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Pleasant Acres Stallions has a long-standing reputation for recruiting quality horses to its sire roster



## Pedigree and Performance at Pleasant Acres

**BARBAZONS BUILDING ON THEIR SUCCESS**

By MICHAEL COMPTON

**T**HIRTEEN YEARS AGO, JOE AND Helen Barbazon set out to impact Florida's breeding industry. Their goal for opening Pleasant Acres Stallions in Morriston, Fla.—just outside of Ocala—was simple: bring stallions with top-tier bloodlines to the Sunshine State. Today, a decade-plus later, Pleasant Acres Stallions has become a force for Florida's breeders, delivering on—and arguably exceeding—their original objective.

ALL SIRES LISTS ARE THROUGH DEC. 7

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# 2025 LEADING SIRES IN ALABAMA



For daily updated sire lists visit [BloodHorse.com](https://BloodHorse.com)

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2026 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wns	BT SWns/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW (Chief Earner, Earnings)	2025 Earnings	2025 Foals	Cumulative BT SWs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	Conan (07, Royal Empire)	N/A	1/0	0/0	0/0 (Channefortynine, \$34,570)	\$34,570	5	0	0.44	0.72

\* includes Southern Hemisphere foals; ¶ Indicates a first-crop sire



Joe and Helen Barbazon, the owners of Pleasant Acres Stallions, on a special trip to Royal Ascot last year

Set among picturesque live oak trees and vibrant green pastures, Pleasant Acres is a full-service commercial breeding operation. The facility represents all facets of the industry, specializing in breeding, mare, yearling, and weanling care, as well as sales representation.

The farm's nine-stallion roster is loaded with horses with sought-after pedigrees and accomplished race records. Heading the stallion battery is Verifying who stood the 2025 breeding season for \$10,000 and is a dual hemisphere stallion. The son of Triple Crown winner and Horse of the Year Justify is out of the graded stakes-winning Repent mare Diva Delite, also the dam of the bril-

liant racemare and champion Midnight Bisou. Verifying banked \$852,706 and was 3-for-11 in lifetime starts, including the Indiana Derby (G3) at 3. He was runner-up in the Champagne Stakes (G1) at 2 and finished second in the Blue Grass Stakes (G1), the H. Allen Jerkens Memorial Stakes (G1), and the Matt Winn Stakes (G3) as a sophomore. Verifying's first foals are yearlings in 2026.

Grade 1 winner Doppelganger, who stood last year for \$10,000, is a 2019 son of perennial leading sire Into Mischief out of the stakes winner and multiple graded stakes-placed Quiet American mare Twice the Lady. Doppelganger captured the Carter Handicap (G1) at 4 en route to amassing earnings of \$554,900. Like

Verifying, Doppelganger welcomed his first foals in 2025.

Mr Fisk, by the late champion Arrogate, an earner of more than \$17 million, won the 2024 Hollywood Gold Cup (G2) at 4 as well as that year's Californian Stakes (G3). At 3, he won the Native Diver Stakes (G3), and all told, earned \$369,700 while winning 5-of-11 starts in his career. Mr Fisk, who stood last season for \$8,500, is produced from the stakes-winning mare Plein Air (by Manduro).

New for 2026 is Gulfport, a precocious stakes-winning and multiple graded stakes-placed son of the late Uncle Mo. Winner of the Bashford Manor Stakes at 2 in 2022 and runner-up in both the Hopeful Stakes (G1) and the Saratoga Special (G2), and third in the Champagne Stakes (G1), Gulfport added the Bet on Sunshine Stakes in 2024 to his list of accomplishments for trainer Steve Asmussen. All told, Gulfport enters stud toting a record of 4-4-2 in 11 starts with earnings of \$680,250.

"He has such a nice pedigree," Joe said of Gulfport. "He is a gorgeous horse. We fell in love with him as soon as we saw him. Christine Jones (Pleasant Acres' director of stallion services) and Jamie LaMonica picked him out for us."

Helen added of Gulfport, "He is a spitting image of his daddy, and his daddy stamps his horses. They are a certain type. He is that type. He is big and strong, and he hasn't even bred his first mare yet. What happens a year after they breed is they become like a weight-lifter. He is going to be amazing looking. He is already."

## STRONG SUPPORT

Despite the hurdles facing Florida breeders—particularly the ongoing concerns over South Florida racing and decoupling—Pleasant Acres has demonstrated resilience. The operation con-

COURTESY OF PLEASANT ACRES STALLIONS

# Mr Fisk

( ARROGATE - PLEIN AIR (IRE), BY MANDURO (GER) )

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Meet MR FISK — a multiple graded stakes winner who broke his maiden at Santa Anita, then continued his rise with a 2nd in the Affirmed S. He went on to win the Shared Belief S. and G3 Native Diver S. at Del Mar, and at four stepped up again with wins in the G3 Californian S. and the G2 Hollywood Gold Cup, earning a triple-digit Beyer. **Consistent and durable, he hit the board 64% of the time** while competing in talented company.



