BREEDERS INCENTIVES AWARD LEADER FOR 2024

WARRIOR'S REWARD LLC

$927,518.75

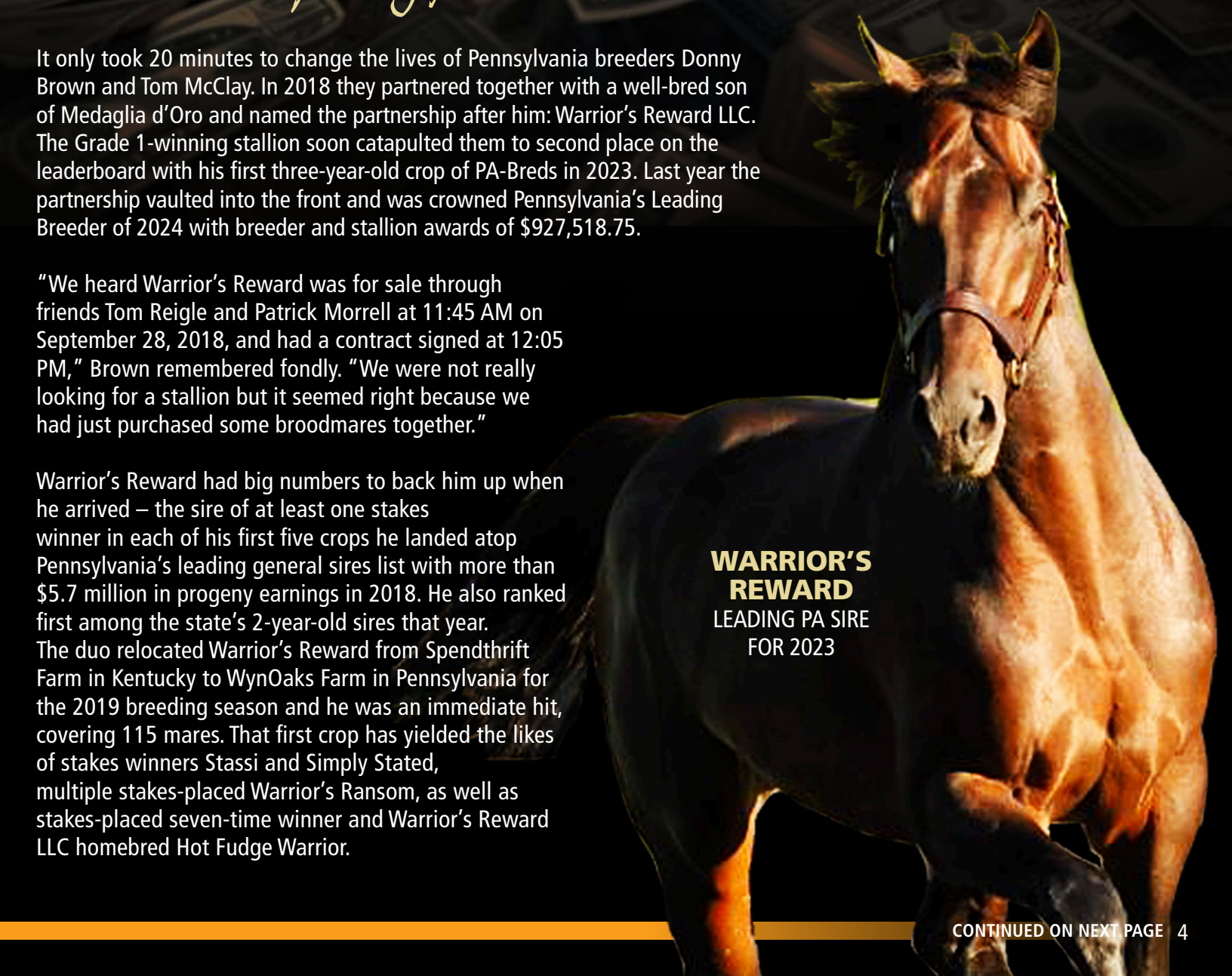
BY NIKKI SHERMAN

Reward's Aplenty for Warrior's Reward LLC in 2024

It only took 20 minutes to change the lives of Pennsylvania breeders Donny Brown and Tom McClay. In 2018 they partnered together with a well-bred son of Medaglia d'Oro and named the partnership after him: Warrior's Reward LLC. The Grade 1-winning stallion soon catapulted them to second place on the leaderboard with his first three-year-old crop of PA-Breds in 2023. Last year the partnership vaulted into the front and was crowned Pennsylvania's Leading Breeder of 2024 with breeder and stallion awards of $927,518.75.

"We heard Warrior's Reward was for sale through friends Tom Reigle and Patrick Morrell at 11:45 AM on September 28, 2018, and had a contract signed at 12:05 PM," Brown remembered fondly. "We were not really looking for a stallion but it seemed right because we had just purchased some broodmares together."

Warrior's Reward had big numbers to back him up when he arrived – the sire of at least one stakes winner in each of his first five crops he landed atop Pennsylvania's leading general sires list with more than $5.7 million in progeny earnings in 2018. He also ranked first among the state's 2-year-old sires that year. The duo relocated Warrior's Reward from Spendthrift Farm in Kentucky to WynOaks Farm in Pennsylvania for the 2019 breeding season and he was an immediate hit, covering 115 mares. That first crop has yielded the likes of stakes winners Stassi and Simply Stated, multiple stakes-placed Warrior's Ransom, as well as stakes-placed seven-time winner and Warrior's Reward LLC homebred Hot Fudge Warrior.



WARRIOR'S REWARD
LEADING PA SIRE FOR 2023

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The crop of 2021 has been even better and the best were all homebreds. In 2024, Candy Reward captured three of five starts, including the H.B.P.A. Stakes at Presque Isle Downs in October to close out the year. Reigert Girls emphatically broke her maiden by 5 lengths at Presque Isle before she walloped an allowance field by 6¾ lengths at Penn National and was on the board in six of her nine starts. And Strider's Slider finished on the board in seven of 10 starts, three of them victories.

