

LA SARDANE LANDS GRADE 3 INTERCONTINENTAL IN GAME FASHION DRYSDALE RESTORES FILLY TO BEST FORM, A YEAR AFTER GR. 2 TRIUMPH SPEEDS 7 FURLONGS IN 1:20 ON LIGHTNING SURFACE AT BELMONT PARK EXTENDS TVI HOT STREAK, 11TH BLACK-TYPE HORSE FOR STABLE IN 2018

La Sardane, despite a preposterous morning-line price of 20-to-1, stood out on back class in yesterday's Grade 3, \$200,000 Intercontinental Stakes at Belmont Park and she showed that she has been restored to that form, gallantly prevailing by a neck in her third start in the U.S.



The French import became the 11th Black-Type horse for Team Valor in 2018 and extended a red-hot streak of eight TVI wins from its last 16 runners.

The triumph came almost exactly a year—368 days—since La Sardane's Group 2 score in France in the Prix de Sandringham. She ended up missing the second half of 2017 and needed a couple allowance outings this spring to race her way back into shape, including a Churchill Downs score on the Thursday of Kentucky Derby week.

This was the Thursday of Belmont Stakes week and La

Sardane was primed for the occasion in cutting back from a mile and a sixteenth to 7 furlongs with regular jockey Flavien Prat. She was bet all the way down to 4-to-1, and for a variety of reasons. With her form, she was never going to be 20-to-1. The projected favorite, Lady Alexandra, was scratched. There also was plenty of evidence, from videos on XBTv and workout reports from *Daily Racing Form* and Bruno de Julio, that she was thriving based on her three moves at Belmont in recent weeks.

La Sardane got creamed by Malibu Stacy from the inside at the break and was pushed in for a couple of strides, but she was able to settle into a good stalking position in fourth place, traveling in the clear and about 3 lengths behind pacesetter Faypien. Turning for home, La Sardane unleashed her wonderful turn of foot that took her right up to the leader. Going past the eight pole, La Sardane looked like she would draw off to win by daylight, but she may have idled a bit once she made the lead. Prat kept her to task in a confident ride, hitting the wire in a lightning 1:20.04 on a day the Belmont weeds were playing very fast. Still, she was only four-fifths of a second off the course and North American record set by A Lot in April 2016.

The Beyer was 92 but it is hard to take any turf figure seriously from yesterday when the Grade 3 Winter Memories went at least two lengths slower (9 furlongs in 1:48 4/5) and came back with a Beyer of 94. That makes no sense.

Trakus says La Sardane covered 9 more feet than runner-up Faypien, or the equivalent of about a length. The replay is [here](#).



Shawn Dugan, left, with Chris McCarron and partners Nick Ben-Meir and Mark Belling.

said, she was confined to a much smaller area and took a long time to come around after returning to the racetrack.

“It took so long to get that weight off,” Irwin said. “She was as big as a house.”

La Sardane got a five-wide parking lot trip at Keeneland in April making her North American debut and first start for trainer Neil Drysdale and was no factor in an allowance race, but she had every right to be tired and returned with a sharp Churchill Downs allowance win around two turns.

Turning back to seven furlongs in the Intercontinental, La Sardane, tracking the fastest pace she’d ever encountered with a sweet outside stalking trip under Flavien Prat, had no chance to pull too hard, as she has been inclined to do at times. As the Bob Baffert-trained Faypien set comfortable splits of 22.87 and 45.43 over a firm course, La Sardane raced in fourth around the far turn and into the homestretch. At the quarter pole Prat called on his mount and La Sardane responded, getting on even terms with Faypien at the furlong grounds and pushing past for a narrow victory. Faypien had

The 4-year-old filly will likely be returned to Southern California now, and the Grade 2 Yellow Ribbon Handicap at Del Mar on August 4 seems like a natural target.

From *Daily Racing Form* comes the following:

La Sardane Digs in to Capture Intercontinental

Things didn’t go as planned after La Sardane was imported to the U.S. from France last summer, but they’re starting to click now, and on Friday at Belmont Park she won the Grade 3, \$200,000 Intercontinental Stakes by a neck.