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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2026 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2025 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative BT SWs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	Khozan (12, Distorted Humor), Ocala Stud	\$6,000	213/120	4/6	2/4	(Jasper Robusto, \$577,433)	\$6,021,265	*464	19	1.12	1.12
2	Neolithic (13, Harlan's Holiday), Pleasant Acres Stallions	\$5,000	90/52	5/6	0/5	(Neoequos, \$352,150)	\$3,334,907	178	9	1.14	0.91
3	Adios Charlie (08, Indian Charlie), Ocala Stud	\$3,000	90/54	4/7	0/4	(Epona's Hope, \$250,280)	\$2,998,775	439	17	1.15	1.09
4	Awesome Slew (13, Awesome Again), Ocala Stud	\$4,000	69/45	1/1	0/1	(R Disaster, \$481,800)	\$2,507,903	119	3	1.07	1.26
5	Valiant Minister (13, Candy Ride), Bridlewood Farm	\$3,500	52/32	1/2	0/1	(Bentornato, \$1,190,350)	\$2,358,564	136	3	1.29	0.98
6	Cajun Breeze (08, Congrats), Stonehedge Farm South	\$5,000	88/48	1/1	1/1	(Fourth and Central, \$112,182)	\$2,201,256	182	9	1.05	1.13
7	Win Win Win (16, Hat Trick), Ocala Stud	\$8,500	58/35	2/2	1/2	(Win With Faith, \$120,300)	\$2,136,899	86	3	1.17	1.17
8	Social Inclusion (11, Pioneerof the Nile), Briardale Farm	Private	56/33	0/0	0/0	(Socially Awkward, \$129,883)	\$1,786,431	142	6	1.13	1.00
9	Jess's Dream (12, Curlin)	Died, 2024	68/36	0/0	0/0	(Gran Andrews, \$98,800)	\$1,575,301	*229	8	0.93	1.32
10	St Patrick's Day (15, Pioneerof the Nile)	N/A	49/25	1/4	0/1	(Mythical, \$540,750)	\$1,446,243	107	2	0.83	0.96
11	Brethren (08, Distorted Humor), Arindel Farm	\$4,000	67/34	1/1	0/1	(Evolution, \$121,807)	\$1,430,252	311	13	1.11	1.32
12	First Dude (07, Stephen Got Even), Double Diamond Farm	\$7,500	50/23	0/0	0/0	(Impacto, \$141,575)	\$1,280,979	519	16	1.06	1.08
13	Bodexpress (16, Bodemeister)	N/A	41/17	1/1	1/1	(Going Deep, \$153,780)	\$824,389	77	2	0.67	0.80
14	Rogueish (16, Into Mischief), Solera Farm	\$3,500	20/11	2/2	0/2	(Rouki, \$116,090)	\$620,729	47	2	1.00	0.89
15	Gunnevera (14, Dialed In)	N/A	51/17	0/0	0/0	(Theo's Thunder, \$50,420)	\$577,753	*79	0	0.36	0.85

\* includes Southern Hemisphere foals; ¶ Indicates a first-crop sire

cluded the 2025 breeding season with a robust 546 mares bred across its diverse stallion roster. The strong show of support from Florida's breeders is a fact that the Barbazons value and appreciate.

"I think it has a lot to do with the pedigrees of the horses we brought in," noted Joe of the successful breeding season. "We have invested a lot to bring these studs to Florida. But it's the only way we can be better here. You must spend a little to get this kind of quality.

"I give a lot of credit to Jamie (LaMonica) and to Christine (Jones)," he continued. "I basically just tell them to find us a stallion and then they work hard, beating the bushes to make it happen. I give the credit to those two. We are happy with what we've been able to do. We have had some good years with the stallions we have."

Of the headwinds facing Florida's Thoroughbred industry, Helen said, "It's not easy with everything going on here in the industry. But Florida is the best place to raise a baby, and that's what it all boils down to. I don't care what state you are in; I know Kentucky has bluegrass, and New York has the program, but the ground in Florida is as good as anywhere. The horses can stay outside, move around, run, and they love the sunshine. They can be horses. In New York, they can be locked up inside with ice and snow and the same in Kentucky for part of the year. There is always something here in Florida for horses as far as the racing industry goes. We'll fight for this industry in Florida. It's too



Grade 1 winner Arthur's Ride, who enters stud in Kentucky this year, was bred by the Barbazons and Tapit Syndicate

good of a location not to fight for.

