

February 16, 2011

CRIMSON CHINA FLIES HOME TO WIN HIS UNITED STATES AND TURF DEBUT, TRIPLE CROWN PROSPECT EYING \$500,000 SPIRAL IN MARCH AT TURFWAY, GIANT'S CAUSEWAY 3YO IMPRESSES GRAHAM MOTION AND RAJIV MARAGH

Team Valor International's Crimson China injected himself right into the Triple Crown conversation today when he used a relentless late stretch kick to fashion an improbable victory at Gulfstream Park for trainer Graham Motion and jockey Rajiv Maragh. Making both his United States and grass debut, the import showed more early interest than in either of his all-weather races in England at 2, as he saved ground from his number 1 draw, racing about 6 or 7 lengths off the pace. The colt had walked out of the gate in both of his earlier races and lagged. When the field contracted five-sixteenths of a mile from home in the 1 1/8-mile event, Crimson China was stuck inside with no place to go. Once Maragh found a seam, he maneuvered his handy bay colt to the outside to make his run.



Crimson China was always going to be rallying wide from that point, but another entrant trained by Motion that was positioned just inside of the Team Valor colorbearer also had some run in him and while making his best bid, he forced Crimson China from about the 4 to the 8 path. The move not only cost Crimson China a loss of ground, but no little loss of momentum. However, Maragh was able to balance the colt and get him to regenerate a second run. Moving down the center of the course, Crimson China was more than 4 lengths adrift at the eighth pole, with the heavy favorite Ari C. in front by daylight and seemingly headed to the winners circle for the second time in as many outings this season.

Maragh cracked Crimson China with the whip twice just inside the furlong grounds and the colt exploded. With a furlong remaining, Crimson China appeared to have a chance to hit the board. With a sixteenth remaining, his chances appeared to improve and second place seemed possible. In the final 75 yards, it suddenly became obvious that he would mow down Todd Pletcher's favorite in a close finish. Then, in the final few strides he not only caught Ari C. but drove half a length past him.

Crimson China completed the trip in 1:46 4/5 and must have come the last furlong in 11 1/5 seconds. He made up more than 4 lengths in the final eighth of a mile and won by an additional half-length. "Rajiv had a lot of very nice things to say about the colt," said Motion. "He cannot have possibly been totally fit for this race and we ran him on faith. Whatever he did today was on pure raw talent. Because of this, I wouldn't want to run him back too quickly." Team Valor's Barry Irwin said "We have him in both the Grade 3 Spiral Stakes at Turfway and the Grade 1 Blue Grass Stakes at Keeneland. Both are on Polytrack. We plan to run him in one or both and if he compiles sufficient graded earnings to qualify for the Kentucky Derby, we will train him on the dirt and see what happens. He looks to have the right action for the dirt. He is a very powerful runner."