

# Lovin' Louisiana

Kentuckian Chester Thomas is bullish on Louisiana breeding and racing, and he's bringing in a new stallion to the state to prove it

By Denis Blake

Horse racing is embedded in the soul of many native Kentuckians, and that's certainly the case with Chester Thomas. His passion for the sport started as a child going to the races with his father in the Bluegrass State, and he's proud to be from Kentucky and loves breeding and racing his horses there. But Louisiana completes the exacta for his favorite racing states, as Thomas has enjoyed great success with his Louisiana-breds and now is stepping up to stand his first stallion in the state with Mr. Money.

Thomas got into owning racehorses as many others did by racing lower-level stock in partnership with a friend. But in a relatively short time, Thomas and his Allied



Chester Thomas in the winners circle following Who Took The Money's victory in the 2021 Louisiana Champions Day Turf Stakes.

Racing Stable have reached heights that few have achieved. He's campaigned two multiple graded stakes

winners and sent horses to the Kentucky Derby in consecutive years. At last year's LTBA Annual Awards Banquet, his homebred Who Took the Money was honored as champion 3-year-old colt or gelding and Allied Racing Stable was recognized as the leading breeder by percentage of stakes winners.

Thomas, who is involved in the oil and gas industry, has only been racing horses for about 15 years, and the last several have been an especially fruitful run.

His two biggest horses to date—Mr. Money and By My Standards—have many similarities. Both

were tremendous values at auction, as Mr. Money was a \$130,000 yearling purchase and By My Standards



Who Took The Money winning the 2021 Louisiana Champions Day Turf Stakes.Hodges Photo.

brought \$150,000 as a 2-year-old in training. Both are sons of Goldencents who were trained by Bret Calhoun and attracted the attention of Spendthrift Farm LLC, which partnered with Thomas while those horses were on the track and have continued that partnership into their stallion careers.

Mr. Money won four consecutive Grade 3 races in 2019 and missed a Grade 1 win by just a neck while finishing second in the \$1-million Pennsylvania Derby. He ran first or second in half of his 18 career starts with a bankroll of \$1,360,430. After spending two seasons in Florida, the 6-year-old stallion will stand at Clear Creek Stud in Folsom, Louisiana, for the 2023 season.

By My Standards won the Grade

2 Twinspires.com Louisiana Derby, also in 2019, and got Thomas to his first Kentucky Derby. He finished 11th in the Run for the Roses, and then he launched a memorable 4-year-old campaign that included three Grade 2 victories, one of which was the New Orleans Classic Stakes at Fair Grounds. All told, By My Standards earned nearly \$2.3 million with seven wins and five seconds from 17 starts. He will be standing his first season at stud at Spendthrift Farm in Kentucky.

Mr. Big News, a son of Giant's Causeway, took Thomas back to the Kentucky Derby in 2020 for the Covid-delayed running in September, where he ran a surprising third at 46-1 behind Authentic and Tiz the Law.

With all that success on the

national stage, one might wonder why a native Kentuckian is also breeding and racing in Louisiana and not exclusively in his home state. For Thomas, the answer is simple.

"Compared to other states, we felt like Louisiana stood out and there was an opportunity there as a breeder to not just win races but to also get a nice breeders' award check," he said. "I've done a lot of business in New Orleans and spent a lot of time there and always loved going to Fair Grounds."

Thomas' best Louisiana-bred has been Who Took the Money, a gelding by Street Boss who last year won the Crescent City Derby and Louisiana Champions Day Turf Stakes at Fair Grounds. That earned him the aforementioned Louisiana

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champion title, and he’s been just as good this year with two more stakes wins. With eight wins from 12 starts, the 4-year-old has earned nearly \$350,000, not including breeders’ awards.

Thomas is looking forward to seeing more of his Louisiana homebreds on the track, especially now that he is standing Mr. Money in the state after two seasons in Florida.

“He got a lot business the first year; I think we bred 79 mares,” said Thomas. “But I was spending a lot of money hauling mares and babies back and forth to Florida, so it worked out well to send him to Clear Creek. Spendthrift is a partner on the horse with us, and they were all for moving him to Louisiana, especially to a first-class operation like Clear Creek.”

Thomas is also putting his money and his mares behind Mr. Money, as he bred about 20 mares to him in each of those first two seasons and plans to come close to that for the 2023 season.

“What we are seeing out of the babies is that he is stamping them with a lot of leg and balance,” he said about Mr. Money’s first crop of weanlings. “They are starting to

were both awesome racehorses and had really good minds and a lot of class,” he said. “When you look at them both you see they have a lot of leg. They both had that heart and

desire to race. There are a lot of good athletes out there but if they don’t have a good mind then things don’t always work out.”

Every horseman knows that “things don’t always work out” is a common theme in racing, as there are many more ways to lose a race than to win. So Thomas is thankful for the success he’s had, which has come without spending lavishly at sales.

“You get into this game and you have that dream about maybe going to the Kentucky Derby,” he said about his two trips to the sport’s biggest race. “But you never really expect it though, so

when it does come around, you just say, ‘Oh wow, did this really happen?’”

While perhaps not on quite the same level as winning the



Michelle Lavoice presents Chester Thomas the trophy for 2021 Louisiana Leading Breeder by Percentage of Stakes Winners

develop nicely.”

Thomas is also excited about By My Standards’ prospects as a stallion.

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Kentucky Derby, Thomas recently enjoyed a big weekend at Delta Downs on October 7-8. First, his homebred multiple stakes winner Winning Romance finished a solid second to graded stakes performer Free Like a Girl in the \$100,000 Magnolia Stakes, and then the following night Who Took the Money took the money in \$100,000 Gold Cup Stakes by more than seven lengths.

“Those homebreds kind of started our Louisiana-bred program,” said Thomas. “We’ve got some nice 2-year-olds now and are extremely excited about the purse structure for next year. Right now Louisiana is a great place to be and there’s a lot of enthusiasm from horsemen in the state with sports betting money going to purses soon. I don’t know why anyone wouldn’t want to be breeding and racing in Louisiana.”

Thomas has been to the Kentucky Derby twice, won numerous graded stakes and bred a Louisiana champion, but he has another goal for the future: to see a homebred by his stallion Mr. Money in the winner’s circle.

“The first Mr. Money runners will be the running the year after next, so I’m really jacked up and looking forward to racing those horses,” he said. “I get goosebumps just thinking about it.”



Chester and Jennifer Thomas accept the award for for Who Took The Money, 2021 Accredited Louisiana Bred Champion Three-Year-Old Colt or Gelding. from LTBA President, Warren Harang.