, \$90,800)	\$594,944	*455	11	1.15	1.38
24	COMIC STRIP (95, Red Ransom)	Died, 2017	25/15	0/0	0/0	(Oh My Oh, \$71,874)	\$579,101	359	12	0.83	1.09
25	PEPPERED CAT (00, Tabasco Cat), Daehling Ranch	\$3,000	39/28	0/0	0/0	(Empressive Cat, \$56,174)	\$570,162	110	1	0.80	0.61
26	HEATSEEKER (IRE) (03, Giant's Causeway)	Died, 2016	52/23	0/0	0/0	(Heatseeker Baby, \$65,992)	\$551,872	*230	8	0.97	1.22
27	RICHARD'S KID (05, Lemon Drop Kid), Rancho San Miguel	\$3,000	22/14	0/0	0/0	(Sedamar, \$95,464)	\$539,413	53	0	0.95	1.03
28	OLD TOPPER (95, Gilded Time), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	Pnsd	21/11	1/1	1/1	(Queen Bee to You, \$176,703)	\$490,722	558	20	0.93	0.82
29	INDIAN EVENING (09, Indian Charlie)	N/A	16/6	1/1	1/1	(Sneaking Out, \$223,331)	\$481,127	51	3	1.03	1.06
30	IDIOT PROOF (04, Benchmark), Victory Rose Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	21/10	1/2	1/1	(Bulletproof One, \$159,400)	\$450,617	85	2	1.23	0.96
31	KAFWAIN (00, Cherokee Run), Tommy Town Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	48/17	0/0	0/0	(Starring John Wain, \$54,740)	\$448,082	*649	18	0.98	1.18
32	DECARCHY (97, Distant View)	Died, 2017	48/18	0/0	0/0	(Ostini, \$67,921)	\$446,394	427	13	0.98	0.95
33	SURF CAT (02, Sir Cat)	N/A	24/10	0/0	0/0	(Ground Attack, \$108,024)	\$431,046	119	2	0.85	1.17
34	TANNERSMYMAN (98, Lord Carson), Woodbridge Farm	Private	19/10	0/0	0/0	(El Huerfano, \$139,465)	\$427,380	178	3	0.74	0.70
35	SMART BID (06, Smart Strike), Milky Way Farm	\$3,500	27/11	0/0	0/0	(Kosciuszko, \$84,820)	\$391,183	70	0	0.61	1.02
36	INFORMED (04, Tiznow), Ridgeley Farm	Private	33/12	0/0	0/0	(Sunrise Royale, \$64,342)	\$383,596	111	0	0.50	0.61
37	EINSTEIN (BRZ) (02, Spend a Buck)	N/A	29/15	0/0	0/0	(Scholar Athlete, \$55,463)	\$379,444	*192	2	0.65	0.95
38	MARINO MARINI (00, Storm Cat)	N/A	44/18	0/0	0/0	(Ciao Luna, \$37,763)	\$372,161	386	4	0.76	0.93
39	TIME TO GET EVEN (04, Stephen Got Even), Lovacres Ranch	\$2,000	14/8	0/0	0/0	(Time for Suzzie, \$94,791)	\$368,805	74	1	0.78	0.72
40	TIZBUD (99, Cee's Tizzy)	Pnsd	35/13	1/1	1/1	(Kitty Boom Boom, \$111,000)	\$367,840	217	7	0.99	0.86

farm manager Clay Murdock, Gonzalez arranged to shuttle Sir Prancealot from Australia to Rancho San Miguel, beginning next year.

Danzing Candy brought a live pedigree

and race record to his new career as a stallion. The son of Twirling Candy—Talkin and Singing, by Songandaprayer, won the 2016 San Felipe Stakes (G2), 2017 San Carlos Stakes (G2), and 2017 Lone Star Park

Handicap (G3), earning \$700,930. But Gonzalez wanted to ensure that Danzing Candy got a good start at stud.

“Checkmate has about a dozen mares right now,” Gonzalez said. “The majority of those were bought to support Danzing Candy. Looking back, we might not have needed to do that because he was so popular. We hoped these wouldn't be the only 12 mares he gets.”

