

‘She Saw The Daylight And Just Ran Off’: Wakanaka Dispatches Rivals In Early Stretch, Rolls Home In Dance Smartly



Wakanaka and Rafael Hernandez win the Dance Smartly at Woodbine

Irish-bred **Wakanaka**, trained by Bill Mott, looked right at home on the E.P. Taylor Turf Course, taking all the spoils in the \$204,400 Dance Smartly Stakes (G2) Sunday at Woodbine.

It was another Irish-bred, Fev Rover, who zipped up the rail to seize control of the 11/16-mile race for fillies and mares as Inthewinnerscircle was settled into second, one length off the leader through an opening quarter mile in :23.65 over firm going. Seasons was positioned in third, a head in front of Wakanaka.

Fev Rover was a half-length on top after a half in :47.19, followed by Inthewinnerscircle, Seasons, Wakanaka, Munnyfor Ro, and Youens (Keyflower and Lady Speightspeare were scratched.).

In front by just a head after six furlongs in 1:10.26, Fev Rover braced for the challenge of a surging Wakanaka, who was making up ground quickly to her outside.

One length clear at the stretch call, Wakanaka, making her first appearance at Woodbine, went on to record a 1 ³/₄-length victory in a time of 1:39.46.

Fev Rover finished second, a head in front of Munnyfor Ro. Seasons was fourth. A claim of foul by Patrick Husbands, the rider of Fev Rover, was disallowed.

Wakanaka, who was bred by Mrs. Jean Brennan, returned \$4.60.

“Keeping her forward and turning for home, she saw the daylight and just ran off,” said winning rider Rafael Hernandez, one race after capturing the Woodbine Oaks with Moira. “She just looked a little bit at the grandstand. We've got a long stretch here and when horses come here new, they like to look at the grandstand too much. I just try to keep their attention on the race.”

With the win, Wakanaka, owned by **Team Valor International and Gary Barber**, improved her record to 7-4-1 from 13 starts that also includes a victory in the 2021 Premio Regina Elena (Italian One Thousand Guineas) (G1) and three consecutive graded stakes-placings in the United States this year. The 4-year-old daughter of Power out of Storyline, by Kodiak, entered the Dance Smartly off a runner-up finish in the Longines Just a Game (G1) June 11 at Belmont Park.

The Dance Smartly is the first race of the lucrative Ladies of the Lawn Series, which also includes the Canadian Stakes (G2) (\$200,000) Sunday, August 21, and the E.P. Taylor Stakes (G1) (\$750,000) Saturday, October 8.

Launched in 2019, this year's series offers a \$250,000 bonus to the owner of the horse that wins all three races in the series. If a horse doesn't sweep the series, a \$50,000 bonus will be presented to the connections of the horse that accumulates the most points throughout the trio of races.