

Barry Irwin: “I like racing in France because the programme and the racecourses are the best.”



Since 1987, Team Valor has won 263 podiums at the black type level and has 28 winners of Gr1. The famous union of American owners is still talking about him this year in Europe, with horses like Devant, Kingstar or Va Bank. Barry Irwin, who heads the entity, answered our questions.

You bought Devant after her impressive maiden victory in Craon. One month later she placed in the Group 3 Prix Six Perfections with a brilliant finish. How is it that an American-based buyer finds himself able to spot such a maiden winner at a local countryside racetrack in France?

I have scouts that look for horses for me, as well as me and my staff watching races daily in France, England, Ireland and Germany. I have been racing in France for more than 30 years. With John Hammond, we won the Vermeille. With Andre Fabre we won the Prix la Force with one horse, and the Vicomtesse Vigier with another. I had horses with Francois Boutin as

well. I am familiar with the scene and many of the provincial courses.

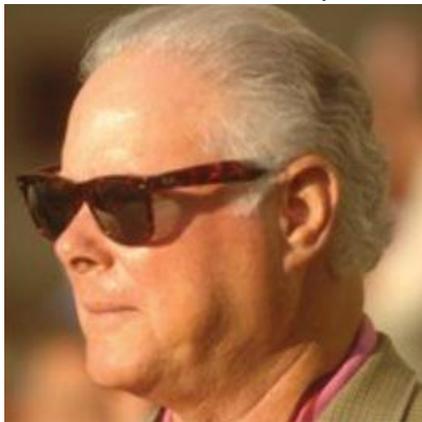
What are your plans for Kingstar?

Kingstar was to have contested the Gordon Stakes at Goodwood, but he has not come out of his last workout in good condition.

On Sunday at Munich, Va Bank finished at the third place of the Grosser Dallmayr Preis - Bayerisches Zuchtrennen (Gr1). He must be the first Polish horse to be Gr1 placed in the western part of Europe. Could you tell us more about the history of Va Bank? How did you discover this horse?

Va Bank is a remarkable horse that I am convinced would have been a Champion in

France if he had been in the right hands. He has been compromised the last 2 years by different soundness issues and he has been able to overcome



them to a certain extent. I don't think he is nearly the same caliber horse as he has been in the past. Andreas Woehler has done a superior job of keeping him in one piece. My wife Kathleen, who is a foreign research consultant for Bloodstock Research Information Services in Kentucky, urged me to buy Va Bank. We bought half of him.

You also planned the mating of Animal Kingdom. Why did you mate Leroidesanimaux and Dalicia?

Dalicia, a Group 3 winner at Baden-Baden beating Soldier Hollow, was originally booked to the French Guineas hero Kingmambo, but when he was unable to temporarily cover mares due to some physical issues, we switched to "Leroi," a horse I bought as agent for Stonewall Farm in Kentucky. The farm owner owned a leg of the mare. I picked him to breed to her mostly off of type and conformation and not pedigree. She is large, big-boned, lengthy type and a 10-11 furlong horse, whereas he was

just under 16 hands, powerful and a pure Miler type.

What is the importance of statistics in your decision process for buying a horse?

Unconsidered. I buy horses based first on ability, second on conformation, third on temperament and last on pedigree. It has served me well over the last nearly 50 years. Pedigree is nice to have, but not essential in developing a racehorse.

You used to have horses in training in Italy. Now your presence is getting stronger in Germany and France. Why are you focusing your European purchases in these two countries?

I don't trust the racing in Italy. I like France because the programme and the courses are the best and the sport is the most beautiful in the world. French horses possess the best finishing speed of any horse in the world. Germany has always intrigued me because every year they develop world class horses from tiny foal crops. Obviously they are doing something right! Their horses have bone, they are tough and they have stamina. Generally speaking we use Europe as a place to buy and develop our racing stock before importing them to America. If my clients would let me, I would never export them to America.

What is the story of the two South African mares that are trained by Alain de Royer Dupre?

Alain has a proven track record with getting good results from South African sprinters. Both of the fillies I have with him, named Brave Mary and Anna Pavlova, were sent from SA to France. I have enjoyed luck racing SA-breds in France before bringing them to America. A few seasons ago Fabre won the Prix du Pin with one of them that went on to win a good race in America. I find that starting them out in France provides a good transition for them.

Do you still have broodmares at stud in France?

