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## BLUE CHIP PROSPECT

### Team Valor International lands rising star with addition of Bradley Weisbord

by Jeff Lowe

Barry Irwin, founder and chief executive officer of Team Valor International, could have counted on a trip to the back of the line for good fortune once he grasped the Kentucky Derby trophy for home-bred Animal Kingdom.

Just a few months later, Irwin is delighted to seize another fortunate opportunity, this time on the human front, as he ushers in Bradley Weisbord as chief operating officer for the Kentucky-based racing stable.

“I feel like we’ve landed a number one draft pick,” Irwin said. “I can’t even imagine a better qualified young man in the entire industry for our enterprise.”

Weisbord has been immersed in the racing industry his whole life and he dove into the deep end professionally over the last 18 months as the racing and business manager for Zayat Stables. He was thoroughly involved in all aspects of Ahmed Zayat’s operation, which achieved 19 stakes wins between 2010 and the first seven months of 2011, including four Grade 1 winners.

Zayat Stables also developed Nehro, the runner-up to Animal Kingdom in the Kentucky Derby. The stable ranks second on the North American earnings list, despite having a fifth as many starters as the money leader, Midwest Thoroughbreds. Team Valor is fourth on the list, with 20 percent of Midwest’s racing volume.

“Working at Zayat Stables has been like the Harvard Business School for the horse business,” said Weisbord, the son of *Thoroughbred Daily News* president Barry Weisbord. “On the racetrack, it would be tough to find a more successful stable considering the amount of horses Mr. Zayat has. It’s not 200 horses in training like some people might think, it’s between 50 and 75. It’s just been a great experience for me.”

In overseeing Zayat’s roster, Weisbord dealt with some of America’s most successful and respected horsemen—trainers Steve Asmussen, Bob Baffert, Todd Pletcher, and Dale Romans, farm owner Tom Van Meter and farm trainer J. B. McKathan.

Weisbord also maintained and strengthened a working relationship with celebrity chef and passionate Thoroughbred owner Bobby Flay. That background played out in the spring when Weisbord assisted



*Bobby Flay leads in Her Smile after G1 Prioress win.*

in Flay's acquisition of the 3-year-old filly Her Smile. Weisbord negotiated the private transaction and it yielded Flay's first Grade 1 victory when Her Smile triumphed in the Prioress Stakes.

"Brad Weisbord has his finger on the pulse of Thoroughbred racing," Flay said. "His ability to identify quality horses makes him a rare breed. I respect his opinion whenever I'm in the market for my next prospect.

"We went back and forth while we were trying to buy her and Bradley Weisbord did a fantastic job negotiating the deal and getting the horse from Maryland to Todd Pletcher's barn at Churchill Downs." Bobby Flay, in *Thoroughbred Daily News* on July 5, after gaining his first Grade 1 win with Her Smile in the Prioress Stakes

Weisbord has been familiar with Grade 1 quality going back to one of his earliest memories, that of crawling through the legs of Hall of Fame filly Safely Kept in her stall at Monmouth Park. Barry Weisbord raced the Breeders' Cup Sprint winner in partnership with Richard Santulli.

"From a very early age I knew I loved the horse business," Bradley Weisbord said. "I was very fortunate to have learned from and to be mentored by my father. He was never a closed-door type of guy. Any type of business deal when I was growing up was discussed at the dinner table, with the family."

As he studied economics and real estate at the University of Wisconsin, Weisbord forged an impact on his father's business, working on deals mostly related to stallion shares. After graduating, Weisbord went to work for *Thoroughbred Daily News* as a market analyst, and he eventually gravitated to a stallion share portfolio owned by Barry Weisbord and former NetJets Inc. CEO Santulli. From that platform, Bradley Weisbord began working with Flay and owner-breeder Gerald Frankel.



"It's seeing the joy people like Bobby Flay and Gerald Frankel have for the business and seeing them win races that makes me so excited for this next part of my career with Team Valor," said Weisbord, who is in the process of relocating from New York City to Central Kentucky to work alongside Irwin. "I'm going to hopefully be getting some new people involved in the game and showing a good time to the partners who are already with us."

Irwin sees a winning combination in Weisbord's obvious skill and his enthusiastic, driven personality.

"I need to free myself to spend more time promoting the company and doing what I do best," Irwin said. "Bradley can step right in and make an impact. Eventually, he will run the day-to-day operations. I will stay very much involved but be focused more on creative ways to enhance Team Valor.

"Bradley is the right person for the job. He has talent, the courage of his convictions and he's got a winning personality that will allow him to be successful."

