

August 20, 2011

SUMMER SOIREE RISES TO ELITE OCCASION IN GRADE 1 DEL MAR OAKS WAR FRONT FILLY BECOMES 25TH GRADE 1 WINNER FOR IRWIN SYNDICATE IN DEL MAR DEBUT, JOCKEY SAEZ DELIVERS FOR MOTION, TEAM VALOR

Team Valor International acquired Summer Soiree with a view that she could develop into one of the top turf fillies in the nation, and she lived up to the projection on August 20 in scoring a Grade 1 victory in the \$250,000 Del Mar Oaks.



Gabriel Saez and Summer Soiree timed the Del Mar Oaks just right as she grabbed Grade 1 glory in her second start on turf.

The War Front filly showed an added dimension by rating behind a pacesetter, Dynamo, before she unleashed her explosive turn of foot along the backstretch and opened up a big lead that proved insurmountable. Crossing the wire a half-length in front of a group that included the top five finishers from last month's Grade 1 American Oaks, Summer Soiree completed 1 1/8 miles in 1:46.46, the third-fastest time in the 47 editions of the Del Mar Oaks on turf.

The victory was an appropriate milestone in the 25th racing season for partnerships organized by Barry Irwin, who scored a first-year breakthrough in the 1987 Del Mar Oaks with Lizzy Hare. Summer

Soiree is the 25th Grade 1 winner for Irwin and partners.

Summer Soiree had been the early leader in each of her four previous wins, including a smashing 8 1/2-length triumph in the Grade 3 Boiling Springs Stakes in her grass debut in late June. Team Valor bought her three months earlier with the Kentucky Oaks as an immediate target, but Irwin and his team surmised that her long-term future would be on the turf, an opinion that her former trainer, Larry Jones, wholeheartedly affirmed.

A key cog in her development has been jockey Gabriel Saez, who rode in her every start she made for Larry and Cindy Jones. Irwin and Motion opted to keep him aboard the headstrong filly, even after a troubled 10th-place finish in the Kentucky Oaks. Saez had never ridden at Del Mar before Saturday, and he sought and received some sage advice from Mike Smith and Pat Valenzuela, two of the most successful riders in Southern California for many years.

Saez also delivered on a game plan that Irwin shared with Motion the morning of the race.

"I told Graham that it would be ideal if Summer Soiree could follow another horse and that the key to the race was to try to gain as much separation as possible before the filly hit the homestretch," Irwin said.

Saez turned Summer Soiree loose a little earlier than Irwin and Motion expected, striking the front at the half-mile pole and opening up by 5 1/2 lengths at the head of the stretch, but he hit the bull's eye in holding on for Team Valor's 11th stakes win of 2011 and Motion's first ever at Del Mar.

"When we went to the second turn, I said it was time to go," Saez said. "That was the plan. I wanted to put some lengths between me and the others. She picked it right up."

"Graham thinks that the filly should be held up a little longer, which I agree would have been better, but the kid used the filly's explosiveness to open up and that won the race," Irwin said.

Summer Soiree is a poster child for Team Valor's decision to base its roster with Motion at Fair Hill this year.

"She's so much more manageable since we got her to Fair Hill," Motion said this week. "You can do different things with her there. She gets turned out in a big paddock every day, and I think we've seen the results. She was very difficult to train before the Kentucky Oaks at Churchill where it's very compact, very busy. She's a very aggressive filly, I think she always will be but I do think she has settled down a lot since May."

Summer Soiree will be considered for another Grade 1 chance in the Queen Elizabeth II Challenge Cup Stakes on October 15 at Keeneland, but Irwin and his team have a multitude of options for the versatile filly who is now a Grade 1 winner on turf, Grade 3 winner on Polytrack, and 2-time winner on dirt by a combined 16 lengths.



Barry Irwin achieved a 25th Grade 1 winner in his 25th season of racing syndicates.

Official owner standings		Starts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
1	Midwest Thoroughbreds	851	247	156	112	\$3,550,769
2	Zayat Stables	157	37	22	16	\$3,143,104
3	George and Lori Hall	151	31	27	21	\$2,754,993
4	<i>Team Valor</i>	44	11	8	2	\$2,597,354

Standings with combined stats*		Starts	1st	2nd	3rd	Earnings
1	Midwest Thoroughbreds	851	247	156	112	\$3,550,769
4	Zayat Stables	157	37	22	16	\$3,143,104
2	<i>Team Valor</i>	74	16	11	10	\$2,870,115
3	George and Lori Hall	151	31	27	21	\$2,754,993

*Some horses race in the name of Team Valor and a partner

