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SAILOR'S CAP SAILS ON WET FOOTING TO UPSET GRADE 3 POKER STAKES, TEAM VALOR COLT BEATS HIGH-CLASS CREW ON THE LONG ISLAND TURF, TRAINER TONER HAS HOMEBRED DISTANT VIEW COLT SPOT ON IN RETURN



Alan Garcia guides Sailor's Cap to daylight victory in Grade 3 Poker Stakes at Belmont.

Sailor's Cap upstaged Kip Deville's comebacker with a layoff return of his own when he skipped home a clear winner of the Grade 3 Poker Stakes today at Belmont Park on Long Island, New York for Team Valor International.

An absolute credit to his veteran trainer J. J. (Jimmy) Toner, Sailor's Cap was making his first start in 6 ½ months. The ground was officially rated as "soft," which was to his advantage, but Toner feared the colt would be very fresh for his 4-year-old debut and worried about him being too close to the pace.

Alan Garcia knows the homebred Distant View colt very well, having guided him to victory last season in the \$600,000 Colonial Turf Cup in Virginia and he was able to rate the colt effectively. The Peruvian reinsman had him fourth of five most of the way, allowed him to cruise up on his own around the stretch curve and pushed the button once he had settled into the homestretch with dead aim on the 3 to 5 favorite Kip Deville.

Sailor's Cap easily engaged the Breeders' Cup winner and blew by him readily enough to post a clear advantage at the furlong grounds. The winner began to loaf in the final sixteenth, as he allowed the runner-up Tam Lin to run up with a length and a quarter of him at the wire. Had Garcia ridden out the colt, he most likely would have won by 3 or 4 lengths.

Final time for the mile on the Widener Turf Course was 1:36 2/5. Sailor's Cap, bred in Kentucky by a Team Valor partnership, was dispatched as the weak third choice at odds of nearly 6 to 1 behind Kip Deville and 5 to 2 Tam Lin.

Kip Deville finished off the board beaten slightly less than 5 lengths. Trainer Rick Dutrow had bragged all week about how well the nation's top-rated Miler had been training and he entered the homestretch with a clear, 2-length advantage.

Tam Lin was a good barometer to gauge the form, as he is ultra consistent at Belmont Park and runs triple-digit Beyers with regularity over the Long Island course.



Barry Irwin said “This horse exited the Hollywood Derby looking like a limp rag, so we sent him to Dr. Barry Eisaman’s training complex in Florida with orders to take as much time as necessary to let him come back to himself. Our trainer, J. J. Toner, knows this colt like a book, understands him well, and prepared him for a winning effort.

“Now we will let the horse come back to himself before we send him over there again. Don’t know what’s next, but J. J. and I have always thought of him as being a Miler, even though he won going 1 3/16 miles last season.

“He’s come back at a good time, because he is fresh, a lot of others aren’t and there are some very good races for him down the pike. Two long term goals might be the Woodbine Mile and the Breeders’ Cup Mile. He ran competitively against some top colts last year like Gio Ponti and Court Vision. We will space his races, because he trains fast and gives his all in his races.”

Barry Irwin’s been in “family” 20 years.

Sailor’s Cap’s bloodlines have been in partnerships formed by Barry Irwin for the last 20 years. Hot Option, his second dam, was syndicated by Irwin in the late 1980s, when she sparkled in a brief racing career cut short by accidents that were not of her doing. The Grade 3 Honeymoon winner was retained as a broodmare and bred twice before being sold along with a daughter named Valor Lady, who went on to become a Grade 3 stakes winner for John and Jerry Amerman, clients of the stable.

Wave On, another daughter of Hot Option, was retained by the partnership, for whom she became a multiple winner on grass. After foaling Sailor’s Cap, Wave On was sold as a broodmare.

“Some of the original partners in the original Hot Option partnership are still members of the group that campaigns Sailor’s Cap,” said Irwin, “which adds a lot of fun to the proceedings.”

In winning race number 30 for Team Valor International in 2009, Sailor’s Cap became stakes winner number 8 for the stable and won stakes number 10 for the Kentucky-based outfit, which has seasonal earnings of more than \$910,000.

From *Thoroughbred Times* comes the following:

Sailor’s Cap upsates Kip Deville in Poker Stakes

by Myra Lewyn

Less than firm footing on Sunday at Belmont Park played to the advantage of Sailor’s Cap, who relished the soft turf course and spoiled the return of multiple Grade 1 winner Kip Deville with a comfortable win in \$103,500 Poker Stakes (G3).

