

FAIRBANKS ROLLS TO A 2 3/4-LENGTH VICTORY IN HAWTHORNE GOLD CUP, GRADE 2 TRIUMPH IN \$500,000 RACE UPS CAREER GLEANINGS TO \$879,768, FUTURE UP IN THE AIR AFTER COME-FROM-BEHIND WIN UNDER MIGLIORE



Fairbanks underlined his versatility by rallying from third place behind pace-setting Barcola to drive to a convincing 2 3/4-length victory today in the \$500,000 Hawthorne Gold Cup over 1 1/4 miles on the main track of the Chicagoland oval.

The \$1.85-million Saratoga Yearling Sale topper bought by Barry Irwin of Team Valor International was winning his second Graded and third stakes overall, to go along with 4 Graded seconds, among them the Grade 1 Suburban and Grade 2 Gulfstream Park Handicaps.

Bet down from a morning line of 5 to 2 to the prohibitive 3 to 5 choice at post time, the Team Valor International colorbearer was expected to vie for command early with Barcola, as both horses have a history of employing a front-running style.

However, following a pre-race strategy, jockey Richard (The Mig) Migliore put a hammerlock on the speedy son of Giant's Causeway just as the runners were leaving the long stretch and heading into the first turn. "The Mig won the race there and then," said Barry Irwin, owner of Team Valor International. "The horse was head strong and wanted to get it on, but the plan was to let Barcola go and come up outside of him at some point."



Fairbanks has won most of his races on the lead, as he did when scoring by nearly 6 lengths last time out when taking the Duke of Magenta Stakes at Saratoga and last year's Grade 3 Tokyo City Handicap at Santa Anita with a 115 Beyer speed figure.



But in his initial outing at 4, when facing a similar situation against Barcola at Gulfstream Park, Fairbanks was boxed in and forced to rate until the lane, when he busted loose to win with authority.

Migliore sat third, as many as 3 lengths back, as Barcola carved out the tepid early fractions, pressed to the top of the lane on the outside by Better Than Bonds. As Barcola approached the quarter pole, however, Fairbanks was allowed to range up outside. Better Than Bonds was under a drive, Barcola was doing his best on the lead and Fairbanks had not even been let loose.

Fairbanks powered to the front inside the lane, as Barcola and Better Than Bonds faded into obscurity, and Magna Graduate and Wayzata Boy picked up the chase from midpack. Migliore went to work on Fairbanks from the quarter pole to the furlong pole, getting him to fashion a daylight lead and get the jump on his two stretch-running pursuers.

Once comfortably in front, Fairbanks finished up on his own volition to finish strongest at the wire and report home an authoritative winner. Multimillionaire Magna Graduate, who may have run his last race, hit the wire a neck before Wayzata Bay, the recent Grade 2 Cornhusker Handicap hero.



Trained by Todd Pletcher, who was winning a pair of Grade 1 races in California on the same day, Fairbanks gleaned \$297,000 to increase his career earnings to \$879,768 and improve his record from 18 starts to 6 wins and 4 seconds.

Plans for the stallion prospect are fluid, pending a deal to go to stud, but under consideration are a go in the first-ever Breeders' Cup Marathon, the Breeders' Cup Classic and the Grade 1 Clark Handicap at Churchill Downs in November.

"He is going particularly well at the moment," said Irwin. "First and foremost on our agenda is coming up with a deal to stand him at stud, but we are looking forward to what most likely will be his final race. He has won two stakes in a row in convincing style and arguably could be coming up to the best race of his career.

Fairbanks ran a 115 Beyer number in winning the Grade 3 Tokyo City Handicap at 4 in a speed figure bettered among older horses in races beyond a mile only by Eclipse Award winner Lawyer Ron. He is a half-brother to Grade 2 Coolmore Lexington Stakes winner Keats out of a half-sister to Grade 2 Fountain of Youth winner Darn That Alarm and Grade 3 Tropical Park Derby winner Strong Performance.

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