

MEXIKOMA PULLED FROM DERBY HUNT, POINTED TO BELMONT STAKES COLT IS JUST NOT FULLY RECOVERED FROM HIS RECENT ILLNESS TEAM VALOR, RICK METTEE ARE NOT GOING TO PUSH PROMISING 3YO

Team Valor International has pulled the plug on preparing Mexikoma for a Kentucky Derby prep race and will focus instead on the final leg of the Triple Crown, the Belmont Stakes on June 7.



The colt came down with a lung infection shortly after a comeback allowance race at Gulfstream Park on February 22, in which he rallied well on a speed carrying surface to finish third. He missed 10 days of training, recovered nicely, and resumed a normal schedule, but Team Valor CEO Barry Irwin decided to re-focus after inspecting the colt this morning.

“Mexikoma is sound,” he said. “Soundness is not the issue. The problem with making a Derby prep is that the infection he battled has left his constitution in a depleted state. Looking at him just

now, I see that his coat has improved 100 percent in just 10 days and gleams with a healthy glow. But standing behind him, I see that the muscle tone he lost during his 15 days of stall confinement has not fully returned.

“In a nutshell, the colt’s constitution suffered and has not fully recovered enough for our team of trainer Rick Mettee, exercise rider Shav Aizpuru, Megan Jones and me to send the colt out for a breeze this weekend with any sort of confidence that the move would not set him back.”

Irwin and Mettee decided on a game plan to prepare Mexikoma for the Grade 2 Peter Pan Stakes on May 10 as a lone prep for the mile-and-a-half Belmont Stakes.

Irwin said, “The time between the Peter Pan and Belmont Stakes is one month, which is good spacing. What I like about the Peter Pan is it gives the colt that all-important race over the track.”

Mexikoma is by Birdstone, who captured the 2004 Belmont over Smarty Jones, and was represented by a son, Summer Bird, who scored his first stakes win in the 2009 Belmont and went on to sweep the Travers Stakes and Jockey Club Gold Cup.