

**GAIUS ROARS HOME ON TOP TO SNARE FRENCH HANDICAP AT CHANTILLY
BARRY IRWIN HOMEBRED WINS SECOND RACE IN 4 STARTS FOR PARTNERS
TRAINER FRANCIS GRAFFARD CAPS DAY WITH ROYAL ASCOT GROUP 1 WIN**



[Gaius carved out a short lead in the final sixteenth of a mile and clung to it readily to score today at Chantilly.](#)

When trainer Francis Graffard learned Barry Irwin and Team Valor partners' homebred 3yo Gaius had received a low Official Rating of 70, he excitedly texted Irwin to say "He was treated kindly in the weights. This is fantastic. This means he can win some races. I like to win races, so this is great news."

The young trainer, a graduate of the Flying Start program just like Jessica Berry, at first thought about sending the gelding to the Alps for soft touch at remote Aix Les Bains, but the Leroidesanimaux soph advertised himself so well in the interim he switched plans and kept him locally for a tilt today at nearby Chantilly. Graffard trains right down the road in Lamorlaye, an adjacent community.

Dismissed at 13 to 1, Gaius showed just like he did in his last start that he is no longer a dead head, sloppy youngster. He has some gas and he wants to use it to a certain extent from the get go. He broke running today. This time, instead of the rider trying to guzzle him into submission, his rider Ronan Thomas let him place himself in the front four, where he raced perfectly positioned for most of the race. The TVI colorbearer had an uneventful trip until rivals jockey began to strategically position their horses for the run into the straight. Chantilly is not a wide-turned, gracious course like Longchamp, as the turns are a little tighter and a lot of maneuvering takes place before riders reach the final stretch.



(L to R) Edward and Denise Barker, Jonathan and Jody Hensley. They reside in Seattle, WA and are long-time racehorse owners.

Gaius found himself displaced in midstretch and behind a wall of horses with no opening in sight. When the scrum to find room began to take place in earnest, Thomas bravely saw the beginnings of a seam, urged Gaius to show some guts by going in there and then pushed him hard to exploit the opportunity. [VIDEO](#)

Showing a lot of courage, Gaius used quite a bit of energy just to get into the hole. Then, under hard urging, he moved on through the opening. Finally, with the jockey riding for all he was worth, Gaius began to really bear down and edge away. Every time the rider asked for more, the generous Gaius gave it to him.

Gaius scored by a long neck, which should serve to keep his Official Rating comparatively low and ensure he has another chance to score at or around this level. For winning the 10-furlong handicap, Gaius earned about \$13,000 plus an additional \$6,500 for the French owner premium. B. Irwin earned an additional bonus as the breeder of the horse.

Irwin bought Upperville, the dam of Gaius, at Newmarket with an eye toward breeding her to Animal Kingdom, but he never repatriated her to America. However, he did the next best thing and bred her to her to AK's sire Leroidesanimaux in England on his lifetime breeding right and came up with the promising Gaius, which looks to have some more wins coming his way this season.

Jonathan Hensley, one of the partners along with his insurance company chairman Ed Barker, now has been to France three times to see TVI horses run and they have all won.

He was there last week to see Technician win along with Jessica Berry.

He and wife Jody have leased an apartment around the corner from Chantilly Racecourse and plan to spend a lot of time in France in the future.