

## TWO OF THREE BREEDERS' CUP RUNNERS FIRE BIG SHOTS AT SANTA ANITA TRACK CONDITIONS WORKED AGAINST BRUJO DE OLLEROS, MEXIKOMA TVI WILL NOT RETURN FOR ANOTHER DIRT RACE WITHOUT A SPEED HORSE

Brujo de Olleros and Mexikoma both fired big races for trainer Rick Mettee in the Breeders' Cup last weekend, despite not reaching the winner's circle. Given what they faced on a dirt track that heavily favored speed and compounded the challenge for late runners with showers of heavy kickback, Team Valor International came away from the 2 championship days disappointed at the circumstances, but certainly not with the "Hispanic" duo.



Street Sailing was another story, as the quirky 2-year-old filly added to a bumpy road since her purchase a few weeks by having a meltdown before the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf. She also endured a tough trip in the race itself, and those two factors left her with little chance to show her true ability.



*Rick Mettee, in his first season as Team Valor's private trainer, delivered bang-up performances across the spectrum in the Breeders' Cup with a 5-year-old import from Uruguay and a 2-year-old classic contender.*

Between Team Valor and forerunner Clover Racing, Barry Irwin's racing partnerships have built up a solid record in the Breeders' Cup with wins in the Turf (Prized) and Juvenile Turf (Pluck), a second-place finish in the Mile (Animal Kingdom) and third-place finishes in the Mile (Star of Cozzene) and Dirt Mile (Brujo de Olleros), plus three fourth-place finishes, from a total of 23 starters.

"We were proud of Brujo de Olleros, Mexikoma and Rick Mettee and his team," Barry Irwin said. "One thing you can be sure of—we will not come back to Santa Anita with another horse to run on dirt that lacks frontrunning ability."

Brujo de Olleros was the only horse based at Fair Hill Training Center to hit the board in a Breeders' Cup race. Breeders' Cup Classic winner Mucho Macho Man did spend a couple months at Fair Hill this spring and summer but the bulk of his preparation came in New York and California.

Mucho Macho Man provided one more endorsement on an elite stage for the Maryland facility that earlier this year was represented by a Dubai World Cup winner in Animal Kingdom. Throw in Orb, who also spent time at Fair Hill following his victory in the Kentucky Derby, and

the training center has ties to 3 of the most accomplished horses in the U.S. this year.



# Team Valor at the Breeders' Cup 2013





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## BRUJO DE OLLEROS BRINGS ‘A GAME’ WITH DECK STACKED AGAINST HIM COMMENDABLE THIRD IN A DIRT MILE WITH LITTLE IN HIS FAVOR FORCED OUT OF STYLE, MAKES UP MORE THAN 8 LENGTHS IN LAST HALF

Stripped of most weapons in his arsenal on an extremely biased racetrack Friday at Santa Anita Park, Brujo de Olleros relied on class to gut out a third-place finish in the Grade 1 Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile.



*Brujo de Olleros was covered in dirt after the Dirt Mile. He has fired in each of his 4 starts under Rick Mettee.*

Instead, Goldencents caught a tidal wave, while Brujo de Olleros and jockey Alan Garcia found themselves 14 ½ lengths back with a half mile remaining and still 13 ½ lengths out of it at the quarter pole—where he normally would be striking the front.

A win was impossible at that point for Brujo de Olleros, and he was presented with a big ask even to snag a placing. Golden Ticket, the eventual runner-up, had launched his rally from tenth place along the backstretch and was second by the time he reached the lane, while Brujo was still relegated to midpack. The Wizard kept coming—against the grain as one of the only horses to make up ground in the stretch all day—and got up for a clear third, with Grade 1 winners Verrazano, Hymn Book and Fed Biz directly behind him.

Brujo de Olleros managed to basically match his best Ragozin Sheet figure with a 6 ¼, but numbers cannot do justice to his performance with the deck stacked against him at Santa Anita.

“Garcia said that as bad as the speed bias was, he felt a bigger contributor to the success of the front runners was that the horses behind them were having difficulty running through the kickback, which he described as very severe,” Team Valor CEO Barry Irwin said. “We heard later that Gary Stevens was receiving welts on his arms from the clods of dirt being kicked back.”

