

# ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS



## JOCKEY LUIS SAEZ CAPTURES FIVE CLAIMING CROWN RACES AND HANDLE HITS A NEW HIGH AT GULFSTREAM PARK

*Compiled from Gulfstream Park news releases/Photos by Derbe Glass and Lauren King/Coglianese Photos*

**L**uis Saez loves riding at Gulfstream Park, and, on Claiming Crown Day, it was very apparent why as the jockey rode six winners on the 11-race December 5 card, including winning a record-breaking five of the nine Claiming Crown races. Among them was a score in the \$150,000 Jewel aboard Jesus' Team, who in his previous outing finished second in the Grade 1 Big Ass Fans Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile at Keeneland. Jesus' Team is being aimed for the \$3 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational (G1) on January 23, 2021, at Gulfstream.

"It's been a great day," Saez said. "I'm so blessed to be here. This is one of my favorite places. This is like home."

Saez also brought home victories in the \$75,000 Iron Horse with Frost Or Frippery, the \$90,000 Canterbury with Fiya, the \$90,000 Distaff Dash with Jakarta and the \$95,000 Tiara with Queens Embrace, as well as a maiden turf win aboard Fighting Force.

On top of Saez's accomplishment, the Claiming Crown once again set a new handle record with total wagering of \$14.6 million, topping last year's \$13.846 million and illustrating how the event continues to grow and evolve. Total handle for the Claiming Crown has increased each year since Gulfstream began hosting the event in 2012. The event, which originated in 1999

at Canterbury Park, is hosted by the National HBPA in partnership with the Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association (TOBA) and with support from the Florida HBPA.

National HBPA CEO Eric Hamelback believes the Claiming Crown has come to be viewed differently in its years at Gulfstream.

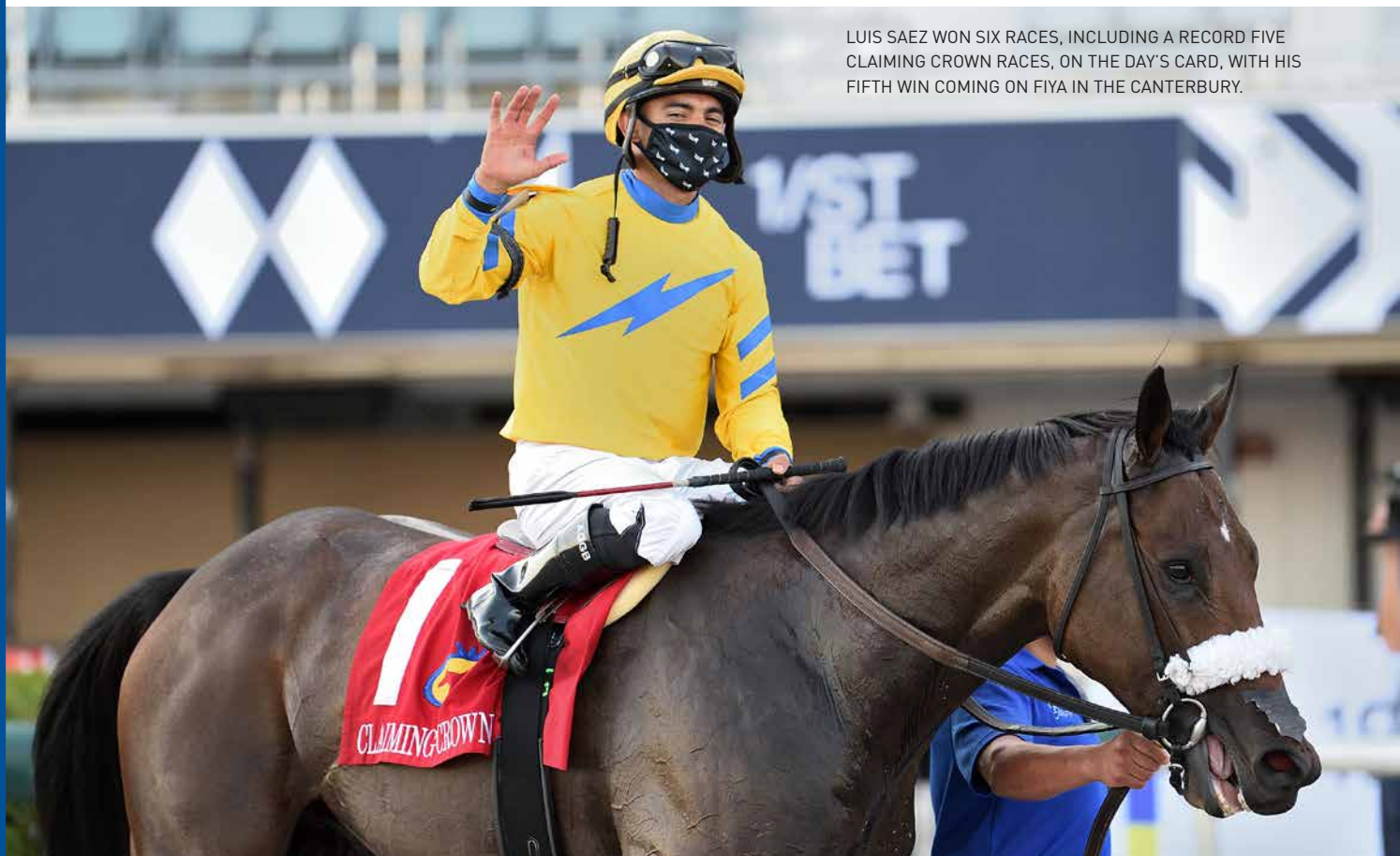
"I believe in the past some people looked at it as a year-end blowout, but I see it as the launch of a new year," he said. "The Breeders' Cup kind of wraps up the year. But because [the Claiming Crown] is at Gulfstream and it's the opening weekend of the Championship Meet, I think it's become the beginning of a new year. I think if it was earlier in the fall or summer, you wouldn't have the buildup or the quality you have. The job [Vice President of Racing] Mike [Lakow], [stakes coordinator] Eric Friedman and, of course, [Executive Director of Florida Racing Operations] Billy Badgett did incredible."