I am currently in the process of liquidating all of my breeding stock in Europe, America, South Africa and South America, as it has become too expensive and takes some of my focus

away from racing. I am 75 years old and would rather race than breed at this point in life.

You are focused on buying horses in training around the world. Why have you chosen to buy yearlings in South Africa?

The value in South Africa is hard to beat. If the export routes are ever opened up, Europe will find out exactly how good these horses are. The two best fillies I've ever owned raced first in South Africa. One was Ipi Tombe, who won the Dubai Duty Free, and the other was Irridescence, who beat Ouija Board to take the Audemars Piguet Queen Elizabeth II in Hong Kong. I love the people and horsemen in South Africa, but they have administration issues that they have been unable to overcome. It is the most challenging environment I have experienced in our sport.

What is your plan with fillies at the end of their racing career?

Most of our fillies are covered and offered in November in Kentucky as broodmares. Occasionally we will sell one in training, but my racing partners buy the horses strictly to race them. They love racing them.

In America, what is the percentage of your horses running on turf? Is turf racing a best investment, in terms of value, in North America?

Two of every three of our horses race on turf because it is kinder on them physically, they can recover faster and run more. I start shaking when anybody refers to money spent on horseflesh as an investment because I only think of breeding stock as an investment. Putting money into a racehorse is strictly a punt. It is speculation.

Do you think it is still possible to buy all weather horses like The Deputy, with a turf pedigree, and make them run with success on the dirt?

The Deputy was a turf horse in England. He possessed a tremendous turn of foot. He is an instance of a rare horse bought by us based on style and pedigree. He was bred for the dirt

and we bought him to try it. It worked. We have been successful doing this from time to time, but it is very chancy. The best horse we ever bought in terms of transitioning to dirt was the English runner who very near upset A. P. Indy in the Belmont Stakes. I find absolutely no correlation between an all-weather performer and a dirt horse. Chasing AW horses to find a dirt runner is a good way to lose a lot of money and have no fun in the process.

It is also on the all weather that you have discovered Euro Charline. What's the story of this 1,5 million \$ prize money winning mare?

Truth be told, while I realized she was talented, I was not impressed enough to buy her after her AW win, even though she was trained by my favorite UK trainer Marco Botti. An agent actually pushed me into buying her. Being a former bloodstock agent myself, I have a soft spot for agents who are aggressive in their confidence in a horse. I challenge them and if they come back hard at me, I usually give in. I hope no bloodstock agents read this!



What do you think about the level of the competition in France? What's your opinion about the quality of training in France?

I rate English racing the best in the world, with France and Ireland virtually on the same plane. I think the training facilities in France are the best anywhere. I am particularly impressed by the French racing authority's strong stance on the use of PEDS (performance enhancing drugs) and this is one of the reasons I race in France. The United States of America could learn a lot from the French racing authorities when it comes to dealing with horsemen and drugs

Forerunner of the group stables

The history of Team Valor begins in the 1980s. Barry Irwin and Jeff Siegel, who met in the press rooms at American racetracks and have become friends, start buying horses together. In 1987, they created Clover Racing Stables with two other partners and, from the first year, they fall on Political Ambition (Hollywood Derby, Gr1). In 1992, the other two partners of Clover Racing Stables do not want to reinvest. It's the end of the team, but Irwin and Siegel are rebounding by creating Team Valor. The first horse to usher the casaque is My Memoirs (Do not Forget Me). Bought in Britain, so he had never ran on the dirt. But Barry Irwin was persuaded to hold a Belmont Stakes horse. He therefore asks Richard Hannon to train him on his all weather track. And for his first release on American soil, he realizes an outstanding performance, placing second in A.P. Indy (Seattle Slew) in the Belmont Stakes, in 1992. In 2007, new change: Barry Irwin bought the shares of Jeff Siegel and renamed Team Valor team International, to focus on the evolution of the team started in 2006. Barry Irwin explains: "For everything to say, we had already been looking internationally for several years. We thought that with the development of the internet, the whole world would be much more accessible. I always preferred to look for new talents outside the United States, thanks to the great variety existing in other countries. I have always said that good horse could come from anywhere. What has changed is also the fact that we started running 4 horses elsewhere than in the United States, before sometimes bringing them back here. At first we did not have many ways to buy. So, we looked less at the pedigrees than the others, and looked for first and foremost to find talent. Then we want athletic horses, healthy, and with a good temperament. The pedigree only intervenes at the end. "



ED Note: The preceding article appeared on Wednesday in the Jour de Galop, which is the TDN counterpart for France. The interview was conducted by Adrien Cugnasse, a staff writer.

