

August 28, 2009

KING OF THE ROXY FINDS THIRD GEAR LATE TO WIN HONEY JAY STAKES, SPECTACULAR LATE BURST THRILLS FANS IN INITIAL OHIO APPEARANCE, FIVE-YEAR-OLD HAS NOW WON BOTH HIS 2009 STARTS RACING ON INSIDE

The “play book” on King of the Roxy for the three years of his career was that he was less than brave when forced to race inside of horses. Opposing riders knew this and tried to keep him pinned down on the rail whenever the opportunity arose. Mumbblings about him being “chicken shit” or “duck hearted” were heard from time to time, even among his own training camp.

In a pair of starts on the comeback trail this season, however, while trying to mount a productive year in spite of a chronic and painful bone disease he developed last rendered him lame for more than 6 months last year, King of the Roxy in both of his races showed the kind of courage displayed only by the best, as each time he was forced to charge up the rail to win.



King of the Roxy demonstrated high pluck in bullying his way into tight quarters along the rail to nail down the Honey Jay Stakes.

The “King” surprised Todd Pletcher and Team Valor International when he used an inside path to win the Don Bernhard Stakes at Ellis Park in his comeback, given his history and the fact that Pletcher issued only one admonition to Orlando Mojica—“stay off the rail, he won’t run inside of horses.”

When the horse did it again, coming up the fence to take down the Honey Jay last Friday in his first Ohio race at Thistledown, the connections once again were incredulous, especially since Mojica tried to get “Roxy” to go outside and the horse did not respond.

A many times decorated Champion in his birth state of Ohio, King of the Roxy was sent off as the huge choice at odds of 1 to 2 for the 6-furlong Honey Jay. His number 7 stall in the 10-horse field was considered ideal for a wide, stalking trip that had been anticipated. Racing on a drying out strip labeled “good,” King of the Roxy acted like he was not getting a hold of the surface. He raced in spurts down the backstretch, shying from clods of dirt. Mojica tried him in the middle of the track, on the inside and even on the outside. The 5-year-old failed to respond.

Curving for home, Mojica was desperate to get the public favorite into gear and literally threw his head toward the rail. OK, figured “Roxy,” I get it now. The “King” raced with enough interest to look like he had a chance to hit the board if he kept to his task. But a furlong from the wire, a win possibility looked quite remote. In the final 50 yards, though, King of the Roxy took over the race, as he exploded like he had never done in his life, to roar to an emphatic daylight victory by 1 ½ lengths. Saratoga County resident and racing partner Don Gallagher, said “I thought the margin was maybe a neck or so. I had no idea he actually had won by that much. He finished so fast it was impossible for me to tell!” Don was joined for the race by Bobby Stamps of Atlanta, Georgia.

From *The Blood-Horse* comes the following:

King of the Roxy Wins First Start at 'Home'

by Tom LaMarra



King of the Roxy won the Grade 2 Belmont Futurity at age 2.

Team Valor Stables' Ohio-bred King of the Roxy, voted Ohio Horse of the Year in 2007, made his first start in his home state a winning one Aug. 28 when he captured the \$50,000 Honey Jay Stakes at Thistledown.

Five-year-old King of the Roxy, who was on the Triple Crown trail early in his 3-year-old season, won the six-furlong test in 1:10.28 on a track rated "good." He finished 1 1/2 lengths ahead of Tri Uimet, with Royal Nemesis two lengths back in third.

Ridden by Orlando Mojica, King of the Roxy earned \$30,000 for his fifth victory in 14 starts, and increased his career earnings to \$599,734. As the heavy 1-2 favorite, King of the Roxy paid \$3 to win.

King of the Roxy (by Littleexpectations out of Marrakesh, by Bold Forbes) broke from the gate alertly but was squeezed back to fifth in the opening quarter-mile. He raced outside of rivals until heading into the final turn, where Mojica, who is based at Hoosier Park Racing & Casino, angled him to the inside.

"He told me he really didn't want to go down in there, that the rail was a bit deeper," said Horacio DePaz, assistant to trainer Todd Pletcher. "Even though it wasn't the trip we wanted, it worked out well."

Debbie Kopatz, who bred King of the Roxy and sold him for \$8,000 at auction, presented the trophy to the winning connections. She'll be back at Thistledown Aug. 31 to watch Barry, a half-brother to King of the Roxy, make his career debut in a maiden special weight sprint for Ohio-breds. Barry is named for Team Valor chief Barry Irwin.

In his previous start, King of the Roxy won the July 18 Don Bernhardt Memorial Stakes at Ellis Park. It was his first start back since having been retired to stand at stud, but a deal never materialized.

King of the Roxy won the Futurity Stakes (gr. II) at Belmont Park at 2 and the Hutcheson Stakes (gr. II) at Gulfstream Park at 3, both at less than a mile. He was able to come within a half-length of Tiago in a runner-up effort in the Santa Anita Derby (gr. I) at 1 1/8 miles.

King of the Roxy developed a defect at the base of his cannon bone and was unable to continue racing, his connections said at the time.

Pletcher told Thistledown officials by telephone that King of the Roxy may make his next start at Thistledown in the \$75,000 Best of Ohio Sprint Oct. 3. The race is part of the championship day for Ohio-bred horses.