Danzing Candy, whose first foals are weanlings, indeed proved very popular. Murdock noted that the stallion covered 129 mares his first season and 115 his second season.

While Gonzalez and his wife, Erin, were getting mares settled on their 66-acre farm near Paso Robles, Calif., several European imports by Sir Prancealot were winning graded stakes in California. Lady Prancealot, Beau Recall, and Madam Dancealot together have won seven U.S. graded stakes. Lady Prancealot most re-



Adrian Gonzalez and his wife, Erin, make good use of their 66-acre farm near Paso Robles, California

2019 CALIFORNIA SIRES BY WINNERS

Sire	Rnrs.	Wnrs
Stay Thirsty	174	95
I'll Have Another	212	91
Graydar	130	67
Lucky Pulpit	140	65
Ministers Wild Cat	95	53
Jersey Town	88	48
Smiling Tiger	78	44
Vronsky	72	42
Square Eddie	82	39
U S Ranger	82	39
Unusual Heat	74	36
Empire Way	74	34
Champ Pegasus	76	30
Peppered Cat	39	28
Desert Code	44	27
Misremembered	50	25
Slew's Tiznow	44	24
Heatseeker (IRE)	52	23
Cyclotron	40	22
Acclamation	50	21
Grazen	45	21
Eddington	44	21
Clubhouse Ride	25	19
Decarchy	48	18
Marino Marini	44	18
Boisterous	41	18
Kafwain	48	17
Coil	43	16
Einstein (BRZ)	29	15
Bold Chieftain	28	15
Comic Strip	25	15
Sierra Sunset	38	14
Awesome Gambler	27	14
Sought After	23	14
Richard's Kid	22	14
Tizbud	35	13
Storm Wolf	16	13

cently captured the Oct. 18 Pin Oak Valley View Stakes (G3T) at Keeneland, and Beau Recall took this year's Yellow Ribbon Handicap (G2T) at Del Mar and Longines Churchill Distaff Turf Mile Stakes (G2T).

For a client, Gonzalez boarded the mare Magic Garden, a half sister to Madam Dancealot, and Magic Garden produced a 2018 filly by Sir Prancealot.

"For the last couple of years, we've had this Cal-bred Irish filly running around here," said Gonzalez. "That was unique and got me to following Sir Prancealot."

Another Checkmate client traveled to Australia and mentioned that filly to people involved with Sir Prancealot in that country.



Fair skies lie ahead for the already successful Checkmate brand

A group winner in England, Sir Prancealot is an Irish-bred son of Tamayuz—Mona Em, by Catrail. His runners seem to thrive on the firmer turf courses in Southern California. Cornerstone Stud, where the stallion stands in Australia, was interested in shuttling Sir Prancealot to the Northern Hemisphere, and it didn't take long for Gonzalez and Murdock to complete the arrangement.

Gonzalez, Murdock, and Rancho San Miguel principals Tom Clark and Michael Adams purchased the Northern Hemisphere rights to Sir Prancealot. Many breeders from California to Kentucky showed interest and bought shares.

"I've also got breeders who don't breed in California who are now going to move mares from Kentucky out here to breed to him," said Murdock at Del Mar in August.

Then an unexpected tragedy occurred. At just 58 years old, Murdock died Sept. 3.

"It's been so rough," said Gonzalez. "To put it into words, I don't know if I could do justice to how much Clay meant to all of this and to me. It's so difficult, losing my friend and my partner."

While each man brought different strengths to the partnership, they both had an abundance of enthusiasm, for the stallions and the industry. Gonzalez is moving forward, working with the Clarks, Adams, and Dennis Yokum, who is stepping into

the managerial position at Rancho San Miguel.

Gonzalez plans to shop for mares to breed to Sir Prancealot.

"Danzing Candy's running style and pedigree are the complete opposite to Sir Prancealot's," Gonzalez said. "The mares that we sought out for Danzing Candy, I don't necessarily think are going to be the best mares for Sir Prancealot. So we're going to actively buy mares in November for ourselves and for clients and shareholders.

"There are some super nice mares coming already. I think he's going to be well-supported, so we don't necessarily have to buy a bunch of mares for him. But I think it would be a missed opportunity not to support him as much as we can."