THIS WEEK IN TEAM VALOR HISTORY

By Kathleen Irwin



EARLY AUGUST brings the following memories of celebration for the stable's partners:



August 1, 2005 – **TARA'S TOUCH**, acquired after several starts in South Africa where she was named Champion Filly Sprinter, won the Grade 3 Royal North Handicap at Woodbine defeating Saint Etienne and favorite Unbridled Sidney, a 5-time stakes winner and 5-furlong course record setter at Churchill. Fourth came Velvet Snow, the winner of the Ontario Damsel Stakes, First Quarter, winner of the Carotene Stakes, Mocha Queen a dual stakes-winning turf

sprint specialist, and others. The Royal North was Tara's Touch's final victory in North America and she was retired to be a broodmare, but as fate would have it, shortly after retirement, she ran into a tree at the farm and died. That was a tragic loss, as Tara was especially beautiful and fast, and was a desirable type as a broodmare.

August 2, 1998 – **COPY EDITOR**, at the age of 6, won the What a Threat Handicap at Calder as the near even-money favorite, covering the grassy mile in a swift 1:33 3/5ths.

August 2, 2009 – **CAPTAIN'S LOVER**, the Champion 3yo Filly in South Africa who also won the Prix du Pin during a brief layover in France, on this date won the Matchmaker Stakes at Monmouth Park. Originally a Grade 3 event, the race was downgraded to Listed status when it came off the turf and was run in the slop. Captain's Lover bobbed at the break but regained her composure and eased into a stalking position on the outside. She commenced her bid on the far turn and easily drew away by 7 lengths.



August 4, 1993 – **DEMALOOT DEMASHOOT** won the Clarinet King Stakes at Saratoga as a prep for the G1 King's Bishop. He led the entire way and fended off a challenge by Mountain Cat to win by 3/4 of a length in time of 1:09 1/5.

August 8, 2007 – **TASHA'S MIRACLE**, bought privately after she broke her maiden at 2 at Hollywood Park, won the Grade 3 Sorrento Stakes at Del Mar in her Team Valor debut and third lifetime start. She won easily by 3 1/4 lengths over future Grade 1 winner Set Play, stakes winner Foxy Danseur, and Keeneland track record setter One Hot Wish. Favored for the G1 Del Mar Debutante, she was withdrawn after tying up in a pre-race work, leaving the G1 at the mercy of Set Play.



Chompin' at the bit



Special to The News Journal/DON BLAKE
 Thomas Jo (No. 7) starts a little slowly out of the gate in the Francis "Jock" La Belle Memorial at Delaware Park Sunday. The start didn't matter in the end, however, as Thomas Jo powered to victory. Story, C2.

Thomas Jo rallies at LaBelle Stakes

From staff reports

WILMINGTON — After an impressive showing at the Belmont Stakes, Thomas Jo came to Delaware Park to claim first place in the 75 thousand dollars Francis 'Jock' LaBelle stakes Sunday afternoon.

Thomas Jo had to rally from behind to win by 1 1/2 lengths ahead of second place finisher Poolman. The Texas-bred covered the fast track in 1:41 3/4. Thomas Jo's time equaled the track record set by Lies of Ommission earlier this year.

Delaware Park in time that equaled the track record. Thomas Jo, a Texas-Bred gelded son of Strong Performance, was later sold to a Saudi Sheikh for three-quarters of a million dollars.

August 9, 2008 – **FAIRBANKS**, acquired as a yearling at the Saratoga Fasig-Tipton Yearling Sale in 2004, won the Duke of Magenta Stakes by nearly six lengths at The Spa on this date. In his wake came Angliana, Magna Graduate, Argentine Grade 1 winner Star Plus, among others.

August 9, 2009 – **RED DUST** won the Premio Ensayo at Maronas in Uruguay.