Warrior's Reward's 2-year-olds of 2024 surpassed them all. The Boy's Warrior sent out ripples of excitement every time he raced, capturing the $100,000 Whistle Pig Stakes by nine easy lengths in his second start and the $100,000 Mark McDermott Stakes by 4 lengths next out. Stablemate Ballad of Warrior was second in the latter race during a campaign that also saw him win first time out and earn more black type with a third in the $100,000 Wait For It Stakes.

"After purchasing Warrior's Reward, we continued to acquire broodmares to support him," said Brown. "Foaling in Pennsylvania has been our priority because the PA program really increases your chance to get a return on a runner."

With his impressive stakes victories, The Boy's Warrior is currently tied for first place in the PA Stallion Series for his crop, with one more stakes in the series set for 2025. On top of that, in 2024 he earned a chart-topping $64,880 in breeders' awards, $16,220 in stallion awards, and an owner's bonus of $5,400, bringing his total bankroll to $225,800. Talk about a return on investment!

Brown gives credit to Susan Grove's Sapphire Equine in Carlisle, Pa., which has always foaled all of their mares. Randy Rentz in South Carolina and Betsy Haughton at Sylmar Farm break their babies. They also have trainers at all three Pennsylvania racetracks, including Tim Girten at Presque Isle Downs, Brandon Kulp at Penn National and Scott Lake at Parx Racing.

"We have found that investing in equine caretakers, as well as adding time and patience shows in your results," said Brown. "Having options when it's time to go to the track gives us the opportunity for success."

Warrior's Reward himself has given Brown and McClay a unique opportunity with breeding and racing their own PA-Breds based around using their own stallion. However, he isn't the only sire they have used. Not This Time's daughter



AVERIE LEVANTI PHOTOS

THE BOY'S WARRIOR
SHOWN WINNING THE WHISTLE PIG STAKES WITH DONNY BROWN IN WINNER'S CIRCLE (SECOND FROM RIGHT)



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Just One Time gave them the thrill of a lifetime in winning the $500,000 Madison Stakes-G1 at Keeneland in 2022. Not This Time also sired One More Kelly, their winner of the 2023 Plum Pretty Stakes.