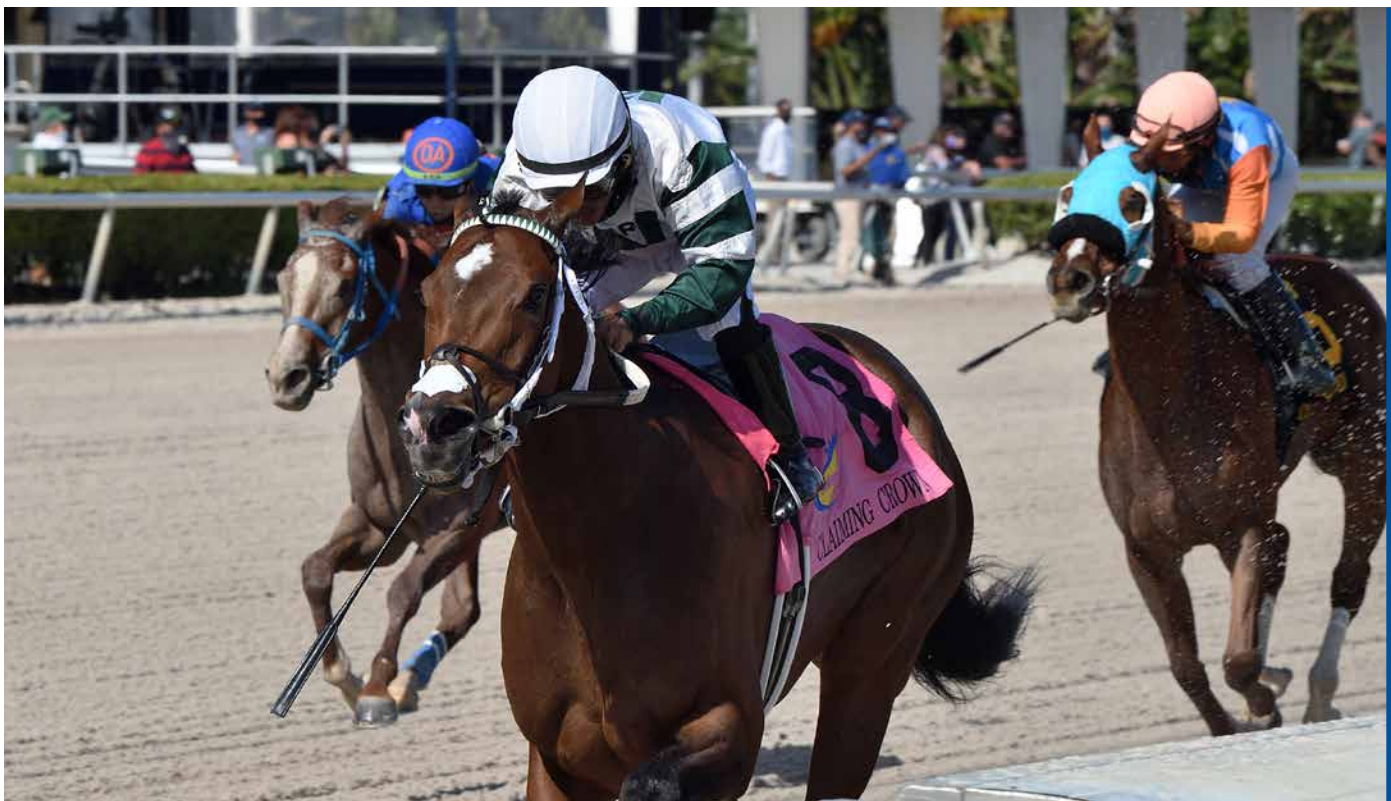
In addition to Jesus' Team, 10 other horses that won or placed in graded stakes participated in the Claiming Crown. In total, 108 horses were entered in the nine Claiming Crown races.

