

SOUTHWEST

# Cowboy Care

*Tom and Sandy McKenna  
raise runners the "cowboy way"*

BY DAVID SCHMITZ

**T**om and Sandy McKenna believe in the “cowboy way” when it comes to raising good horses at their 1,200-acre McKenna Thoroughbreds near Taiban in the eastern part of New Mexico.

“It’s wide, open fields and a hands-on approach with everyone on the ranch doing their part,” Tom McKenna said. “Everyone picks up a shovel.”

McKenna, 74, who grew up near El Paso, Texas, got an early start in racing. “My grandfather, a corporate judge in El Paso, had both Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horses, and at 12, I started riding in lap-and-tap races for him,” he said. “The races were out in the boondocks. They went out and cleared off an area of land for them.”

In a lap-and-tap race, horses are ridden slowly to the starting line, and if they are closely lapped when they arrive there, they are “tapped off” by the starter. Once they are tapped off, the race is on.

The McKennas honor the memory of the judge by campaigning their runners in the name Judge Lanier Racing.

The couple started in the Thoroughbred business after attending a Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association seminar earlier this decade. At the time, they owned a ranch near Walsenberg, Colo.

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From left, Tom and Sandy McKenna with farm manager David Sprissler and veterinarian David Orton

# 2009 Leading Sires in Louisiana

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

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Louisiana (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 2, 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	YONAGUSKA (98, Cherokee Run), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$5,000	204/119	6/8	1/6	(Musket Man, \$836,000)	\$4,906,952	*377	11	1.27	1.33
2	BRAHMS (97, Danzig), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$3,500	155/91	5/5	2/5	(Bad Action, \$288,905)	\$2,894,223	*465	10	1.10	1.06
3	YANKEE GENTLEMAN (99, Storm Cat), Le Mesa Stallions	\$5,000	108/57	3/4	0/3	(Supermodel, \$123,414)	\$2,388,371	171	6	1.51	1.38
4	IDE (93, Forty Niner), Clear Creek Stud	\$2,500	114/54	3/4	2/3	(Shezacrazygirl, \$172,800)	\$2,167,627	396	15	1.28	1.16
5	LEESTOWN (94, Seattle Slew), Red River Farms	Died, 2008	177/56	2/2	2/2	(Lee City Slew, \$103,931)	\$2,016,918	441	15	0.93	0.99
6	SNUCK IN (97, Montbrook), Matthews Thoroughbred Farm	\$2,000	123/71	1/1	1/1	(Sneak a Cold Treat, \$97,260)	\$1,684,281	249	4	0.94	1.01
7	SEFAPIANO (89, Fappiano), Landlock Equine Center	\$2,500	67/33	5/9	3/5	(Jonesboro, \$585,110)	\$1,667,522	296	22	1.39	0.97
8	GOOD AND TOUGH (95, Carson City), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$3,000	100/49	0/0	0/0	(Jemilyn, \$178,120)	\$1,665,277	*287	11	1.31	1.23
9	GOLD TRIBUTE (94, Mr. Prospector), Red River Farms	\$2,000	96/48	2/2	0/2	(Cajun Conference, \$121,300)	\$1,609,033	*354	6	1.06	1.18
10	RICHTER SCALE (94, Habitony), Chad & Pat White Farms	\$2,500	114/54	0/0	0/0	(Rock Hard Candy, \$74,880)	\$1,231,996	305	7	0.83	1.42
11	TIME BANDIT (96, Time for a Change), Heritage Stud	\$2,000	75/38	0/0	0/0	(Yare, \$147,720)	\$1,231,007	175	3	1.04	0.99
12	AFTERNOON DEELITES (92, Private Terms), Clear Creek Stud	\$3,000	101/39	1/2	1/1	(Classy Deelites, \$201,500)	\$1,193,797	*492	22	1.24	1.51
13	ROSSINI (97, Miswaki), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$2,000	126/47	1/1	1/1	(Ailbe, \$95,898)	\$1,187,816	*393	6	0.68	0.85
14	ROBYN DANCER (87, Crafty Prospector), Shady Lane Farm	N/A	90/45	2/2	1/2	(Fancy Runner, \$159,390)	\$1,041,308	623	22	1.14	1.36
15	ZARBYEV (84, Nureyev), Foxwood Plantation	\$3,500	54/24	2/3	2/2	(Zarb's Ballerina, \$175,100)	\$927,186	*289	14	1.15	0.90
16	SCRIMSHAW (00, Gulch), Millennium Farms at Moon Lake	\$2,500	61/33	1/2	1/1	(Single Scoop, \$71,910)	\$892,920	92	2	0.94	1.00
17	HONOR GLIDE (94, Honor Grades), Fanlew Farms	\$2,500	61/33	1/1	0/1	(Euroglide, \$93,332)	\$849,462	133	2	0.71	1.16
18	PORTO FORICOS (95, Mr. Prospector), Clear Creek Stud	\$1,500	37/13	1/1	1/1	(Mr. Foricos Two U, \$307,766)	\$823,893	108	5	1.61	1.24
19	RUN PRODUCTION (00, Saint Ballado), Foxwood Plantation	\$1,500	25/17	1/1	1/1	(Productive Envoy, \$172,460)	\$736,196	50	3	1.68	0.99
20	TETON FOREST (01, Forestry), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	42/21	1/1	1/1	(Deltalicious, \$86,510)	\$707,627	84	1	0.95	1.10
21	LITTLEEXPECTATIONS (97, Valid Appeal), Millennium Farms at Moon Lake	\$2,000	55/25	2/5	1/2	(Seven Seventythree, \$167,100)	\$690,923	114	3	0.95	1.12
22	MILLENNIUM WIND (98, Cryptoclearance), 519 Thoroughbreds	\$2,000	83/28	1/1	0/1	(Whirlwind Poppy, \$57,714)	\$687,158	*215	3	0.58	1.39
23	EASYFROMTHEGITGO (99, Dehere), Ryder River Ridge Farm	\$2,000	43/16	1/2	0/1	(Happyfromthegitgo, \$169,710)	\$622,305	81	1	0.77	1.08
24	TOOLIGHTTOQUIT (92, Dixieland Brass), Ryder River Ridge Farm	\$2,000	33/18	2/2	2/2	(Coach Mike, \$92,000)	\$604,593	128	7	1.10	1.10
25	FINEST HOUR (94, Forty Niner), Camelot Farm	\$2,000	69/21	0/0	0/0	(Sparkling Diamond, \$64,700)	\$600,455	256	4	0.71	0.80

