

June 20, 2009

UNBRIDLED BELLE ROMPS BY 11 LENGTHS TO DEFEND IN OBEAH STAKES, TODD PLETCHER TRAINEE TO SEEK SECOND DELAWARE HANDICAP NEXT, GRADE 1 WINNER NOW 5 WINS, 2 PLACED FROM 7 OUTINGS AT DELAWARE

By Jason Shandler/www.bloodhorse.com



Unbridled Belle repeated her brilliant performance of last season by romping to an 11-length score on a sealed oval to take down the Grade 3 Obeah Stakes for a second year in a row for Todd Pletcher.

Team Valor Stables' Unbridled Belle scored in the \$125,700 Obeah Stakes (gr. III) (VIDEO) for the second straight season, getting out to an early lead and running her six rivals off their feet to win by 11 lengths June 20 in the slop at Delaware Park.

It was a dominating performance for the 6-year-old Broken Vow mare, who will be retired at the end of the season. But first, she will have another crack at the \$1 million Delaware Handicap (gr. II), a race she won in 2007 but finished third in a year ago.

With the victory, Unbridled Belle upped her enviable record to 5-1-1 at seven starts at Delaware. Overall, she won for the seventh time and earned her fourth graded stakes. She is trained by Todd Pletcher.

Breaking from post 7, Unbridled Belle shot to the lead under Richard Migliore, but they faced early pressure from All Night Labor. The opening quarter-mile went in :23.73. As they moved through the backstretch Unbridled Belle inched away from All Night Labor while keeping a steady pace (half-mile in :47.39). The dark bay began to draw off on the far turn, took a commanding 5 1/2-length lead at the top of the lane and cruised home under a hand ride.

The final time for 1 1/8 miles on a sloppy, sealed track was 1:50.79, about a second off her time on fast going when winning the event a year ago. Peruvian-bred Morena finished second in her American debut, 2 1/2 lengths better than 9-5 favorite Skylighter.

"She just relishes the Delaware Park course," said Pletcher. "She is not particularly fond of off-tracks, but the Delaware Park track clearly made up for that. Her next start will be the Del Cap."

Unbridled Belle was making her second start of the season. She opened her 2009 campaign with a sluggish fifth-place finish in the Louisville Distaff (gr. II) May 1 at Churchill Downs.

Bred in Kentucky by Joe Sutton and Laszlow Makk, the winner is out of the Silver Buck mare Little Bold Belle. She has now earned \$1,595,662 from 20 starts. Her biggest win came in the 2007 Beldame (gr. I) at Belmont Park. Team Valor's Barry Irwin said Unbridled Belle would be retired to Hill 'n' dale after this season to bred to A.P. Indy.