

Tom Lopic is a well known realtor in the Iowa City area, but what may not be well known about this entrepreneur is his history in the horse racing industry. When Lopic was wrestling at the University of Iowa in 1971, he was approached about possibly becoming a jockey. Lopic had spent time around horses and decided to give it a try. He continued attending college until his graduation in 1975 and raced during those years. His love of the track kept him jockeying even with working full time as a physical education teacher and wrestling coach in Iowa City.

In 1978 Lopic was forced to retire from racing after suffering a severe concussion during a training session. His unfortunate accident took him away from horses altogether and Lopic went on with other activities, including opening his own real estate agency, Lopic Kroeger Realty. That was until 1994, when a friend, Dave Huffman, came to Lopic and asked if he would be interested in investing in a racehorse. From there Lopic and Huffman created a new partnership in the racehorse business.

According to Lopic, "I bought 50% interest in a horse named Mighty Tiggeress. When Dave moved away I bought his ownership rights also. I was hooked. I started breeding and raising babies. I purchased an equestrian center south of Iowa City with Julie Bloomhall and we had the center for four years. It eventually got to be too much, so we sold that and I have several horses with different trainers now. I race both thoroughbreds and quarter horses."

It doesn't take long however to figure out that Lopic's pride and joy is a quarter horse named Eye The Hawkeye. "Hawkeye" is not only a stunning beauty but also a very impressive record setter.

Hawkeye is an 8-year-old (yes that's right 8! And still racing) gelding that was named the Aged Champion of 2005 and 2001, reserve Aged Champion of 2004, Horse of the Year in 2002 and was High-Point Overall Champion and Champion 3-Year-Old of 2000. Hawkeye boasts over \$200,000 in winnings and 55 lifetime races. Additional highlights of his career have included being the winner of the 2000 running of the Pleasant Hill Handicap - \$23,730 total value of purse- and three-time champion in The Terrace Hill Stakes. (If you're ever lucky enough to meet him, you'll see that he proudly stands as if to say "Yes - I'm that good!") Lopic raised Hawkeye and recruited his long time friend and former trainer, Don Rayner, to get back in the business.



## Eye the Hawkeye, an Iowa Champ

Tom Lopic & Don Rayner



Eye the Hawkeye leaves the Prairie Meadows win circle as the three-time champion and record holder of the Terrace Hill Stakes, which he won during Iowa Classic Night on August 27, 2005.

Photo: Jack Coady, Jr. / Coady Photography

Rayner initially was content with being retired from his racehorse training endeavors, but is quite thankful today that Lopic contacted him. Rayner is now working with several racehorses.

Realistically Lopic and Rayner both know that the number of years Hawkeye will continue racing is uncertain; after all,

he's considered a senior in the racing world. (But don't tell Hawkeye! He doesn't seem to know...or maybe he just doesn't care.) No matter how long the racing and winning lasts, Lopic and Rayner have no intension of ever letting Hawkeye leave their lives.

"The greatest thing we could do with Hawkeye after retirement is to make him

into a lead horse but we know he'll never put up with that. If we are fortunate enough to get him to be a riding horse that will be good enough," says Lepic. Hawkeye is a racer and currently he just wants to run.

Takin On Iowa, another one of the horses in Lepic's breeding stock, was sired by the Champion stallion Takin On the Cash. Takin on Iowa has total purse earnings in excess of \$30,000 and has an impressive track history. This chestnut mare won two races in 2004, finished second in August of 2005 in the Future of Iowa Stakes on Iowa Classic Night at Prairie Meadows and has a trio of third place finishes across her 20 career starts.

Lepic also is an owner of the famed race-bred quarter horse, Corona Cartel. He is the sire of over twenty-three \$100,000+ earners and achieved stakes winning in excess of \$550,000. Because of Corona Cartel's excellent breeding, the fees are high and his semen is never shipped. Mares must come to him and meet certain criteria to be lucky enough to have the chance of producing one of his foals. One of the perks to being part owner in such a fantastic horse is that the owner's take turns with having the breeding rights. Lepic therefore has the option, on his turn, to sell the semen or use it on a mare. Lepic states that when he breeds, he keeps the horses to race himself.

Lepic and his wife Polly, enjoy attending as many races as possible. Their horses race locally at Prairie Meadows and in MN, IL, FLA, NE, AK, OH and OK. During the 2006 season, which generally runs from April to September, Lepic intends to have 5 horses on the track. His lineup includes three quarter horses and two thoroughbreds.

It should be no surprise that many fantastic racehorses come from Iowa, after all we have many equestrian enthusiasts in all areas of the horse world. Somehow though, Iowa normally isn't the state that comes to mind when racehorses become the topic of conversation. Thankfully people like Tom and Polly Lepic and Don Rayner know, it isn't a matter of state lines that make a great champ - it's simply the finish lines.



Tom Lepic, jockey, with Trainer Don Rayner  
1974 Central City, IA

**Nikki's BBQ**  
- Catering & Carry Out -  
1455 Mt. Vernon Rd SE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

*Operations Manager, Tate Wilson*  
Bus. 319-261-0707  
Cell 319-981-7060

Tues. - Sat.  
11:00 A.M. - 7 P.M.



# Annual 20% Off Sale

**All In-Store Items**

(Some restrictions apply • Sale items not included)



"Located in the heart of Czech Village"

48 - 16th Ave SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

**319-362-2846**

Saddlesh@inav.net

www.saddleandleathershop.com

**Saturday**  
**April 1, 2006**  
**8am 'til 5pm**