

## **BELLA ROMANZA DAZZLES ON DEBUT WINNING ON GULFSTREAM PARK SOD EXPENSIVE BERNARDINI JUVENILE BUY COMES GOOD FOR TODD PLETCHER**



Bella Romanza, which had been bought a year ago off a strong synthetic track breeze in Ocala at the OBS sale of unraced juveniles, reverted to that form when dazzling an Easter Sunday throng at Gulfstream Park yesterday to surprise not only most of those in attendance at the Hallandale track, but her connections as well.

“A rare pleasant surprise,” is how trainer Todd Pletcher characterized the 14-to-1 upset fashioned by Bella Romanza in winning her racing bow over 7 ½ furlongs on grass. The trainer, his staff, Barry Irwin and anybody that had watched her string of video-recorded workouts over the winter at Palm Beach Downs this winter into spring were all surprised.

Irwin had made no bones about the fact that he had been underwhelmed by what he had witnessed the filly do on dirt in the mornings and slightly less perturbed by her one and only grass move. “She was fine from the gate and early in her moves, but she never galloped out with conviction or speed,” he explained. Clearly the “penny dropped” in this debut race.

Bella Romanza, a \$350,000 auction buy, looked and played the part of a quality filly in the paddock, the walking ring, and the post parade.

As her odds drifted and she was completely dead on the board in her role as “The Other Pletcher,” Bella Romanza broke well and was in the process of being nicely slotted over from her outside stall

towards what looked like a spot two off the rail. But a filly in front of her veered out on the first bend, forcing the Team Valor color-bearer to be shifted dramatically outside lest she clip heels.

Jockey Emisael Jaramillo expertly overcame that early incident, managed to maneuver the filly around the turn onto the backstretch, where after a short while he moved the filly across the course and to a spot along the rail while ahead of just one runner. He saved every bit of ground possible from there to inside the lane.

Speed rider Paco Lopez let I'm Glad roll on the front end, setting fractions of :22 <sup>2</sup>/<sub>5</sub> and :46 <sup>2</sup>/<sub>5</sub> with a length or so advantage over a pressing Tickle My Fancy, as "The Actual Pletcher" Image of Love stalked half a dozen lengths behind the pacesetter. Approaching the five-sixteenths pole before entering the stretch, it suddenly became apparent that Jaramillo was "loaded" aboard the TVI runner, which had built up a tremendous amount of momentum coming off the bend. She looked set to inhale her competition if she could find a seam to get through.

Jaramillo daringly angled his mount off the rail with the slingshot momentum of using the curved railing and when he split horses at the top of the lane and bumped a bit with the eventual third-place finisher Big Brass Bed. Near even-money favorite Starship Boeing, who had hit the gate at the break, made her challenge widest of all at the quarter pole when Bella Romanza was saving ground along the rail. Down the lane Bella Romanza was strong and home free.

Bella Romanza crossed the line 1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> lengths to the good, covering the trip in 1:29 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>5</sub>. Her Beyer speed figure of 77 was 5 above par, underlining what a terrific effort she was able to generate first time up.

After the race, Irwin spoke with assistant trainer Anthony Sciametta and jockey Emisael Jaramillo. "He said he was really impressed with the filly and considers her to be a top prospect," said Sciametta.

[RACE VIDEO](#)