"No question, this event has evolved," agreed TOBA President Dan Metzger. "I thought Saturday's fields, from top to bottom, were some of the best we ever had."

Following are recaps of all of the Claiming Crown races.

LUIS SAEZ WON SIX RACES, INCLUDING A RECORD FIVE CLAIMING CROWN RACES, ON THE DAY'S CARD, WITH HIS FIFTH WIN COMING ON FIYA IN THE CANTERBURY.





## GLASS SLIPPER—DESCENTE

**T**rainer Peter Walder sent out his second straight winner of the \$80,000 Glass Slipper with Descente. Stablemate Liza Star, who won last year's running, ended up fifth after setting a pressured pace as the favorite. Descente, whom Walder claimed for himself for \$6,250 in her previous outing, a mile-and-70-yard race at Gulfstream Park West on October 18, hit the wire in the Glass Slipper 3 ¾ lengths clear of runner-up Don't Get Khozy.

The Glass Slipper, run at one mile for 3-year-old and up fillies and mares who have started for a claiming price of \$12,500 or lower, became Descente's sixth win in eight starts this year. The 4-year-old daughter of Bodemeister, bred in Ontario by Bernard and Karen McCormack, improved her career record to seven wins in 24 starts and earnings of \$176,260. Descente came into the Glass Slipper off of two straight daylight wins, the mile-and-70-yard race by 4 ½ lengths and a mile claimer at Gulfstream by six lengths.

"She's a winner; right off the bat, I wasn't thinking about this race," Walder said prior to the Glass Slipper. "Then I worked her, and she worked really good. Then I worked her again, and she worked really good. I said to myself, 'You only get one shot at this thing. She knows how to win.'"

Ridden by Miguel Vasquez for the first time in the Glass Slipper, Descente rated in second behind Liza Star through an opening quarter in :23.58 before



taking over in the turn after a half in :45.89. She pulled away in the stretch to win in 1:36.99. She paid \$9.20 as the third choice at nearly 4-1.

Three-year-old Don't Get Khozy, ridden by Irad Ortiz Jr. for owner Drawing Away Stable and trainer Antonio Sano, was last early in the 10-horse field before getting up for second by a half-length over second-choice Sky Chaser. The latter, who races for Sun Dance Stables and is trained by Ronald Spatz, bumped with Charge Account at the start before settling mid-pack and then going four-wide in the stretch. She finished four lengths in front of fourth-place finisher Charge Account. Liza Star was next, followed by Dana Grace, Bargainaire, Victory Crusade, Chubofftheholdblock and Slingin Sammy B.





## EXPRESS—KRSTO SKYE

**K**rsto Skye came into the \$75,000 Express off two strong efforts in graded company, so it was no surprise he was made the odds-on favorite—and he won like it with a wire-to-wire score in the six-furlong race for horses that have started for a claiming price of \$8,000 or lower. With Irad Ortiz Jr. aboard, the 8-year-old gelded son of City Zip covered the distance in 1:10.14.

Owned by Daniel Feit and Carlos David and trained by the latter, Krsto Skye set fractions of :22.35 and :45 on his way to his 14th career victory in 61 starts and earnings of \$357,915. The gelding had showed his mettle this fall with a second in the Grade 3 Smile Sprint at Gulfstream on September 5, followed by a fourth (back two noses and 1 ¼ lengths) in the Grade 3 Frank J. De Francis Memorial Dash at Pimlico on October 3.

