

DAILY RACING FORM'S UNDER THE RADAR FOCUSES ON MEXIKOMA DAN ILLMAN: TVI COLT GAVE 'GOOD ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF' LAST WEEKEND

From Dan Illman in his "Under the Radar" column for *Daily Racing Form* comes the following:



While horses like Cairo Prince, Candy Boy, Honor Code, Shared Belief and Top Billing divvy up the headlines, talented 3-year-olds such as Mexikoma have fallen under the radar.

Sixth in last year's Breeders' Cup Juvenile while racing without Lasix in his first start against winners, Mexikoma gave a good account of himself in his seasonal debut last weekend at Gulfstream Park.

A closer breaking from the far outside post at 1 1/16 miles over a speed-favoring surface, Mexikoma faced plenty of obstacles. He started alertly, but was forced to take back to avoid being hung out to dry on the first turn. Mexikoma was outrun on the backstretch and raced ten lengths back entering the final curve. He began his bid with three furlongs left, split horses on the bend, eased widest turning for home and finished well in the short stretch to place third behind the very promising colts Constitution and Tonalist. According to Trakus, Mexikoma completed his final half-mile in 48.14, the quickest final four furlongs of any horse in the race.

Mexikoma breezed two furlongs in 21.1 at OBS last April prior to selling for \$55,000. Owned and trained by Michael Dilger for his first two starts of 2013, Mexikoma made his debut in a turf route at Saratoga. There is only a single two-turn race on dirt for juveniles during the Spa meeting and that may have been the reason why Dilger raced Mexikoma on grass. The colt needs distance and the only way he could have stretched his legs around a route of ground at Saratoga was on turf.

Mexikoma finished off the board that day after enduring some traffic trouble, but he put himself on the map in his next start, a one-mile maiden special weight on dirt at Delaware Park. Although he didn't face the strongest group that afternoon, he absolutely toyed with the opposition, drawing off to win by almost 15 lengths with a strong 88 Beyer. That race attracted the attention of Team Valor International and they purchased Mexikoma privately with an eye to the Breeders' Cup. Mexikoma was outrun in the early portion of the Juvenile, but came with a decent run to finish sixth, beaten 3 3/4 lengths by New Year's Day.

Mexikoma is by Birdstone, an extremely talented colt that won the Grade 1 Champagne traveling 1 1/16 miles at two, and also prevailed in both the Grade 1 Belmont Stakes at 1 1/2 miles and the Grade 1 Travers at 1 1/4 miles the following year. Birdstone has sired two classic winners from his first six crops as Mine That Bird and Summer Bird won the Kentucky Derby and Belmont Stakes, respectively, in 2009. Mexikoma's dam placed twice from three sprint starts. She is a half-sister to Doctor Dechard, a stakes-winner at one mile. Mexikoma's fourth dam is millionaire and twelve-time graded winner Sabin.

Distance shouldn't pose a problem for Mexikoma, but his one-run style puts him at the mercy of race and pace luck. Expect to see him soon in stakes action as he needs Kentucky Derby qualifying points.