

GITANO HERNANDO ONLY A FIFTH SHY OF LINGFIELD RECORD IN 4YO BOW, WORLD CUP PREP A 4 ½-LENGTH ROUT GOING 1 ¼ MILES ON ALL-WEATHER, FALLON EXUDES CONFIDENCE IN THE NEW AND IMPROVED HERNANDO SON



Gitano Hernando exploded with a furlong remaining and drew off to a 4 ½-length triumph when he missed the Lingfield track record for a mile and a quarter in taking the Listed Winter Derby Trial Stakes today outside of London, England. The 1 to 2 favorite caused an anxious moment 50 yards from home when he pricked his ears and seemed ready to prop after eyeballing tire marks from the gate. Kieren Fallon kept his cool, easing the 4-year-old down to finish the race in hand.

The victory was exactly what Newmarket-based trainer Marco Botti was looking for in the colt's debut at 4. "I had him about 80 percent ready," said the Italian-born horseman. "I did enough for him to win and hoped he would get enough out of the race to advance him to the World Cup a month from now."



Following the prep over the all-weather Lingfield course, at least two bookies in England dropped his odds from 14 to 1 to 8 to 1, solidifying him as the third betting choice to win the \$10-million World Cup on March 27.

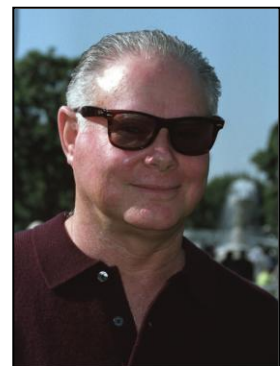


Fallon, flown in for the race by Team Valor after riding Thursday evening in Dubai, is finished in the desert until the World Cup. "I have ridden in and seen most of the likely competitors in Dubai for the World Cup and right now I like my chances with Gitano Hernando. He is a completely different animal this year at 4 as compared to last season at 3. Last year, he wanted to pull and get it on. In this race, he switched off. In fact, he was so laid back about halfway through the race, I switched the stick from one hand to another just to send him a signal that we were in a race!

"When I took him outside and let him know it was time to move, he showed me a turn of foot I had not felt last season. He has really matured into quite a machine. He still has a lot more to come, too."

Gitano Hernando was winning race number 5 from 8 outings in making his first start since winning the Grade 1 Goodwood Stakes at Santa Anita last fall. Instead of coming back in the Breeders' Cup Classic, the Hernando colt was sent back to trainer Botti's Green Ridge Stable in England to let down and be prepared for the World Cup.

Barry Irwin, who prospected, bought, syndicated and developed the battle plan that landed the Grade 1 victory in North America, said "He is something special on synthetic tracks. Obviously he has never set foot on the Tapeta surface, but both Fallon and Botti think it should not pose a problem for him.



"We will employ the same shipping routine we used to bring him to Southern California and show up a few days before the World Cup. This race has buoyed our confidence for the desert classic. Marco tried out the plan with a filly a couple of weeks ago and she handled the trip well and won a good race for him. We plan to fly the colt directly from Stanstead to Dubai for the race."

From *Racing Post* comes the following:

Gitano warms up for World Cup in style

Betdaq The Betting Exchange Winter Derby Trial Stakes (Listed) 1m2f, 4yo+



Gitano Hernando warmed up for a crack at the Dubai World Cup at Meydan on March 27 with a convincing win in the Winter Derby Trial at Lingfield on Saturday.

The Marco Botti-trained colt, who developed into a top-class performer during 2009, quickened smartly under Kieren Fallon in the straight to see off long-time leader Suits Me.

Stan James (from 12) and Paddy Power (from 10) reacted by trimming the Team Valor-owned Gitano Hernando to 8-1 for the Dubai World Cup and Fallon was impressed by the four-year-old's display.

"It was very smooth," he said. "He's better than them and I thought on the home turn he'd win nicely. He's a very good horse and is improving all the time."

Among Gitano Hernando's seven rivals was stablemate Mesa Marauder, whose principal task was ensuring a decent gallop to the Listed contest.

However, with Suits Me in the line up, a dawdling pace was an unlikely scenario.

Suits Me, who is trained by Tom Tate and was second in the race last year, was sent straight to the front by Darryll Holland. He was tracked in second by Yahrab, relegating Mesa Marauder to third and a limited role.

Gitano Hernando, meanwhile, was held up by Fallon as the leaders set such a gallop the track record was only missed by 0.34 seconds.

Entering the straight, Gitano Hernando, the 1-2 favourite, found the gaps and put the race to bed in a matter of strides.

Suits Me (3-1) clung on for second, while Mister Green ran on for third.

Botti, who landed his first top-level success courtesy of Gitano Hernando's win in the Grade 1 Goodwood Stakes at Santa Anita in October, said: "I was delighted he won in the style he did. It's nice to see him back.

"He was only 80 per cent fit today and I expect him to come on. They went a nice, even pace and he picked up nicely."

The Newmarket-based trainer also revealed Gitano Hernando would fly out to Dubai in the week of World Cup night, a method that proved fruitful in the lead up to his Santa Anita victory.