For Ortiz, the Express was his first win of Gulfstream's Championship Meet.

"It feels great to be back at Gulfstream," said Ortiz, the meet's two-time defending champion. "This is a nice horse. Carlos told me to let him do his thing in that you can control the pace from the inside post. He put me in a



good position, so I just held it there, and when it was time to go, he responded very well."

Krsto Skye finished 1 ¼ lengths ahead of runner-up Whyruawesome, who finished four lengths in front of 3-1 second-choice Combination, who had won eight of 10 starts this year coming into the Express. Game Boy Benny finished 2 ½ lengths back in fourth in the six-horse field, followed by Ray'swarrior, White Wolf and Long Blade.





## DISTAFF DASH—JAKARTA

**S**takes winner and graded stakes-placed Jakarta powered to a 2 ¼-length score as the odds-on favorite in the \$90,000

Distaff Dash for fillies and mares who had started for \$25,000 or less. The 5-year-old daughter of Bustin Stones was ridden by Luis Saez, who captured his second win and his first of five Claiming Crown races on the day. Jakarta stalked the pace early before Saez set her down for her drive. She quickly seized command and drew clear to win the five furlongs on the turf in :56.48.

Owned by Three Diamonds Farm and bred in Pennsylvania by Arrowwood Farm Inc., Jakarta gave trainer Mike Maker a record 18th win in the Claiming Crown.

"Claiming Crown is always a fun day, a little different without fans this year," Maker said. "I was glad to do it with Jakarta. She's been a great filly for us all year, so it's very rewarding. She didn't get away today as quickly as she usually does, but her class prevailed."

Jakarta came into the Distaff Dash off of a sixth in the Grade 2 Bessarabian going seven furlongs on the all-weather surface at Woodbine on November 21, but, prior to that, she finished third in the Grade 3 Buffalo Trace Franklin County Stakes, racing 5 ½ furlongs on the grass at Keeneland on October 9. And in May, at Gulfstream, she earned her first stakes win in the one-mile



Powder Break Stakes on the main track. Jakarta has won four of nine starts and earned \$245,727 this year.

In the Distaff Dash, Unaquoi closed from 10th in the 11-horse field to nab second by a nose over last year's winner Thinkin Cowtown, who finished a half-length in front of Katieleigh. Sweet Yare N Dira finished fifth, followed by My Sarasota Star, Cat's Astray, Precocious Peach, The Great Kath, Dahlongega and Midtown Rose.





## RAPID TRANSIT—AVANT GARDE

**G**elfenstein Farm LLC's Avant Garde captured the \$85,000 Rapid Transit to cap an impressive debut season.

The 3-year-old son of Tonalist made his first start in maiden claiming company at Gulfstream in February. In his fifth try, he broke his maiden by 5 ¼ lengths going a mile at Gulfstream on July 4 and then rattled off three more daylight victories before running fourth in the Oklahoma Derby (G3) on September 27. In his last outing before the Rapid Transit, he was back in the winner's circle on October 25 at Gulfstream Park West. After the Rapid Transit, his record now stands at six wins in 11 starts and earnings of \$143,020.

Trainer Jesus Lander has saddled Avant Garde for all of the gelding's victories, having claimed him for \$10,000 on June 10 at Gulfstream. Avant Garde ran second that day going a mile before launching his win streak. Jockey Leonel Reyes has ridden Avant Garde in all of his victories.

In the Rapid Transit, for horses that had raced for \$16,000 or less, the duo broke second to last but moved up quickly to fourth in the backstretch. Entering the stretch, eventual second-place finisher Town Classic took the lead but couldn't hold off Avant Garde and Reyes, who closed to win the seven-furlong race by a half-length in 1:21.98.



Ridden by Emisael Jaramillo, Town Classic finished 1 ¼ lengths ahead of third-place finisher Lookin At Roses. It was the fourth straight second-place finish for Town Classic, who races for Mercy Man Racing and is trained by Saffie Joseph Jr. Travin Stables' Lookin At Roses came into the Rapid Transit off two allowance wins at Parx, including a three-length score at 1 ¼ miles in his last start on October 26. The 4-year-old Lookin At Lucky gelding, with Robby Albarado aboard, finished a neck in front of Yodel E. A. Who in the Rapid Transit, with Joe Di Baggio two lengths back in fifth.