\*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.

"We went to the TOBA seminar and that whetted our interest in racing and breeding," McKenna said. "I checked out some programs, including one in Louisiana, but liked the incentives in New Mexico best."

The McKennas, who still own their Walsenberg ranch, took their time before choosing New Mexico as a place to start a breeding operation.

"We spent two years looking at differ-

ent properties," McKenna said. "This place is nice because it had been a racehorse operation and is only 3½ hours from our Colorado ranch.

"When we went looking for broodmares, we went to Kentucky and California, focusing on winners or mares that had produced winners. During the time we bought the mares, we didn't think we'd go into the stallion business but that

changed."

The McKennas stand Dominique's Cat and K.O. Punch at their ranch. Both stallions were at stud when the McKennas bought them.

Dominique's Cat, purchased by Tom McKenna for \$30,000 at the 2005 Barretts January sale, offered exceptional bloodlines. The son of leading sire Storm Cat was produced from champion Eliza. By Mt. Livermore, Eliza was voted 1992 champion 2-year-old filly after winning the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (gr. I). Her credentials at 3 included a triumph in the Santa Anita Oaks (gr. I).

Dominique's Cat stood his first season at McKenna Thoroughbreds in 2005. Runners from his first New Mexico-bred crop are 3-year-olds. One of them, Cat's Simon, bred by McKenna Farms, has won four races this year.

K.O. Punch stood at Rick Trontz' Hopewell Farm near Midway, Ky., when the McKennas bought him.

"I met Rick while I was buying mares in Kentucky," McKenna said. "He showed me K.O. Punch, who was a heck of a sprinter. Rick got me thinking about buying K.O. Punch. We messed around for a couple of years before the syndicate that owned him finally decided to sell him."

K.O. Punch (Two Punch—Joanie's Princess, by Joanie's Chief) first stood at McKenna Thoroughbreds in 2006. Runners from his first New Mexico-bred crop are 2-year-olds and include Mean Jean, a first-