1 1/2 MILES. (1,543) STAKES. Purse \$110,000 DUKE OF MAGENTA S. FOR THREE YEARS OLDS AND UPWARD. No nomination fee. \$1,000 to enter, starters to receive a \$750 rebate. A supplemental nomination fee of \$200 may be made at time of entry. The added money and all fees to be divided 60% to the owner of the winner, 20% to second, 10% to third, 5% to fourth, 3% to fifth and 2% divided equally among the remaining finishers. Three Year Olds, 120 lbs. Older, 123 lbs. Non-winners of a sweepstakes over a mile in 2008 allowed 2 lbs. Three Races; 4 lbs. (Maiden, claiming, a nd starter races not considered in allowances). (Purse includes an additional \$10,000 for each betting interest over Six that start.) A trophy will be presented to the winning owner.
 Closed Monday, August 4, 2008 with 15 Nominations. (Clear 75)
 Value of Race: \$111,750 Winner \$67,050; second \$22,350; third \$11,175; fourth \$5,588; fifth \$3,353; sixth \$1,117; seventh \$1,117.
 Mutuel Pool \$535,930 Pick 3 Pool \$64,514 Daily Double Pool \$95,542 Exacta Pool \$409,585 Trifecta Pool \$276,836 Grand Slam Pool \$32,210

Last Raced	# Horse	M/Eq.	A/S	Wt	PP	St	%	%	%	Str	Fin	Jockey	Odds \$1
19Apr08	*Haw ²	L	5H	121	6	6	11	11 1/2	14 1/2	15	15 1/2	Migliore R	1.60
06Jun08	*Bel ³	L	6H	123	4	5	6 ²	5hd	6 1/2	4 1/2	2 nd	Maragh R	7.60
02May08	*CD ⁵	L	6H	121	5	4	4 1/2	3 1/2	3 1/2	2 1/2	3 1/2	Bindmoham S	3.15
03Jy08	*CD ⁵	L	5H	121	1	3	3 1/2	4 1/2	4 1/2	3 1/2	4 1/2	Cos E	8.50
14Jun08	*19CD ⁸	L	4C	119	7	7	2 1/2	2 1/2	2 1/2	5 1/2	5 1/2	Domiguez R A	6.50
18Jy08	*Bel ¹	L	6G	121	2	2	7	7	5 ²	6 ^{1/2}	6 ^{1/2}	Castellano J	6.20
04Jun08	*Mb ¹	L	bc	121	3	1	5 1/2	6 ²	7	7	7	Garcia A	13.70

OFF AT 6:05 Start Good. Won driving. Track Fast.
 TIME :234, :474, 1:11, 1:36, 1:52² (:23.90, :47.86, 1:11.16, 1:36.07, 1:55.45)
\$2 Mutuel Prices:
 6-FAIRBANKS 5.20 3.30 2.40
 4-ANGLIANA 5.20 3.00
 5-MAGNA GRADUATE 2.70
 \$2 EXACTA 6-4 PAID \$28.40 S2 TRIFECTA 6-4-5 PAID \$64.50
 \$2 GRAND SLAM 3,5,8-1,4,9-1,2,6-6 PAID \$21.40 Correct

Bay Horse, (M), by Giant's Causeway - Alaska Queen by Time for a Change. Trainer Pletcher A. Todd. Bred by Kidder, Grigg and J & J Mamakos(KY).
 FAIRBANKS sprinted clear in the early stages, raced uncontested on the lead along the backstretch, extended his margin opening a comfortable advantage leaving the far turn, maintained a safe lead into upper stretch and drew away under steady right hand urging.
 ANGLIANA was reserved along the inside, angled three wide while gaining on the turn, angled back to the inside in upper stretch and finished well along the rail to narrowly gain the place. MAGNA GRADUATE was well placed for six furlongs, lodged a bid from outside leaving the turn, raced closest to the winner into midstretch and weakened in the final sixteenth. STAR PLUS (ARG) was unhurried for a half, angled out on the far turn, gained three wide in upper stretch and flattened out. SAM P. chased along the rail to the top of the stretch and steadily tried thereafter. DEPUTY INDY failed to mount a serious rally while four wide. SARATOGA LULABY staided wide rank between horses on the first turn, dropped back after a half, drifted out while trailing at the top of the stretch and was not persevered with in the late stages.
 Owners- 6, Team Valor International; 4, Winning Move Stable, Sanford H. Robbins LLC, Seidman Stables LLC, et al; 5, Alexander Elisabeth H.; 1, Mack Earle L.; 7, Starlight Stables and Starlight Partners; 2, E. Paul Robsham Stables LLC; 3, Moss Maggi
 Trainers- 6, Pletcher Todd A.; 4, Contessa Gary C.; 5, Asmusen Steven M.; 1, McPeck Kenneth G.; 7, Pletcher Todd A.; 2, Hough Stanley M.; 3, Levine Bruce N.

