



Mission Accomplished

*David Willmot steps down as Woodbine CEO
after innovative run*

BY JENNIFER MORRISON

Innovation. Progress. Leadership.

These are just a few of the words used over the years to describe what David Willmot has brought to the horse racing industry in Ontario since he bulled his way into the business 35 years ago.

Under his aggressive, business-minded guidance, Woodbine racetrack has crawled out of the depths of near-bankruptcy and been transformed into a stable and healthy business that is the envy of many racetracks throughout North America.

And riding the crest of a pleasing 2009 Woodbine meeting that boasted a 7% increase in all-sources wagering—almost unheard of in a trying economy—Willmot will hand over the reins and step down as chief executive officer of Woodbine Entertainment Group in June 2010.

“You have to allow for growth and transition in a business,” said Willmot, 60, who will remain as chairman, a position he has held since 2001.

“When I became chief executive officer in 1994, I said that I would stay for three years; it wound up being 15. And 15 years is the outer edge of an appropriate run of a CEO.”

Taking over from Willmot will be Nick Eaves, 41, who was named president of WEG in 2006.



WEG ZAST

David Willmot (above) will remain as chairman while Nick Eaves will become CEO of Woodbine

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2009 Leading Sires in Canada

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

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Canada (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 16, 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	2010 Stud Fee Can\$	Rnrs/Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/Wns	Rstrct SW/BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2009 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	MILWAUKEE BREW (97, Wild Again), Adena Springs/Gardiner Farms	\$12,500	147/84	5/9	1/5	(Milwaukee Appeal, \$786,808)	\$3,661,833	236	8	1.46	1.56
2	BOLD EXECUTIVE (84, Bold Ruckus), Gardiner Farms	\$15,000	133/73	5/5	3/5	(Sans Sousi, \$162,178)	\$3,576,612	660	42	1.71	1.34
3	ALPHABET SOUP (91, Cozzene), Adena Springs/Gardiner Farms	\$6,000	185/94	2/3	0/2	(Sal the Barber, \$168,900)	\$2,983,076	*619	37	1.38	1.43
4	GILDED TIME (90, Timeless Moment), Bar None Ranches	\$7,500	144/74	2/4	1/2	(Gayego, \$656,600)	\$2,822,541	*1068	46	1.41	1.74
5	CAPE CANAVERAL (96, Mr. Prospector), Highfield Stock Farm	\$5,000	133/83	2/2	1/2	(Made for Magic, \$109,200)	\$2,073,703	299	17	1.25	1.39
6	SLIGO BAY (IRE) (98, Sadler's Wells), Adena Springs/Gardiner Farms	\$6,000	101/53	3/4	0/3	(Chirac, \$298,883)	\$1,998,883	*178	4	1.12	1.84
7	GONE WEST (97, Gone West), Gardiner Farms	\$4,500	105/40	2/2	2/2	(Resentless, \$184,476)	\$1,942,957	242	12	1.34	1.35
8	WHERE'S THE RING (99, Seeking the Gold), Gardiner Farms	\$4,500	65/37	2/2	2/2	(Who's Big Daddy, \$151,123)	\$1,912,518	107	4	1.47	1.34
9	WHISKEY WISDOM (93, Wild Again), Thunderbird Horse Centre	\$1,500	64/32	3/6	3/3	(Double Malt, \$239,293)	\$1,623,971	295	16	1.58	1.60
10	BOLD N' FLASHY (89, Bold Ruckus), T.C. Westmeath Stud Farm	\$3,500	66/34	0/0	0/0	(Lucky n' Bold, \$109,080)	\$1,375,522	275	13	1.34	1.27
11	SKIMMING (96, Nureyev), Pacific Stud	N/A	111/51	5/5	1/5	(Dewey's Special, \$130,092)	\$1,348,012	253	11	0.86	1.17
12	PEAKS AND VALLEYS (92, Mt. Livermore), Gardiner Farms	\$4,500	82/36	2/3	2/2	(Oistins, \$176,127)	\$1,286,649	488	28	1.31	1.47
13	ONE WAY LOVE (95, Regal Classic), T. C. Westmeath Stud Farm	\$4,500	83/36	1/1	1/1	(King Eddie, \$114,285)	\$1,279,243	252	2	1.00	1.36
14	VYING VICTOR (89, Flying Paster)	Died, 2008	110/53	6/6	2/6	(Disfunction, \$117,749)	\$1,232,568	556	34	0.85	0.82
15	PIKEPASS (96, Forty Niner), Mountainview Farms	\$3,500	98/48	2/2	2/2	(You Don't Pass, \$181,378)	\$1,202,225	233	4	0.75	0.95
16	PERIGEE MOON (98, Hennessy)	N/A	62/36	0/0	0/0	(Lunar Linda, \$136,908)	\$1,177,453	138	3	1.12	1.32
17	KISSIN KRIS (90, Kris S.), Esquirrel Farms	\$3,000	62/30	2/2	0/2	(Delightful Kiss, \$180,000)	\$1,029,121	440	15	1.15	1.18
18	MAZEL TRICK (95, Phone Trick), Canmor Farms	Died, 2008	79/37	2/2	2/2	(Voy Por Uno Mas, \$81,455)	\$1,021,753	*330	10	1.15	1.53
19	PAYNES BAY (98, Mr. Prospector), Norse Ridge Farm, Breeding Division	\$2,500	44/22	0/0	0/0	(Sunflower Drive, \$117,334)	\$1,007,300	90	0	1.11	1.26
20	STEPHANOTIS (93, Regal Classic), Canmor Farms	\$3,000	86/52	1/1	1/1	(Restless Lady, \$66,420)	\$998,627	217	7	0.72	0.85

