

# Spanish Mission New Favorite for Melbourne Cup

By Carl Di Iorio/ RACING.COM

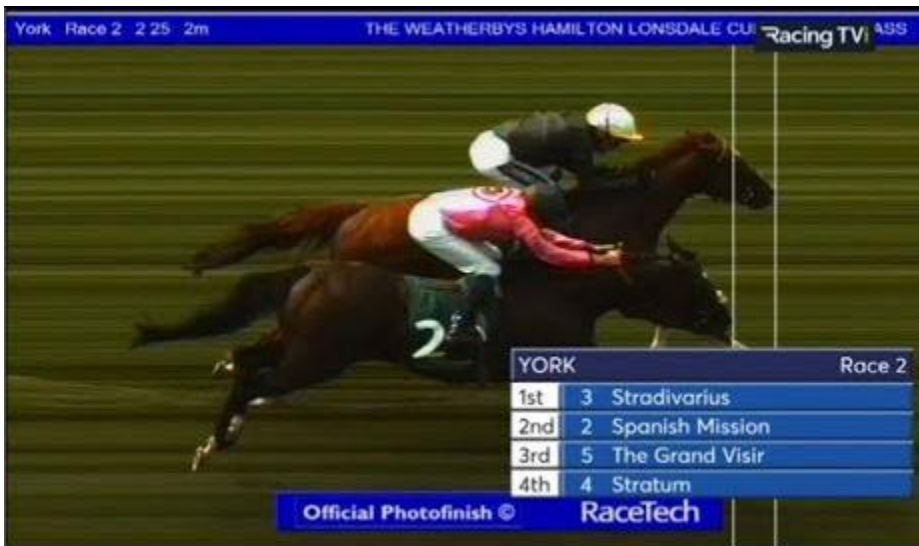
**Spanish Mission** has been promoted to Melbourne Cup favourite after giving Europe's aging staying champion Stradivarius a major fright in the £150,000 (A\$285,000) Group 2 Lonsdale Cup (3270m) at York on Friday.

Spanish Mission firmed from \$31 into \$15 with Sportsbet immediately after the Lonsdale Cup but his odds tightened further on Saturday morning as Australians awoke to the result, now sitting atop of markets as an \$11 outright favourite.



Stradivarius turns back Spanish Mission in the Lonsdale Cup | [racingfotos.com](http://racingfotos.com)

Consequently, Incentivise drifted from \$11 favourite out to \$13 while Realm of Flowers drifted from \$13 to \$15 to join Dawn Patrol on the third line of betting.



The Lonsdale Cup provided great theatre and once again illustrated how small fields can be hazardous for champions to conquer.

Stradivarius and Spanish Mission were late scratchings from last month's G1 Goodwood Cup (3219m) due to heavy ground. Whilst the pair both appreciated the drier footing during York's Ebor Festival, Spanish Mission was clearly advantaged by the sit-sprint tempo of the four-runner Lonsdale Cup, as seen when beating four rivals at the venue in May's G2 Yorkshire Cup (2787m).

Stradivarius (\$1.60 favourite) crept towards the pacemaking The Grand Visir (\$29) from the 1200 metre mark with Stratum (\$12), known as Stratum Albion in last year's Melbourne Cup, and Spanish Mission (\$2.80) following in behind.

As Stradivarius idled into the lead, no sooner was the Andrew Balding-trained Spanish Mission on terms, the ascendancy see-sawing during an absorbing final 400 metres with Stradivarius winning by a head to claim his third Lonsdale Cup to the roars of the crowd. [VIDEO](#)

Winning jockey Frankie Dettori told ITV Racing post-race: "He passed me once, then I passed him back, then he passed me and then on the line my horse went: 'Boom, I won!'

John Gosden's champion stayer has developed a habit of winning by narrow margins despite his domination of the staying division. Stradivarius has won 18 of 29 starts, last year's 10-length romp in the G1 Ascot Gold Cup an exception to the rule with ten of his victories by a length or less.

"He's phenomenal, to have won four Goodwood Cups, three Gold Cups, three Lonsdales now, two Yorkshire Cups and a Doncaster Cup. As Mark Johnston said to me, all those miles of racing, let alone miles of training," Gosden said.

Anna Lisa Balding, assistant trainer to her husband Andrew, was proud of Spanish Mission and told Sporting Life: "He's run a hell of a race and I actually thought we'd won when he went ahead. I thought we'd got him, but we didn't.

"Someone just said to me to have a good race you need two good horses and he had it everywhere bar the line.

"We'll stick to Plan A, Australia here we come (for the Melbourne Cup) and let's hope he does his stuff out there. It will mean two weeks in a hotel probably so I'm not sure who'll be putting their hand up for that trip!"

Spanish Mission is anticipated to travel to Melbourne for the Spring Carnival on the first shipment, entering quarantine at Newmarket on September 9 ahead of his arrival on AFL Grand Final day (September 25).

Foreign-trained horses who compete in this year's Melbourne Cup are permitted just one lead up start and Racing.com understands Spanish Mission is likely to contest the \$5m G1 Carlton Draught Caulfield Cup (2400m) on October 16 before the \$8m G1 Lexus Melbourne Cup (3200m) at Flemington on November 2.

Spanish Mission firmed from \$51 to \$26 with Sportsbet for the Caulfield Cup following the Lonsdale Cup.