

## TEAM VALOR, ANIMAL KINGDOM ARE FINALISTS FOR ECLIPSE AWARDS THREE FINALISTS IN EACH CATEGORY FOR AMERICAN RACING'S OSCARS WINNERS SET TO BE FETED JANUARY 16 IN CEREMONIES IN BEVERLY HILLS

Team Valor International and its home-bred Kentucky Derby winner Animal Kingdom are both finalists for Eclipse Awards, the year-end honors for American racing that will be presented on January 16 in Beverly Hills, California.



*Animal Kingdom, Barry Irwin's Team Valor, and jockey John Velazquez are all Eclipse finalists.*

Team Valor is a finalist for outstanding owner along with Ken and Sarah Ramsey and Midwest Thoroughbreds.

Animal Kingdom is a finalist for champion 3-year-old male, joining Caleb's Posse and Shackleford.

Three finalists were announced on Thursday for each Eclipse category from an election of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, National Turf Writers and Broadcasters Association, and *Daily Racing Form*, the three organizations that present

the awards. Finalists are based on combined totals for first-, second-, and third-place votes. The award winners are determined solely by first-place votes.

Team Valor, in the 25<sup>th</sup> racing season for public partnerships organized by Barry Irwin, recorded typical statistics in 2011 by winning 17 stakes races, eight of them in Graded competition, topped off by Animal Kingdom's classic triumph. Team Valor, which switched to a primary trainer, Graham Motion, for the 2011 season, also collected a Grade 1 victory with Summer Soiree in the Del Mar Oaks and set a stable record with racetrack earnings just shy of \$4-million.

Animal Kingdom was the star of show, rising from relative obscurity to win the Grade 3 Vinery Racing Spiral Stakes in his stakes debut at Turfway Park and then rumbling to a clear victory under the Twin Spires at Churchill in his first start on dirt. He finished a close second to Shackleford in the Preakness Stakes and was the heavy favorite for the Belmont Stakes, only to stumble and nearly lose his jockey, John Velazquez, in an awkward collision a few strides out of the gate when he was sandwiched between two horses. Velazquez also is a finalist for outstanding jockey.

The chestnut colt by Leroidesanimaux came up short in a gallant rally in the Belmont and exited the race with a season-ending hock fracture. He underwent surgery and is back in training with the \$10-million Dubai World Cup as an early goal in 2012.