*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.

"I'm still very passionate about the business," said Willmot. "There is a fire in the belly that you need to have every day as a CEO. I still have it; it's just that the embers are not burning as brightly. But I do think I can contribute strategically as chairman of the board—there are still serious issues out there facing racing and Woodbine Live! (a multi-million-dollar development project) is still to come."

A father of two sons, Willmot inherited his love and dedication to the sport of horse racing from his father, Donald "Bud" Willmot, who took his then 17-year-old son to their first yearling sale in September 1967 at Keeneland.

That sale was where the Willmot family purchased Cool Mood, a subsequent Canadian Oaks winner and a foundation mare for their Kinghaven Farms, which rose to become the cream of Thorough-

bred breeding operations through the '80s and '90s.

Upon graduating from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto in 1974, the younger Willmot started his own law practice but also became more active in the Thoroughbred industry as a board member of the Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society and Jockey Club of Canada.

Within 10 years, when the state of racing and breeding in Ontario was in steep decline, the board of trustees of what was then still known as the Ontario Jockey Club, a not-for-profit organization, asked Willmot to become a trustee.

"I assumed they were looking for younger blood on the board, and I was the youngest trustee of a large board of 27 people," he said.

It was not long before Willmot's reputation for hard-nosed business practices

took hold.

"I was looked upon as the angry young man on the board," said Willmot. "I certainly spoke up in terms of the company's financial situation. I was quite vocal that we needed a strategic plan and more aggressiveness in running it as a business."

"Not that they weren't good businessmen, but they were focusing on the organization from the point of view of their horses, not as a business."

"Those days the rate of decline of the industry and running of debt load was becoming very critical. The banks were going to take our loans."

Ironically, the troubles of Woodbine and racing contradicted the rise of Kinghaven Farms, which won back-to-back Canadian Triple Crowns with With Approval (1989) and Izvestia (1990) and produced dozens of champions and stakes horses.



Seattle Slew - Statuette, by Pancho Villa
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Sam-Son Farm

2009 Leading Sires in Ohio

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

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Ohio (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 16, 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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1	MERCER MILL (94, Forty Niner), Fair Winds Farm	N/A	49/28	2/3	2/2	(Darth Tater, \$106,970)	\$663,302	188	13	0.69	0.88
2	PARENTS' REWARD (98, Mr. Prospector), Blazing Meadows Farm at Meander Creek	\$2,000	13/6	2/2	2/2	(Raise the Reward, \$60,184)	\$204,740	30	3	1.27	0.61
3	BOLD TRUTH (99, Seattle Slew), Belford Farm	\$2,000	11/6	0/0	0/0	(Baby My Darlin', \$36,320)	\$144,959	*19	1	0.82	1.07
4	ACADEMY AWARD (86, Secretariat), Win Row Farm	\$1,500	25/11	0/0	0/0	(Clays Mill Knight, \$15,979)	\$136,160	*385	9	0.80	1.00
5	PRIDE OF BURKAAN (90, Burkaan)	Pnsd	13/6	0/0	0/0	(Best Air, \$30,410)	\$131,456	52	0	0.50	0.57

