

All in the game

Southern California owner expands stable after success of first purchase

BY LIANE CROSSLEY

RUSTIN KRETZ was just a casual racing fan when he took his wife, Juliana, to the 2010 Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (G1) as a birthday gift, but he was so overcome by the festivities that he left with an intense desire to be actively involved in Thoroughbred racing.

"Seeing her in the dress and the hat was so incredible," he said. "And watching the horses in the paddock, we just kind of fell in love with it. We got back from the trip and I got this itch and I said 'I want to own a horse,' and she looked at me like I was kind of crazy and said 'Okay, sure,' but didn't think I would really do it."

Kretz's only knowledge of the sport was watching major races on television and making an occasional trek to Santa Anita Park, where his handicapping methods consisted of betting catchy names and favorite numbers.

"The way I am, if I get my head on something, I have to do it," said Kretz, founder and president of Scorpion Design, a website designing and marketing firm based in Valencia, California. "So I started looking around and learning because without knowing anything about the business, I figured the first thing I had to do was find a trainer."

His research brought him to Kristin Mulhall, who invited him to the races at Hollywood Park. He quickly got a crash course in one of racing's harshest realities.

"Two of her owners had horses running that day," he said. "One of the horses was in a claiming race and we didn't quite understand how that worked. The horse got claimed and we thought, 'We don't want to fall in love with our horse and then all of a sudden it is gone from you.' That was scary but now we totally understand how [claiming] works."

Kretz soon understood about other racing options and felt confident in hiring Mulhall, who recommended he purchase Westwood Pride, a filly who had just won a maiden claiming race at Calder Race Course. She debuted for her new connections with a second-place effort in a Hollywood starter allowance race on June 23, the Kretzes' third wedding anniversary. In her next start on July 16, Westwood Pride gave the couple that euphoric feeling that keeps racing enthusiasts searching for more when she cruised to victory and inspired the Kretzes to buy more horses.



Rustin Kretz
Birthplace: San Francisco
Residence: Valencia, California
Business: President and founder of Scorpion Design in Valencia, California.
Family: Wife, Juliana
Racing stable: Purchased first Thoroughbred and eventual Grade 2-placed Westwood Pride in June 2010; currently has 11 horses in training, including seven juveniles purchased at 2010 Keeneland September yearling sale.
Websites: www.scorpiondesign.com, www.westwoodpride.com



Westwood Pride finished second in a Hollywood Park starter allowance race in her first start for new owners Rustin (cap and sunglasses) and Juliana (far left) Kretz, before winning two races, including one at Del Mar (above). She later finished second in the 2010 Las Palmas Handicap

Added investments

They joined a partnership to purchase Square Deal, a six-year-old Sky Mesa gelding who eventually won back-to-back allowance races for the group. The Kretzes wanted

a young horse for 2011, so they claimed Gnarly Dude from a winning effort in his career debut in September at Del Mar. The Mr. Greeley gelding recently returned to the races following an illness that

sidelined him after two starts for the Kretzes.

To augment the roster, Kretz sent his wife and trainer to the Keeneland September yearling sale with a shopping list. While Kretz re-

searched pedigrees in California, the women did the footwork and sent videos, pictures, and text messages of their finds to him. They were the successful bidders on seven yearlings and bought another one privately.

Kretz eventually intends to name a horse Papa K after his father, who has been caught up in his son's enthusiasm for racing. His employees also have joined in the fun and Kretz encourages them to watch the races at the office. He is putting together a syndicate to buy a two-year-old at the Barretts Equine Ltd.

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In 2008, California trainer Jeff Bonde purchased three yearlings for clients Philip Lebherz and Alan Klein at the WTBOA yearling sale ...

That \$101,000 investment has now grown to **OVER \$1-MILLION in earnings** and includes multiple G1 SW and 2010 Eclipse Sprint finalist **SMILING TIGER** and 2010 Washington Champion 3YO Colt/Gelding **SLEW THE MAN**

"We've been very successful and happy with the horses we've purchased in Washington," said Philip Lebherz, whose **SMILING TIGER** won the February 19 San Carlos Handicap (G2).