"And we love what we are bringing here for Florida's breeders," she continued. "We have sons of quality sires, the best of the best. It makes us feel good and proud to show people our roster of stallions. Hopefully, we'll be doing this for a long time to come."

Ocala/Marion County offers a distinct and powerful advantage for horsemen accustomed to the winters in the north. Joe emphasizes that the year-round warmth and favorable conditions in Central Florida play a fundamental role in the health and conditioning of equine athletes.

"Ocala has the sunshine. The horses can be outside more unlike up north

in the wintertime when they are stuck in stalls," Joe said. "Here, it's rare that you put horses in because of weather. Mother Nature has a lot to do with why Florida is so healthy for horses."

## LENNILU A BREAKOUT STAR FOR LEINSTER

While Pleasant Acres is known for standing high-profile stallions, one stallion has turned into an unexpected sensation. Leinster, who will stand the 2026 season in New York, generated headlines in 2025 with his first crop. Standing for a modest fee of just \$2,500, he made an instant impact. The undisputed star of his initial crop was the 2-year-old filly Lennilu. The gray/roan filly, who was bred

THIS PAGE: COGLIANESE PHOTOS/SUSIE RAISNER, OPPOSITE PAGE: COURTESY OF PLEASANT ACRES STALLIONS/LOUISE E. REINAGEL

by the Barbazons, announced her presence by winning the first two starts of her career, including the Royal Palm Juvenile Fillies Stakes on turf at Gulfstream Park. Her  $3\frac{3}{4}$ -length triumph in that event earned her a coveted berth in the Queen Mary Stakes (G2) at Royal Ascot.

While the Barbazons sold Lennilu at the 2024 Ocala Breeders' Sales Winter Mixed Sale, they could not pass up a trip to England to watch her take on some of the world's best juveniles in her third career start. Trained by Patrick Biancone for the partnership of Amy Dunne, Caitlin Dunne, Brenda Miley, Jean Wilkinson, Hoffman Family Racing, Tranquility Lake Farms, and Maury and Christopher Harrington, Lennilu finished third in a determined effort in the Queen Mary last June.

"That was such a special moment for



**Leinster stood with success at Pleasant Acres from 2022-25; he was sold last fall to stand in New York for the 2026 breeding season**

us," shared Helen of the trip to Royal Ascot. "We thought that this might never happen again and was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so we packed our bags and went to England. She ran so big. She is something else. We're so proud of her. It was exciting for us."

Returning home, Lennilu showed no

ill effects from her sojourn across the pond. She won the FTBOA Florida Sire Desert Vixen Stakes and, fittingly, the Leinster Hollywood Beach Stakes in September. Her impressive freshman season concluded with an unplaced finish in the Oct. 31 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf Sprint (G1T) at Del Mar.

"She is a little pistol, and she is like one of our kids," Helen said of Lennilu. "We are so proud of her and the entire team that raised her and races her."

### HUMBLE ROOTS

Joe, originally from Louisiana, and Helen, who hails from New York, both consider Florida home. The Barbazons met in the early 1980s while working at Noel Hickey's Irish Acres Farm in Florida. They were married in 1983. They have one son together, Travis, and Joe has a son, Ryan, from a previous marriage.

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# 2025 LEADING SIRES IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2026 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	BT SWnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2025 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative BT SWs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	Done Talking (09, Broken Vow)	N/A	22/9	0/0	0/0	(Miss Fussy Pants, \$64,927)	\$389,448	62	0	0.94	0.86

\* includes Southern Hemisphere foals; ¶ Indicates a first-crop sire

Pleasant Acres initially opened its gates on a 10-acre parcel of land and today encompasses more than 200 acres.

“Our success is way beyond what I ever dreamed of,” Joe said. “When I was young, growing up in Louisiana, there was not much there. I always dreamed of having 10 acres with a horse. I never in my life dreamed I would have this. It’s a dream come true. When Helen and I started and had our own place on 10 acres, we would get so excited just to have a winner. Now, we have all of this, and we have accomplished everything we wanted to. The horse business has been great to us. We love it.”

A defining characteristic of the Barbazons’ success is their hands-on dedication and an active commitment to bolstering Florida’s breeding industry.

“It makes us feel good and warms our hearts that breeders support what we do here,” Helen said. “We try—no matter who it is or what type of mare they have—to treat everybody with respect. We know that we have a stallion for everyone, and we want them to breed their mares here. Everyone starts somewhere. We pride ourselves on helping Florida’s breeders. We are still Florida breeders, and we have been where some breeders are today. People gave us breaks along the way and we love returning the favor with the people in Florida.”

