

BELVOIR BAY EMERGES AS AN INSTANT STAR IN THE BLUE NORther STAKES JUVENILE FILLY EXPLODES TO SCORE ON SANTA ANITA SOD BY 7½ LENGTHS ENGLISH IMPORT REGISTERS FLASHY “7” RAGOZIN & “90” BEYER NUMBERS



Longtime racing partners Team Valor International and Gary Barber saw their English 2-year-old filly Belvoir Bay burst to the fore of her division with panache on Sunday at Santa Anita.

Jockey Flavien Prat, returning from a severe back injury, did a masterful job settling the speedy import and cleverly made an early move curving off the final bend to open a clear advantage and simply steered the bay filly down the lane, as she widened her advantage to score by 7½ lengths in the \$75,000-added Blue Norther Stakes.

Prat told Gary Barber after the race that he thinks the filly would run even better in the future if she was allowed to have her head and set her own pace.

Running a mile in the good time of 1:36 over a completely refurbished course that officially was labeled “firm” but playing considerably softer, Belvoir Bay earned a 7 on the Ragozin Sheets and a 90 Beyer, both of which are outstanding speed figures for a juvenile filly.

Belvoir Bay, a daughter of the English sprinter Equiano out of a Rock of Gibraltar mare, has won twice from 5 starts in England, flopped in her U. S. debut when she failed to settle in a stakes in New York and improved her record in 7 starts to 3 wins and 2 places.

Peter Miller was saddling the powerfully built filly for the first time in competition, after breezing her a few times at his San Luis Rey Downs base and once over a muddy strip at Santa Anita a few days before the race with Prat aboard.

Prat was selected to ride, even though it was understood that he possibly could be rusty following his enforced hiatus from riding, because he was a European rider with soft hands.

Barry Irwin, president of Team Valor, said “She responded as we hoped she would to a return to a rider that knows how to handle a European horse. That made all the difference in the world.”

No plans have as yet been formulated for the fleet filly, but Miller actually toyed with running her on the dirt instead of the turf race, following a fast finish in a dirt breeze at San Luis Rey.



Irwin said "Her first two dams were sired by stallions that have a history of siring good winners on the dirt, so Gary and I will be open to this possibility in the future at some point."

Belvoir Bay ran a 7 on the Ragozin Sheets and a 90 Beyer speed figure, both of which are near the top of her division for a juvenile filly racing on the grass this season in North America.

When asked to compare the filly with any past Team Valor stars, Irwin did not hesitate in mentioning Summer Soiree, who won the Grade 1 Del Mar Oaks. "They have one thing in common," Irwin said. "They are both explosive, they are built like sprinters, but they can extend their speed."



Gary Barber (c), Barry Irwin and jockey Chris McCarron celebrate racing win.

Belvoir Bay follows Grade 2 Monmouth Stakes winner Triple Threat as the second stakes winner of 2015 raced by Barber and Irwin in partnership. The duo also raced Grade 3 Grey Stakes runner-up Kasseopia, which is expected to hit the Triple Crown trail next season with Graham Motion in Florida.

The Irwin/Barber juggernaut commenced in 2000 when English import The Deputy won the Grade 1 Santa Anita Derby.

Internationally their Champions include Becrux (Italy) Sweet Stream (England), Carnadore (South Africa) and Russian Sage (South Africa). Other Grade 1 winners campaigned by the duo include Goodwood Stakes winner Gitano Hernando and Santa Oaks winner Golden Ballet.