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## **CAPTAIN'S LOVER TAKES TO SLOPPY MAIN TRACK FOR MONMOUTH TALLY, SOUTH AFRICAN CHAMPION WINS BY 7 LENGTHS IN MATCHMAKER STAKES, TEAM VALOR YEARLING BARGAIN WINS \$200,000 GRADE 3 IN HER DIRT BOW**

Team Valor International's Captain's Lover scored a facile 7-length victory this afternoon on a rainy afternoon at Monmouth Park, when she stayed in the field for the Grade 3 Matchmaker Stakes, even though the \$200,000 fixture was taken off the grass following a significant downpour.

Trainer Todd Pletcher and Team Valor owner Barry Irwin analyzed the four remaining entrants and decided to give the race a go. "Her sire, Captain AI, sires the most American-like offspring of any stallion in South Africa," noted Irwin, "and the broodmare sire, Badger Land, was an American dirt colt. Every time she ran on an off course in South Africa, she not only won, but won big."



*Captain's Lover cat-hops by 7 in The Matchmaker.*

Pletcher advised jockey Johnny Velazquez to steer the smooth-striding 5-year-old mare away from any kickback on the sloppy footing and to let the mare use her prodigious natural speed instead of covering up, which is her style on turf. When the mare bobbed at the break and two distaffers set out in front of her, Captain's Lover was maneuvered wide around them around the clubhouse turn.

Velazquez kept the 5 to 2 favorite wide down the run along the backstretch. As the field began to head into the far turn, the rider let out a notch and allowed Captain's Lover to creep up to challenge for the lead. Curving for home, Captain's Lover was still wide, but her ears were pricked, her rider was sitting chilly and the filly American Border was under severe pressure to maintain her newly inherited lead. When allowed to open up her stride, Captain's Lover quickly drew away to win with her ears pricked by 7 lengths in the 9-furlong event.

"Good win, one that opens up some options for this mare," said Irwin. "Todd has done a fine job with this mare and Johnny rode her with style."

Captain's Lover is individual stakes winner number 13 for Team Valor International in 2009, victories coming in the United States, South Africa and Germany.

The Matchmaker winner was making her third United States and first main-track outing, having earlier debuted in the Grade 1 Just a Game Stakes, in which she finished fifth beaten 4 lengths at Belmont Park, and finished a fast-closing third in the Miss Liberty Stakes beaten 1 ¼ at Monmouth.

Captain's Lover, bought for \$27,000 as a yearling by Barry Irwin for a Team Valor partnership, has now won 7 of her 12 races and earned \$311,351. She was unbeaten in 4 races at 2 and was voted the Champion Filly at 3 after winning the Grade 1 Cape Fillies Guineas. Last year, in 2 French races, she beat colts in the Group 3 Prix du Pin and was fourth in the Group 1 Prix de la Foret behind Paco Boy. The Matchmaker is stakes win number 4 for the mare. Her only two unplaced efforts have come in Grade 1 races in which she was fourth and fifth.