

BRUJO DE OLLEROS STAMPS TICKET TO BREEDERS' CUP DIRT MILE 'WIZARD' CONTINUES RISE AGAINST TOP-CLASS GRAYDAR IN KELSO IMPORT FROM URUGUAY PROVES TALENT WITH TRAINER RICK METTEE

A year after Animal Kingdom finished second to Horse of the Year Wise Dan in the Breeders' Cup Mile, Team Valor International will return to Santa Anita Park and look to do one better with Brujo de Olleros in the Grade 1 Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile on November 1.



A Group 1 winner and track record holder at a mile on dirt in Uruguay, Brujo de Olleros finished a game second to even-money favorite Graydar in the Grade 2 Kelso Handicap on Saturday at Belmont Park.

The Brazilian-bred horse owned in partnership with Richard Santulli was wide throughout after breaking from the outside post in the Kelso, which unfolded with a slow pace that bunched up the field and never allowed jockey Alan Garcia to save ground. According to Trakus data, Brujo de Olleros covered 25 feet more than Graydar, who had not raced since emerging as one of the best older horses in North America with

consecutive victories in the Grade 1 Donn and Grade 2 New Orleans Handicaps last winter.

“Losing ground and momentum took away from his closing punch, but he still dug in very hard,” Team Valor CEO Barry Irwin said of Brujo de Olleros. “This horse is legit and he proved it today. Great training job by Mr. Rick Mettee!”

Team Valor and Santulli purchased Brujo de Olleros in February 2012 after catching wind of his performance in the Group 1 Gran Premio Pedro Pineyrua in Uruguay. Scoring by 14 1/4 lengths, the son of American Grade 1 winner Wild Event broke a 75-year-old track at Montevideo's Maronas racecourse, blazing the mile in 1:33.27.

Brujo de Olleros struggled with the transition to the Northern Hemisphere last year, as he never fully acclimated until he was given more time following a pair of disappointing races. Once he resumed training, first with Bill Recio at the Classic Mile in Ocala and then with Team Valor's new private conditioner Rick Mettee, he consistently flashed the talent he showed in South America. The liver chestnut returned with an excellent second-place finish in the Donald LeVine Memorial Stakes at Parx, just missing by a neck over 7 furlongs. At that point, Team Valor and Mettee identified the Kelso as Brujo de Olleros' key test for the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile. As a steppingstone, they picked out the Carl Hanford Memorial Stakes on August 19 at Delaware Park, and Brujo de Olleros delivered a 6 1/2-length win over a mile and 70 yards and around 2 turns.

Brujo de Olleros will prepare for the 2-turn Dirt Mile at Mettee's base in Northern Maryland at Fair Hill Training Center. Alan Garcia will retain the mount on the 5-year-old named after renowned Argentine trainer Francisco Maschio, who was known as the “brujo” (wizard) of Olleros Street in Buenos Aires.

Team Valor won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Turf with a home-bred, Pluck, in 2010 and the Breeders' Cup Turf with Prized in 1989 under the stable's previous name, Clover Racing Stable.