

August 26, 2012

## FIRST CORNERSTONE PREVAILS IN IRELAND'S GROUP 2 FUTURITY STAKES TEAM VALOR REWARDED FOUR DAYS AFTER BUYING IRISH-BRED JUVENILE BREEDERS' CUP JUVENILE TURF ON RADAR FOR SON OF HURRICANE RUN

First Cornerstone scored a Group 2 victory and flashed an abundance of promise for the future in winning Sunday's Futurity Stakes at The Curragh, four days after Team Valor International purchased the Irish-bred son of Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe winner Hurricane Run.

Barry Irwin negotiated for 2 weeks before pulling the trigger to buy the chestnut colt when his connections supplemented him to the 7-furlong Futurity, which has been one of the most productive juvenile stakes in the world over the last 20 years. The list of winners reads like a Who's Who of the Irish Turf, as a springboard for champions Giant's Causeway, Hawk Wing, New Approach, St. Jovite, and Cape Blanco, who garnered an Eclipse Award with 3 Grade 1 wins in the U.S. last year.



First Cornerstone, a flashy chestnut with a white face and three white stockings, was 7 to 2 in a 4-horse field for the Futurity, after breaking his maiden on heavy ground in a Listed stakes race at Tipperary in his second start.

*Irish based First Cornerstone came through impressively just four days after being purchased privately by Barry Irwin for Team Valor International.*

His trainer, Andrew Oliver, was the original trainer of Miss Singhsix, who was purchased by Team Valor and moved to the U.S., where she became a Graded stakes winner.

First Cornerstone looks like a prime prospect for the Grade 1 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf the way he and jockey Chris Hayes burst to a 1 1/2-length win over Flying The Flag, the 7 to 4 favorite for Coolmore and trainer Aidan O'Brien. Timeform responded by boosting First Cornerstone from 104 to 111, an exceptional rating for a 2-year-old at the end of August. English bookmakers immediately added him to their markets as a Classics candidate for next spring, listed as low as 20 to 1 for the Two Thousand Guineas and 33 to 1 for the Epsom Derby.

"He is progressive and becoming stronger," said Irwin, who stopped in Ireland to see the race on his way to the German National yearling sale. "This was a small, but high-class field of 4. Flying The Flag's stablemate had just lost a Group 3 in a photo finish. Birdman had just missed to highly touted English colt Olympic Glory in a Group race at Goodwood. And our horse just won a Listed race as a real comer.

"Our colt is not only talented, but game. He was locked in a battle with Aidan O'Brien's colt for a furlong and drew away and the English colt Birdman was only half a length of Flying The Flag. This is very good form."

Irwin will take a few days to weigh the options for First Cornerstone, who could return to the Curragh for the Group 1 National Stakes over the same course and distance in 3 weeks, head to Paris for the Group 1 Grand Criterium on Arc day at Longchamp, or be sent to the U.S. for a Graded prep for the Juvenile Turf.

From England's *Racing Post* comes the following:

### **First Cornerstone gamble pays off in Futurity**

TRAINER Andy Oliver's gamble to stump up €9,500 to supplement First Cornerstone for the Futurity Stakes paid off when the son of Hurricane Run ended the unbeaten record of Aidan O'Brien's Flying The Flag, staying on stoutly to record a length and a half victory and earning a 20-1 quote from Paddy Power for the 2,000 Guineas.



*First Cornerstone is a half brother to Buxted, a stakes winner over 10 furlongs in England.*

With big hitters Mars and Dawn Approach absent due to the heavy ground, First Cornerstone's connections had predicted the race would cut up and were proved correct, with just four runners leaving the starting gates due to the absence on the day of Nevis, who appeared to be the pick of the O'Brien trio.

A delighted Oliver is now eyeing a step up to Group 1 company, saying: "It's great when a plan comes to fruition. I had a fair idea that Dawn Approach and Mars wouldn't turn up because of the testing ground and that's why we supplemented him.

"There was a change of ownership during the week. The horse is in the Racing Post Trophy and Beresford Stakes but the new owners will call the shots from now on."

Team Valor bought First Cornerstone last Wednesday and this performance proved that his 33-1 shock in a Listed contest at Tipperary on his previous outing was no fluke.

Sent off the 7-2 third favourite of the four runners, Chris Hayes was happy to bide his time in third place as Kingston Jamaica made the running from 7-4 joint-favourite Flying The Flag, with

Joseph O'Brien replacing Seamie Heffernan in the saddle.

Kingston Jamaica led until a furlong and a half out but First Cornerstone and Flying The Flag went on soon after with the winner comfortably seeing off the runner-up, with the other joint-favourite Birdman running on for a never-dangerous third, another half-length behind.

The victory was a second Group 2 win of 2012 for County Tyrone trainer Oliver, following Sendmylovetorose's win in the Cherry Hinton Stakes at Newmarket last month.

Video of the last 4 furlongs of the Futurity is available [here](#).