

May 8, 2009

## **GITANO HERNANDO IS GUTTY SECOND IN GROUP DEE STAKES IN ENGLAND, TEAM VALOR/GARY BARBER COLT PUNCHES TICKET FOR JUNE 6 BELMONT, COLT FOLLOWS TRIED AND TRUE PATH OF BELMONT SECOND MY MEMOIRS**



Team Valor International and Gary Barber's Gitano Hernando punched his ticket for the June 6 Belmont Stakes with a bang-up second today when he failed by a head of pegging back the winner of the Group 3 Dee Stakes at Chester race course in England.

Sent off as the second choice at odds of 7 to 2 for the 10-furlong English Derby trial, the Team Valor colorbearer came within a single stride of winning, but the connections came away feeling as though they not only ran the best horse, but got an ideal prep into their charge for the third leg of the Triple Crown in the United States.

Chester course specialist John Egan's plan before the race was to keep Gitano Hernando off the rail, because the ground was hard and chewed up. Less than a sixteenth of a mile into the race, however, his plans went awry, when eventual winner South Easter angled to the rail, forcing Gitano Hernando to check, steady and get shuffled back.

Gitano Hernando spent most of the race boxed in. When Egan tried to make a move curving for home, Frankie Dettori kept him pinned inside, again causing Egan to throttle the jets on his colt. When the field hit the homestretch, Egan eventually sent his mount to the inside for a clear path. The second favorite closed with good energy and was beaten a short head on the wire. A stride past the finishing post he was in front and a few strides later he galloped out 5 lengths ahead of the pack.

*Racing Post*, in its post-race analysis of the Dee, wrote as follows: Gitano Hernando's connections objected following the race, the winner having cut across him after about 100 yards, and that combined with the trouble he met straightening for home has to mark him down as being unlucky. Winner of a Doncaster handicap off 84 on his reappearance, he was backed beforehand and still very nearly got up, marking himself down as a smart performer. There should be more to come from the son of Hernando and he is still on course for an ambitious crack at the Belmont Stakes.

Bought early in the season, Gitano Hernando broke his maiden third time out, taking an all-weather race at Wolverhampton. The new owners kept him with Marco Botti, instructing the Newmarket-based conditioner to prepare the strapping chestnut for an assault on the 12-furlong Belmont Stakes. A plan was formulated, with the Dee Stakes being the centerpiece, because Team Valor had a horse in 1992 named My Memoirs that used the Dee as a launching pad for the Belmont and he came within three-quarters of a length of upsetting Champion A. P. Indy in the final leg of the Triple Crown.

Former Italian rider Botti plans to breeze Gitano Hernando at Lingfield on the sand and use a bell in the starting gate, as Americans do. He will bring the colt to New York 6 days before the race and his wife, Lucie, will accompany him to exercise the son of Hernando at Belmont Park prior to the Classic.