

FACTEUR CHEVAL EXUDES RAW POWER REMAINING UNBEATEN IN STAKES SOPHOMORE GELDING WOWS FRENCH CROWD IN EFFORTLESS TRIUMPH IRWIN: “HE’S THE MOST EXCITING HORSE FOR US SINCE CITIDANCER IN 1990”



When Gerald Mosse swung Facteur Cheval outside to allow the 3-year-old to make his stretch move, many in the Chantilly crowd on Sunday began to applaud the flashy gelding and the intensity of the clapping and whooping increased as he powered to the front, strode clear down the lane and won eased up at the wire with his jockey patting him on the head and neck.

“The sheer power he exuded was truly breathtaking,” said Barry Irwin. “You know, at every juncture of the horse’s career I checked in with Mosse afterwards to gauge his opinion of the performance. He has been pretty conservative in his assessment of the horse. He has been careful not to over-sell the talent level of the horse to us. He is, after all, 54 years old, he has ridden more than his share of Champions and has been a leading rider wherever he has plied his trade, whether in France or Hong Kong. This time the jockey could not control his enthusiasm.”

Mosse said “He is an absolute super star.” The rider expounded even more on the horse to the press after he weighed out.

Irwin said “I have not been this excited about a horse of ours since 1990 when Citidancer wowed a Travers Day card at Saratoga, winning an allowance race by 14 lengths to remain unbeaten in 3 starts. In the New York Times the following morning, Turf Writer Steven Crist named him as one of the front runners for Horse of the Year honors—and this after just an allowance race. That’s how breathtaking his win was going 6 furlongs.



“Facteur Cheval is now 4 for 4, a black-type winner, and a horse that has now made decent rivals look decided moderate in each of his victories. He won by 2 lengths, the same winning margin in all of his races since the 3-year-old Ribchester horse broke his maiden on debut by 5 lengths.

In each race he gave the distinct impression that he could have doubled or tripled the margin if Mosse had either given the horse his head or asked him to finish his races in full stride, instead of easing him down before the wire.

Sunday, in the Listed Prix Saint-Patrick going a one-turn mile at Chantilly, the horse once again did not have the smoothest of trips. He was slammed coming out of the gate and raced next to last, after trainer Jerome Reynier and jockey Gerald Mosse had decided beforehand to have him position second or third just behind the lead, as they both suspected a slow pace.

Instead, the odds-on favorite raced last but one until the middle of the stretch. Just when Mosse planned to bring the horse outside to make his move, he got slammed again, which delayed his challenge. Once the big horse was balanced by Mosse and the rider gave the bay horse the office, he both quickened and lengthened his stride.

When he was in full flight the image of the flashy horse excited not only his jockey both those on hand at the French Headquarters of Thoroughbred racing. “These people are seasoned racegoers and true professionals,” Irwin said. “They know when they are in the presence of something special and they responded as the horse generated a penultimate furlong, once again, in :10 4/5. The feeling as the horse cut a brilliant figure racing down the stretch was like nothing I’ve ever experienced as an owner since Citidancer did the same thing at The Spa. We all knew that we had seen something special.”

Mosse wrapped up on the horse and allowed him to canter to the line. Even though he was not persevered with, he ran his final three-eighths of a mile in :33 1/5.

“I don’t know what we’ve got here,” Irwin said. “Before today I was skeptical that his form might just have looked better than it was, because every time he dusted a horse with a good record or subsequently good record, I wondered if the competition had been off form. This time that was not the case at all. In fact the runner-up ran to his previous mark. So the win was legit and our boy did it with contemptuous ease. He has now consistently made very decent horses with Group form look common.”



“Facteur Cheval really reaches out underneath himself with his hind legs, pushing off with his powerful engine” Barry Irwin said. “His depth of muscle behind in his hindquarters is something to behold. He is a special horse.”

Both Barry Irwin and partner Gary Barber have said from day one that the horse does not look like any gelding they have ever seen. This impression really holds true when the gelding is seen in the flesh. “He has tremendous depth, scope and quality. He is an absolutely gorgeous specimen of the Thoroughbred breed. He makes his rivals look like claiming horses.”

In somewhat of an anomaly, all three major figure generators—named Timeform, RacingPost and the Official Rating from France Galop—settled on the same figure of 105. That rarely happens.

Timeform has incrementally raised his figure from 99 to 100 to 101, but this time they raised the Master Rating to 105p, meaning he was given 4 pounds more for what Mosse had in hand. Also the “p” means that there is likely more there but on the bare face of the evidence they cannot rate him higher at this stage of the horse’s career.

Mosse mentioned after the race that he feels the horse has at least two more gears that he has not yet tapped. “He is a Group 1 winner waiting to happen.”