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2009 Leading Sires in Illinois

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								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	CARTWRIGHT (90, Forty Niner)	Died, 2005	102/53	2/2	1/2	(Tripper's Cart, \$86,531)	\$1,194,675	*437	18	0.90	0.83
2	SHORE BREEZE (98, Danzig), Eagle Valley Farm North	\$3,000	49/24	0/0	0/0	(Takenbythebreeze, \$71,705)	\$735,953	69	1	0.97	0.75
3	UNREAL ZEAL (80, Mr. Prospector)	Died, 2006	54/29	2/2	1/2	(River Bear, \$110,049)	\$645,378	602	30	1.11	1.17
4	FRIENDLY LOVER (88, Cutlass), Three Way Horse Farm	\$2,500	64/28	0/0	0/0	(Hands On, \$107,310)	\$623,652	446	11	1.07	1.08
5	CALLER I. D. (89, Phone Trick)	Died, 2006	49/18	0/0	0/0	(Sprig of Lilac, \$127,226)	\$581,897	*517	21	0.97	1.39

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David Willmot, left, with his father, Donald

"The two were absolutely linked," said Willmot. "Those were the golden years of Kinghaven, and I had such a passion and love for horse racing that the notion that the OJC could go bankrupt, I could not accept that."

Willmot was so determined to rescue Woodbine, he even made an attempt to buy the company in 1992.

"It's a little-known fact, but a partner and myself, with financial backing, made an offer to buy it," he noted. "I disagreed with the way (then president) Pat Keenan viewed the industry. But the board said 'no' and it caused some friction between me and some of the other board members who were friends of mine."

But in two years the board approached Willmot to take over as CEO.

"I think they had thought about some of the things I had believed in, and they looked at the situation the track was in very seriously," he said.

On the verge of hosting the 1996 Breeders' Cup, the first and only time the event has been held outside the United States, Willmot made one of the boldest moves that ultimately would be one of the keys to the track's resurgence.

In the midst of failed negotiations with unhappy union mutual clerks, Willmot locked the clerks out of the track. The lockout lasted six months and risked the arrival of the Breeders' Cup.

But the track saved \$4.5 million through a 35% rollback of the clerks' salaries and, according to Willmot, started a path that would lead to gaining back the confidence of banks that held more than \$80 million of the track's loans.

In addition, Willmot and his team lobbied the provincial government for the reduction of pari-mutuel tax and for getting slot machines at the track to help it compete with the expansion of gaming in the province.

Slot machines arrived at Woodbine in 2000 (and a year earlier at the company's Standardbred counterpart Mohawk Raceway) while the struggling Fort Erie Racetrack, located on the U.S. border, was sold.



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Hello Broadway NG

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Time Raker LF, Wild Zone LF
Daily Double Farm
Classy Prospector LF
Davis Ranch - Barometric LF
Just Plain Joe LF, Mattress LF
On The Mark LF
Gentry Farm - Fighter Joe LF
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KENTUCKY

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Seattle Fitz NG, State City NG
Ten Centuries NG
Darby Dan Farm
Magna Graduate NG
Nobiz Like Shobiz NG
Repriced NG, Sun King NG
Run Away And Hide NG
Darley
E Dubai NG, Rockport Harbor NG

Elmhurst-Cat Ridge
Hopewell Stallions
David Copperfield NG
Najran NG, Skip Away NG
Hurstland Farm
Bright Launch NG
Mahogany Hill Farm
Valiant Halory LF
Margaux Stallions
Devil His Due NG, Kela NG,
The Cliff's Edge NG
Milestone Farm-Mancini NG
Mid Life Crisis Thoroughbreds
Achilles of Troy LF
Big Unit LF, Blazing Song LF
New York Hero LF
Phoenix Farm - Fullbridled LF
River Run Farm - Rocking Trick LF
Roseglade Farm
Margie's Wildcat LF
Sparks View Farm
Heart of the Storm LF
Superstition Farm LLC
Silver Devil LF
Walmac Farm - Boboman LF
War Horse Place- Kitalpha NG
Wintergreen Stallion Station
Elite Squadron LF
Woods Edge Farm - Latent Heat NG

