

**PILLAR MOUNTAIN GETS TEAM VALOR OFF THE SCHNEID IN BELMONT WIN
ROSARIO LEAVES IT UNTIL VERY END TO GET UP IN TIME FOR PLETCHER
VICTORY ENDS SERIES OF TOO MANY SECOND-PLACE FINISHES TO COUNT**



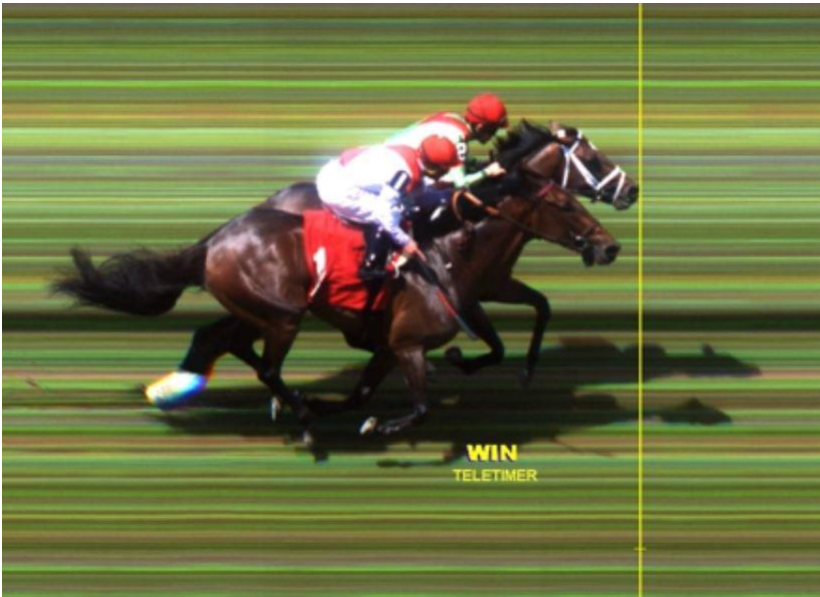
Pillar Mountain surged under a vigorous ride from Joel Rosario, who always rides extra hard for Team Valor.

Pillar Mountain, making his second outing off a layoff, showed a high degree of moxie in coming up a very tight opening along the rail while under severe pressure to score by a nose just now at Belmont Park for trainer Todd Pletcher.

Sent off as the 7 to 5 favorite off a big number last year at Saratoga and an excellent comeback third going shorter at Churchill Downs during the Kentucky Derby Festival.

Barry Irwin had described how crazy the Past Performances for the allowance race looked in his preview of the race in yesterday's Insiders' Bulletin and the race did not disappoint in terms of its strangeness. [RACE VIDEO](#)

As suggested in the preview, South American Crackspeed might set the pace. And did he ever! The import fairly ran off with his rider going :23 and :47 while completely blowing the first turn.



Pillar Mountain mostly raced fourth of the 5 runners as the Argentine speedster Crackspeed opened up more than a dozen lengths at one point and Pillar Mountain was so far back it would have taken a slide rule to calculate how far back he was. At one point he looked like he would need to make up at least 2 parsecs but would need a ride on the Millennium Falcon to do it. For sure he was 20-plus lengths in arrears down the backstretch.

When the leader calmly folded his tent and went bye-bye, the next pretender Kurlin Rock—whose form was unimpressive—was ready to assume command, but quickly he faltered as well.

He win easy. Hard to figure out why they even asked for a photo

The entire complexion of the race changed dramatically in the final furlong, when the Phipps Family's Hierarchy loomed a threat only to fade, leaving the race a battle between the new leader Graham Motion's He's No Lemon and Team Valor's Pillar Mountain.

The Motion horse, ridden Javier Castellano, lead Pillar Mountain. As the TVI color-bearer made his move inside the leader, Castellano (hitting right handed) came over on Pillar Mountain and tightened things up along the inside.

Castellano spent more time eye-balling Pillar Mountain and Joel Rosario than riding his steed. Under an inspired ride by Rosario and a surging Pillar Mountain, the Pletcher colt caught and just nailed the Motion horse on the line.



"Your colt had the momentum and that's why he won," Pletcher told Irwin after the race on a transatlantic call. "He is nothing if not brave.

"Wait 'til you see the head on, because Javier tightened things up pretty dramatically. Joel told the outrider who picked him up that if he didn't win, he wanted to claim foul against Javier, it was that bad."

Pletcher said "This horse still has a future. And did you see that gallop out? Wow." He left the runner-up 5 lengths behind in the gallop out. His 5³/₄ ThoroGraph equaled his topper last season at Saratoga.

The win was number 17 this season for Team Valor, which also has a whopping 16 seconds, a bunch in black-type races, including a few lately.