Dominique's Cat, by Storm Cat, joined the farm's roster in 2005

# 2009 Leading Sires in Oklahoma

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For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in Oklahoma (exported stallions are excluded), and have runners in North America. Listed below are all available statistics for the Northern Hemisphere through December 2, 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	<b>TACTICAL CAT</b> (96, Storm Cat), Diamond G Ranch	\$2,000	139/71	3/5	1/3	(Wishful Tomcat, \$140,145)	<b>\$2,092,216</b>	427	23	1.18	1.34
2	<b>SERVICE STRIPE</b> (91, Deputy Minister), Rockin Z Ranch	\$2,000	104/56	1/2	0/1	(Field Commission, \$560,309)	<b>\$1,726,694</b>	309	15	1.30	1.12
3	<b>EVANSVILLE SLEW</b> (92, Slew City Slew), Diamond G Ranch	\$2,000	96/52	4/4	3/4	(Kizzy's Chaos, \$110,840)	<b>\$1,535,488</b>	*386	30	1.20	0.95
4	<b>ARTAX</b> (95, Marquetry), Diamond G Ranch	\$2,000	101/41	1/1	1/1	(Diabolical, \$293,601)	<b>\$1,532,913</b>	373	6	1.08	1.42
5	<b>DIAMOND</b> (95, Mr. Prospector), Oklahoma Equine	N/A	69/31	0/0	0/0	(Movin' Out, \$234,460)	<b>\$1,180,821</b>	230	5	1.22	1.13
6	<b>DANCE MASTER</b> (97, Gone West), JEH Stallion Station-Oklahoma Division	\$1,500	101/44	2/2	1/2	(Master Link, \$94,510)	<b>\$1,136,437</b>	179	7	0.98	1.14
7	<b>MALABAR GOLD</b> (97, Unbridled), Winner's Circle Farms	N/A	114/42	1/1	0/1	(Dynamite Bob, \$94,784)	<b>\$1,115,930</b>	*213	3	0.68	1.13
8	<b>OMEGA CODE</b> (00, Elusive Quality), Rockin Z Ranch	\$2,000	98/45	1/1	0/1	(Code of Honour, \$129,160)	<b>\$1,084,796</b>	162	2	0.72	1.32
9	<b>LUCKY LIONEL</b> (93, Mt. Livermore), Diamond G Ranch	\$2,000	65/29	0/0	0/0	(Benny the Bull, \$131,800)	<b>\$821,724</b>	256	11	1.27	1.28
10	<b>KING OF SCAT</b> (96, Eastern Echo), Raywood	\$2,000	57/31	1/1	1/1	(Concert King, \$62,059)	<b>\$606,897</b>	150	9	0.77	0.77

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# 2009 Leading Sires in New Mexico

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								Foals	Stks Wnrs	*A-E Index	*Comp Index
1	<b>SUAVE PROSPECT</b> (92, Fortunate Prospect), Doubletree Farm	\$4,000	110/63	3/3	1/3	(Talented Princess, \$97,090)	<b>\$1,641,339</b>	358	16	1.21	1.08
2	<b>GOLD CASE</b> (94, Forty Niner), Mesa Vista Stud	\$5,000	100/55	1/3	1/1	(Red Hot N Gold, \$153,023)	<b>\$1,510,864</b>	*461	20	1.19	1.19
3	<b>GHOSTLY MOVES</b> (92, Silver Ghost), Callaway Farm	\$4,000	57/29	7/8	7/7	(Some Ghost, \$134,345)	<b>\$1,365,856</b>	154	18	1.30	1.06
4	<b>FAVORITE TRICK</b> (95, Phone Trick)	Died, 2006	78/38	2/3	0/2	(F Swoop Trick, \$91,448)	<b>\$1,104,100</b>	*478	21	1.06	1.69
5	<b>CHIMES BAND</b> (91, Dixieland Band)	Died, 2005	53/29	3/5	3/3	(Let the Musicbegin, \$152,355)	<b>\$1,045,673</b>	311	23	1.20	1.32

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start winner at Ruidoso Downs Race Track & Casino.

McKenna credits farm manager David Sprissler and breeding center manager Andres Olivas with much of the farm's success.

"Dave moved down here from Pennsylvania and has 17 years in the business," McKenna said. "Andres has spent a lifetime in the horse business and is probably the best stallion man in the state."

McKenna also tips his hat to Sandy.

"She's got more horse background than any woman I can think of," he said.

Another key member for the McKennas is veterinarian David Orton, who provides state-of-the-art veterinary care on the farm.

McKenna is a big proponent of raising runners the cowboy way—in huge, scruffy fields.

"The foals are out there in these big, up-and-down pastures that are filled with rocks, gullies, and mesquite bushes, the whole works," he said. "They get out there romping and running, and they learn how to put their feet down, avoid obstacles, and change leads, things they don't do in a manicured pasture. They get bone development, build an attitude, the whole works.

"The mares are in this program all the time. They stay in good condition because they're out in a big pasture and that keeps their muscles toned, and they have less of a problem foaling because of that.

