Wednesday, 03 July 2019 09:48

Surprising stake payouts this weekend at Century Mile

Written by Curtis Stock

Meanwhile, Sharp Dressed Beau’s powerful victory creates a lot of decisions for his owners Empire Equestrian and trainer Rick Hedge. Considered to just be a sprinter, Sharp Dressed Beau handily won the Count Lathum by four and three-quarter lengths going a mile on Monday. “I wasn't really sure he could go that far. Was I confident? No. But I watched the replay a bunch of times and he was drawing away at the end,” said Hedge. “The closest they got to him was at the eighths pole and then he drew away again.”

The big race, of course, is the Aug. 18 $250,000 Canadian Derby going a mile and a quarter. Asked if he was going to point Sharp Dressed Beau in that direction, Hedge wasn’t sure.

“We’ve got to sit back and think about it. He used to be all speed but now he can rate and relax which he showed again on Monday.” Sitting second behind pace-setter Coco Tiger through some fast fractions considering the mud, Sharp Dressed Beau moved to the lead with ease at the five-sixteenths pole and there was never any more questions. “Rigo (jockey Sarmiento) told me that when he asked him at the quarter pole he just exploded.”

Hedge didn’t even give Sarmiento any instructions for the Count Lathum, which saw the legendary trainer Bobby Marsh, who trained the great Count Lathum for his family’s stable making the presentation. “Same as last time?” asked Sarmiento as he threw his legs over the three-year-old. “Yup. Same as last time,” answered Hedge referring to the six furlong Western Canada Handicap that Sharp Dressed Beau won, again coming from off the pace, by two lengths.

Hedge said that while Sharp Dressed Beau was small as a two-year-old he started to grow last August in Calgary. “He grew some more over the winter - he really started to fill out - and I think he’s still growing,” Hedge said of the colt that Empire Equestrian co-owner Lori Neyka bought over the phone for just $1,600 (US) at the Montana Futurity Sale. “He came out of the race super. He was tired but then that’s expected. But he wasn’t to tired to want to play on the walker (Tuesday) morning. “I used to train him to sprint but we’ve had to change that now. I’m galloping him a lot longer than I used to do.”

Maybe the best praise was summed up by Canadian Hall of Fame trainer R.K. ‘Red’ Smith. “He reminded me of Careless Word the way he skipped through the mud,” Smith told Hedge after the Count Lathum referring to the champion colt who, in 1975, won everything for owners Elmbrook Farms: the Kindergarten, Birdcatcher, Tiny Holden and then the Stampede Futurity.

“That was nice to hear but I don’t know what his future is going to be,” said Hedge. “There’s an allowance race in the book going a mile and an eighth on July 25. That would make a nice prep for a mile and a quarter. “But I really don’t know for sure. We’ll just take it day by day and see what happens.”