



West Virginia

THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

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The Browns' ambitious gamble

Trainer Ronney W. Brown's adventurous escapades at the claim box are well-documented, and his barn is no stranger to black-type social functions, but recently Ronney and wife Nicole adjusted their business strategy to include the purchase of a farm and acquisition of multiple stallions.

However, don't be fooled by Brown's calm exterior.

Inside the 'Gentle Giant' lies a fierce competitor, that has a burning desire to be number one on the training charts and challenge the elite in the local breeding industry.

Since arriving in West Virginia, the 60-year-old native of Frederick, Md., has waged an epic battle with perennial leading conditioner Jeff Runco.

With close to 45 head in Barn 2, Ronney continues to deliver more with less than most of his rivals, while maintaining a loyal crew, almost unheard of in today's volatile employment market.

Ronney and Nicole have been together since 2013, and officially tied the marital knot in 2019.

Her Marine Corps background has been a valuable resource in sanctioning long hours at the track, before transitioning to the farm for midday chores and late afternoon feeding.

Nicole's son, Zachary is the couple's right-hand man at their Pellinor Lane Farm and, according to his mother, is Bullsbay's best friend.

Ronney Brown discusses the expansion of the breeding side of the business. "Throughout my career I've bred a handful of mares, but my



Ronney and Nicole Brown with Grade 1 winner and stakes sire Bullsbay.

primary focus has always been the claiming game. Unfortunately, this has become a cutthroat business, with rival trainers attempting to poach away any worthwhile client."

The last decade has seen the popular twosome witness the success of champion sires Fiber Sonde and Windsor Castle, and their exploits have them formulating a similar plan of attack.

Ronney says, "You can't consistently get a good horse without breeding one. So, if I can't claim my way into an allowance race, I will breed my way in."

With the addition of a farm, the Browns now have adequate resources to pursue their dream. They've relocated stallions Bullsbay and Vorticity to West Virginia and the response has been favorable.

Nicole is a staunch advocate for further expansion, while Ronney admits having control over every aspect of a foal's life from day one is desirable.

"We have approximately 30 mares at the farm, including 21-year-old Original Gold (two-time Cavada Stakes winner) and Golden Debutante (Malibu Moon—Original Gold), mother to recent allowance winner Golden Key," he notes.

Bullsbay is a son of Tiznow out of The Hess Express, by Lord Carson, who accounted for \$923,245 during a five-year career on the track.

His memorable achievements include wins in the Whitney Handicap-G1, Alysheba Stakes-G3, Harrison E. Johnson Handicap and second-place endeavors in the Hal's Hope Stakes-G3, John B.

Campbell Handicap and Sussex Handicap.

A prestigious third place effort, behind the indomitable Rachel Alexander, in the Woodward Stakes-G1 further amplifies his desirable status.

"I was especially glad to get my hands on Bullsbay, because his trainer Graham Motion is universally recognized for good judgment and attention to detail," says Ronney. "At 17 years old, Bullsbay's legs are sound and he possesses a wonderful disposition."

So far with a limited number of his foals on the ground, Ronney and Nicole are thrilled.

Ronney notes, "They are correct individuals and from a racing perspective should handle any distance."

Current 3-year-old Maythehorsewithu is probably the best known progeny of Bullsbay to date. Mid-Atlantic followers easily recognize this *Star Wars* play on words winner, trained by emerging star Brittany Russell.

Russell, a former protege of Brad Cox, is on a meteoric rise since striking out on her own in 2018.

Maythehorsewithu, purchased as a yearling by Michael Dubb for \$55,000, won the Miracle Wood Stakes this past February and exhibited ultra gameness as runnerup in the \$100,000 Private Terms Stakes.

"I love a horse that has speed and stamina," says Ronney. "At one-time Bullsbay was the only son of leading sire Tiznow standing in the Mid-Atlantic. He also holds the distinction of setting the 1-mile track record at Del Mar. He is on course to covering over 40 mares this season."

On June 10, breeders James and Lisa Boyer watched their homebred Tizbit turn back a fine field of maiden special weight horses by a decisive 7-length margin. The chestnut filly by Bullsbay out of Bit of Brass, by Dixie Brass, looked like a chiseled piece

of granite in the paddock and comfortably ran to her odds of 2-5.

In seven career outings, Tizbit has one win, two seconds and two thirds with earnings totaling \$37,000.

"This filly is exactly what Nicole and I aspire to breed," adds Ronney. "Nowadays, it's unrealistic to try and purchase a West Virginia-bred. The cost is prohibitive and availability is limited. The development program here is robust, add in the double conditions clause and literally a \$20,000 horse is worth \$40,000."

Romney hailed Unrideabull as another serious example of Bullsbay's prowess.

The quirky bay gelding owned and trained by Mike Sterling has compiled a solid 33 percent career win ratio.

Victories in the Henry Mercer Memorial, Robert G. Leavitt and Frank Gall Memorial establish him as a crack sprinter, with over \$200,000 in lifetime earnings.

Drawing on his history of utilizing every possible resource available to him, Ronney is especially fond of a foal by Bullsbay out of Top Pick (by Outflanker).

Nicole recalls: "When the time came to retire Top Pick, our interest focused on the strength of her dam, Shes Pretty Fancy. The hard knocker won over \$140,000 for Tim and Judy Grams and she produced West Virginia Lottery Breeders Classic winner Fancy Concho. The future is unknown, but if we continue to spread out it will be with stallions that have proven performances on the racetrack."

Adds Ronney, "That's why potential breeders better not overlook Vorticity. This son of Distorted Humor was a very consistent runner that earned close to \$350,000. He should be a perfect sire for our speed favoring Charles Town surface. Nicole and I don't have unlimited funds, like some of our contemporaries, but what we do have is each other and a willingness to put in long hours to achieve our goal."

Take a farm named for an Arthurian legend, sprinkle in the vision of an eternal optimist and add the dedication of one serious Marine and the possibilities appear fruitful.

Benefits of Owning a WV-Bred and/or -Sired racehorse

Some of the best incentives in the nation:

- A minimum of three accredited races are written every day at Charles Town exclusively for registered WV-bred and/or -sired horses.
- West Virginia has the only program in the country that permits horses to win state-bred races that do not count against the horse's lifetime open conditions.
- The WV Thoroughbred Development Fund distributes almost \$5 million to breeders, owners, and stallion owners of accredited WV-bred and/or -sired horses based the horse's annual earnings at Charles Town and Mountaineer Park racetracks.
- The West Virginia Breeders Classics pays out almost \$1 million in purses for WV-bred and/or -sired horses. It is held annually on the second Saturday in October.
- \$800,000 in purses are allocated for up to 16 WV accredited stakes races during the year.
- Supplemental Purses Awards of up to 10% of the winner's share of the purse to the owner, breeder, and/or sire owner of the accredited WV-bred and/or -sired winner.
- West Virginia offers year-round racing with approximately 300 race days per year.

West Virginia Thoroughbred Breeders Association

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