

June 18, 2009

SAILOR'S CAP COLLAPSES IN STALL AND DIES AT 4:30 A. M. AT BELMONT, TRAINER J. J. TONER ORDERS AUTOPSY OF SUNDAY'S GR.3 POKER HERO, TEAM VALOR HOMEBRED WAS MULTIPLE GRADED WINNER OF \$616,970



Sailor's Cap, who upset Sunday's Grade 3 Poker Stakes at Belmont Park, collapsed and died in his stall in trainer J. J. Toner's barn at 4:30 a. m. on Wednesday.

Cause of death is unknown and an autopsy will be performed at the New Bolton Research Center in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania.

Toner said "He spiked a temperature during the day on Tuesday and simply collapsed early in the morning. We are all in complete shock over this turn of events."

Bred by a Team Valor partnership and raced by the Kentucky-based stable, Sailor's Cap was a lightly raced 4-year-old that just seemed to be coming into his own under the careful stewardship of veteran conditioner Toner.

Last season he was among the best 3-year-olds on grass, winning the \$600,000 Colonial Turf Cup in a driving rainstorm and finished a good third behind Gio Ponti and Court Vision in the Virginia Derby. He was given a long rest after a difficult round trip from East to West Coast for the Hollywood Derby.

In the one-turn, one-mile Poker on Sunday, Sailor's Cap exploded off the stretch curve to collar and pass Breeders' Cup hero Kip Deville, open a clear lead at the eighth pole and went on to score by a margin of more than a length with a 106 Beyer speed figure.

In 10 career outings, the homebred Distant View 4-year-old won 4 times and earned more than \$616,000.

Sailor's Cap was produced by the Caveat mare Wave On, a daughter of Hot Option, a filly raced by a partnership formed by Barry Irwin in the late 1980s. The Grade 3 Honeymoon winner was considered by Irwin to be the best domestically raced female ever to carry his stable's silks.

"Sailor's Cap had the same explosive turn of foot as Hot Option," Irwin said. "He was just coming into his own. This shows the highs and lows of this game. It is a tough nut to swallow."