



The Grade California-Breds

Brother Derek: In A Class By Himself

by LISA GROOTHEDDE

California-bred Brother Derek cemented his status as one of the most talented members of North America's 2003 Thoroughbred foal crop and continued his trek toward the 2006 Kentucky Derby (grade I) by adding yet another professional victory to his credentials on March 4, this time in the grade II Santa Catalina Stakes at Santa Anita Park.

Under a confident ride by regular partner Alex Solis, Brother Derek exhibited the ability to rate in the 1 1/16-mile test for three-year-olds, a \$200,000 stepping stone on the path to the lucrative Triple Crown series. The handsome colt is now five for seven in his young career, and, perhaps most importantly, he boasts an undefeated record in two-turn races.

In his first start since defeating reigning Eclipse champion juvenile Stevie Wonderboy in Santa Anita's grade II San Rafael Stakes, Brother Derek commanded respect as the only graded stakes winner in the field of eight colts assembled for the 68th running of the Santa Catalina. Installed as the 1-2 wagering favorite and 122-pound highweight, he broke from the gate eagerly but was deftly settled by Solis into a stalking position behind early leaders Latent Heat and Mister Triester through opening splits of :23.27, :46.31 and 1:10.31.

Turning for home, Brother Derek got his bay engine moving in full gear, gliding past his rivals down the stretch as Solis merely showed him the whip. The duo reached the wire in 1:41.96, successfully holding off a late rally by 19-1

longshot Sacred Light for a 1 3/4-length final margin of victory. Latent Heat held on for third, nearly three lengths behind the runner-up.

"What a pro he is," Solis marveled from the winner's circle, where he and his winning mount were greeted by owner Cecil Peacock, trainer Dan Hendricks and trophy presenter Beverly Lewis, the widow of prominent local horseman Robert Lewis, for whom the Santa Catalina will be renamed in 2007. "He broke real sharp and placed himself. We're wanting to get him to relax a little bit more. He really won it very easy; I wasn't using him that much. We wanted to make sure we didn't do him in before the Kentucky Derby, if we get to that point."

"Dan said he is only 90 percent (for this race)," Solis continued. "If he was only 90 percent, that's mighty exciting. We just pray he stays healthy and keeps moving forward."

The win was the first for Solis, Hendricks and Peacock in the Santa Catalina, a historic race which produced 1986 Kentucky Derby winner Ferdinand and 1973 runner-up Sham, among dozens of others who subsequently made a run for the roses. Immediately following the 2006 edition, Hendricks confirmed the next target for Brother Derek will be the \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (grade I) on April 8—a 1 1/8-mile challenge which last year yielded eventual Kentucky Derby winner Giacomo.

Bred by California Thoroughbred Breeders Association member and Oregon resident Mary Caldwell, Brother Derek has more than reimbursed his \$275,000 pricetag from the 2005 Barretts March Sale of Selected Two-Year-Olds in Training with cumulative race earnings of \$712,080 to date for Peacock, a Canadian oilman. The Santa Catalina victory was his third straight since capturing the grade I Hollywood Futurity last December.

If Brother Derek goes on to compete in the Kentucky Derby, he will be the first colt to represent the Golden State in the sport's most revered race since 15th-place finisher Lusty Latin in 2002.

Brother Derek is one of five graded stakes winners by his sire, the multiple grade II-winning router Benchmark. The 15-year-old Alydar stallion, who stands for \$10,000 at River Edge Farm Inc. in Buellton, is also responsible for 2004 Santa Anita Oaks (grade I) winner Silent Sighs and her full sister, 2006 El Encino Stakes (grade II) heroine Proposed, 2005 Mervin H. Muniz Jr. Memorial Handicap (grade II) victor A to the Z and 2003 Golden Gate Derby (grade III) winner Standard Setter who, like Brother Derek, is out of a Siyah Kalem mare. 🐾

Grade II Santa Catalina Stakes Santa Anita Park Saturday, March 4, 2006



©Katey Barrett