Kip Deville, starting for the first time since a tenth-place finish in the Dubai Duty Free (UAE-G1) on March 28 at Nad al Sheba, was sent off as the 0.75-to-1 favorite as he sought a second consecutive win in the Poker.

A six-year-old Kipling horse, Kip Deville raced keenly while setting solid early fractions in this year’s edition of the one-mile race as Tam Lin (GB) pressed from second. Kip Deville held a one-length lead as the field rounded the home turn, but tired noticeably thereafter. The gray or roan horse was easily

overhauled by a fresh and ready Sailor's Cap, who was full of run on the outside at the quarter pole after rating in fourth for the first half-mile under Alan Garcia.



Sailor's Cap quickly accelerated past Kip Deville in midstretch, opened a clear lead, and scored by 1 1/4 lengths from Tam Lin (GB), the runner-up in last year's Poker whose tail swished wildly as he pursed this year's winner to the finish line.

Sailor's Cap, a four-year-old by Distant View, covered one mile in 1:36.50 in his first start in more than six months. He was soundly defeated in a ninth-place finish in the Hollywood Derby (G1) on November 30, but rebounded emphatically on Sunday at 5.70-to-1 odds.

Tam Lin finished 2½ lengths clear of third-place finisher Yield Bogey. Kip Deville finished fourth in the five-horse field.

Trained by James Toner (above), Sailor's Cap's victory marked his first win in nearly a year since scoring by 6¾ lengths on soft turf the Colonial Turf Cup Stakes (G3) on June 21, 2008, at Colonial Downs (video).

"We were going to try to sit in the pocket, but the big horse [Kip Deville] looked like he was a little rank today, so it worked out perfect," Toner said. "Once he made that move—he made just a tremendous move the last part of it.

"He's such a nice little horse—such a neat, little, athletic, and competitive horse."

Toner said future goals could include the 1 1/16-mile Fourstardave Handicap (G2) on the turf at Saratoga Race Course on August 2, adding, "We'll probably watch the Weather Channel first and see where it rains, and that's where we'll go."

Out of the Caveat mare Wave On, Sailor's Cap improved to four wins in ten career starts and earnings of \$616,970.

From *Bloodstock Journal* published by *BRISnet.com* comes the following:

Sailor's Cap relishes soft ground in Poker

Team Valor International's Sailor's Cap (Distant View), who had not raced since trailing the Hollywood Derby (G1) on November 30, found Belmont Park's soft Widener turf to his liking when making a successful return to the races in Sunday's \$103,500 Poker S. (G3). Content to rate in fourth in the early stages, the four-year-old made a bold move for the lead turning for home and looked every bit the winner in the run to the wire. Under Alan Garcia, the Jim Toner charge stopped the timer in 1:36 2/5 for one mile.

Kip Deville (Kipling), the 3-5 favorite seeking his second consecutive win in the Poker, dueled with 2-1 second choice Tam Lin (GB) (Selkirk) through the opening furlong before establishing a one-length advantage after a quarter in :23. The margin was the same after a half in :47, though by that time Yield Bogey (Langfuhr) had taken second by a half-length over Tam Lin. Kip Deville still led after six furlongs in 1:11 4/5, but at that point Sailor's Cap commenced a four-wide bid while Tam Lin began to gain along the inside. At the top of the stretch, it was evident Sailor's Cap was moving best of all. Tam Lin narrowed the gap slightly in the final furlong while Kip Deville tired badly in his first outing since an unplaced finish in the Dubai Duty Free (UAE-G1) in late March.

Sailor's Cap, at 5-1, returned \$13.40, \$4.90 and \$7.50. Tam Lin, 1 1/4 lengths behind the winner, gave back \$3.20 and \$3.80. Yield Bogey re-rallied to take third by three parts of a length at 17-1 and paid \$9.50. The exacta was worth \$48.40 and the 1-3-2 trifecta paid \$314. Kip Deville crossed the wire in fourth while Operation Red Dawn (Miswaki) trailed throughout. Thou Swell (Aptitude) was scratched.



A. Garcia scored Grade 1 in King's Bishop aboard Visionaire in 2008.

"I didn't plan anything out next -- I could probably do the (August 2) Fourstardave (G2) at Saratoga, but we'll probably watch the Weather Channel first and see where it rains, and that's where we'll go," Toner said.

