

FIRST CORNERSTONE DEFINITE FOR SEPTEMBER 30 BERESFORD STAKES TRAINER ANDREW OLIVER ELECTS TO WAIT, RUN 2YO COLT OVER A MILE BARRY IRWIN PLANS TO BE ON HAND FOR GROUP 2 TEST AT THE CURRAGH



As Andrew Oliver has convinced Barry Irwin to conclude First Cornerstone's juvenile campaign with the October 27 renewal of the Group 1 Racing Post Trophy over a mile, he has chosen the September 30 running of the Group 2 Beresford Stakes going a mile instead of the 7-furlong National Stakes this weekend.

"First Cornerstone is a Miler," Oliver said. "And, such, is always going to be vulnerable to a top-class colt with more speed than him over 7 furlongs. With the ground expected to ride on the good side on Saturday, I am reluctant to race him in the National Stakes, especially as we would have to paid a supplementary fee of 20,000 euro for the privilege.

"I'd much rather take the conservative move, wait a couple of weeks, and run back over a mile. Besides, the timing between the Beresford and the Racing Post Trophy is better this way."

Barry Irwin never wanted to bring the colt back in 3 weeks after his hard run in the Group 2 Futurity, so he was not unduly upset with the decision. Yet, as Irwin is very competitive, he still suffered pangs of displeasure all day long after the decision had been made, because he would like to win a Group 1 with the colt. "I definitely had mixed emotion," said Irwin. "But I bit the bullet and agreed with the logic behind the decision. The colt should be spot on for the Beresford. It should be a good prep for him."



First Cornerstone proved a convincing winner of the Group 2 Futurity.

What impacted the decision was a bit of a nagging throat situation with the colt in which he develops build up of mucous from time to time. Also, the colt had a small line under the edge of the saddle where a bit of skin disease had been spotted after his win in the Group 2 Futurity.

"Neither one of these things would have stopped him from running in the National Stakes," said Irwin, "but they are telltale signs that he might not been quite at his very best, and to win a race like this, a horse must be in tip-top form."

Irwin plans to put Oliver, a vet himself, in touch with Team Valor International's respiratory specialist Dr. Rob Holland, so that the throat issue can be cleared up once and for all. The week the colt was vetted and won the Futurity, he had a similar condition. So Irwin wants to get to the bottom of it now and get it resolved. Irwin plans to visit the colt and inspect Oliver's stable on September 29, a day prior to the Beresford.