

LONG-TIME PARTNER BELLING PREVAILS IN 1ST-QUARTER CONTEST BAGS \$3,500 WITH PREDICTION OF SIX WINS, NEARLY NAILS EARNINGS JUST EDGES WALLACE AND KIM MCGEORGE, WHO TAKE \$1,500 FOR 2ND

Mark Belling is one of Team Valor's longest-running partners, dating back to the early 1990s, and he has been involved in many of the stable's top horses over the years. What he had not been able to make a dent in was a Team Valor contest—until now, as Belling came out on top of the first-quarter contest carrying a first prize of \$3,500.



Mark Belling at Royal Ascot with Euro Charline.

Belling hit closest to the mark with his prediction of six Team Valor wins in the quarter and \$503,000 in earnings. The real totals were six wins and \$493,000 in earnings. Wallace and Kim McGeorge finished second for a \$1,500 prize, as they also predicted six wins and were barely edged in the earnings tiebreaker, \$17,000 shy of Belling's entry. The tiebreaker for leading horse by earnings did not come into play as no one who correctly predicted six wins also had the leading earner, which was Hayabusa One at \$114,800.

"I don't think I had ever even been close before in any of the contests," Belling said.

Barry Irwin thinks Belling may be forgetting a close finish or two, but that might just be reflective of Irwin's respect for Belling as a handicapper and as a partner who has consistently been involved in quality horses. That ranges from Belling's all-time favorite, 1997 Kentucky Derby runner-up Captain Bodgit, to Euro Charline, who scored her biggest win in a Grade 1 at his "home track," Arlington Park a few years back, and big hitters on today's roster like Capla Temptress, Hayabusa One and La Sardane.

Belling's analytical bent is a natural fit for horse racing and also his prominent role as a talk-radio host in Milwaukee. He definitely swings to the right and has regularly filled in nationally for Rush Limbaugh.

Belling said he tries to focus on a single question for any horse prospect he is considering: "Does this horse have the potential for greatness?"

Belling latched onto a great run with Captain Bodgit, who swept the Grade 1 Florida Derby and Grade 2 Wood Memorial before coming up agonizingly short in the Kentucky Derby, which Belling has referred to as "the most exhilarating and frustrating 25 seconds of my life." Captain Bodgit also went on to finish third by a total of two heads in the Preakness Stakes.



Mark Belling, second from the left, in the winner's presentation at Woodbine last September for Capla Tempress's Grade 1 Natalma.

The highlight list also includes Went for the Day Well, who rocketed from a maiden win to a place in the Kentucky Derby field with his score in the Grade 3 Spiral Stakes, and Unrivaled Belle, who banked nearly \$2-million and had a knack notching big wins when Belling was not in attendance.

"I saw her win a Listed race at Delaware Park but I missed her Delaware Handicap and her Grade 1 win in the Beldame Stakes, and it seemed like whenever I would be there to see her in a big race, it wouldn't turn out well, so it almost seemed like it was better if I didn't go," Belling

said with a laugh.

Euro Charline not only provided her signature win at Arlington but she also prompted Belling's first visit to England and Royal Ascot. He has certainly not been swayed by a horse's proximity to Wisconsin, as he is currently a partner in European Guineas prospect Capla Tempress, German-based Va Bank, and Anna Pavlova, who is newly arrived in France by way of South Africa.

"I am in really good shape right now," Belling said, ticking off his list of Team Valor horses that has been fortified recently with the additions of Pillar Mountain and Talk Veuve To Me. "This should be a fun year."



Mark Belling with Went the Day Well, who went from a maiden winner to a Kentucky Derby horse in a single burst at Turfway Park.

For the second-quarter contest, Belling went with his filly La Sardane to lead the way along with seven Team Valor wins and \$421,000 in earnings.