Joe added, “We get a lot of appreciation from Florida’s breeders. That means a lot to us. They tell us, ‘Thank you,’ all the time for bringing in well-pedigreed stallions. I hope we will be here bringing good studs in for Florida’s breeders until I die. It’s in my blood and I take a lot of pride in Pleasant Acres and what we’re doing.

“It’s seven days a week,” Joe added. “I



New to Pleasant Acres this year is stakes winner and grade 1-placed Gulfport, a son of the late Uncle Mo



The Barbazons bred multiple graded stakes winner Presious Passion, a durable son of Royal Anthem who retired after 52 starts with earnings topping \$2.6 million

hate being in the office. I’m outside all the time. Helen and Christine handle all the paperwork and the people. Everyone here is good at their job, and without Helen and Christine, I would not be here. They are the backbone of Pleasant Acres.”

## INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

While the Barbazons are known for standing stallions, they are no strangers to breeding top caliber stakes winners. The couple bred 2009 Florida Horse of the Year Presious Passion, who nearly ran away with the 2009 Breeders’ Cup Turf (G1T) at Santa Anita. The gelded son of Royal Anthem opened 10 lengths on an

international field before being caught late by Conduit, ultimately finishing second. Campanied by Patricia Generazio, Presious Passion, who is still a resident of Pleasant Acres today, was a multiple grade 1 winner who banked more than \$2.6 million in a stellar career.

“He put us on the map,” Helen said of Presious Passion. “He provided us with some of our favorite memories. He was special. His mom hurt herself and couldn’t race, and we got her for a board bill. We liked her and her pedigree, so we bred her.”

Presious Passion’s achievements on the racetrack led to the Barbazons being honored as Florida’s Breeder of the Year in 2009, the year after they received the 2008 Needles Award, given each year by the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders’ and Owners’ Association to outstanding small breeders.

“The recognition makes us feel like we have accomplished something,” Joe said. “It makes us feel like all the work was worth-

while. It makes us feel appreciated. We do all of this because we love it. We love horses; we love a lot of the people in this business. There are so many special people breeding to our stallions, and it is a good feeling to be recognized.”

More recently, the Barbazons bred Arthur’s Ride (in partnership with Tapit Syndicate), winner of the 2024 Whitney Stakes (G1) at Saratoga Race Course. A \$250,000 graduate of the Keeneland September Yearling Sale, Arthur’s Ride ran his rivals off their feet in the Whitney. The flashy gray/roan son of Tapit proved uncatchable, leading nearly every step of the way to win by 2¼ lengths for owner Glassman Racing and trainer Bill Mott.

THIS PAGE: TOP: BILL DENVER / EQUUS PHOTO; BOTTOM: CANDY MEDIA; OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: COURTESY OF PLEASANT ACRES STALLIONS; BOTTOM: TANDRA DOWNS

Arthur's Ride is embarking on his own stallion career in 2026 at Taylor Made Stallions in Kentucky. His exploits on the track garnered the Barbazons yet another award, winning the 2024 Florida Broodmare of the Year Award for Points of Grace, the dam of Arthur's Ride.

"It's special whenever any of our horses run like that," said Joe of Arthur's Ride winning the Whitney. "We thought we were top of the mountain with Presious Passion. And to get another classy horse like Arthur's Ride and another grade 1 winner is what you dream about. We were loud watching that race, let's put it that way. We will be sending a mare to breed to him. We're excited about his stud career."

For the Barbazons, the successes—from the breeding shed to the race-track—are evident. Helen acknowledges, however, that despite the demanding nature of the industry, passion is an essential ingredient that makes the effort sustainable.

"We never dreamed that we would come this far," Helen said. "When we look outside our window,



A full-service operation, Pleasant Acres offers breeding, mare, yearling, and weanling care, and sales representation



Pleasant Acres' stallion barn typically houses horses with desirable pedigrees and solid race records

it makes us feel proud. We're happy to be here and help people in Florida. When we were younger and starting out, it was tough to find good studs to breed to and we would try to send one or two mares to Kentucky when we could. It was tough to afford. Our goal was to start the farm and bring in new stallions every year for Florida's breeders. We want to raise the bar every year. We believe we've done that. Today, there are only a couple of big farms left here that have several stallions. We're very proud to be one of them.

"And none of this is easy," she added.

"It's been a lot of blood, sweat, and tears. But when it's your passion, you will keep getting better. If it's not a passion, why even do it because you probably won't excel at it. That's the key for everybody. Find your passion in life. Whatever it is that God has blessed you good at, that is what you need to do."

It is that fundamental truth that drives Pleasant Acres, ensuring that the Barbazons will remain a vital cornerstone of the Sunshine State's breeding landscape for years to come. **BH**

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