

**IRISH PUNCH WINS BY 12 ¼ LENGTHS AT ODDS OF 1-TO-20 AT SAM HOUSTON
STEVE ASMUSSEN LOOKS TO STRETCH HER OUT NEXT AT LOUISIANA DOWNS**



Kentucky Derby-winning jockey Stewart Elliott steered Irish Punch to facile maiden victory going 7 furlongs.

When a horse is hammered down from a morning line of 2-to-5 all the way down to 1-to-20 (the lowest pari-mutuel digits available in North American racing) they are supposed to win as Irish Punch did on Saturday at Sam Houston Park.

Elliott allowed the grey daughter of Upstart and the stakes-producing mare Green Punch show some initial early speed, but then he kept her off the rail, where an upstart pretender scooted up the fence to wrest command.

When that one was done before 2 furlongs had been covered, the prohibitive favorite took over and set all the fractions. She went :22 ³/₅, :45 ³/₅ and 1:11, all accomplished under a tug. In the stretch, although she had opened up about 14 or 15 lengths, Elliott eased her down. She cruised her final furlongs in a leisurely :13 ⁴/₅ to finish up 7 furlongs in 1:24 ³/₅ to earn a 62 Beyer speed figure.

Irish Punch won by 12 ¼ lengths. The pace-prompter Dig Baby Dig finished 10 ³/₄ ahead of the third, which had 2 lengths to spare over the fourth horse. All in all the 6-filly field was spread-eagled a total of more than 33 lengths, which is about a sixteenth of a mile. [LINK](#)



Irish Punch never had any idea this game could be this easy after a pair of hard-fought thirds at Fair Grounds.

Homebred Irish Punch earned \$19,740 for her partners, which combined with money she gleaned for finishing third twice at Fair Grounds, brings her career total from 4 starts to \$34,480.

Hall of Fame trainer Steve Asmussen, who trains Irish Punch, said “That was a very, very nice win for the filly. She is starting to get the hang of it now. I reckon that she will make her next start at Louisiana Downs. I know Barry (Irwin) wants to stretch her out and now would be the right time to try that.”

The reason that Barry Irwin, who bred the filly with his wife Kathleen from their mare Green Punch (dam of multiple stakes winner Green Up), is so intent on stretching out the grey filly is that she is bred to improve with a bit more distance.

Says Irwin “Coming off a 7-furlong race that she won so easily will boost her confidence and allow her cruise around there on or close to the lead. It was good that the other filly came up the rail and pestered her a bit in the early going, as it showed her that she needn’t respond to every challenge that early in the race.

“She tried to cut with Stewart coming off the final bend, but he took a hold of her and sent a message that she needed to chill. It was a nice, well-needed winning experience and should set her mind on the right path going forward. It’s nice to have a young filly that actually wants to go long, because most of them don’t.”