Part of California's incentive awards program is designed to encourage just such purchases in order to bring better mares to the state's stallions. Foals by out-of-state stallions can become registered California-breds if they are foaled in the state and the mare is bred back to a California-based stallion.

At the inaugural Fasig-Tipton yearling sale in Pomona, Calif., Sept. 26, Gonzalez saw evidence of that plan at work.

"We saw a lot of Kentucky-sired Cal-breds," he said, "and I know that those mares came to California to be bred to these new stallions. When I was looking

2019 LEADING SIRES IN WASHINGTON



For daily updated sire lists
visit BloodHorse.com

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2019 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2019 Earnings	Cumulative			
								2019 Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	ATTA BOY ROY (05, Tribunal), Blue Ribbon Farm	\$2,000	45/23	1/1	0/1	(Mr. Jagermeister, \$188,927)	\$600,118	95	2	0.60	0.71
2	COAST GUARD (05, Stormy Atlantic), El Dorado Farms	\$1,500	35/19	3/3	1/3	(Satellite Storm, \$91,542)	\$469,159	61	5	0.58	0.54
3	ABRAAJ (03, Carson City), El Dorado Farms	Died, 2019	34/14	2/2	0/2	(Capilano Canyon, \$64,013)	\$309,643	81	7	0.63	0.69
4	NATIONHOOD (02, Cherokee Run), Blue Ribbon Farm	\$1,500	20/8	0/0	0/0	(Time 'n Time Again, \$27,580)	\$162,644	70	2	0.44	0.67
5	HE'S TOPS (93, Seattle Slew)	Died, 2015	12/7	1/3	0/1	(Summerland, \$77,786)	\$159,052	324	9	0.54	0.63
6	PARKER'S STORM CAT (00, Storm Cat), Gibson Thoroughbred Farm	\$2,000	27/14	0/0	0/0	(Cross Creek, \$23,546)	\$157,523	*330	4	0.82	1.00
7	PREACHINATTHEBAR (01, Silver Charm), Pulse Ranches	\$1,000	21/13	0/0	0/0	(Docktarri, \$19,075)	\$153,130	113	0	0.36	0.53
8	GOTHAM CITY (98, Saint Ballado), West Coast Training Center	\$1,500	11/10	0/0	0/0	(Gotham Desire, \$35,284)	\$135,331	188	0	0.68	0.80
9	DEMON WARLOCK (00, Demons Begone), Roche Farm	\$1,500	8/3	1/2	0/1	(Alittlestalk, \$85,976)	\$133,282	53	4	0.55	0.61
10	WAR POWER (06, Pulpit), Frances Long	Private	16/9	0/0	0/0	(Pulpits Power, \$20,448)	\$123,575	35	1	0.32	0.43



The many facets of the Checkmate enterprise keep Gonzalez very busy

through the catalog and studying the pedigrees, I thought, 'Oh, we bred that mare to Danzing Candy.' That was really neat to see."

Checkmate sold 10 yearlings at the Fasig-Tipton California fall yearling sale for \$311,500. Fasig-Tipton also conducted a California 2-year-old sale at Santa Anita June 5. At that sale Checkmate sold 12 head for \$493,500.

Gonzalez is thankful that Fasig-Tipton has stepped into the California sales market after the demise of Barretts Equine Sales.

"My business relies on selling these horses," he said, "and without a venue for that, we'd be in big trouble. Certainly,

having them come out here really saved us. The timing couldn't have been better because we had just invested in bringing these new stallions and a whole bunch of new mares."

One of Checkmate's biggest successes has been selling Spiced Perfection at the 2017 Barretts March 2-year-old sale to Dare To Dream Stables for \$50,000. The filly, now owned by Pantofel Stable, Wachtel Stable, and Peter Deutsch, was voted the 2018 Cal-bred horse of the year, has earned more than \$1 million, and most recently won the Thoroughbred Club of America Stakes (G2) at Keeneland and ran fourth in the Nov. 2 Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (G1).

"She's really special to us," said Gonzalez. "She was small and fast and put together right. Everybody loved her work (at the sale), but when they came back to the barn to see her, she was just a plain brown wrapper, nothing too stellar to look at. Plus, it was the very first crop of Smiling Tiger."

