

COLINA VERDE TRIUMPHANT IN U. S. A. BOW AT SANTA ANITA ON MONDAY, FIRST BRAZILIAN FILLY TRIPLE CROWN WINNER IN 29 YEARS WINS HANDILY, BEJARANO GUIDES DRYSDALE PROTÉGÉ IN FIRST WIN SINCE FALL OF 2006



Rafael Bejarano eases down Colina Verde approaching the finish line.

Colina Verde, the first to win Brazil's Filly Triple Crown since her grandam turned the trick 29 years earlier, won her United States debut Monday at Santa Anita by an eased-down three-quarters of a length as the 4 to 5 favorite going a mile on grass.

"The performance reminded me a lot of when Ipi Tombe won her U. S. debut at Churchill Downs," said Barry Irwin, Team Valor International's principal who formed a group to buy the daughter of Know Heights before she was voted Champion Filly at 3 in her homeland. "She won with consummate ease this afternoon."

Colina Verde is owned by a small group of partners that includes Highfield Stock Farm of Canada, Gary Barber of Southern California,

John Torrode of Canada, Scott Stiteler of the Bay Area and Team Valor.

English-born trainer Neil Drysdale gave a leg up to Peruvian-born jockey Rafael Bejarano for the second race on Monday at Santa Anita, which wound up with a 5-horse field after one defection. The Brazilian filly broke smoothly, was briefly in front and then settled in behind a pacesetter that was coming out of sprints.

The field raced in single-file fashion around the turn and down the backstretch, where it soon became evident that the rider of the third-placed horse had a plan to put the Team Valor color bearer in a box approaching the far turn.

"I knew what was coming," Bejarano told Drysdale. "I wanted to wait as long as possible to move my filly. When I saw the other jock coming, though, I was forced to make my move earlier than I wanted."

Bejarano steered Colina Verde off the rail rounding the turn, as she raced between horses into the lane and down the stretch. With about 75 yards remaining, Bejarano gave his filly two quick slices of the whip on the shoulder to signal it was time to pick up the pace.

Colina Verde responded by bounding into the lead. One backhander set the filly alight in earnest and she opened up a daylight advantage, before being geared down approaching the wire.



Trainer Neil Drysdale had the filly ready.

“This race didn’t suit the filly, as she is used to racing in large fields and coming from the clouds,” noted Barry Irwin. “This race today was like an indoor track meet. The temporary rails were up. There was no pace to speak of. It was all about tactics. She handled it because she is a top filly. But she would have preferred a larger cast of characters and an honest pace to run at.”

Colina Verde sped home the penultimate quarter-mile in :23 1/5 as well as the final quarter-mile in :23 1/5 to complete the mile in 1:36-flat.



Rafael Bejarano crafted a very polished ride on Colina Verde.

Runner-up was another Group 1-winning Brazilian filly in Immortelle, who finished well along the rail for second for her owner-breeder TNT Stud, owned by Goncalo Torrealba.

The winner earned \$39,000 from the purse of \$65,000. She improved her career record to 8-5-1-1.

Colina Verde became the most expensive filly ever bought by Team Valor International when she was acquired last year. She made her first start about 11 months after her arrival from Brazil, where she became a Champion after taking the three Group 1 events that comprise the filly Triple Crown. In the Guineas, she stormed up the fence to claim the mile in a brilliant 1:32 4/5.

In the middle leg of the Triple Crown, Colina Verde was forced so wide after entering the stretch that she virtually was sent to the stand-side rail after a rival swerved violently into her path. Miraculously, she recovered, still found herself with more than a dozen lengths to make up in less than a quarter-mile, yet prevailed while being geared down approaching the wire. She then won the final leg of the crown on soft turf by once again skirting the rail in a move from far back.

“Neil and I will put our heads together,” said Irwin “and figure out what to do next. We will be in no rush. This is a very special filly, we want to give her every chance to make a name for herself and we will be patient.”