La Sardane, purchased by Team Valor International about a year ago after she finished second in the Prix de la Grotte, beat subsequent Group 1 French Oaks winner Senga in the Prix Sandringham after the Team Valor purchase. She was sent to California with the Del Mar Oaks as a goal, but cannon-bone bruising took her out of consideration for that race, according to Team Valor president Barry Irwin.

La Sardane was sent to a farm for rest last fall but instead of being turned out in a field, Irwin

something left, too, and Prat had to give La Sardane a couple of solid smacks with the crop just before the wire to make certain the filly knew her work wasn't quite done.

Faypien, who was 9-1, finished a nose in front of 20-1 pace-presser Heavenly Score, a sign the race flow favored front-runners. Behind the top three came Malibu Stacy, Always Thinking, 7-2 second choice Delectation, 5-2 favorite Stormy Victoria, and 9-2 Thundering Sky. I'm Betty G and, more significantly, 2-1 morning-line favorite Lady Alexandra, were scratched. La Sardane, who paid \$10.80 to win, was timed in 1:20.04 as the front-runners really picked up the pace in the stretch.



"She was quite calm going to the gate today," said Drysdale, who during Kentucky Derby week at Churchill won the Edgewood Stakes with the 3-year-old turf filly Toinette. "The last two races have helped her a lot."

Irwin said Drysdale's wife, the bloodstock agent Shawn Dugan, had recommended La Sardane for purchase last year. The filly has a relatively obscure pedigree – she is by the Kingmambo sire Kingsalsa and out of Foresta, by Forestier – and had come out of provincial French tracks for a little-known trainer to show her wares last year.

"She's a physical monster with no pedigree at all – a total freak," Irwin said. "I don't like buying those kind. I used to, but with no pedigree they can be difficult to resell. But she's so incredible looking I figured what the hell."

Seven furlongs probably is a touch short of La Sardane's best distance – and now that she is blooming again, it will be interesting to see how high she can grow.

From the *Blood-Horse* comes the following:

French-Bred La Sardane Tops Intercontinental Field

It took founder and CEO Barry Irwin a little more than 30 years to notch his 300th stakes win with his Team Valor International partnership. He needed only 10 days to collect No. 301.

European group 2 winner La Sardane rallied from fourth in a field of eight to post a neck victory over the Bob Baffert-trained Faypien in the seven-furlong, \$200,000 Intercontinental Stakes (G3T) at Belmont Park on the June 7 opening day of the Belmont Stakes Racing Festival.

"She was our 11th horse to earn black type this year," said Irwin by phone. "We're quite proud of that. It's been a nice roll for us."

The victory was La Sardane's second in three starts in the United States, following a May 3 optional-claiming allowance win at Churchill Downs for Team Valor and trainer Neil Drysdale.

"She's coming along well. She had a long time off, and Barry said take your time with her, so we gave her some extra time. The first race back didn't go quite according to plan, but in the next race we could see what she was," Drysdale said.

Unraced in 10 months since winning the 2017 Prix de Sandringham (G2) at Chantilly, La Sardane finished 10th in a Keeneland allowance race in her U.S. debut, but then quickly turned the corner and returned to the form she displayed in Europe.

"It's a spectacle every time she runs," said Irwin, who purchased the Kingsalsa filly prior to her win in the Prix de Sandringham. "She was the second-best miler among 3-year-old fillies in Europe last year. I expect her to be a multiple grade 1 winner going a mile here. Today was a little short for her, and she still won."

The French-bred La Sardane was listed at morning-line odds of 20-1 for the fifth running of the Intercontinental but was sent off as the 4-1 third choice to return \$10.80, a turn of events that had Irwin in a sarcastic mood.

Grade 2 winner Faypien, making her turf debut, set the early pace in the Intercontinental, posting a half-mile in :45.43 on the firm turf. La Sardane, with Flavien Prat aboard, collared the leader in midstretch but could not go by as the two battled to the wire, with the Team Valor 4-year-old prevailing in a stakes-record time of 1:20.04 for the seven furlongs.

[**Video from partner Nick Ben-Meir of La Sardane afterward**](#)
[**NYRA Recap Posted on Paulick Report**](#)
[**Racing Dudes Recap**](#)