

STEVE SHERACK OF *THOROUGHBRED DAILY NEWS* ON U. S. S. VALOR DEBUT AUGUST 8 SARATOGA UNVEILING SAYS WAR OF WILL SON IS ONE TO WATCH



Second Chances: U. S. S. Valor – 'We Just Have the Highest Dreams Possible for a Horse Like This'

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By *Steve Sherack*

In this continuing series, TDN's Senior Racing Editor Steve Sherack catches up with the connections of promising maidens to keep on your radar.

"McGaughey colt can run."

U. S. S. Valor (c, 2, War of Will–Spangled Banner, by Tiz Wonderful) received some high praise from DRF's Clocker Report following consecutive B+ breezes for Hall of Famer Shug McGaughey ahead of his 6 1/2-furlong unveiling at the Spa Aug. 8.

Backed at 5-1 in a deep-looking maiden special weight in the lidlifter on Whitney day, the Team Valor International homebred was carried in at the break from his rail draw and was steered out in time by Tyler Gaffalione to avoid hitting the rail leaving the chute.

An inside sixth and traveling nicely through an opening quarter in :22.38, Gaffalione was forced to gently tap on the brakes rounding the far turn.

Guided out at least four wide at the top of the stretch, U. S. S. Valor raced a bit greenly and remained on his left lead as they straightened for home.



U. S. S. Valor (outside) | Sarah Andrew



U. S. S. Valor in Saratoga Paddock | Tod Marks

Gaffalione got U. S. S. Valor to switch over in deep stretch and the long-striding bay came rolling down the center while finishing up in a field-best :30.87 to complete the trifecta—beaten just three-quarters of a length—behind the promising duo of Gaudreau (Nyquist) and Coach Pope (Tapit).

U. S. S. Valor earned an 88 Beyer Speed Figure for the effort, one point less than the winner.

"Shug told me in the paddock, 'I don't think we're gonna win here, but we'll stretch him out

at Belmont and he'll win there,'" Team Valor International Founder/Chief Executive Officer Barry Irwin said.

"He ran a remarkable race and rather than wait for Belmont, we're gonna run him back at Saratoga. Hopefully, he'll break his maiden and then we can go on from there."

U. S. S. Valor returned to the worktab with a four-furlong bullet in :48 (1/22) over the Oklahoma training track Aug. 19.

"For a horse that is built like him to have as much gas as he's got and do it in a controlled way, we just have the highest dreams possible for a horse like this," Irwin said.

The son of 2019 GI Preakness Stakes winner War of Will was produced by the winning Tiz Wonderful mare Spangled Banner and hails from the family of MGISW Curalina (Curlin).

The 15-year-old broodmare, also responsible for the GISP Expressman (Liam's Map), was acquired by Irwin's operation for \$225,000 at the 2022 Fasig-Tipton August Digital Sale. Bred to Tiz the Law for 2027, she has been entered in this fall's Keeneland November sale, per Irwin.

"I put her in the sale to take advantage if this horse does what we hope he could do," Irwin said.

Since launching 'Second Chances' in 2017, 78 maidens have been featured in these pages (through 2025), producing 24% graded stakes winners, 36% stakes winners and 49% stakes horses. The series has introduced nine future winners at the top level, led by 2025 Horse of the Year and dual Classic winner Sovereignty (Into Mischief), 2023 Horse of the Year Cody's Wish (Curlin) and fellow two-time Breeders' Cup winner Golden Pal (Uncle Mo).