

**SPECIAL WAN CRUISES TO 1 ¼-LENGTH TRIUMPH IN GRADE 3 HONEY FOX S. MARE FIRST TEAM VALOR STAKES WINNER TRAINED BY BRENDAN WALSH OPTIONS AHEAD INCLUDE KEENELAND GRADE 1, DERBY DAY GRADE 2 MILE**

When Special Wan glided down the green Gulfstream Park stretch under a superb ride from Luis Saez, Barry Irwin reflected on how fortunate the partners were to secure the services of the Panamanian reinsman.

Saez was exactly the type of partner the 5-year-old Belardo mare required on the day, as Saturday's Grade 3 Honey Fox Stakes was bereft of pace except for public choice In Our Time, the mild 3 to 1 favorite over 7 to Special Wan and Tax Implications.

*Jockey Luis Saez has a big old smile on his face as he steers Special Wan to the finishing post on Saturday in the Grade 3 Honey Fox S. at Gulfstream Park.*



Under a well-judged simpatico ride from Edwin Gonzalez, In Our Time came away well from the gate and made the pace under light rating, ticking off comfortable fractions of :23.54 and :46.37 to the hallway point down the Hallandale Beach backstretch.

In Our Time was 5 lengths in front of Special Wan, which was a head in front of Rosario-ridden 11 to 1 chance Ozara, at the half-mile pole. The lead looked insurmountable at that stage of the proceedings, but those backing Special Wan surely saw that she was well in hand.

The entire complexion of the race changed as the field traversed the far turn, where Special Wan—now allowed to use some of her reserves—cut into the favorite's lead and was only 2 lengths back at the quarter pole, where she was making a wide bid.

In Our Time, which had reached the top of the lane in 1:09.47, still had plenty of fight left in her, even after a 23-flat third quarter. Special Wan, challenging outside of the pacesetter, readily engaged her target, wrested command before reaching the furlong pole in 1:21.20 and put her away in a matter of a few strides. Irwin had asked trainer Brendan Walsh to inform Saez that the mare's previous trainer had warned Irwin last year that the mare had a tendency to pull herself up when she made the lead.

Over a hard grass course that had been playing for speed all day long, Special Wan clocked 1:32.77, a time comparable to other races run on the card. Her 94 Beyer topped the 92 she earned when seventh in the Grade 1 First Lady Stakes at Keeneland, the lone time in 8 career outings that she failed to finish in the top three.

She boasts a career profile of 3 wins, 2 seconds and 2 thirds. She is now a Graded stakes winner, with a pair of Group and a pair of Listed placings in Ireland. Her wins are a debut maiden tally at 2, a Kentucky Downs allowance win on debut at 4 in America and the Grade 3 Honey Fox Stakes at Gulfstream. Her earnings now are \$194,115. [LINK](#)



[Special Wan was a “push-button” ride for a happy Luiz Saez en route to victory on Saturday at Gulfstream Park.](#)

The winner smoked her second half of the race in a stunning :45 1/5. Walsh noted that Special Wan galloped out ahead of the field. “I think she can run farther. Today she gave the impression there is not much she cannot do,” said the transplanted Irish horseman, who was saddling his first stakes winner for TVI with his very first stable representative. [LINK](#)

“She is such a beautiful mare and such a professional. She is slightly above average in size. She is so beautifully balanced. She has learned to be a tractable racing tool. As I see it today, without discussing strategy going forward with Brendan, she has two immediate options.

“There is the April 12 renewal of the Grade 1 Jenny Wiley, up in trip a sixteenth of a mile, worth half a million for non-Kentucky-breds, and there is the Grade 2 Longines Churchill Distaff Turf Mile worth

\$650,000 for non-Kentucky-breds the First Saturday in May under the Twin Spires on the Kentucky Derby undercard.

“We have won both of these races and, in my experience, it is difficult to contest both of these, so it would behoove us to choose one or the other. Next on the agenda would be between June 4-8 up at Saratoga in the Grade 1 Just a Game Stakes, a mile that last year offered prize money of \$750,000.”

Special Wan is stakes winner number 14 Belardo, which in TVI annals famously denied trainer Marco Botti a Group 1 victory when besting TVI's Euro Charlene by half a length at Newbury in the Lockinge Stakes. Special Wan, credited Saturday with a new Timeform top of 112, now rates as the third best runner for her sire. Special Wan is among 4 runners and 4 winners for her dam Fast Jazz, including 3 black-type runners. Grandam Slow Jazz produced 10 winners, including the Italian black-type winner Mister Cavern. Under the grandam are Champion Older Mare in Italy Bounce the Blues, Irish Group 3 Park Stakes heroine Jazz Princess and Group 3 Prix Perth heroine Miss O Connor.