"We don't break our horses at the track. We've got a cowboy here, and he breaks horses the cowboy way. We use a western saddle and a snaffle bit. We don't try to put a rein on them like you would a performance horse. He rides them in the open country and gets them to respond to the rein, where you can put a saddle on them



K.O. Punch, a son of Two Punch, moved from Kentucky in 2006

# 2009 Leading Sires in Texas

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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	<b>VALID EXPECTATIONS</b> (93, Valid Appeal), Lane's End Texas	\$10,000	115/79	7/9	5/7	(Camille's Appeal, \$165,150)	<b>\$2,538,082</b>	481	37	1.39	1.29
2	<b>PINE BLUFF</b> (89, Danzig), Duncan 21 and Change Farm	N/A	69/36	0/0	0/0	(Who's Bluffing, \$88,885)	<b>\$1,153,432</b>	*568	34	1.58	1.68
3	<b>EARLY FLYER</b> (98, Gilded Time), Valor Farm	\$3,000	52/24	1/1	0/1	(Rare Flyer, \$64,798)	<b>\$679,073</b>	92	4	1.08	0.94
4	<b>MAGIC CAT</b> (95, Storm Cat), Valor Farm	\$1,500	65/24	2/2	0/2	(Smoothcideup, \$61,525)	<b>\$612,615</b>	181	11	0.75	1.00
5	<b>DIXIELAND HEAT</b> (90, Dixieland Band), Richland Ranch	\$1,500	42/19	0/0	0/0	(Dixie Dust, \$72,144)	<b>\$537,694</b>	*245	9	1.16	1.03

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and they stand still.

"Most of them go to Jerry Nicodemus at Double Eagle Training Center near Roswell (N.M.). Jerry, who gallops them for us, made the comment that of all the horses he's had, these are the best-broke babies he's ever seen in his life, and Jerry's been in the horse business his whole life."

New Mexico is not free of the economic woes that have plagued other states. "The recession has affected the horse business, and New Mexico is no different," McKenna said. "Our two stallions did get a lot of outside mares, but I don't think we're going to get nearly the number of mares like we did. It's not going to be good for anyone."

"We can't sell a yearling now for the cost of production. The only thing we'll be breeding next year is our very top mares, about 15 of them. And we're going to run everything we produce. At this point, the purses are still good, and the casinos have not been impacted that badly. We've got to keep these tracks in business and keep racing healthy."

"Mine That Bird (who won the 2009 Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands, gr.

I, after running in two prep races at Sunland Park in New Mexico) was a big shot in the arm even though he wasn't a New Mexico-bred. He helped draw attention to the state. It's great that he came along, and I hope we have another like him."

The McKennas are blessed in the way of close proximity to four of the five New Mexico tracks. "With the exception of Sunray (Park & Casino) near Farmington, the other four tracks are less than 3½ hours away," McKenna said.

In addition to Sunray and Ruidoso, the other New Mexico tracks are The Downs at Albuquerque, Sunland Park Racetrack & Casino, and Zia Park.

McKenna is high on a 2-year-old homebred Medaglia d'Oro colt named McKenna's Justice. Campaigned in the name of Judge Lanier Racing, McKenna's Justice broke his maiden at Lone Star Park and then ran fourth, beaten three-quarters of a length, in the Sunny's Halo Stakes at Louisiana Downs.

"We're expecting big things from him," McKenna said. "He has a little injury so he's back at the ranch. We'll take him off

the turf and race him on the dirt.

"We're also expecting big things from his half-brother Wholelottaenergy (by Unbridled Energy). He'll be 2 next year."

McKenna feels horsemen are well represented by the New Mexico Horse Breeders Association. "They do a good job promoting racing," he said. "It's a good, dynamic organization. We've had quite a few breeders from out of state bring mares and stallions here."

In a release issued by the NMHBA Nov. 30, the organization announced it had distributed \$4,460,495 in award monies to owners, breeders, and stallion owners from Sept. 13, 2008, through Sept. 27, 2009. The amount compares favorably to the \$4,533,987 distributed during the preceding period when economic times were rosier.

Breeders' awards for the same period totaled \$2,181,765; owners' awards amounted to \$1,939,345; and stallion owners' awards totaled \$339,385.

As good as McKenna feels about the conduct of the NMHBA, he feels the New Mexico Horsemen's Association falls short of expectations.

"As far as the Horsemen's Association, it's the complete opposite," McKenna said. "The main thing is owner involvement. We've got 5,000 owners racing in the state, and a good many of them are from out of state. Most of them didn't know they were part of the NMHA because there was no communication or notification. We recently formed a group to try to get owners a bigger presence on the state board. Unless some of these owners feel involved, they're not going to stay in. If you take the caliber of the people who are owners—and we've got some who are dynamic business people—to not get them involved is stupid. We're trying to get owner involvement to drive racing and get a marketing plan going."

"With the recession, it's a golden opportunity," McKenna added. "People want entertainment and want value. We don't have NASCAR, professional baseball, football, or basketball. We've got the tracks, and we can produce probably the cheapest entertainment value for the general public there is." 📺



Tom and Sandy McKenna with some of their mares