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ANIMAL KINGDOM MOVING FORWARD IN HIS COMEBACK AT FAIR HILL DERBY WINNER BREEZED SUNDAY MORNING FOR THIRD TIME IN 16 DAYS TRAINER MOTION WILL MOVE ECLIPSE FINALIST TO SOUTH FLORIDA SOON

From David Grening of *Daily Racing Form* comes the following:

Animal Kingdom, the 2011 Kentucky Derby winner, took another step toward his 2012 return to the races by working four furlongs in 50.40 seconds Sunday morning over the dirt surface at the Fair Hill Training Center in Maryland.



Animal Kingdom and Toby's Corner have been workmates in three straight moves on the dirt at Fair Hill. Photo by Maggie Kimmitt.

Animal Kingdom worked in company with Wood Memorial winner Toby's Corner, who was credited with the same time. Trainer Graham Motion said Animal Kingdom galloped out five furlongs in 1:03-and-change. Motion added this was Animal Kingdom's first half-mile breeze, though last week he was credited with a half-mile move in 49 seconds. Motion said that was the gallop-out time following a three-furlong move.

"I'm conscious of not overdoing it with him," Motion said by phone. "Last week, he went from the three-eighths pole; this was a proper half-mile."

Whatever the distance, it was Animal Kingdom's third breeze in 16 days. Motion and owner Barry Irwin have targeted the \$10 million Dubai World Cup at Meydan on March 31 for Animal Kingdom with a prep race in the second or third week of February. Motion said that race could be anywhere from seven-eighths on dirt to 1 1/8 miles on turf either in Florida or possibly Dubai. The Gulfstream Park Turf Handicap on Feb. 11 and the Gulfstream Park Sprint, a seven-furlong dirt race on Feb. 18, are possible spots. There is also a mile turf race at Meydan on Feb. 16.



Animal Kingdom has been shedding pounds as he works his way back into condition. Photo by Maggie Kimmitt.

"The fact is the objective of racing him in February is to get a race into him," Motion said.

Motion added that both he and Irwin are not going to try and make the Dubai World Cup at all costs.

"Barry and I are very conscious of not getting too carried away with this," Motion said. "We're not going to compromise him to do this. I think we're on schedule. Everything's going to have to remain on schedule and you know how that can be. We can't afford to miss a beat to stay on the schedule we'd like to be on."

Animal Kingdom, who won the Derby by 2 3/4 lengths before finishing second by one-half length to Shackleford in the Preakness, has not started since finishing sixth in the Belmont Stakes on June 11. In that race, he got pinched back at the break, clipped heels with another horse and stumbled just a few strides into the race. He was later diagnosed with slab fracture in his left hind leg that required surgery.

Following his recuperation, Animal Kingdom spent a month jogging and a month galloping before returning to the work tab on

Dec. 24.

Motion said he plans to work both Animal Kingdom and Toby's Corner at Fair Hill next weekend before shipping them to Palm Meadows in Florida on Jan. 16.

"It's more about not fixing it if it ain't broken," Motion said when asked why he has elected to keep Animal Kingdom in the Northeast for so long. "He's doing well up here. When he goes down there it's going to be a different deal.

"As a trainer you want to keep everything as normal as you can for as long as you can. It won't be so normal when you get down there. I'm here at the moment. I can very much stay on top of it which is important at this stage."