



FIRST DOWN DASH LAID TO REST

First Down Dash, the 26-year-old stallion who has dominated statistics for racing American Quarter Horses for 20 years, was laid to rest at Vessels Stallion Farm on November 26.

Bonnie Vessels said that First Down Dash was quietly eating hay in his stall when observed by ranch manager Kevin Dickson at 1 a.m. Thanksgiving day. Three hours later the night man observed First Down Dash taking his last breath.

"The entire family is here and First Down Dash is resting with a set of Vessels Stallion Farms silks and an ample supply of sunflower seeds in the place which Scoop selected some time ago," said Bonnie Vessels. The ranch crew joined the family at the ceremony.

The World Champion of 1987 who sired the earners of nearly \$74 million through November 25, 2010, First Down Dash bred a full book of mares in 2010 and was expected to do so again in 2011.

For most of 2010, First Down Dash was on top of the leading sires of money earners list. Today he is ranked No. 2 with \$3.6 million . . . ahead of where he was at this same point in 2009.

In 2010, First Down Dash is the only stallion with eight horses that have earned more than \$100,000 each and the only stallion with five horses which have earned more than \$200,000 each.

First Down Dash's best year on the tracks was 2006 when his runners included 16 stakes winners and the earners of \$6,560,242. The 2006 runners were headlined by No Secrets Here, the Vessels-bred runner who was the sixth All American Futurity G1 winner for First Down Dash; Ed Burke Million Futurity G1 winner FDD Dynasty; and Champion of Champions G1 winner Wave Carver.

With a crop of 86 foals of 2009 eligible to race as two-year-olds next year, First Down Dash undoubtedly will continue his lofty status as the breed's No. 1 sire for some time. He is nearly \$35 million ahead of No. 2, which is First Down Dash's sire Dash For Cash.

The Vessels Family requested that memorials for First Down Dash be sent to the American Quarter Horse Foundation in Amarillo, Texas. — Ben Hudson, *TRACK Magazine*