LOUISIANA

Carrier Thoros.- Carlisle Bay LF
Max's Missile LF
Fanlew Farms-Chestertown NG
Gemma's Star NG, Honor Glide NG
Jagerman NG, Not Phone NG
Matthews Thoro.- Snuck In NG

MICHIGAN

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H & D Stables - The Plains NG
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NEW YORK

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Patriot Act NG, Roaring Fever NG
Saratoga Glen Farm - Twilight
Meteor LF
Waldorf Farm - Bustin Stones NG

OHIO

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Farm** - Parent's Reward NG
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Harmony Hill - Colony Key LF
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Raimonde Farm -Pacific Waves LF
St. L'Enjoleur LF
Win Row -Academy Award LF
Big Atlanta LF, Canvas LF

PENNSYLVANIA

Dana Point Farm- Action This Day LF,
Sir Shackleton LF, Southern
Success LF, Spartan Victory LF,
Wiseman's Ferry LF
Davidovich Farm - Draft Age LF
Noah's Courage LF
Godstone Farm -Activist LF
Cetewayo LF, Pure Precision NG
Justaplain Farm-Knockadood NG
TurnoftheCentury NG
Lojeski Farm - Tekken LF
Maui Meadow Farm-Gulf Storm NG
Mountain Springs Farm
Storm Center LF, Turn West LF
Never Ending Farms -Mr. Kipp LF
Safe Haven Farm
Emperor Tiberius LF, Show Tune LF
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TEXAS

Lane's End Texas - Too Much Bling NG

WEST VIRGINIA

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2009 Leading Sires in Michigan

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

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Michigan (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 16, 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	SYNCLINE (97, Danzig), McMaster Farm	\$2,000	34/21	0/0	0/0	(Palamonium, \$140,150)	\$571,552	79	1	1.07	0.97
2	DEMALOOT DEMASHOOT (90, Bold Ruckus), McMaster Farm	\$2,500	64/29	1/2	0/1	(Valley Loot, \$112,875)	\$551,928	297	9	0.94	1.08
3	THE DEPUTY (IRE) (97, Petardia), Hubel Farms	\$2,000	64/32	0/0	0/0	(Kid Kearny Gabe, \$57,860)	\$527,133	188	4	0.60	0.99
4	MEADOW PRAYER (95, Meadowlake), Arnold Farms	\$2,000	27/18	4/5	4/4	(Meadow Wise, \$60,890)	\$429,409	84	9	1.19	0.76
5	NATIVE FACTOR (87, Foolish Pleasure), Arnold Farms	Died, 2009	36/19	0/0	0/0	(AI's Best Man, \$27,653)	\$292,545	167	6	0.74	0.75

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2009 Leading Sires in Minnesota

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For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Minnesota (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 16, 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	GOLD FEVER (93, Forty Niner), Dove Hill Farm	Died	48/26	2/2	1/2	(Hop Skip and Away, \$126,236)	\$854,097	*424	9	1.23	1.34
2	DEMIDOFF (90, Mr. Prospector), Waverly Stallion Station	\$2,800	56/30	1/1	1/1	(Wayoff, \$44,670)	\$526,807	224	19	1.03	0.85
3	APPEALING SKIER (93, Baldski), Hanson's Thoroughbreds	\$1,750	33/11	0/0	0/0	(Blushing Skier, \$41,513)	\$265,018	235	5	0.95	1.11
4	GHAZI (89, Polish Navy), Boehlke Farm	\$2,000	44/17	1/1	0/1	(Ghazia, \$40,625)	\$254,647	410	19	0.97	1.31
5	SHOT OF GOLD (95, Jolie's Halo), Dove Hill Farm	\$1,200	31/13	0/0	0/0	(Shot of Silver, \$38,827)	\$188,938	67	0	0.50	0.75

*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 was a classic turnaround situation," said Willmot. "We wanted to cut costs, rationalize assets, and start working toward building the business."

Next on Willmot's list was to modernize the Woodbine facility, not an easy task as the track had "no money" and had to start by selling \$5 million worth of original artwork located in the turf club.

A new paddock, jockeys' room, and completely refurbished levels in the grandstand, including the new slots floor, ultimately cost \$200 million.

