

March 26, 2011

ANIMAL KINGDOM HEADED TO KENTUCKY DERBY AFTER \$500,000 SPIRAL HOME-BRED LEROIDESANIMAUX COLT SCORES BY 2 ¾ LENGTHS IN GRADE 3 GRAHAM MOTION-TRAINED COLT TO TRAIN AT KEENELAND FOR CLASSIC



Animal Kingdom went from last to first and scored a decisive 2 ¾-length triumph in the \$500,000 Spiral Stakes today at Turfway Park in Northern Kentucky.

The \$285,000 in Graded earnings is enough to qualify him for the Kentucky Derby and his connections—trainer Graham Motion and owner/breeder Team Valor—will now determine if he has the dirt capabilities to go along with his prodigious stamina.

Animal Kingdom ran twice last season and capped his juvenile campaign with a fast and stylish Keeneland maiden win going 9 furlongs on Polytrack.

Team Valor put him away, gave him a breather and sent him to its new private trainer Motion to start his Classic season. He had one prep—a mile grass allowance at Gulfstream—and he flew home as though the step up in distance and a return to Polytrack would be something he might relish.

Animal Kingdom started as the 3 to 1 second choice to streaking Positive Response, who won the Spiral prep over the Turfway track. He broke smoothly under Alan Garcia, but was forced to check off heels when a horse inside of him came off the rail and made it uncomfortable for him.

Garcia settled him into last place around the first turn. When the chestnut colt reached the backside, Garcia rode him the length of the backstretch up the rail, as the imposing colt improved from last to fourth before heading into the second turn. Animal Kingdom was able to maneuver off the rail bending for home, but was forced at least 6 wide on the last curve when eventual second-place finisher Decisive Moment packed him out. Animal Kingdom lost some momentum, was able to regenerate, caught the winner just inside the furlong pole, dueled with him for about 50 yards, then pulled away to win by nearly 3 lengths.

With a record of 2 wins and 2 seconds in 4 career outings, the tall Kentucky-bred is lightly raced; however, Garcia says he is impressed enough by him to utter something the Team Valor partners loved hearing. “Wherever he goes, I want to be there to ride him. He is very exciting.”

Motion and Team Valor International CEO will give the colt some time to regroup and then design a plan to find out whether he can act on the dirt.

Irwin said “Randy Bradshaw had him on the dirt at Adena Springs early and late at 2 and Randy thinks it is worth giving the colt a shot on the main track. Graham will figure out how to test the colt before we totally commit to the Kentucky Derby. He will get the trip. We know that much. Now we need to see if he can actually handle racing on the dirt.”

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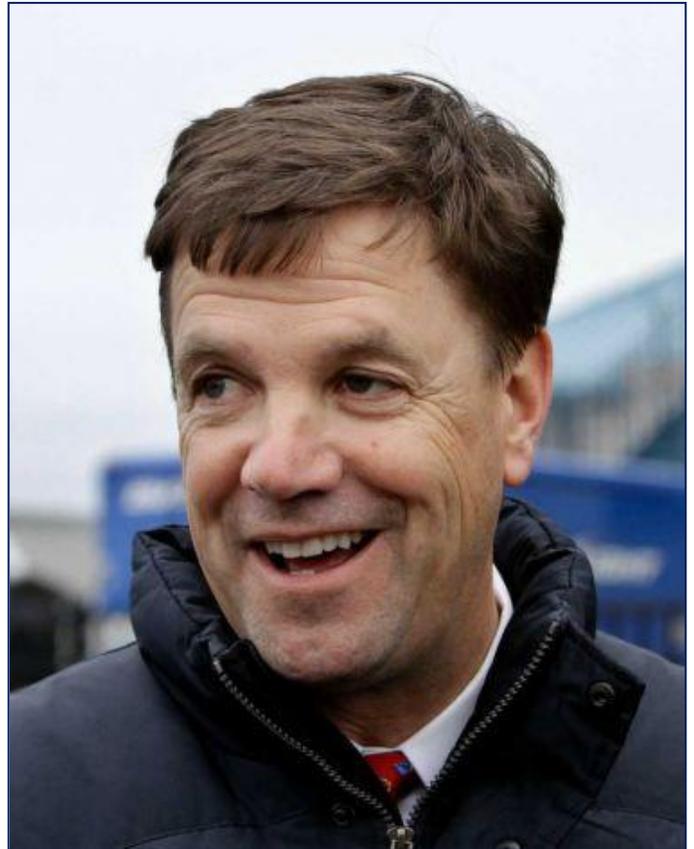
[Sun Herald](#)

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Trainer Graham Motion and jockey Alan Garcia came away from today's \$500,000 Spiral Stakes with positive feelings about Animal Kingdom.