Sailor's Cap has clearly favored turf with some give in it when competing in stakes company. An electric 6 3/4-length winner of the Colonial Turf Cup (G3) last year in bog-like conditions, he also finished a neck second in the American Turf S. (G3) over yielding ground. He did not fare as well on firmer ground late last year when third in the Virginia Derby (G2) and John's Gold S. prior to his Hollywood Derby attempt. This victory in the Poker elevated his career earnings to \$616,970 from a line of 10-4-1-2.

Bred in Kentucky by Wave On LLC, the winner is out of Wave On (Caveat) and has an unraced three-year-old half-sister named Playa Bonita (Royal Academy), an unraced juvenile half-brother named Colonel Mustard (Rock Hard Ten) and an unnamed yearling half-brother by Stormy Atlantic. Sailor's Cap comes from the same line as Grade 3 victress Hot Option (Explodent), who is the dam of 1997 Ballston Spa H. (G3) winner Valor Lady (Sir Ivor).

From *The Blood-Horse* comes the following:

Sailor's Cap Aces Poker; Kip Deville Folds

by Jack Shinar

Sailor's Cap overcame a 6 1/2-month layoff to blitz past the odds-on favorite Kip Deville in winning the \$105,500 Poker Stakes (gr. IIIT) (VIDEO) on a soft turf course at Belmont Park June 14.

The soggy condition of Belmont's Widener course was made to order for Sailor's Cap. Jockey Alan Garcia was content to rate the winning colt off the pacesetter Kip Deville before putting in a big run on the outside to post a 1 1/4-length triumph over Tam Lin. Yield Bogey, who kept the pressure on Kip Deville through most of the one-turn mile event, finished third, 3 3/4 lengths behind the winner.

The multiple grade I winner Kip Deville faded to fourth in his first start since running 10th in the \$5 million Dubai Duty Free (UAE-I) on World Cup Night March 28. Operation Red Dawn trailed throughout in the five-horse field.

Coming into the Poker, Sailor's Cap had won two of three starts on soft or yielding turf, including a 6 3/4-length score in the Colonial Turf Cup (gr. IIIT) on soft going a year ago. His lone loss came by a neck in the American Turf (gr. IIIT) on a yielding Churchill Downs course in May 2008. The 4-year-old son of Distant View had never raced at the Poker distance, preferring longer trips.

Looking for a repeat win in the Poker, Kip Deville seemed intent to lead every step of the way, pulling jockey Cornelio Velasquez to the front from his far outside starting post. He showed the way along the inside over a closely-grouped field while carving fractions of :23.09, :47.17 and 1:11.89. Tam Lin, ridden along the inside by Javier Castellano, and Yield Bogey, on the outside with Jean-Luc Samyn aboard, kept the pressure on while Sailor's Cap, angled to the outside by Garcia for the stretch run, stalked comfortably.

Kip Deville maintained a clear advantage rounding the turn but gave up the lead near the eighth pole as Sailor's Cap quickly closed in and swept past his rivals. After getting to the front, Sailor's Cap held sway under right-handed urging while Tam Lin rallied along the rail to take the runner-up spot. Yield Bogey, always close to the pace, lacked much closing kick while Kip Deville drifted out late while tiring.



"Actually, I thought he dropped back a little bit further than I thought he would," said winning trainer James Toner. "We were going to try to sit in the pocket, but the big horse (favored Kip Deville) looked like he was a little rank today, so it worked out perfect.

"He made just a tremendous move the last part of it. He's such a nice little horse – such a neat, little, athletic and competitive horse. I just hope we have a nice year with him."

Sailor's Cap relished the wet conditions last year to take \$600,000 Colonial Turf Cup.

Toner said the \$150,000 Fourstardave (gr. IIT) over 1 1/16 miles at Saratoga Aug. 2 could be next, "but we'll probably watch the Weather Channel first and see where it rains, and that's where we'll go."

Owned by Team Valor International, Sailor's Cap collected his fourth win in 10 lifetime starts. This was his first race since finishing ninth in the Hollywood Derby (gr. IT) Nov. 30.

Bred in Kentucky by Wave On LLC, Sailor's Cap is out of the Caveat mare Wave On. He earned \$63,300 for the victory, pushing his career bankroll to \$616,970.

Sent off as the third choice, Sailor's Cap carried 116 pounds, receiving seven pounds from the 7-10 favorite. He paid \$13.40, \$4.90 and \$7.50. Tam Lin, second in the Fort Marcy Stakes (gr. IIIT) in his last start, returned \$3.20 and \$3.80 and completed a \$2 exacta worth \$48.40. Yield Bogey was \$9.50 to show in his stakes debut for trainer Patrick Kelly.