Backstretch barns were also modernized, and the track's gates surrounding the property were taken down and parking and admission fees were eliminated.

"We had to change the focus from supply-side driven to focus it on customer-driven issues to generate money that would take care of the supply side," Willmot stated.

Willmot cannot forget one of his first meetings with some of the track's bigger bettors.

"I called them 'fans' and one of them said to me, 'I'm not a fan. You charge us to get in, you treat us badly, turn us upside down, shake the money out of our pockets, and kick us out.'

"When you're in the business as an owner or breeder you don't even think about what the average punter thinks about wagering, and that's one of the first big things I learned," Willmot said.

Willmot then set sail to bring racing to the fans and had his

Michigan's Exacta Sire Payoff

#1 SYNCLINE

Danzig-Annie Edge, by Nebbiolo ~ \$2,000

1st Among Michigan Sires in 2009

21 winners from 32 runners in 2009

#2 DEMALOOT DEMASHOOT

Bold Ruckus - Trouble Free, by Nodouble ~ \$2,500

2nd Among Michigan Sires in 2009

Sire of 73% winners/runners lifetime



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Kinghaven Farms' With Approval, the first of two Triple Crown winners

ANNIE M. EBERHARDT

2009 Leading Sires in Indiana

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

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Indiana (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 16, 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	2010 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	CHIEF SEATTLE (97, Seattle Slew), WinRich Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	119/65	3/6	1/3	(Bold Chieftain, \$294,084)	\$2,372,916	*324	10	1.23	1.37
2	CHAMPALI (00, Glitterman), Richwine Farm	\$2,500	62/27	1/2	1/1	(Key Lime Baby, \$154,450)	\$989,259	*108	1	0.84	1.37
3	MAX'S PAL (97, Marquetry), Indiana Stallion Station	\$1,500	56/29	0/0	0/0	(Max Ahead, \$97,486)	\$896,312	120	3	0.96	0.98
4	PATTON (91, Lord At War)	N/A	47/19	1/2	1/1	(Whistle Pig, \$237,592)	\$884,166	389	13	0.97	1.13
5	SPANISH STEPS (01, Unbridled), Foot Fall Farm	\$3,500	56/25	2/2	0/2	(Rock 'n' Roll Gal, \$77,030)	\$801,526	98	2	0.92	1.48
6	INDY KING (99, A.P. Indy), Richwine Farm	\$1,000	50/29	1/1	0/1	(Indycency, \$100,030)	\$732,291	90	2	0.92	0.92
7	BLACK MOONSHINE (87, Mt. Livermore), Ayer Farm	Died	32/17	1/1	1/1	(Brean Can, \$71,120)	\$631,948	80	4	0.97	0.77
8	CROWN AMBASSADOR (94, Storm Cat), Swifty Farms	Died, 2009	46/22	2/2	2/2	(Classic Ramona, \$69,165)	\$627,804	154	12	0.89	0.96
9	CENTURY CITY (IRE) (99, Danzig), Breakway Farm	\$2,500	50/20	0/0	0/0	(Oculuna, \$62,578)	\$618,397	*117	0	0.61	1.45
10	ARROMANCHES (93, Relaunch), Donald Dearth	\$750	17/12	0/0	0/0	(Brother Jamie, \$77,445)	\$559,841	38	0	1.27	0.57

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team apply to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission for a digital horse racing channel.

"That is one of the things that I am most proud of," said Willmot about the birth of The Racing Network, now the 24-hour HorsePlayer Interactive TV.

"The days of people spending four or five hours at the track during a weekday are gone. We had to bring our product to the fans."

An in-house television department grew from three employees to more than 100 and, after several years of lobbying with the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency and through the Criminal Code of Canada, Woodbine offered the first form of legal wagering over the Internet.

In 2001 the Ontario Jockey Club name was replaced by Woodbine Entertainment Group, and Willmot added the role of chairman to his titles.

Continuing his steady run of changes, Willmot brought the synthetic surface Polytrack to Woodbine in 2006, making it the second track in North America to replace its dirt track with an all-weather surface.

"I thought we should look into it," said Willmot. "I don't think we would have moved as quickly without the comfort of a good North American partner (Keeneland) that we could have turned to if there was a problem."

