



CECILIA GUSTAVSSON

Broodmare of the Year My Fiona with Finneus at her side in 2019

My Fiona

THIRD CAL-BRED CHAMPION TO BE BROODMARE OF THE YEAR

BY TRACY GANTZ

My Fiona thrust herself into rarefied company when she was named 2021 Broodmare of the Year. She became just the third champion California-bred racehorse to go on to become a Broodmare of the Year, following Warren's Veneda in 2020 and Variety Queen in 1988.

Unlike her predecessors, however, My Fiona shot to stardom as a 2-year-old. Thus, she has been famous, especially in the pages of this magazine, for most of her 10-year-old existence. Variety Queen became a Cal-bred champion at 3 in 1979, while Warren's Veneda earned her championship as a 5-year-old.

My Fiona won her Cal-bred championship at 2 in 2014. She has proved just as precocious as a producer. Her first foal, produced when My Fiona was 6, is Fi Fi Pharoah, a Cal-bred daughter of Triple Crown winner American Pharoah. The very next year, My Fiona foaled Finneus, her first by California leading sire Stay Thirsty. Both became stakes winners in 2021.

Terry Lovingier, California's leading breeder of 2021, is responsible for just about every facet of My Fiona's existence. Her story began when he bought the Two Punch mare A Vision in Gray, in foal to Ghostzapper, for \$18,000 at the 2011 Keeneland November sale.

My Fiona arrived the following March, and from the beginning she

demonstrated a feistiness that would aid her racing career. Her personality reminded Lovingier of Fiona in the television show "Shameless," prompting him to name her My Fiona.

"The character kind of rules the roost and runs the family," Lovingier said, "and that's what this filly did out in the pasture."

Lovingier raced My Fiona in partnership with Tom Beckerle and Amanda Navarro. Walther Solis trained her at 2, and later in her career she resided in the barns of trainers Bob Hess Jr. and Gary Sherlock.

During her championship season, My Fiona won the California Thoroughbred Breeders' Association Stakes, Golden State Juvenile Fillies Stakes, and Soviet Problem Stakes, one at each of Southern California's racetracks. She ran second in

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Stakes winner Fi Fi Pharoah, by American Pharoah—My Fiona, as a yearling

FASIG-TIPTON PHOTO



Finneus topped the 2020 Fasig-Tipton California yearling sale at \$200,000

the Generous Portion Stakes and third in the Landaluce Stakes. My Fiona competed through her 4-year-old season, with six wins, one second, and three thirds in 16 starts for total earnings of \$478,743.

That kind of race record earned My Fiona a trip to Kentucky and a date with American Pharoah. Fi Fi Pharoah is from the stallion's second crop. Because My Fiona foaled the filly in California and was bred back to Stay Thirsty, Fi Fi Pharoah is a Cal-bred.

Fi Fi Pharoah has the same team behind her. Lovingier, Beckerle, and Navarro campaign her, and Solis is her trainer. Third in her debut, Fi Fi Pharoah ran second in the Evening Jewel Stakes while still a maiden. It didn't take the filly long to win her first race, and she became a stakes winner in the June 19 Melair Stakes.

Lovingier brought Stay Thirsty to

California in 2018 and included My Fiona in the stallion's first California book of mares. That resulted in Finneus, and Lovingier has sent My Fiona back to Stay Thirsty every year since. The mare has a 2020 colt, a 2021 filly, and was back in foal to the stallion for a 2022 foal.

My Fiona's Stay Thirsty filly has Lovingier especially enthused.

"She had an unbelievably good filly by Stay Thirsty, one of the best fillies I've ever had," he said. "I've never raised a filly that good."

Lovingier entered Finneus in the 2020 Fasig-Tipton California yearling sale, held at Los Alamitos. Finneus topped the sale at \$200,000, purchased by Naseer Fasihuddin of San Diego.

Fasihuddin was the colt's majority owner when Finneus reached the races, though Lovingier and Navarro thought

so much of the youngster that they became partners in him as well. Solis trains him.

Finneus broke his maiden in his second start and jumped right into graded competition. There he ran second to Pappacap in the Best Pal Stakes (G2) and second to Pinehurst in the Runhappy Del Mar Futurity (G1).

Before the year was out, Finneus became a stakes winner in the Golden State Juvenile Stakes. He started 2022 with a good third in the California Cup Derby. He has already earned more than his purchase price, banking \$288,366 through the Cal Cup Derby.

Fi Fi Pharoah and Finneus could be just the beginning of My Fiona's broodmare career. She is a mare who has shown promise since she was foaled, and she has been fulfilling that promise ever since. **CTB**

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Finneus takes the Golden State Juvenile at Del Mar on first day of BC World Championships



With her victory in the Melair Stakes at Santa Anita, Fi Fi Pharoah carries the stakes-winning tradition of her dam, Mi Fiona, to a second generation