

Bill Oppenheim-December 24, Kentucky Bargains



From the desk of...

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KENTUCKY BARGAINS

If you still have mares in Kentucky not booked for 2015, here are four stallions listed at \$10,000 and under which look to us like very good buys. All have been advertised lately in *TDN*, so no guarantees, as usual, that there are still seasons available; but if they are, here are our four 'best value' Kentucky sires at \$10,000 and under.

MUNNINGS, 2006h. Speightstown--La Comete, by Holy Bull
First Foals 2012, Ashford (Ky), \$10,000.

A \$1.7-million 2-year-old by the \$2-million yearling Speightstown, Munnings currently ranks fourth on the 2014 North American Freshman Sire List ([click here](#)), with three black-type winners and six black-type horses--all in the last two months, and including No Problem and Alright Alright, one-two in the Gill Bob Hope S. (it used to have another name, but then what black-type race in California run in California after April didn't?). He's also the sire of Om, impressive winner of the hottest 2-year-old maiden race of the year (subsequent dual Grade I winner American Pharaoh was fifth), but on the shelf since.

Munnings was third in the GI Hopeful S. and second in the GI Champagne S. at two--both times behind Vineyard Haven--but he really came into his own as a 3-year-old in 2009. He won two Grade II seven-furlong races in a row at Belmont Park in June and July, the Woody Stephens on Belmont S. day (Beyer 110) and, a month later, the Tom Fool, against 'olders', for which he was odds-on (Beyer 111). In his subsequent three starts that year, he caught sloppy tracks. It was probably too far anyway when he was seven lengths third to Rachel Alexandra in the nine-furlong GI Haskell S., and he was subsequently third, in the slop, in the GI King's Bishop S. (seven furlongs) and GI Vosburgh S. (six). He went to stud with good credentials, he's really come to life in the past two months and, if they're still selling seasons over there at Ashford for \$10,000, he looks an excellent bet for that money.



Munnings
Coolmore

DISCREET CAT, 2003h. Forestry--Pretty Discreet, by Private Account
First Foals 2009, Darley Jonabell (Ky), \$7,500.

Veteran readers will know we've been fans of Discreet Cat for a long time, and have thought he was undervalued even before his stud fee plunged to \$7,500 for 2015. Though the end-of-year figures are due out in a couple of weeks, through our midyear APEX run, Discreet Cat had an APEX A Runner Index of 2.24. For a horse with that rating to be standing for \$7,500--it's a steal, it must be.

As a racehorse, Discreet Cat was spectacular through the end of his 3-year-old year, at the end of which he was unbeaten in six starts. He had run a scintillating Beyer 106 when he broke his maiden at Saratoga as a 2-year-old, after which he was purchased by Sheikh



Discreet Cat
Darley

Mohammed. He won two races in Dubai as a 3-year-old, including the G2 UAE Derby, then came back to the U.S. where he won three races in the fall, running Beyers of 112-115-116, culminating in an easy win in the GI Cigar Mile, against older horses, at odds of 1-4. But he lost his unbeaten record when

trailing in last of seven in the G1 Dubai World Cup in his first start at four, and managed only two thirds in his two starts back in the U.S. before he was retired. At two and three, though, he was a total superstar.

Discreet Cat was part of the huge Darley 2008 stallion intake on both sides of the Atlantic. Through the end of 2013 he ranked fifth among North American third-crop (F2009) sires by progeny earnings (\$8.7m); ahead of him were Darley's Hard Spun and Street Sense; Ashford's Scat Daddy; and Lane's End's (now Caulmet's) English Channel. Through mid-year 2014 Discreet Cat had 15 'unique' (counted once) A Runners (5.68% of foals), and five G1-G2 winners (1.89% of foals), including three Grade I winners in three crops of 3-year-olds and up. Darley has been advertising Discreet Cat pretty hard--he has 108 2-year-olds of 2015, for example--and they are right to do so. We like him a lot for \$7,500.

ISTAN, 2002h. Gone West - Ronda, by Bluebird
First Foals 2009, Airdrie (Ky), \$7,500

Istan is a little bit of a minor Speightstown, in that both are by Gone West; both had their best years much later than might have been expected; and both are really good sires. Speightstown has more foals in one crop than Istan has had in his whole career, but he costs 10 times as much. If you're looking for a stallion more in the \$7,500 range than the \$80,000 range, Istan is your man.

Ronda, dam of Istan, was a good filly at a mile in Europe (she won the G3 Prix de Sandringham and then-G2 [now G1] Falmouth S.) and was graded stakes-placed in the US. Istan himself began his racing career in France, where he won three races at two and three and was black type-placed. He only started twice as a 4-year-old in the U.S., but made 11 starts at five, winning five including the GIII Ack Ack S. at a mile at Churchill Downs, by almost nine lengths (Beyer 111).



Istan
Airdrie Stud

Istan had 42 foals in his first crop (2009), which included the Grade III winner Mr. Bowling, and Atigun, who placed in the GI Belmont S., but he had no more than 34 total in his next three crops (2010-2012). His 2011 crop of just 11 foals includes two graded stakes winners: the filly Istanford, who captured the GII San Clemente S. and the GIII American Derby--against the boys--(on the lawn); and the colt Albano, winner of the GIII Pegasus H. and over half a million dollars. That seals the deal; he's on the Big Bad Bob list of bargain buys.

CALEB'S POSSE, 2008h. Posse--Abbey's Missy, by Slewacide
First Foals 2014, Three Chimneys (Ky), \$5,000

For the first 12 starts of his 19-race career--until he got to Saratoga as a 3-year-old--Caleb's Posse was a useful Grade III winner whose best Beyer Speed Figures were 92's, when he was second to The Factor in the GII Rebel S. and when he won the GIII Ohio Derby. Then he went back to sprinting, and he got really good. He won the GII Amsterdam at 6 1/2 furlongs (Beyer



Caleb's Posse
NYRA

105) and the GI King's Bishop at seven (Beyer 106), defeating Uncle Mo and Justin Philip. He went back to 1 1/16 miles in the GII Indiana Derby but was a modest third behind the impressive winner Wilburn (who is himself a live 'cheapie' at \$6,500 at Spendthrift on that form) and

Shackleford. Sent off a 6-1 shot in the 2011 GI Breeders' Cup Mile, back around one turn he shot by Shackleford in the stretch to win going away by four lengths (Beyer 111). I voted for him for champion 3-year-old that year.

Caleb's Posse came back at four and ran three straight seconds in three starts before he was retired, including a nose second to Jackson Bend in the GI Carter H., and a nose second to Shackleford in the GI Met Mile; his Beyers in those three races were 110-109-115. Pretty clearly some combination of maturing in the second half of his 3-year-old year and dropping back to one turn turned Caleb's Posse from being a useful horse to being a consistent Grade I performer and near-champion. For \$5,000? It's practically a gift, isn't it? No-brainer. Merry Christmas.

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