

March 9, 2014

MEXIKOMA RETURNED TO TRAINING TODAY AFTER MISSING TWO WEEKS BIRDSTONE COLT CONTRACTED RESPIRATORY INFECTION AFTER 3YO BOW RICK METTEE PLAYING CATCH UP WITH TEAM VALOR'S CLASSICS HOPEFUL



Mexikoma appeared on a lot of Kentucky Derby lists after closing stoutly for third, racing against a speed bias at Gulfstream Park in his 3-year-old debut on February 22, but a lung infection cost him 15 days of downtime as he battled back from sickness.

The medium-sized Birdstone colt returned to the track this Sunday morning, after walking in the shedrow for the past few days at Palm Meadows. The colt simply jogged around the oval of the racing center near Boynton Beach, Florida.

Now his trainer Rick Mettee will be playing catch up to get the colt back on the Kentucky Derby trail as the serious preps for the Classics are contested in earnest over the next several weekends.

Barry Irwin, managing member of the Team Valor International LLC that campaigns the bay colt, said “Both Rick (Mettee) and Dr. Luis Castro, our vet, have been very patient with the colt’s recovery and probably gave him 4 or 5 days more time than usual for as minor a problem as he had. But they wanted to prevent any relapse. His blood has been normal for a week and he never coughed.

“While I had difficulty living through 15 days of inactivity with the colt, my anxiety over him missing his best chance to make the Kentucky Derby was assuaged knowing the colt’s light frame and medium size would make it a lot easier for him to regain fitness and racing sharpness than a tall, heavily muscled colt.”

Mexikoma is slated to breeze a half-mile on March 22 and work five-eighths on March 28 or 29. Rick Mettee will then determine whether the colt is ready to run on the weekend of April 5 or whether he needs another work and should run on the weekend of April 12.



“Until he has breezed a couple of times, we won’t know how badly his illness and downtime has impacted him,” Mettee said. “We just have to play it by ear.”

Mexikoma broke his maiden second time out last summer by more than 14 lengths at Delaware Park and finished a fast-closing sixth beaten less than 4 lengths in the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile. In his debut at 3, he was last down the backstretch going 1 1/16 miles on a speed-favoring Gulfstream Park oval in a loaded allowance race featuring Constitution and Tonalist and finished fastest for third, turning a lot of heads in the process.

Irwin said “Rick and I have considered Mexikoma to be a better prospect for the Belmont than the Derby all along, but neither of us want to deny him a chance to make the Derby if he comes up to it the right way and qualifies. We won’t have to wait long to find out where we stand now.”