

Y-Lo Racing expands services to Florida

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LOLITA RAQUIZA WITH ROCKPORT HARBOR COLT

Cynthia McFarland photo

by Cynthia McFarland

When Wickedly Perfect captured the Sorrento Stakes (G3) at Del Mar on August 6, the gray or roan filly's win was a reaffirming victory for her Florida breeder, Y-Lo Racing Stables.

Now perfect in two starts with earnings of \$114,600 for owners Peter Moehrke, Rafter JR Ranch, and STD Racing Stable, Wickedly Perfect, by current leading freshman sire [Congrats](#), is one of two winners from as many starters out of Wickedly Wise, one of the first broodmares purchased by Y-Lo Racing Stables.

"We're in business to make our mares and to sell yearlings," said Lolita Raquiza, the "Lo" in Y-Lo. "Our goal is always to breed quality racehorses. The key is racehorses.

We don't just want to sell horses for top prices that never make it to the track. We want to produce solid horses; soundness and durability are essential. If you want to win at the track you better have a horse that not only has talent but also has heart."

Solidly proving her worth as a broodmare, the nine-year-old Wickedly Wise also is the dam of Ash Zee, an [Exchange Rate](#) filly who was a \$375,000 purchase by Zayat Stables at the 2008 Fasig-Tipton Kentucky July sale of selected yearlings. The gray or roan filly has two wins from four starts, and most recently finished fourth in the Test Stakes (G1) at Saratoga Race Course.

Y-Lo Racing Stables is the partnership of two long-time friends, Raquiza and Yvonne Cordova, both native Californians. Their families originally are from New Mexico, where Raquiza's family is ranchers, raising Angus cattle on the Del Curto Ranch.

As a nurse administrator in plastic and reconstructive surgery, Raquiza retired from that profession in 2004 to devote all of her time to managing the partners' horse interests. Cordova is a highly regarded entertainment insurance specialty executive in California with an exceptional client list, which services the U.S. and Canada. The two consult closely on all areas of their business, but Raquiza is the managing partner in the Y-Lo partnership.

It was an old family contact that plunged Raquiza and Cordova into the horse business in the first place. Cordova's father, Joe Cordova, worked as a jockey agent in California for 35 years. Among the jockeys he worked for was Juvenal Diaz, now a trainer and major consignor of two-year-olds in Florida, who sold multiple Grade 1 winner Blind Luck to Jerry Hollendorfer after her debut win last June at Calder Race Course. In 2004, when Raquiza and Cordova expressed an interest in Thoroughbreds, Diaz agreed to help them as a favor to his former agent.

"Juvenal was my mentor for several years," Raquiza said. "He took me by the hand and showed me the ropes. It was a family connection more than a business relationship. He was with me when we bought Wickedly Wise and Enduring Legacy, the first broodmares we bought in 2006."

Y-Lo Racing Stables maintains a main office in Sherman Oaks, California, where both partners reside, but the farms are in the heart of Florida's horse country. Mares are kept at the 110-acre nursery in McIntosh overseen by broodmare manager Joclyn Helmbrecht. This year's foal crop of 11 includes babies by such sires as [Broken Vow](#), [Candy Ride \(Arg\)](#), [Circular Quay](#), [Grand Slam](#), and [Tale of the Cat](#).

The 43-acre yearling and training operation is located at Oak Ridge Equine Center in Morriston. The entire operation is managed by Raquiza from the main office in California, while the day-to-day onsite farm management is overseen by Francis Manning. Yearling manager Israel Chavez is also responsible for breaking and training.

"We have a one-mile dirt track and turf gallop at the complex," Raquiza said. "We can record official works and get a gate card. This track is incredible; we can prep a horse all the way to the racetrack here. When Tampa [Bay Downs] is running, we train here, then haul to Tampa to run and come home."

Active in all facets of the business, Y-Lo Racing Stables currently has a total of 70 horses. In addition to 17 broodmares and their foals, there are horses training and racing in Florida, California, and Pennsylvania. Horses in Florida train with Calder-based Joe Catanese III. In Pennsylvania, they are with Louis Linder Jr., while California horses are under the care of Vladimir Cerin

Y-Lo Racing Stables also owns young stallion Spensive, who stands at E. A. Ranches in Ramona, California. A strapping gray or roan stallion standing 17.2 hands, Spensive is by Ponche and was a stakes winner and an earner of \$313,557. His first foals are two-year-olds this year and appear to have inherited his size and substantial bone.

This month marks the debut of Y-Lo Racing Stables' newest venture, as a first-time consignor at the Ocala Breeders' Sales Co. August yearling sale, which begins Tuesday and runs through Thursday.

"We prep all our own horses when we sell in Kentucky, so we decided to consign here ourselves," Raquiza explained. "I think it's a huge opportunity for us as a stable. We want to sell horses that give the buyer something back, horses the buyer can have fun with and make money off. We play the game straight and honest; we stand behind our horses."

Among the Y-Lo-breds are yearlings for the OBS select session—a [Badge of Silver](#) colt out of the winning [Dynaformer](#) mare Bandera Negra and a [Rockport Harbor](#) colt out of multiple stakes winner Makin Heat, by Makin. Horses to be offered at the open session include a [With Distinction](#) filly out of the Silver Ghost mare Ghostofalady and a With Distinction colt out of the winning Distinctive Pro mare Jill McGill.

As for expanding their business in a time when the market has been challenging, Raquiza is realistic but positive.

"The last two years have been difficult, but I think the market is becoming more steady," she said. "The correction had to happen because many horses were bringing more than they were worth."

Both Cordova and Raquiza are adamant about putting their horses first.

"We want the best outcomes for our buyers and our horses," Raquiza said. "We have a tremendous amount of responsibility to the horses after their racing careers. We don't overproduce, and we find homes for any of our horses that we don't keep. We also donate to the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation.

"We tell anyone who buys from us to get back with us if they need help placing a horse after their racing career is over. We want to make it full circle."

Cynthia McFarland is a Florida-based Thoroughbred Times correspondent