Crea's Bklyn Law was sixth in the 12-horse field, followed by 2-1 favorite Miles Ahead, T Loves a Fight, All Around, I'm a G Six, Examiner and Fix Me a Sandwich.



## CANTERBURY—FIYA

**T**ransferring Fiya from the main track to turf proved to be a wise decision earlier this year because the 3-year-old Friesian Fire gelding is now five-for-five on the surface after his win in the \$90,000 Tom Metzen Memorial Canterbury for horses that had started for \$25,000 or less. As the odds-on favorite, Fiya took control right from the start of the five-furlong turf sprint and drew clear to win handily by 1 ½ lengths in :55.63.

“He really is an incredible turf horse; since we’ve seen him go from dirt to turf, he just does things so easily,” said trainer Tom Albertrani, who has saddled Fiya in his last three starts.

Owner Robert Masiello acquired the gelding for \$400,000 during the Wanamaker’s Online Auction in July from breeder Ann Merryman and trainer Michael Merryman after his win in a 5 ½-furlong turf allowance at Laurel. Fiya went on to win an allowance at Belmont Park in September and then came into the Canterbury off a 2 ¼-length victory in the Maryland Million Turf Sprint Handicap at Laurel in October.

“Every time he runs, he just seems to run better and better,” Albertrani added. “I think we’ll give him a break now and bring him back later next year.”

Fiya also provided jockey Luis Saez with his fifth of sixth victories on the day’s card.



“He’s a special horse,” Saez said. “When I rode him for the first time at Belmont, he showed me a lot of ability. I couldn’t wait to be on him today.”

Super Super Stable’s Fully Loaded tracked Fiya throughout to finish second by 1 ¼ lengths with Edgard Zayas aboard. He came into the Canterbury off a third in a \$62,000 optional claimer at Gulfstream Park West going five furlongs on a sloppy surface for trainer Amador Sanchez.

Harry’s Ontheloose, with Leonel Reyes aboard, finished third in the Canterbury for owners Sam Wilensky and Harry Orgo and trainer Herman Wilensky. He was a half-length in front of fourth-place finisher Tiger Blood in the 12-horse field.

Legendary Prince was fifth, followed by Citrus Burst, Belgrano, Unmoored, Lusitano, Memorable, Munn Passage and Like What I See.





## IRON HORSE—FROST OR FRIPPERY

**K**entucky shipper Frost Or Frippery earned his first career stakes win in the \$75,000 Kent Stirling Memorial Iron

Horse for runners who had started for \$8,000 or less. Trained by Brad Cox for Steve Landers Racing LLC, Frost Or Frippery was still in seventh at the stretch call and took the lead with only 70 yards to go. With Luis Saez aboard, he held off a late-closing Bobby G and Irad Ortiz Jr. to win the 1 1/16-mile race by a nose in 1:44.57 as the 3-1 second choice.

It was the sixth victory on the afternoon for Saez and the 21st career win for Frost Or Frippery. A 7-year-old son of Lewis Michael, the gelding has now won or placed in 46 of 66 total starts and earned \$365,718. Eight of those wins have come this year, including five in a row this spring and summer at Oaklawn, Churchill Downs and Indiana Grand.

Mohan Stable Inc.'s Bobby G came into the Iron Horse off of three straight wins in Maryland for trainer Jonathan Maldonado. Although he just missed in the Iron Horse, he was the clear runner-up, finishing 1 1/4 lengths ahead of Deal Driven and jockey Joe Bravo. Owned by Troy Johnson and Charles Lo and trained by Robert Mosco, Deal Driven stalked the pace early before taking the



lead near the three-eighths pole. He relinquished the lead to Frost Or Frippery in deep stretch and held on for third by a neck over O'Kram, who had closed for fourth after running last early.

Business Cycle was another neck back in fifth in the 12-horse field, closely followed by Charlie the Creek and Souper Fly Over, who finished a neck and a nose back in sixth and seventh, respectively. Quenane, Bold Paynter, Snap Hook, Meade and Incubator completed the order of finish.





## TIARA—QUEENS EMBRACE



Queens Embrace was making only her second start for owners Spedale Family Racing LLC and

Flying P Stable in the \$95,000 Tiara for fillies and mares who had started for \$25,000 or less. In her previous start, the 3-year-old daughter of Real Solution was claimed by trainer Danny Gargan for \$80,000 in an allowance optional claimer at Belmont Park. She finished fifth and last that day, but earlier in the year, she won four straight at Tampa Bay Downs, breaking her maiden on January 1 for a \$16,000 tag and then capturing two starter optional claimers and an allowance optional claimer. After winning a 1 1/16-mile turf allowance at Monmouth Park on July 3, Queens Embrace earned stakes status with a third in the Grade 2 Lake Placid Stakes at Saratoga on July 19.

