

May 30, 2011

## MOTOVATO SHOWS HIGH PLUCK IN WINNING MEMORIAL DAY HANDICAP SIX-YEAR-OLD REPULSES MAMBO MEISTER'S STRETCH-LONG CHALLENGE MARTY WOLFSON/BARRY EISAMAN COMBINE FOR A BRILLIANT COMEBACK



Motovato staved off a stretch-long bid from old nemesis Mambo Meister on the outside and youngster Jackson Bend on the rail to gut out a victory Monday in the \$75,000 Memorial Day Handicap at Calder.

(The race used to be a Grade 3 but lost its Graded status this season.)

Motovato completed an unlikely comeback, as he had been on the shelf for a year prior to returning earlier in the month to place in a sprint at Calder.

Marty Wolfson and Dr. Barry Eisaman combined to work their respective magic on the 6-year-old Calder veteran.

"This was one gritty display," Barry Irwin said of the horse Team Valor owns in partnership with Dave Munro of Canada

and Gary Barber of Southern California. "This horse is all heart. He has more metal than bone on one of his forelegs and has gone wrong on it from time to time, but when he comes back and is feeling fine, he is one classy individual.

"Dr. Eisaman received a horse that was down for the count. Marty had given up on him. Dr. Eisaman was not sure the horse would make it back this time. But he patiently worked on him. When I visited him in January and saw him trying to buck in a gallop, I knew we would be in business again."

In the Memorial Day Handicap, Luis Saez gave the Team Valor colorbearer a near perfect ride. He settled the son of Proud Citizen in second early and had Mambo Meister breathing down his neck on the outside virtually from the end of the initial quarter until deep stretch. Jackson Bend saved ground with an inside trip.

When Motovato neared the end of the backstretch, Saez had him going sweetly and nudged his mount to take command entering the lane. Motovato spurted clear, Mambo Meister tried to come back at him and Jackson Bend rallied along the rail. But Motovato had too much class to allow them to get too close. He won by 1 length going a mile and 70 yards over a very sluggish, tiring track.

The \$45,000 winning purse swelled the horse's earnings past the \$375,000 mark and was his sixth victory at Calder, where he has never finished worse than second.

"I hope we can find a place to stand him next year," said Irwin, "because I would breed mares to him. He is gorgeous, all man, with a heart as big as his body. You gotta love a horse that tries like him."

Marty Wolfson plans to ship the Kentucky-bred Graded stakes winner to Monmouth Park and shoot for the Grade 3 Salvator Mile, a \$200,000 feature around 2 turns on dirt.

Motovato earned a flashy 4 ¼ Ragozin Sheet figure, indicating he has returned at a very high level.