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GENERAL SIRE LIST BY 2011 EARNINGS

The accompanying state sire lists represent racing in the current year, plus lifetime statistics for all foals of racing age for each sire. Sires are reported by state where stands regardless of where runners were bred. To be considered for inclusion is any sire who is currently standing at stud or had last stood in that state if the sire has been pensioned or is dead. (If pensioned or is dead, the sire will be included if his youngest foals are age three or younger.) The statistics are inclusive of all racing in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, and Uruguay. ♦First crop to race in 2010.

| STALLION, YOB, sire; farm where stands | Current year | | | | | Lifetime | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|-------------|------------|---------------------------|------------------|----------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----|--------------------|------------|
| | Stud fee | Strs/Wnrs | SWS/StWins | Leading earner, earnings | Progeny earnings | Crops | Fis | Strs | Winners | SWS | Avg. winning dist. | Per runner |
| UNUSUAL HEAT , 90, Nureyev; Harris Farms | \$20,000 | 50/11 (22%) | 0/0 | The Usual Q. T., \$60,000 | \$538,795 | 11 | 499 | 328 (66%) | 240 (48%) | 27 | 7.17 | \$85,106 |
| BENCHMARK , 91, Alydar; Ballena Vista Farm | 4,000 | 74/19 (26%) | 0/0 | Bench Points, 43,680 | 504,070 | 10 | 607 | 414 (68%) | 306 (50%) | 30 | 6.48 | 52,500 |
| BERTRANDO , 89, Skywalker; Ballena Vista Farm | 8,000 | 42/15 (36%) | 1/1 | Bloemer Girl, 85,290 | 370,745 | 15 | 968 | 665 (69%) | 467 (48%) | 51 | 6.86 | 59,152 |
| CEE'S TIZZY , 87, Relaunch; Pens | | 30/8 (27%) | 0/0 | Magic Launch, 68,496 | 295,697 | 18 | 714 | 479 (67%) | 348 (49%) | 39 | 6.70 | 74,050 |
| IN EXCESS (Ire) , 87, Siberian Express; Vessels Stallion Farm | 12,500 | 55/13 (24%) | 0/0 | Piney River, 43,200 | 292,087 | 16 | 937 | 638 (68%) | 472 (50%) | 62 | 6.29 | 63,771 |
| SOUTHERN IMAGE , 00, Halo's Image; Rancho San Miguel | 4,000 | 41/15 (37%) | 2/2 | Calibrachoa, 60,000 | 278,037 | 3 | 246 | 124 (50%) | 66 (27%) | 3 | 6.62 | 20,311 |
| MARINO MARINI , 00, Storm Cat; Rancho San Miguel | 2,500 | 40/12 (30%) | 0/0 | Bleach Blonde, 53,040 | 277,388 | 4 | 186 | 91 (49%) | 59 (32%) | 4 | 6.23 | 26,303 |
| KAFWAIN , 00, Cherokee Run; Tommy Town Thoroughbreds | 5,000 | 53/10 (19%) | 0/0 | Twelve Twenty Two, 36,600 | 239,544 | 5 | 354 | 217 (61%) | 140 (40%) | 12 | 6.58 | 33,708 |
| SIBERIAN SUMMER , 89, Siberian Express; Victory Rose T'breeds | 3,500 | 30/11 (37%) | 0/0 | Sammartino, 36,960 | 225,167 | 10 | 362 | 271 (75%) | 190 (52%) | 13 | 6.42 | 41,515 |
| SWISS YODELER , 94, Eastern Echo; Harris Farms | 5,000 | 66/11 (17%) | 0/0 | Swiss Charm, 17,680 | 219,964 | 10 | 640 | 462 (72%) | 322 (50%) | 23 | 6.10 | 46,330 |
| TRIBAL RULE , 96, Storm Cat; Ballena Vista Farm | 6,000 | 47/10 (21%) | 0/0 | Urban Hunter, 37,440 | 219,858 | 6 | 339 | 152 (45%) | 100 (29%) | 14 | 6.28 | 49,519 |
| OLD TOPPER , 95, Gilded Time; Tommy Town Thoroughbreds | 3,500 | 60/15 (25%) | 0/0 | Champagne Topper, 20,800 | 213,605 | 8 | 444 | 312 (70%) | 229 (52%) | 15 | 6.40 | 37,026 |
| SALT LAKE , 89, Deputy Minister; Dead | | 42/9 (21%) | 0/0 | Maggie McGowan, 32,400 | 202,510 | 16 | 1,188 | 972 (82%) | 780 (66%) | 70 | 6.23 | 58,887 |
| MINISTERS WILD CAT , 00, Deputy Minister; Tommy Town T'breeds | 4,000 | 29/6 (21%) | 0/0 | Jim's No Preacher, 53,040 | 179,971 | 3 | 159 | 70 (44%) | 39 (25%) | 2 | 6.48 | 17,594 |
| SEA OF SECRETS , 95, Storm Cat; Ballena Vista Farm | 2,500 | 37/11 (30%) | 1/1 | Shred the Secrets, 32,800 | 178,509 | 9 | 406 | 293 (72%) | 221 (54%) | 19 | 6.40 | 52,016 |



