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VISIONAIRE CLOSES FAST TO WIN GRADE 1 KING'S BISHOP AT SARATOGA, GRAND SLAM COLT EXPLODES AROUND THE TURN UNDER ALAN GARCIA, TEAM VALOR/VISION RACING CHESTNUT WINS BY 2 ¼ FOR TRAINER MATZ

Visionaire fashioned an improbable rally from some 20 lengths back to runaway and hide from the best 3-year-old sprinters in North America in taking Saturday's Grade 1 King's Bishop Stakes by 2 ¼ lengths at Saratoga.

About 5 lengths behind the last horse on the far turn, the Grand Slam sophomore was taken some 8 wide curving for home by Alan Garcia, who won 5 races on the Travers Day card at The Spa. The colt was last at the quarter pole and still more than 3 lengths off the lead at the furlong grounds, but Garcia had him rolling down the middle of the strip. In the end, Garcia was celebrating before he went under the wire in 1:21 4/5 for the 7 furlongs.



The chestnut was winning for fifth time in 10 career outings and earned \$150,000 in the victory in a race that is considered one of the premier fixtures in the United States for stallion prospects.

Visionaire was a yearling buy for Vision Racing, which formed a racing partnership to buy him from one of its own pinhooking partnerships as a 2-year-old. After the colt scored impressively in an allowance race over the winter at Gulfstream Park, Team Valor International acquired a 51-percent stake in him with an eye on the Triple Crown.

The Kentucky-bred won the Grade 3 Gotham Stakes and placed in the Grade 3 Risen Stakes and Grade 3 Northern Dancer Stakes, but following a third in the last-named at Churchill Downs the owners got together and decided to try dropping Visionaire back to one corner, as he had the same explosive move he had demonstrated at Gulfstream Park, but he had trouble sustaining it when raced around two turns.

Team Valor and Vision Racing set the King's Bishop as its autumn goal, but when trainer Michael Matz looked for a prep race, the only race available was a 6 ½-furlong allowance test late in July at Saratoga. Matz was skeptical that the colt could sprint, but kindly consented to give it a go.



Rounding the turn, Visionaire is last. His jockey's red cap can be seen as the third horse behind the aqua-blinkered horse in the middle and a white-capped rider next in the line.

Visionaire responded by coming from last to first to win the allowance race in the slop with a sustained late move. He was ridden for the first time in that race by Alan Garcia, who learned just how to handle the colt for the King's Bishop.

Seasoned racetrackers and horsemen recognized prior to the races on Saturday that the Ragozin speed figures compiled by the entrants in the King's Bishop far outshone those put up by those in the

Travers on the same card. The racing press and even some of the partners in the racing syndicates questioned whether the colt had been entered in the right race.

"We knew the King's Bishop was a more challenging spot than the Travers in terms of class," admitted Barry Irwin of Team Valor International, "but we felt strongly that our colt was much more effective around one corner because of his explosive turn of foot on the stretch curve."

The Grand Slam colt has lost only once in one-turn races, when he was second in his career debut. In 10 starts, the colt has a record of 5-2-1 for lifetime earnings of \$462,287.

Visionaire now has put together back-to-back wins around one corner at The Spa. The connections will huddle sometime in the next couple of weeks to chart the next course for the exciting stallion prospect.

The King's Bishop hero is Grade 1 winner number 20 for a horse syndicated by Barry Irwin since 1987. He is among 9 stakes winners—all but one of them Graded—for Team Valor International this season. The King's Bishop winner is the fourth Grade 1 winner to represent the stable during the 2008 racing season.

Team Valor has won 42 races and has earned more than \$2,600,000 through the last weekend. The stable is winning at a clip of 20 percent.

From *Thoroughbred Daily News* comes the following:



After watching GIII Gotham S. winner Visionaire (Grand Slam) finish off the board for the only times in his life in the nine-furlong GI Blue Grass S. and 10-panel GI Kentucky Derby, it was clear to his owners that the colt would be better off at shorter distances. The chestnut colt dropped back to a mile and a sixteenth for the June 14 GIII Northern Dancer S. at Churchill Downs and finished third, then went back to one turn for a 6 1/2-furlong optional claimer at Saratoga July 24.



Barry Irwin

Last early, Visionaire charged down the lane to get up for a one-length score. “The main thing with this horse is that he is very, very explosive off the turn,” Team Valor International principal Barry Irwin explained. “He showed that in the Northern Dancer, but the race was just too far. We knew if he could put in that kind of run going short, it would be very effective. That was the gamble, and it paid off.”

It did indeed. Let go at 6-1 in the seven-furlong King’s Bishop, Visionaire trailed the field as 17-10 chalk J Be K (Silver Deputy) led them through an opening half in :44.71. The crowd’s choice still had the advantage at the eighth pole, but jockey Alan Garcia had Visionaire in the clear on the far outside, and the colt stormed past the field to win going away. Desert Key (E Dubai) closed through the crowd on the inside in deep stretch, but couldn’t match strides with the winner late.

“My horse, he came flying!” said Garcia, celebrating his fifth winner on the card. “This is great.” Added trainer Michael Matz, “The horse just has that one style of running; it can be a little nerve-wracking. When I saw him that far behind after the first quarter, I said, ‘Oh, my goodness!’ But he is an honest horse and he tries real hard.” Matz also conceded, “Maybe he doesn’t want to go far. It looks like seven furlongs to a mile is his distance.” J Be K faded late to be sixth. His jockey, Garrett Gomez, remarked, “I did not have a good trip. My horse just did not respond like normal. I tried to get him to move down the stretch, but I never got the response I was looking for.”