

March 9, 2011

PLUCK BEGINS HIS CLASSIC CAMPAIGN SATURDAY AT TAMPA BAY DOWNS, BREEDERS' CUP HERO TO RUN A MILE ON GRASS IN AN ALLOWANCE RACE, SATURDAY'S RACE WILL SERVE AS PREP FOR A GRADE 3 AT KEENELAND

Pluck will begin his 3-year-old season on Saturday under modest circumstances in an allowance race with a \$27,000 purse at Tampa Bay Downs, passing on the \$150,000, Grade 3 Palm Beach Stakes the same afternoon at nearby Gulfstream Park. Post time for race number 7 is projected to be 3:20 p. m. Pluck has drawn the advantageous number 2 post position in a full field of 10 sophomores, with the most serious challenger on the rail.



Pluck finished his 2-year-old season in a rally, reeling off consecutive victories in the Grade 2 Summer Stakes going a mile on soft turf at Woodbine. He came back to win the \$1-million, Grade 2 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf in a performance that was voted in a *Thoroughbred Daily News* on-line poll as the most nightmarish trip for a winner in 2010.

The first major goal for Pluck, who is now owned in partnership by The Vinery after Team Valor International sold a substantial interest last season, is the May 15 French Two Thousand Guineas equivalent. Motion has designated two prep races: tomorrow's Tampa allowance followed by the Grade 3 Transylvania Stakes on April 8, which is opening day at Keeneland.

"I am sure that this will look funny to some people," Motion said. "Here we are, the favorite for a Grade 3 at Gulfstream, running instead in a lowly allowance race at Tampa, but I think this is the right race for Pluck to start off in.

"He should prefer the more lush Tampa turf over the harder surface at Gulfstream Park and he definitely will enjoy the mile rather than the mile and an eighth. I think he is ready to run well. Animal Kingdom, the colt he's been working well with, ran a cracker first time out for us at Gulfstream, so I feel that Pluck should be fit enough for a mile race."



The one to beat this weekend is Lil Bit O' Fun, a Langfuhr gelding that has 2 wins in 6 starts, including earning a 13 on the Ragozin Sheets when breaking his maiden at Churchill Downs in the fall. In a pair of subsequent starts at 3, he ran off and stopped badly as the 8 to 5 choice for the Dania Beach Stakes at Gulfstream Park and returned in a spot identical to tomorrow's race when he came from off the pace to finish strongly for third beaten a length with an 11 Ragozin topper.

Pluck paired up 11s on The Sheets when third in the Continental Mile and winning the Summer, then spiked an 8 ½ in his troubled but successful victory in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf.

New trainer Graham Motion