

March 24, 2012

WENT THE DAY WELL RESPONDS VERY WELL IN SPIRAL STAKES TEST ENGLISH IMPORT GRABS KENTUCKY DERBY SPOT WITH DECISIVE G3 WIN DÉJÀ VU AS TEAM VALOR, GRAHAM MOTION REPEAT IN TURFWAY'S PREP

The day went very well for Team Valor International on March 24 as Went the Day Well emulated Animal Kingdom in running away with the Grade 3 Spiral Stakes at Turfway Park and punching a ticket to the Kentucky Derby.



Barry Irwin bought a majority interest of Went the Day Well as a Kentucky Derby prospect for Team Valor after watching him finish second on turf in his debut.

The scene was eerily familiar, from the same yellow number 4 saddle towel that Animal Kingdom carried last year in his first stakes test on the way to glory in the Run for the Roses, to the stretch punctuation that revealed a very promising candidate for the spring classics.

Went the Day Well hardly snuck up on anyone, as the natural comparisons with Animal Kingdom were rampant in the week before the Spiral. That may not have been entirely fair to the younger colt, but no one in the Team Valor camp was surprised to see the strapping son of Proud Citizen power away in the Spiral in his first real chance to live up to the abundant talent Barry Irwin could see in England last September.

Irwin identified Went the Day Well as a Kentucky Derby prospect after a single start on grass at Haydock Park where he made a huge rally to just miss winning a deep maiden race in a field of 14. Upon inspecting Went the Day Well in person at the end of September, Irwin was so impressed that he not only bought and syndicated the colt within a few hours for Team Valor, he also purchased the horse's dam for his own broodmare band.

By Tiznow out of Sweet Roberta (a Grade 3 winner and runner-up in the G1 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies), Tiz Maie's Day produced Went the Day Well as her first foal. She is in foal to G1 King's Bishop Stakes hero Discreetly Mine and is booked back to Proud Citizen. She is due to foal any moment.

A year after capturing the Kentucky Derby with a home-bred, Team Valor is blessed with a strong quartet of 3-year-old colts that also includes Graded stakes winners State of Play and Howe Great and stakes winner Lucky Chappy, who will compete in the \$2-million UAE Derby in Dubai on March 31 after finishing second by a short nose in the Grade 3 El Camino Real Derby at Golden Gate Fields. But Irwin always considered Went the Day Well to be the stable's best prospect for the task of going a mile and a quarter on dirt in the Kentucky Derby.

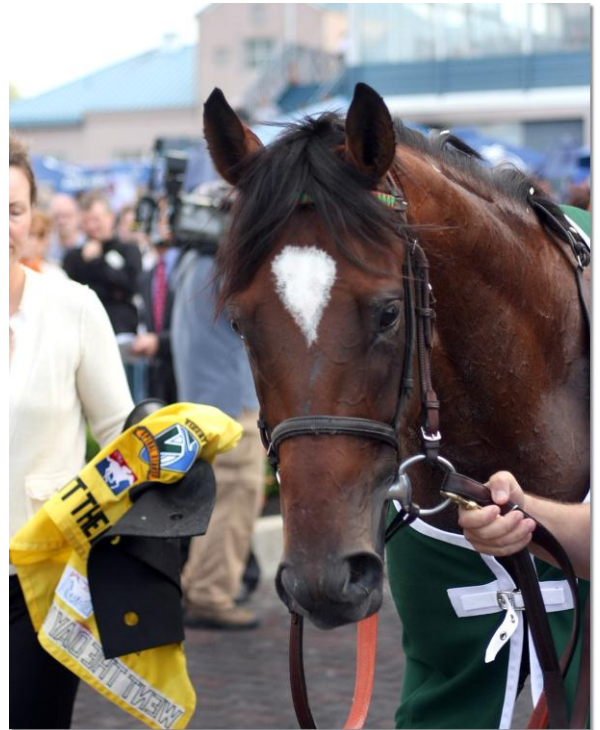
That impression only heightened his frustration when Went the Day Well had to spend an extra week in quarantine in Miami in mid-November because of a testing snafu. The idle time cost the colt some valuable conditioning and delayed his transition to trainer Graham Motion's program in South Florida.

Went the Day Well adjusted well with a good rally in his American debut on February 3 at Gulfstream Park that Irwin and Motion thought enough of that they considered running him as a maiden in the Grade 3 Gotham Stakes at Aqueduct. When the field came up huge for Aqueduct's inner track, they opted for another maiden special weight the same day at Gulfstream, and Went the Day Well came through with a sharp victory.

Even though State of Play captured Turfway's Spiral prep, the John Battaglia Memorial Stakes, Irwin turned to Went the Day Well with confidence that he would be ready to step up and put himself in line for the Derby.

"The difference this year is that with Animal Kingdom, we were a little surprised how impressive he was in the Spiral," Irwin said. "I expected Went the Day Well to be able to be able to handle this. This horse is unbelievable. He gives me so much confidence."

Count jockey John Velazquez as a believer after Went the Day Well surged to a 3 ½-length triumph as the 5-to-1 third choice. It was the largest winning margin in Turfway's premier race since 2001, even though the 2-time champion jockey had to nudge the colt at the top of the lane to switch to his right lead and then worked to keep his attention as they drew away.



Went the Day Well carried the same yellow number 4 saddle towel as Animal Kingdom, who prevailed in the 2011 Spiral in his stakes debut.