In the Tiara, Queens Embrace and jockey Luis Saez (who earned his fourth win on the day) raced well off the pace in the early going while saving ground before reeling in leader Sugar Fix near the sixteenth pole. Queens Embrace then burst free to win by 2 3/4 lengths in 1:40.26 for the 1 1/16 miles on the turf.



It was her sixth win in 12 career starts for earnings of \$155,876.

Favored Sugar Fix, with Tyler Gaffalione up, held on for second, a length in front of Bienville Street and Christian Torres, who closed from mid-pack for third. Irony of Reality was three-quarters of a length back in third in the 10-horse field, followed by Jost Sayin, Rosa Star, Jabuticaba, Afficionado (FR), Isadorable Aida and Maries Melody.





## EMERALD—HIGH NOON RIDER

**G**enStar Thoroughbreds' High Noon Rider scored the biggest win of his career in what was the day's biggest upset as the 55-1 winner of the \$95,000 Emerald for horses that had started for \$25,000 or less. The 8-year-old gelding by Distorted Humor paid his supporters \$113.00 for the win.

High Noon Rider and jockey Edgar Zayas saved some ground around the first turn of the 1 1/16-mile turf race before angling out on the final turn and closing strongly to get up by a half-length in 1:40.94. The finish was a close affair as second place ended up in a dead heat between last year's winner Muggsamatic and favored Temple, who hit the wire together three-quarters of a length in front of Artie's Rumor.

The Emerald was the first Claiming Crown victory for High Noon Rider's trainer, Saffie Joseph Jr. Temple, Muggsamatic and Artie's Rumor were three of five horses in the field trained by Mike Maker, who holds the event's record for most victories at 18, including seven in the Emerald.

"We're just thankful," Joseph said. "We've claimed horses that won graded stakes but had never won a Claiming Crown race. It's good to get it done finally. He's a cool, old horse."



"He's just a horse for a course, honestly," he added. "If you see his numbers before he left Gulfstream this year, they were good. Then we got ambitious. We went all around with him, and he kind of lost his way. Today, he ran back his best race."

High Noon Rider made seven starts at Gulfstream this spring and summer, winning four, before traveling to Virginia and Kentucky, where he placed in three turf allowances. With the Emerald victory, his record now stands at 15 wins in 55 starts and \$633,591 in earnings.

Hieroglyphics finished fifth in the 12-horse Emerald, followed by Over the Channel, Rijeka (IRE), Tusk, Apreciado, Speed Franco, King of Spades and Zippy.





## JEWEL—JESUS' TEAM

**I**n prepping for the \$3 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational (G1) at Gulfstream in January, Jesus' Team made short work of the \$150,000 Jewel, winning the 1 1/8-mile race by three-quarters of a length as the 2-5 favorite.

It was the 3-year-old Tapiture colt's first victory since he defeated \$25,000 claimers at Gulfstream in May, but in six starts since, he has finished third in the Preakness (G1), third in the Jim Dandy (G2), second in the TVG.com Pegasus and, most recently, second in the Big Ass Fans Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) at Keeneland. Jesus' Team now has three wins in 13 career starts with earnings of \$518,540.

"I think the race was good for him because he only had the one work since the Breeders' Cup," said trainer Jose D'Angelo, who conditions the colt for Grupo 7C Racing Stable. "I am very sure he's going to improve because this race worked out very good for him. I can give him some days off and prepare him for the Pegasus World Cup."

Ridden in the Jewel by Luis Saez (as one of the jockey's six winners on the day), Jesus' Team saved ground while running in behind Storm Runner, who set fractions of :23.14 and :46.40. Saez moved Jesus' Team off the rail into the homestretch, and they gradually wore the pacesetter down to win in 1:49.30.



The Dale Romans-trained Storm Runner held on for second, hitting the wire two lengths ahead of Dack Daniel's.

"This is a very nice horse, who ran a very big race last time," Saez said. "I knew today would be a little tough... but he has such a big heart."

Finishing fourth in the eight-horse Jewel was the Mike Maker-trained Treasure Trove, followed by Prince of Arabia, Toughest 'Ombre, Rebelde and last year's winner, Leitone (Chi). **HJ**