Dr. Nathan Slovis, who scoped many of the Breeders’ Cup horses, told Irwin that the amount of gunk and bleeding in the throats of the dirt runners was startling. It was all related to the kickback.

Both in Uruguay and the U.S., Brujo de Olleros’ ballgame has been to sit back early, take command in the final turn and open up with an extra gear in the stretch. That was out the window even before the Dirt Mile began, as the Santa Anita main track displayed a heavy tilt toward early speed all day Friday, furthering a bias that had been evident in the 2 weeks leading up to the Breeders’ Cup, topped off with severe kickback that left welts on jockeys.

Goldencents, the Santa Anita Derby winner this spring, was right there to take the initiative from the outside post, triggering a lightning pace of :22 and :44.75 that would have been suicidal on a level playing field.



**Dirt Mile**  
**Takeaway:** Brujo de Olleros hit the board for the 9th time in 11 starts, the exceptions coming in his first 2 starts in the U.S.



*Daily Racing Form* columnist Mike Watchmaker wrote “Goldencents's victory in the Dirt Mile was a stunning illustration of how intensely speed favoring the Santa Anita main track was again on Friday.”

Irwin said “Much to Brujo's credit, while staying inside into the homestretch and down the lane, he managed to mount a serious late kick to get third. He generated a tremendous amount of energy to get third without troubling the runner-up or winner.”

Fully restored by new trainer Rick Mettee this year, Brujo de Olleros proved himself again in top company and earned \$100,000 for the partnership of Team Valor International and Richard Santulli. He is only the second Brazilian-bred horse to place in a Breeders' Cup race, joining Animal Kingdom's sire, Leroidesanimaux, who ran second in the 2005 Turf Mile.



*Big ham Brujo de Olleros, looking for a tongue rub.*

Brujo de Olleros came out of the race in good shape. He has been shipped to Florida and will not race again until the New Year. He officially turns 6 on January 1, although his real birthdate is August 5 and he is lightly raced with just 11 career starts.

Irwin said “He ran as hard as a horse can run in a championship event and he deserves a nice respite now. The brain trust will watch him train at Palm Meadows and decide whether it wants to keep him at around a mile, or if it makes sense to try him over farther to see if he might be effective in the next category of races, because if he can run 9 or 10 furlongs, there are a lot more opportunities open to him.”

From *Burreros.com* in Uruguay comes the following:

## **Brujo de Olleros Third in the Dirt Mile**

Seven years after Invasor became the best horse in the world, Brujo de Olleros relocated internationally to achieve a very good third place in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile.

Of course there is no point of comparison, but the reality is that for the first time since that memorable November 4th, 2006 came a Breeders' Cup race with a horse associated with Montevideo. While Brujo de Olleros is Brazilian and never had Uruguayan owners, he was a champion in our country and that is his credential in the United States. And as we said, for the first time since Invasor, Uruguay had a say in the Breeders' Cup.

Brujo de Olleros came away in seventh place and never had a chance to win, but he passed several rivals showing his class and finished a clear third, beating the heavily favored Verrazano .

It was a great occasion for Maroñas, where Brujo de Olleros holds tracks records for 1500 and 1600 meters. He proved to be one of the best milers in the United States on dirt and confirmed what we saw in the flesh.

## MEXIKOMA MAKES BIG IMPRESSION WITH RALLY FROM LAST IN JUVENILE COLT FINISHES SIXTH, BEATEN 3 ¾ LENGTHS, COULD HAVE BEEN THIRD RECENT PURCHASE PROVES HE IS A HORSE TO WATCH FOR KY. DERBY

Even with a 2-year-old title and \$2-million on the line, the Breeders' Cup Juvenile always comes with a "Yeah, but," looking 6 months down the road. As in, "Yeah, a Breeders' Cup win would be super, but the race we're really shooting for is the Kentucky Derby."



*Mexikoma and Alan Garcia were caked in dirt after rallying into severe kickback at Santa Anita that left welts on jockeys' arms.*

At the halfway stage he was stone last and a couple of lengths behind the next-to-last runner. With 3 furlongs remaining, Garcia turned Mexikoma loose and received a powerful response, but he had trouble finding a seam in the stretch.

