

## THE ANIMAL KINGDOM STORY ‘READS LIKE A HOLLYWOOD SCRIPT’ *AMERICA’S BEST RACING* CATCHES UP WITH STAR BEFORE HIS SWAN SONG HOME-BRED HAS MADE THE MOST OF RARE SECOND AND THIRD CHANCES

From *America’s Best Racing* comes the following:

### Catching Up With Animal Kingdom

The story of Animal Kingdom reads like a Hollywood script, but even then it would be hard to believe.

The colt entered the Kentucky Derby after a win in the Spiral Stakes, a race run over an all-weather surface. In fact, the Kentucky Derby was his first race on dirt. Trainer Graham Motion and owner Team Valor International were coming in to the race looking to make history if they won with a horse that, it’s safe to say, wasn’t taking a conventional path to the Derby.

But Animal Kingdom laughed in the face of Derby convention. He pounced on the leaders late in the race and bounded away to win by 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  lengths. The Derby win was the first for all of the horse’s connections with jockey John Velazquez getting his first win in the race after picking up the mount the day before.

“I like to try to make history if I can, and we made a lot of history today,” said Barry Irwin, Team Valor’s co-founder and CEO. “This is the first horse that came to win this race with only four previous races since Exterminator in 1918, the first horse to win after a six-week layoff since Needles in 1956, so that means a lot to me.”



*Animal Kingdom schmoozing with Katherine (left) and Cindy Dillon at Palm Meadows.*

Animal Kingdom headed to Pimlico with bettors giving him more credit in the second leg of the series. Improving from odds of 20.90-to-1 in the Derby to Preakness favorite odds of 2.30-to-1, Animal Kingdom looked to be a tough contender in the Preakness.

But after racing in the near-last position for almost the entire race, Animal Kingdom’s late surge wasn’t enough to catch front-running Shackleford. He finished a half-length behind the winner.

Following the Preakness defeat, Animal Kingdom continued on to the Belmont Stakes with a good chance of winning. But what happened next was something straight out of a nightmare.

Animal Kingdom was pinched between two horses out of the gate and stumbled after clipping heels. Velazquez lost an iron in the incident and took nearly a furlong to pick it back up, spotting the field many lengths. Animal Kingdom made a huge, sweeping move around most of the field on the far turn but he faded to sixth in a Belmont shocker.

It was found after the race that Animal Kingdom had been injured in the incident. While it was initially thought that the colt would only be out for the summer, a few weeks later it was announced that the injury was worse than expected. He subsequently underwent surgery.

Eight months later, Animal Kingdom returned to the racetrack in a turf allowance race to prep for the 2012 Dubai World Cup. He showed that he was back to normal by easily winning the race by two lengths.

But again the fairy tale came to a halt after it was found Animal Kingdom had fractured his pelvis, knocking him out of training again. In another unconventional move, Team Valor decided to bring the horse back instead of retiring him. When he returned to training in August, he came back more mature than when he had been sidelines, which prompted an unconventional move. Animal Kingdom was pointed to the 2012 Breeders' Cup Mile, arguably the toughest race on the World Championships card.

In a nine-horse field that included five Grade 1 winners, Animal Kingdom entered his first race in eight months. The task looked to be virtually impossible but the Kentucky Derby winner nearly pulled it off.

Animal Kingdom showed the world just how good he was when after a disastrous trip in the stretch, he burst through the pack to finish only 1 ½ lengths behind eventual Horse of the Year Wise Dan.

Animal Kingdom's effort in defeat became one of the most talked-about moves of that year's Breeders' Cup.

While it was a tough loss, Motion was thrilled that he had the support to bring the horse back.

"I think I was fortunate that I had someone like Barry as an owner who didn't think that I was crazy bringing him back in the Breeders' Cup," Motion said. "Not everybody would have gone along with that, and I think it was just really a credit to the horse that I thought that much of him and that he would be able to handle it. Fortunately, he didn't disappoint and proved that he belonged. To be able to come back with a horse at this age as a Derby winner, not many people get to do that."

Animal Kingdom enjoyed another brief break over the winter as his connections mapped out a 5-year-old campaign. During the break, Team Valor's Barry Irwin also coordinated another unusual plan for the horse. He sold majority interest to Arrowfield Stud, which meant Animal Kingdom would retire to Australia in June 2013.



*The big boy is bright-eyed and alert in Lambourn, England.*



But first things first, Animal Kingdom had a few more races to get ready for. The first intact Kentucky Derby winner to come back at five in 14 years, Animal Kingdom returned to the track in the Grade 1 Gulfstream Park Turf Handicap to take on Point of Entry. Regarded as one of the best horses in the country, Point of Entry won five of his seven starts in 2012, including three Grade 1 events.

Much was made of the match-up between the two talented horses. Animal Kingdom had a new jockey as John Velazquez was on Point of Entry after riding Wise Dan in the Breeders' Cup Mile. This time, Joel Rosario was named on the horse for the first time. Animal Kingdom finished second behind Point of Entry by 1 ¼ lengths with an early move by Rosario partially blamed for the loss.

After the race, Animal Kingdom went to Dubai for the \$10 million Dubai World Cup, a race he'd had to skip the previous year. The task looked to be a tough one as no American-based horse had won the Dubai World Cup since the race meet had moved to Meydan Racecourse's synthetic Tapeta Footing surface in 2010.



*Yuri Pascarella gives Animal Kingdom a victory pat in the crowded winner's enclosure at Meydan. Photo by Jon Siegel*

the gap to two lengths, but Animal Kingdom had officially completed the Kentucky Derby/Dubai World Cup double.

