

**SPANISH MISSION SECOND FOR BARBER/TEAM VALOR IN RED SEA HANDICAP
EARNS \$500,000 IN SECOND RICHEST GRASS HANDICAP ON PLANET EARTH
ANDREW BALDING PLANS TO RETURN HIM FOR THE DUBAI GOLD CUP NEXT**



Spanish Mission's jockey Ryan more said "He ran a nice race, you must be happy with that first run of the year. He has won a big one in the past already. The ground is a bit loose now." It rained for 1 ½ hours before the race

Team Valor International and Gary Barber's Spanish Mission, wearing the Hollywood movie mogul's distinctive shocking pink silks, opened his 2021 account with an excellent performance to finish a closing second today in Saudi Arabia on the Saudi Cup undercard.

Second place was worth \$500,000 as the \$2.5-million purse is the second biggest in the world for a grass handicap behind only the Melbourne Cup, which coincidentally remains his seasonal goal in November over 2 miles.

Today he ran a furlong less than the Melbourne Cup trip and was closing steadily on Godolphin's upset winner Gifts of Gold, reducing the winner's margin during the final sixteenth of a mile from 2 lengths to 1 ¼ lengths.

The first two runners carried the same package of 128 pounds, receiving 11 from last year's winner Call the Wind, which set the pace today, only to tire down the lane. Godolphin filled the first and third spots, with Secret Advisor finishing third.

Spanish Mission has always preferred hard ground but he did not get it tonight, as rain fell for 1 ½ hours before the race, changing the ground and possibly costing him a win on the night.



Andrew Balding and the ownership connections, however, were not making excuses as they were over the moon with their 5-year-old's performance. It was the first time in his career that he began the season with a competitive performance, as hitherto he always desperately needed a prep race.

Barry Irwin, CEO of Team Valor, said "We tried for a prep race or at the very least a good gallop over a racecourse to put the horse's mind on business, but because of COVID-19 restrictions were unable to arrange it. So for him to run this well off the bench bodes well for a big year for this horse.

"Basically we feel and have always believed that Spanish Mission would improve with maturity. We think this will be his best season yet and next year could be even better."

The \$500,000 increased Spanish Mission's career gleanings to \$1,314,736. In 14 outings he has a record of 5-3-2.

Balding said "As long as he comes back in good shape I see no reason why we cannot put him back on a plane to the Middle East and race him in the (Grade 2) Dubai Gold Cup. We have done this type of quick turnaround before with success. I actually prefer bringing him back to leaving him there.

"Look, Ryan gave him a lovely ride and was very complimentary about him, as have been all those who have ridden him. He runs his race regardless of the rider, which is very nice, because one never knows which jockeys might be available to ride him from race to race."

The Dubai Gold Cup is run at the end of March over 2 miles for reduced prize money of \$750,000.

RED SEA TURF H. (Cond.), \$2,500,000, King Abdulaziz, 2-20, 4yo/up, 3000mT, 3:14.24, gd to fm.

1-GIFTS OF GOLD (IRE), 128, g, 6, Invincible Spirit (Ire)-Sanna Bay (Ire), by Refuse To Bend (Ire).

(€280,000 wnl '15 GOFNOV) O-Godolphin; B-Paul Hyland (Ire); T-Saeed bin Suroor. £1,094,890.

Lifetime Record: SP-UAE, 13-4-3-1, £1,143,591. *1/2 to Dusky Queen (Ire) (Shamardal), SW-Eng, \$157,962; and Achnaha (Ire) (Haatef), MGSP-US & GSP-Ire, \$224,655.

2-Spanish Mission, 128, h, 5, Noble Mission (GB)-Limonar (Ire), by Street Cry (Ire). (\$125,000 yrl '17 KEESEP; 60,000gns RNA 2yo '18 TATAPR) O-Team Valor LLC & Gary Barber; B-St Elias Stables LLC; T-Andrew Balding. £364,963.

3-Secret Advisor (Fr), 132, g, 7, Dubawi (Ire)-Sub Rose (Ire), by [Galileo](#) (Ire). O-Godolphin; B-CEA Haras de Saint Pair (Fr); T-Charlie Appleby.

Margins: 1 1/4, NK, 1. Also Ran: Red Verdon, Making Miracles (GB), Mildenberger (GB), Mirinaque (Arg), New Show (Ire), Prince Of Arran (GB), Mekong (GB), Call The Wind (GB), Barbados (Ire), Arctic Sound (GB).