

ANIMAL KINGDOM'S 1ST AMERICAN RUNNER DRAWS OFF AT KEENELAND NINE-LENGTH ROMP GETS DERBY AND DUBAI HERO OFF THE MARK IN U.S. SHUTTLE STALLION ALREADY AMONG FRESHMAN LEADERS IN AUSTRALIA



Animal Kingdom's first runner in America and first anywhere on dirt drew off to win by 9 lengths today at Keeneland in a 4 ½-furlong maiden race. Sunny Skies, a homebred filly for Normandy Farm and trainer Ken McPeek, prevailed as the 3-to-5 favorite off a series of sharp gate works.

The Kentucky Derby and Dubai World Cup hero already had three winners from 11 individual starters in Australia, where he began his stud career in September 2013 at Arrowfield Stud. He shuttled to Darley's Jonabell Farm for his first Northern Hemisphere season in early 2014.

Sunny Skies sailed to victory as the first Northern Hemisphere runner for Animal Kingdom, who has three winners in Australia and missed getting a fourth April 26 when Table Mountain was edged by a nose at Wyong.

Team Valor CEO Barry Irwin was on hand to watch the maiden U.S. runner and

congratulated McPeek in the winner's circle. Team Valor owns Animal Kingdom in partnership with Arrowfield and Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum's Darley.

"I never pressed this filly," McPeek told Irwin and said the following a few minutes later in an interview on TVG: "Animal Kingdom was a great horse and obviously now a very good stallion, off to a good start. This is a really sweet filly with a lot of class."

Team Valor has nine Animal Kingdom juveniles—three colts and six fillies—waiting in the wings.

Animal Kingdom broke his own maiden at Keeneland as a 2-year-old in 2010. His jockey that day was Robby Albarado, who also was originally named to ride Sunny Skies, but in the interim went to the sidelines with a leg fracture from a race spill. Corey Lanerie stepped in for the mount on Sunny Skies.



Animal Kingdom broke his maiden at Keeneland as a 2-year-old in 2010 under Robby Albarado, who unfortunately had to miss the mount on Sunny Skies due to injury.