Animal Kingdom's win signified the true internationalism of the World Cup. While Animal Kingdom is American-bred, he is by a Brazilian-bred stallion and out of a German-bred mare. His trainer Graham Motion is from England and Animal Kingdom was officially racing under the Australian banner in Dubai.

Animal Kingdom is scheduled to make his final start at Royal Ascot in the Queen Anne Stakes on June 18, the first day of the prestigious meet. The retirement will be bittersweet for the horse's connections, who have given him the chance to prove just how talented he is and been rewarded when he seized the opportunity.

"I am happy that Animal Kingdom came along at a time when he had horses like Wise Dan and Point of Entry to race against, because these are some of the finest grass horses we've had in America in quite some time," Barry Irwin said. "I am just so proud to be associated with a horse that has been as

Animal Kingdom lined up against 11 horses, including eight other Grade or Group 1 winners. He wasn't the only American-based horse in the race as both champion Royal Delta and Grade 1 winner Dullahan were among his opponents.

Royal Delta took the lead right out of the gate with Animal Kingdom in the second spot. As the mare started to fade on the turn, Animal Kingdom took an easy lead.

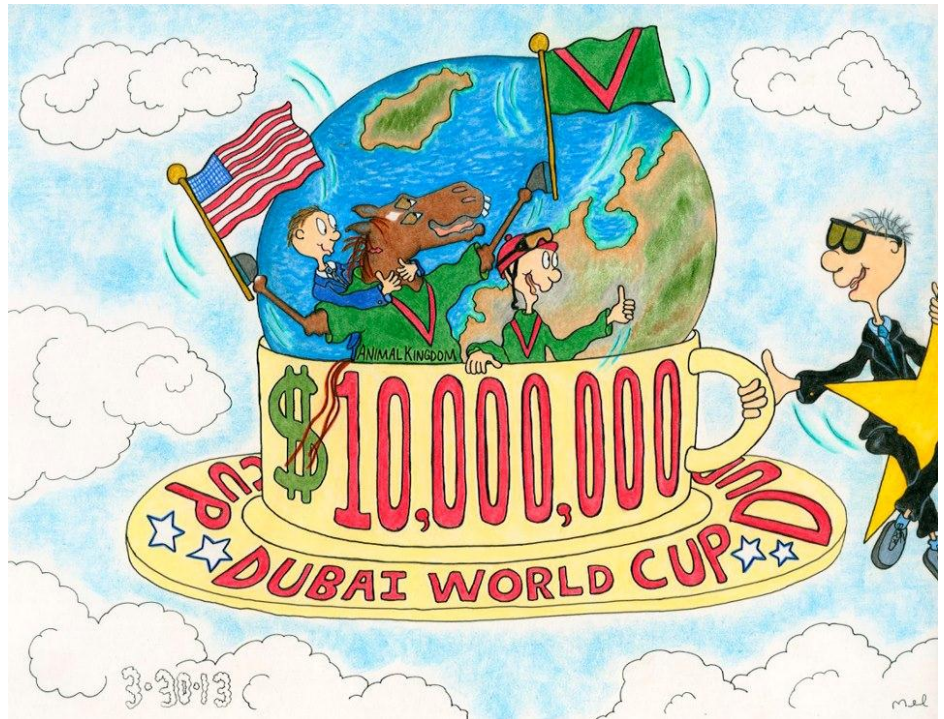
From there on, it was all Animal Kingdom as he was never seriously challenged during his run to the finish line, easily pulling away. In the final stages of the stretch, international superstar Red Cadeaux made a late run to close

versatile and classy as Animal Kingdom. We kept him in training because we thought he still had something to prove. I am gratified for myself, my trainer and my partners that Animal Kingdom has made the most of his second and third chances.”

Animal Kingdom was already a fan favorite after his Kentucky Derby success but his fan base has seemed to grow the more he’s accomplished. These days, racing fans in America aren’t the only ones appreciating the horse’s success.

“I think he’s got a lot more attention internationally since winning in Dubai,” Motion said.

“Now that he’s in England, racing is a little more focused ... so certainly he’s drawn a lot of attention. And I think also the fact that he’s a Kentucky Derby winner in England, I think people are very excited about that.”



*Cartoon by Marcy Leonard of Daily Racing Funnies.*

Just like he’s done over the past six months, Animal Kingdom will be a globetrotter in coming years. After his Southern Hemisphere season, Animal Kingdom will stand in Lexington, Ky. at Darley for the Northern Hemisphere season. Irwin said he is confident Animal Kingdom will get a good chance at stud.

“[Animal Kingdom] will get the best chance possible, thanks to Arrowfield Stud and Darley Stud, of any horse that has gone to stud with his credentials. Because he has names in his pedigree that are unfamiliar to the vast majority of Americans, he will need all of the high-quality support he can get,” he said. “And between Team Valor’s dozen mares we’ve acquired to breed to him in Kentucky, Sheik Mohammed’s mares and those of Arrowfield, Animal Kingdom will not have to totally rely on commercial breeders to become successful.”

While Animal Kingdom’s career hasn’t been a smooth ride, he has helped grow the sport not only at the fan level but at the ownership level as well. Team Valor, a group-ownership racing operation has seen this first hand.

“Last year we brought in more new partners and raised more money than ever before, and our long-standing partners all feel good just to be associated in some way with the horse,” Irwin said.

Motion has also seen an increase in business but saying good-bye to the Derby winner will be hard, no matter how many horses are in his barn. While Motion prepared himself for the horse’s possible retirement in Dubai, he knows saying good-bye won’t be easy.

“I’m an emotional person anyway, so it will be a very emotional moment for me,” he said “I kind of went through that already in Dubai. ... Then we were fortunate enough to get to do this trip in England. I guess I’m prepared for it, but it won’t be easy.”