"Our main track was not a good racetrack," said Willmot. "You could never find the right point on the pendulum—it was too hard or too cuppy. I understand that the jury is still out on synthetics. They are not perfect, but there is no question that this Polytrack is much better than the main track that came before it."

Willmot stressed the safety of horse and rider has always been paramount to Woodbine.

"I've had two Horses of the Year go down on the racetrack, and I think we should do whatever we can do for the safety of horse and rider," said Willmot. "You cannot imagine, until you have sat in on focus groups, the impact that a breakdown has on new or potentially new customers."

Certainly the most ambitious plan set out by Woodbine under Willmot is the launching of Woodbine Live!, which is on the verge of breaking ground, perhaps by mid-2010.

Acres of land surrounding the Woodbine property will soon be home to an entertainment district to be built in partnership with The Cordish Co. of Baltimore, Md.

"We have had countless offers for that land, but we never felt that we wanted it developed with buildings that go dark at five o'clock," Willmot noted. "So we said we would wait for the big idea that would benefit horse racing."

Willmot's first meeting with David Cordish, president of

the company, was the first of many that would span two years until the project was announced in 2006.

Today, zoning and a financial incentive agreement (deferred taxes over the early years of the project) have been completed and site plan approvals are in the works. Only the trying economy throughout the continent has slowed its progress.

So with Woodbine Live! on the horizon, Willmot will step back and let Eaves and company carry on what many will agree has been the most influential run by a racing executive in modern history.

"There are two things I feel most proud of," said Willmot. "One

Indiana Welcomes ROYALLY-BRED



Sire of 75% 2-year-old winners/runners in 2009, headed by Oak Tree at Santa Anita winner *Legal Separation* and *Sheza Foxy Jackpot* at Fairplex.

By leading sire **SEEKING THE GOLD**. Out of a G1-placed full sister to leading sire **OUT OF PLACE** (G3). Won the Grade II Gulfstream Park H.

Immediate family of 4-time G1 SW **VERSAILLES TREATY** (\$1,271,154).

(Seeking the Gold – Frolic, by Cox's Ridge) FEE: \$1,750

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Kinghaven Farms, with owner Don Willmot (center) and his team, won nine Sovereign Awards as Canada's outstanding breeder

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GOODS

Tale of the Cat – Twirl, by Darn That Alarm



photos by Z

Third Leading Indiana Freshman Sire in 2009

Indiana's Only 2009 Freshman Sire
to Sire a Stakes Performer
Sire of 2YO LORD AVIE JONES – 2nd
by only a nose 1st time out and returned to
place in the \$74,000+
Crown Ambassador Stakes

A winning son of G2SW TALE OF
THE CAT – sire of G1SWs GIO
PONTI, TALE OF EKATI, LION
HEART, etc.

From the family of 2008 G1SW
SQUARE EDDIE (\$786,000), etc.

is the transition of this company to a very business-minded, focused, and motivated company with a young and competent management team overseen by a board that functions well.

“The other thing is while horse racing and breeding continue to face a lot of challenges throughout North America, I’m proud that owners and breeders can look at this jurisdiction and track and know with confidence that the business they are in makes sense.

“Years ago when times in the industry were tough, I would look out the window of the farm at all the horses and think, ‘Willmot, are you an idiot?’ But today the purses are healthy, you almost have to be unlucky not to make money, and the pride of being in horse racing has come back.”

Following a dispersal of Kinghaven stock in 1988, Willmot has kept a number of Thoroughbreds for his racing and breeding operation. He will breed five Thoroughbred mares and four Standardbred mares in 2010 and operate a small racing stable that includes several horses owned in partnerships with friends.

“It’s going to be of a size that my wife, Susan, and I can feel comfortable with,” he said. “Hopefully, we will have more time to travel and do some other things we want to do, but we’ll always own horses.”

Willmot is especially excited about his Canadian-bred 2-year-old Stormy Lord, a Queen’s Plate hopeful for next summer.

A multiple award winner and member of the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame, Willmot is content Woodbine is ready to continue its move forward without him at the helm.

“My father had a lot of great sayings and one was that the first responsibility of a new CEO is to immediately begin grooming your successor and then know when to get out of the way.

“What I hope is the case is the men that were around when I first got into the game—Charles Taylor, Jean Louis Levesque, George Frostad, Ernie Samuel, my father—they are all gone but they are up there looking down and saying, ‘Good job, David.’”