Fearsome foursome		
<i>Team Valor's top 3-year-olds in 2012</i>		
Howe Great	1st	Kitten's Joy S.
	1st	G3 Palm Beach S.
Lucky Chappy	2nd	Kitten's Joy S.
	2nd (nose)	G3 El Camino Real
State of Play	1st	Battaglia Memorial
Went the Day Well	1st	Maiden race
	1st	G3 Spiral S.

"He got a good position going into the first turn, and I took advantage of that -- saved all the ground and pulled him out at the quarter pole," said Velazquez, who rode Animal Kingdom for the first time in the Derby and is now 7 for 11 with Team Valor runners in 2012. "When he got to the lead, he started waiting and lugging in, and then he just went on. He still doesn't know very much. You can tell, as soon as he pulled out at the quarter pole and he found himself on the lead, he didn't know what to do. I think this horse will go all day."

The winning time, 1:51.33, was the third-slowest in the history of the Spiral, but a full second faster than Animal Kingdom in his 2 ¾-length victory last year as a prelude to his clear score under the famed Twin Spires at Churchill Downs.

And the slowest Spiral winner? Lil E. Tee, who also followed up with a Derby victory in 1993. Team Valor will be hoping for the next 6 weeks that this unusual progression continues.

NBC Sports video of Spiral can be viewed [here](#) and an interview with Barry Irwin [here](#).

From Alicia Wincze-Hughes of the Lexington *Herald-Leader* comes the following:

Went the Day Well convincing in Spiral win

There is still so much for Went the Day Well to accomplish before he can be mentioned in the same breath as his stablemate Animal Kingdom, a fact that is certainly not lost on his connections.

But if trainer Graham Motion thought the comparisons were coming quickly before Saturday's running of the Grade III Vinery Racing Spiral Stakes, he and owner Team Valor now know they're going to spend a good chunk of the next six weeks comparing the lightly raced son of Proud Citizen to the 2011 Kentucky Derby winner.



Went the Day Well will train at Keeneland and possibly make one more start there before the Derby.

Racing fans who missed last year's edition of the \$500,000 Spiral saw a near replay on Saturday when Went the Day Well put Team Valor's colors in the winner's circle for a second straight season by taking the 1 1/8-mile test by 31/2 lengths at Turfway Park.

To say the Spiral has been good to Team Valor and Motion would be an understatement. Last year, their then-unproven colt Animal Kingdom earned his first graded-stakes win when he captured the Spiral and went on to claim the roses en route to being named 3-year-old champion male.

Went the Day Well now has the same trainer, owner, jockey (John Velazquez), and prep-race win as his predecessor's. For what it's worth, there is ample confidence the bay colt can finish out the equation should he make it to the Churchill Downs starting gate on May 5.

"I'm totally confident in this horse," said Barry Irwin, founder and CEO of Team Valor, which owns Went the Day Well along with Mark Ford. "I told everybody that asked me today, of the four horses we've got, the four 3-year-olds ... I said I would take this horse over all the other ones. This one is the best."

One thing Went the Day Well already has over Animal Kingdom at this point is a win on dirt.

Purchased privately by Team Valor after making his first two career starts in England, Went the Day Well spent 10 extra days in quarantine than originally planned and was not able to make his stateside debut until running fourth in a maiden race at Gulfstream on Feb. 4.

While his maturity is still a work in progress, Went the Day Well showed how much raw talent he had when he won next time out on March 3 by 11/4 lengths on the main track at Gulfstream.

"I hate to get into comparing because they're such different horses, but I was very impressed with how he ran today," Motion said via cellphone Saturday. "I said earlier this week I thought this horse was a little more ahead (than Animal Kingdom), and I didn't necessarily mean that in terms of ability. I meant by what he has done in the mornings. He understands more about what he is doing."

Sent off at 5-1 odds, Went the Day Well settled between horses in fourth and then fifth in the Spiral as 2-1 favorite Heavy Breathing covered the opening half in :46.98 with Ill Conceived sitting just off his neck.

Heavy Breathing, trained by Todd Pletcher, started to get weary around the final turn, and Went the Day Well advanced three-wide with eventual runner-up Holiday Promise to his outside and managed to take a short lead at the head of the lane despite his resistance to switch leads.



John Velazquez suggested that Went the Day Well is still developing with experience.

Even showing some greenness in the lane, Went the Day Well hit the wire in 1:51.33 over the Polytrack.

"He still doesn't know very much. You can tell as soon as he pulled out at the quarter pole and found himself on the lead, he didn't know what to do," said Velazquez, who piloted Animal Kingdom to his Kentucky Derby win last year. "I just encouraged him to keep going forward. I think this horse will go all day."

Holiday Promise, sent off at 25-1, finished gamely to get second in his stakes debut, one length clear of his stablemate, Heavy Breathing, who held for third over Handsome Mike.

Pletcher said he and WinStar Farm President Elliott Walden are discussing shipping Holiday Promise to Keeneland for a possible run in the Blue Grass Stakes on April 14.

Irwin has already said Went the Day Well is bound for the Kentucky Derby, but he added Saturday that the colt could make one more start — possibly in the Grade III Coolmore Lexington Stakes at Keeneland on April 21 — to get more seasoning for the horse.

"He wants to run a mile and a quarter, that's for sure," Irwin said. "I think we might want to run him one more time just for the experience. He's a big, tough son-of-a-gun, and he can handle it."