Premier Thoroughbreds bred Spiced Perfection, a daughter of the Pleasantly Perfect mare Perfect Feat.

Gonzalez noted that he has sold horses in Kentucky as well, including a Kentucky-bred yearling daughter of Empire Maker out of the Cal-bred Unusual Heat mare Katie's Heat. Offered through Bluewater Sales, the filly brought \$350,000.

"She spent about 30 days of her life in Kentucky—the rest of it was here," said Gonzalez.

Gonzalez is proud of California, where he grew up and earned a degree in animal science at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. His father's side of the family comes from Cuba. His grandfather, Roberto, was a Cuban Olympic gymnast who defected to the U.S.

Roberto, now in his 80s, and Adrian's father, Erick, are responsible for the Checkmate name. Adrian remembers the two of them playing chess frequently when he was young.

"My dad was a very good chess player," Adrian said. "He taught me how to play. He'd say, 'You have to think five moves in advance.' Whenever I reached some kind of achievement, good grades or whatever,

Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in the states featured in this section (stallions that are dead or exported prior to 2015 are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through October 27, 2019. As supplied to BloodHorse by The Jockey Club Information Systems Inc., include adjusted money from Japan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Adjusted earnings are put on par with average North American earnings from the previous year. For example, the average North American purse in 2015 is \$21,782 or 50% of the 2015 average purse in Japan. To put earnings on par, all Japanese progeny earnings are multiplied by 50% before being credited to a sire's progeny earnings. Hong Kong earnings are adjusted by 17%; Singapore by 57%. 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.



Gonzalez with Danzing Candy, who stands at Rancho San Miguel

that became our catchphrase ‘checkmate, you won.’

“I thought the horse business is exactly like that. You need to be thinking five moves in advance. Plus, there is a chess piece that’s a horse.”

Gonzalez began Checkmate about 15 years ago. He grew up near Northern California’s Napa Valley, and after high school he worked with Quarter Horses on a large cattle operation. When Gonzalez went to college, he got a job exercising horses at Cardiff Stud Farm in Atascadero before moving on to the Paso Robles property that originally was Cardiff but had morphed into Creston Farms, owned by Alex Trebek of “Jeopardy.”

At Creston for three or four years, Gonzalez worked on the breeding side with stallions and broodmares.

“The breeding manager there, Joe Tevis, was so knowledgeable,” said Gonzalez. “I learned so much from him and Dr. James Shupe, our vet.”

One of the stallions Gonzalez particularly liked was Falstaff, a son of Lyphard—Ivorina, by Sir Ivor.

“I love to read Shakespeare,” said Gonzalez. “I remember Falstaff the Shakespeare character as kind of the goofball drunk, and this horse was so classy. I thought it was comical that the classiest horse I’d ever been around was named

after this goofball character.”

Gonzalez eventually leased part of the Creston property for Checkmate before he and Erin bought their current farm. Though Erin, a former barrel racer, has a job running a trust management company, she lends a hand at the farm.

“She helps with the midnight foalings and the horses that are hard to catch,” said Gonzalez. “She does a lot of the bookkeeping and getting our paperwork in order at sale time. I couldn’t do it without her.”

Adrian and Erin are also raising their 19-month-old son Ryder.

“He’s already walking around with a lead shank making clucking noises,” Adrian said. “He’s watching, and he’s not too far away from taking this place over.”

Currently, the Checkmate property is undergoing a large refencing project. The farm has a barn and sun pens, but Gonzalez tries to keep most of their horses in large pastures.

“My dream was always to build our own place so the horses have room to run around,” said Gonzalez.

The many facets of the Checkmate business keep Gonzalez extremely busy. To relax, he competes in an archery league.

“It’s all about controlling your breathing and focus,” he said. “That’s my hobby and my therapy all locked into one.”

With all of the challenges that have faced California breeders in recent years, Gonzalez can use an escape. But he remains positive about the industry.

“I feel like the people who have stuck through it and ridden it out have been handsomely rewarded,” he said. “You can get a lot of money for a Cal-bred at a sale. We’re doubling down and filling the void. I hope that people will see that not being scared is going to pay off in the long run.” **BH**

Tracy Gantz is the Southern California correspondent for BloodHorse.

