

PLUCK OVERCOMES TROUBLE TO NOTCH THE GRADE 3 SUMMER STAKES, HOME-BRED COLT GETS “WIN AND YOU’RE IN” BERTH TO BREEDERS’ CUP, MORE THAN READY COLT BROKE IN AIR, STEADED ON TURN, CAME WIDE, TEN NEWCOMERS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF SPECIAL INSTALLMENT BUY IN



Team Valor International’s Pluck, sent postward as the 5 to 2 favorite, relished the cut in the ground today on a somewhat softened turf course at Woodbine and drew away smartly from half a dozen other 2-year-old to win the \$243,176 Summer Stakes.

Victory in the Grade 3 fixture, a “Win and You’re In” Breeders’ Cup qualifying event, earned the black-bodied colt an automatic starting berth in the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile Turf, a \$1-million race to be run November 6 at Churchill Downs going a mile and a sixteenth. Trainer Todd Pletcher was winning the Summer Stakes for a third time.

In 3 outings this season at 2, Pluck finished a distant third sprinting on a muddy track in his debut, scored handsomely when racing like an inexperienced colt in winning a grass sprint at Belmont Park and finished in a dead-heat for second in the \$100,000 Continental Mile at Monmouth, only to be disqualified for interference in the stretch, the result of reacting greenly to right-handed sticking.

When Pluck broke in the air at the break of the one-mile Summer Stakes run around one turn on the E. P. Taylor Turf Course, the colt’s owners could be forgiven if they collectively gulped, as the colt raced last down the backstretch.

Jockey Garrett Gomez never panicked, even when he was boxed in from the seven-eighths to the three-eighths pole. The Eclipse Award-winning rider had a chance to split horses once in the long homestretch, but he opted to keep his colt collected and moved him outside when he gauged that the timing was optimal.

Once shown daylight, Pluck exploded to easily catch and run past his field. Gomez did not rely on his whip to encourage the colt, he used a swinging motion with his arms and twirled the reins. The rider tapped the colt once and he went on about his business to score by a length. “I never got close to the bottom of him,” Gomez told one of the Team Valor racing partners.



The Kentucky-bred has a record of 4-2-0-1 and earnings of more than \$183,000. He was winning the 10th stakes race for a Team Valor International partnership in 2010.

Pluck’s win was especially sweet for both the majority of the partners in the colt, because they raced his dam and bred the son of More Than Ready. Secret Heart, dam of Pluck, was prospected in South Africa by Team Valor. The stakes winner had been Grade 1 placed several times and showed talent in a handful of North American starts.

But it also was special for ten newcomers to the racing stable, because they took advantage of a special offer from Team Valor to acquire interests in the colt on an installment plan basis. To see the original offer click this [Link](#). Barry Irwin said “A year earlier, we had first offered another homebred named Sailor’s Cap on a similar basis, where newcomers were allowed to buy in at a reasonable figure and make installment payments. My idea with newcomers is to sell them the best possible horse to get them started right.



“We loved Sailor’s Cap from the word go and he didn’t let us down, winning the \$600,000 Turf Cup at Colonial Downs at 3. I chose Pluck as the home-bred of choice from our yearlings last December. I made 40 percent of the colt available and we sold interests to ten newcomers who mostly responded to a new item on the Team Valor website. Four of them attended the Summer Stakes and now, with their first Team Valor horse, they are going to the Breeders’ Cup.”

Irwin explained that Team Valor deals not just in horses that have run and shown promise, but in home-breds. This season has been particularly ripe for home-bred runners, as just a week ago another Kentucky-bred colt, the French based 3-year-old Brigantin, scored a convincing victory in the Group 3 Prix de Lutece at Longchamp.

“Our normal modus operandi is to buy fillies, race them, breed them and sell them at public auction,” said Barry Irwin, who prospected Secret Heart in his first batch of racing fillies from South Africa. “This one I wanted to keep. She was different. She was a whole package: she had Grade 1 racing class; she was a Grade 1 horse at 2 and 3; she had size, standing about 16 hands 3 inches; she had unbelievable scope; her sire Fort Wood was brilliantly bred, could run and has been a leading sire; and her family was perhaps the best ever developed in South Africa. I thought she was capable of producing a Classic type of animal, so I bought out some of the partners and we have held her.”

Irwin further stated that the current crop of Team Valor home-breds--comprised of foals bred by Irwin himself, Team Valor International or Team Valor in partnership—includes some exceptional ones as well. “Because we have 4 really promising home-breds,” he pointed out, “we decided early that we would not be major buyers at the yearling sales in 2010, instead offering to newcomers and regular racing partners substantial interests in some selected home-bred yearlings.

“This week we offered a yearling half-sister to our 2010 Graded winner Miss Singhsix and at Keeneland we bought out a partner in a promising colt by Mr. Greeley that we will offer to newcomers and regular partners next week. “We will follow this up every couple of weeks until we have offered the cream of our home-bred crop. Between myself, Team Valor and Team Valor partnerships, we have at least 30 mares covered every year.”



Pluck poses with group of 4 Team Valor newcomers after taking Grade 3 Summer S.