Barry Irwin said "The horse was all over the racetrack in the stretch as Alan tried to find places to allow his mount a free run. It never happened. The Mexican lost more ground and momentum than he generated by weaving in and around. Had the colt stayed inside, he very well may have finished third."

Mexikoma ended up finishing sixth, but he was only beaten by 3 ¾ lengths, less than the winning margin in 3 of the last 7 editions of the 1 1/16-mile Juvenile. Not only did he finish full of run, but he also kept going past the wire and actually galloped out in front of the winner, New Year's Day, another colt with just a maiden victory to his credit before the Juvenile.

Garcia jumped off and said the magic words: "Kentucky Derby."

"Mexikoma made a lot of friends on Saturday with his eye-opening

The partners in Mexikoma are in very good shape in that regard after the 2-year-old colt flashed his class, stamina and talent in the face of adversity in the Juvenile, his first start carrying the Team Valor green and red silks.

Jeff Siegel was one of many respected handicappers who tabbed Mexikoma as an upset threat in the Juvenile itself, but that was before the Santa Anita dirt track played extremely one-sided on Friday's card. Barry Irwin, Brad Weisbord and Rick Mettee came very close to scratching Mexikoma after observing the speed-biased conveyor belt in the Day 1 program on Friday. A chorus of complaints from horsemen and horseplayers forced the Breeders' Cup and Santa Anita to make adjustments for Day 2, and the Team Valor brain trust only gave a final go-ahead for Mexikoma after watching the first few dirt races on Saturday.

Speed was no so golden as the track crew watered the surface closer to each race, but severe kickback was still a factor, as photos of Mexikoma after the race

attest. Kickback may explain why the colt fell back to last place early, despite breaking sharply from his



### Juvenile

#### Takeaway:

Mexikoma was rolling as he crossed the wire in the 8 ½-furlong Juvenile and galloped out in front.



performance and struck those in attendance at Santa Anita and those watching on their monitors as the one horse that would relish the distances of the Triple Crown races next season," Irwin said. "Personally, I was very satisfied with his performance, because I got to see what I wanted, which was a horse that wanted more ground and fit well in the company. With another race under his belt, he would have been right there with the winner."

Mexikoma will be based in South Florida this winter with Rick Mettee's string at Palm Meadows Training Center, but Team Valor will keep all options open for his prep schedule so he gets a fair crack at qualifying for the Kentucky Derby.



From the *Blood-Horse* comes the following:

### **Mexikoma Heads to Florida to Prepare for 2014**

Team Valor International said its recent private purchase Mexikoma, who rallied well to finish a close-up sixth in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile (gr. I) at Santa Anita Park Nov. 2, is headed to Florida to prepare for his 3-year-old season.

Mexikoma, purchased after a commanding maiden victory at one mile at Delaware Park Sept. 13 in his second start for Michael

Dilger, overcame some traffic and a troubled start to pass all but five foes in the Juvenile. The comment line in the official Equibase chart said the 2-year-old colt finished with "good energy."

Team Valor said it opted for the 1 1/16-mile Juvenile rather than the Nov. 3 Nashua Stakes (gr. II) at Belmont Park because the latter, at one mile, was run around one turn. Team Valor said Mexikoma, by Birdstone out of the Toccet mare Toccet Over, was training like a two-turn horse.

"We have a Triple Crown candidate," Team Valor president Barry Irwin said Nov. 4. "He not only showed his class in the Breeders' Cup, but, as expected, demonstrated that he will need at least nine furlongs."

Trained by Rick Mettee, Mexikoma will spend a week or so at GoldMark Farm in Ocala, Fla., and then be shipped to Palm Meadows Training Center, where Mettee will be based this winter. The colt will be pointed to stakes at Gulfstream Park, Team Valor said.

From *Daily Racing Form's* Dan Illman comes the following:

### **Trip Handicapping from the Breeders' Cup**

Mexikoma is an interesting prospect. Purchased privately off a monster 14-length win at Delaware Park, the son of Belmont/Travers winner Birdstone was very slow into stride but made a nice run into the lane while having to maneuver through traffic.