

**SPANISH MISSION RUNS RIGHT UP TO HIS BEST FOR MELBOURNE CUP THIRD
MOMENTUM STOPPED CLOSE HOME WHEN WINNER CROSSED IN HIS PATH
VINTAGE RENEWAL WAS RUN IN FIFTH FASTEST TIME IN LENGTHY HISTORY**



[Spanish Mission finishes in a rally to nail down third in the Group 1, \\$6-million Melbourne Cup at Flemington.](#)

Spanish Mission overcame physical niggles in Newmarket and Australian quarantine to bring his best game to the US\$6-million Melbourne Cup, in which he was a dead-game third. The superb winner, which triumphed by 4 lengths, legally crossed over in front of the Team Valor International color-bearer once barely clear in the closing stage, which caused Spanish Mission to jink and lose valuable momentum.

In a 3-horse battle for the places, Spanish Mission looked as though he would be relegated to fourth, until Craig Williams managed to urge the English invader and generate a second burst to be finishing fastest at the end. Spanish Mission was motoring late, saved third and missed second by a diminishing neck.

Barry Irwin said “It was an odd renewal of the world’s most lucrative grass handicap because the first two home—namely former Australian Horse of the Year Verry Elleegant and recent 7-length Group 1 Cox Plate winner Incentivise—are top class and up to the high standard of any Cup winner.

“The remainder of the field, as shown by the post-race ratings, were below par, including the fourth finisher, which was in receipt of 16 pounds from Spanish Mission. The winner was winning her tenth Group 1 race, a figure that likely would have been higher had she not been forced to race against the incomparable Winx earlier in her career, and the runner-up set a high standard when winning the Cox Plate in his ninth consecutive victory. This was a Melbourne Cup for the ages and up to snuff.”

Williams opted to keep Spanish Mission wide for much of the race and just at the end of the lead pack. Turning for home, Spanish Mission looked to have as good a chance for an historic victory as any runner and he fired down the lane.

When the winner was unleashed, however, it was game over. She blew by the field, moved over towards the rail and won as convincingly as one would want. Incentivise was unable to match strides with the mare but he kept on strongly to the line, just lasting for second over a powerfully closing Spanish Mission.

The first three home carried equal weight of 126 pounds. There was a gap of 6 lengths between the fourth and fifth horses and the field was stretched out some 53 lengths.

Trainer Andrew Balding produced the horse in superb condition for the race and he drew the most raves of any runner in the paddock before the race.

Time of the race for the 2-miles was 3:17.43.

In a race run at Flemington since 1882, the 3:20 barrier was pierced for the first time in 1956. In 1983 the winner was the first to run the race in 3:18 and change. Seven years later the great galloper Kingston Rule lowered the record, which still stands, to 3:16.30. Only 4 renewals have been completed in faster time than the 2021 fixture.

Spanish Mission earned high praise from the Australian press, on-air analysts and horsemen. Racing Post rated his effort at 117, a mark he now has run to in each of his last 3 outings. His career best is a mere one pound higher. Timeform have kept him at 121.



Andrew Balding praises team effort as Spanish Mission finishes brave third

By Jack Haynes

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Andrew Balding described Spanish Mission's third in the Lexus Melbourne Cup as "a real thrill" for the whole team after they set their alarms to watch the big race unfold on Tuesday morning.

Craig Williams' mount, owned by Team Valor and Gary Barber, travelled smoothly and looked a leading player turning into the straight. Despite being passed on his outside by the winner Verry Elleegant, the five-year-old stayed on gamely to finish in the places.

Spanish Mission earned just over £300,000 in prize-money and he will be considered for the HK\$20million (£1.88m) Longines Hong Kong Vase, won by Mogul last year, at Sha Tin on December 12.

Balding said: "I was thrilled with him and he's run with real credit. I have to give a big thanks to everyone who has been involved – Tony Noonan and his son Tom have done a brilliant job with him, as has Neil Varley who has been riding him out there. Maddy O'Meara did the quarantine in Newmarket with him, so it's been a big team effort.

"It was exciting getting up early to watch the race and it's a big deal. All the staff were up in their various places to watch him run and everyone has got a real thrill out of it. I hope it's not the last time we have a runner in the race.

"He has an invitation to go for the Hong Kong Vase, which is a possibility, but we'll have to see how he comes out of the race."

Balding and Joseph O'Brien, responsible for last year's winner Twilight Payment who finished 11th, were the only British or Irish trainers represented in this year's race after enhanced veterinary procedures dissuaded other connections from making the journey.

Spanish Mission was forced to miss the first international shipment and the Caulfield Cup after having muscle spasms, then survived a late scare in the lead-up after vets reported swelling in a foreleg on Thursday and Friday.

Balding said: "I can see why they have changed the protocols but I'm sure they will review how it's done, particularly in terms of the pre-travel scans. It's their race though and it's for them to decide what the protocol is going forward."