The Warrior's Reward LLC partnership is the owner of Twilight Dancer, a 2021 son of Tapiture who captured last year's $100,000 Hard Spun Stakes at Presque Isle, part of a nine-race 2024 campaign that additionally included three more allowance wins. Twilight Dancer is out of Moonlight Basin, making him a full brother to seven-time winner Magicnthemoonlight, who has career earnings of over $360,000.

"Our plan is simply to breed mares with some pedigree or ability to the best sires we can," Brown said.

Warrior's Reward LLC-breds by other stallions include 2024 winners Cici Unified (Unified), Cloud in the Wind (Cloud Computing), Dweller (Mshawish), Lost in Newyork (Verrazano), More Ransom (Run Away and Hide), Motito (Kantharos) and Shy Da Runner (Competitive Edge).

Foals born in 2024 are by such sires Cairo Prince, Connect, Goldencents, Mandaloun, Maximum Security, Maximus Mischief, Midshipman, Mitole, Practical Joke and Yaupon.

After their massive 2024, the sky has no limit for Brown and McClay in 2025 and beyond. Looking at their crop of newly-minted yearlings, the future should be fun, rewarding and exciting. Warrior's Reward LLC has retained several mares by their stallion to continue his legacy into the next generation.

"Princess Brie, (stakes-placed) My Girl Corey and Went With the Wind will have foals this year," Brown said. "We just added (stakes-placed) Pretti Xtreme. We are going to race Candy Reward this summer and breed her next year. We do not own our favorite mare by Warrior's Reward. Her name is Strong Incentive. But at one time we owned her mother G G's Dolly."

Strong Incentive, bred by Spendthrift Farm, was a stakes winner for Klaravich Stables and William Lawrence who has turned into a blue hen broodmare. She is the dam of three consecutive graded stakes winners, the first the Into Mischief colt Highly Motivated, who contested the 2021 Kentucky Derby-G1 after finishing second in the Blue Grass Stakes-G2. Highly Motivated is now a stallion at Airdrie Stud in Kentucky.

Flintshire (GB) sired Strong Incentive's next stakes winner, Surge Capacity, who went on to win the Grade 1 Matriarch Stakes at Del Mar in 2023. Surge Capacity was then sold for $3.6 million to Grand Stud at last fall's Fasig-Tipton Fall Mixed Sale. She is expecting a foal by Into Mischief this spring.

Strong Incentive's third stakes winner has been the most impressive: Ways and Means, by Practical Joke, captured the Grade 1 Test Stakes and Grade 2 Gallant Bloom Stakes last summer, was second in the Spinaway Stakes-G1 at 2 and last year's Gulfstream Park Oaks-G2, as well as fourth in the Kentucky Oaks-G1 and fifth in the Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Sprint-G1.

After such an eye-popping produce record, Strong Incentive has sold twice for more than a million. She brought $2,150,000 at the 2023 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky Fall Mixed Sale in foal to Good Magic, and was at the same select sale last fall, selling for $2,750,000 to M.V. Magnier and White Birch Farm while carrying a full sibling to Highly Motivated.

Warrior's Reward was pensioned, at the age of 19, following the 2024 breeding season in which he covered 10 mares. Brown is a huge proponent of responsible race-horse retirement and he wanted to make sure that their prized stallion would be appreciated. In July, Warrior's Reward was shipped to Old Friends in Georgetown, Ky., where fans can visit by scheduling a tour.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DONNY BROWN

"The mission and staff at Old Friends make us proud to be a part of horse racing," said Brown. "It has been important to retire all of our horses like a loved family pet." ■

WARRIOR'S REWARD
AT HIS NEW HOME AT OLD FRIENDS IN GEORGETOWN, KY