

MICHAEL PHELPS, BOB BOWMAN HAVE DERBY PROSPECT IN CERRO SWIMMING LEGENDS ARE PART OF TEAM VALOR PARTNERSHIP THEIR 3-YEAR-OLD COLT SCORED BY 2 ½ LENGTHS AT GULFSTREAM TODAY

After re-writing the Olympic record books for swimming, Michael Phelps and his long-time coach may have the Kentucky Derby in their sights with a 3-year-old colt named Cerro who won a race at Gulfstream Park on Saturday for Team Valor International.



Phelps and Bob Bowman joined the Team Valor group that races Cerro after he finished third at Gulfstream in Hallandale Beach, Florida, on January 1 for trainer Graham Motion. Team Valor and Motion won the Derby two years ago with Animal Kingdom.

Bowman and Phelps were both traveling when Cerro scored by 2 ½ lengths (left) in a \$54,500 allowance race on the dirt this afternoon.

“Neither one of us got to see the race, but we are really excited to be part of Cerro’s partnership and see what he can do as he moves along this spring,” Bowman said.

Cerro is scheduled to race one more time at Gulfstream on March 3 in the Grade 3 Palm Beach Stakes and then move on to Kentucky for the Grade 3 Spiral Stakes at Turfway Park on March 23. Team Valor and Motion swept the Spiral in 2011 with Animal Kingdom and in 2012 with Went the Day Well, who finished a troubled fourth in the Derby.

Phelps has been eager to get involved in horse racing since he retired from competitive swimming after the 2012 Summer Olympics. Bowman bred and raced Thoroughbreds in the past and introduced Phelps to the intricacies of the sport. They have visited Motion’s base at Fair Hill Training Center in Elkton, Maryland.

Phelps grew up watching the Preakness Stakes, the Triple Crown event in his hometown, Baltimore. Bowman and Phelps attended the Kentucky Derby together in 2009 and were at Pimlico Race Course when Animal Kingdom finished second in the 2011 Preakness. Bowman knows his way around the racetrack—he maintained a small roster of Thoroughbreds in Maryland from 2001 to 2010, winning the \$100,000 Dancing County Stakes in 2008 at Laurel Park.

“I’ve always loved racing and I got out because it just got to be a little much with the coaching, but now that Michael has retired and we’re on a little more flexible schedule, we both wanted to have fun with it,” Bowman said. “I think he’s always seen how much fun I’ve had with it and wanted to get involved, and this is a great opportunity for us to do it.”

Barry Irwin’s Team Valor International syndicates each horse among a group of partners, varying from a handful of members to as many as 20, which is the size of the Animal Kingdom syndicate. Team Valor has 40 racehorses in the United States and another 25 in Europe, South Africa and Australia. Irwin discovered Cerro in Italy, where he won his career debut on turf last spring. He raced on turf in his first two starts in the U.S. and improved when he switched to dirt this month.