MAIDEN BONUS PROGRAM

I. A \$20,000 bonus made available for owners of registered California-Bred or Sired maidens in Maiden Special races at the Santa Anita, Hollywood Park and Del Mar meetings in Southern California; and a \$10,000 bonus for owners of registered California-Bred or Sired maidens in Maiden Special races in Northern California and at all Fair meetings throughout the state. Beginning in 2011, only races at 4 1/2-furlongs or longer will qualify.

*Paid directly to the owner within 45 racing days after the win.

II. Significant eligibility changes for California-breds.



California Thoroughbred Breeders Association

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March sale of selected two-year-olds in training.

Despite his exuberance, Kretz is grounded in reality and realizes not every horse will be a Westwood Pride, runner-up in the Las Palmas Handicap (G2) in October during the Oak Tree at Hollywood meeting.

"You have to balance the business side with how much you love these animals," Kretz said. "Someday I realize I will have to put one in a claiming race and see it go and it is going to be a sad day for us because we get so attached. But we will never, ever sell Westwood Pride."

The Kretzes are regular visitors to Mulhall's barn and delight in interacting with their horses.

"Gnarly Dude and Square Deal are hams, they want attention from everyone, but Westwood Pride does not want attention," he said. "But when my wife and I go there, she will put her head in our hands and just stand there. She has a bond with us, with my wife more than me. It is really touching to see her do that." ♦

Liane Crossley is a freelance writer based in Lexington.

Leading 2011 California sires

| By number of 2011 winners | Sires | | |
|---------------------------|-------|------|------|
| | Strs | Wnrs | Pct. |
| Benchmark | 74 | 19 | 26% |
| Southern Image | 41 | 15 | 37% |
| Bertrando | 42 | 15 | 36% |
| Old Topper | 60 | 15 | 25% |
| In Excess (Ire) | 55 | 13 | 24% |
| Marino Marini | 40 | 12 | 30% |
| Siberian Summer | 30 | 11 | 37% |
| Sea of Secrets | 37 | 11 | 30% |
| Unusual Heat | 50 | 11 | 22% |
| Swiss Yodeler | 66 | 11 | 17% |
| Tribal Rule | 47 | 10 | 21% |
| Kafwain | 53 | 10 | 19% |

† Dead; • Pensioned; ♦ Freshman sire

Considered for inclusion on the accompanying lists is any sire who stands in the state reported and is represented by a starter in the United States or Canada in 2011. Statistics are comprehensive for all starters in the United States and Canada (statistics through February 22), Argentina (February 21), Australia (February 21), Brazil (February 25), Chile (February 18), England (February 22), France (February 22), Germany (February 21), Hong Kong (February 23), Italy (February 21), Ireland (February 22), Jamaica (January 15), Japan (February 20), Malaysia (January 23), Mexico (February 22), New Zealand (February 25), Peru (February 20), Puerto Rico (February 21), Saudi Arabia (February 3), Singapore (February 20), South Africa (February 16), United Arab Emirates (February 25), Uruguay (February 20), and Zimbabwe (February 13).

Statistics are lifetime: Crops (C), average number of foals per crop (F/C), starters (Strs), winners (Wnrs), percent starters from winners (%), stakes winners (SWs), earnings, and average earnings per starter. The total number of stakes winners is worldwide. Deceased sires are preceded by a dagger (†); pensioned sires are preceded by a bullet (•); freshman sires are preceded by a diamond (♦).

Statistics from Jockey Club Information Systems Inc. and THOROUGHBRED TIMES.