



December 4, 2017

## **Sharp Azteca on Fast Track to \$16 Million Pegasus World Cup**

*Trainer Navarro “95 percent” Certain he’ll run in World’s Richest Race  
Stewart duo training as if both will run in Pegasus*

**HALLANDALE BEACH, FL** – Sharp Azteca all but punched his ticket to the \$16 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational (G1) Jan. 27 at Gulfstream Park when he dominated Grade 1 rivals in Saturday’s \$750,000 Cigar Mile at Aqueduct.

After watching the 4-year-old son of Freud draw off to a 5 ¼-length triumph, trainer Jorge Navarro was “95 percent” certain that his 2017 Gulfstream Park Handicap (G2) winner will start next in the richest race in the world.

Sharp Azteca, who fell only a half-length short of winning the Breeders’ Cup Dirt Mile (G1) at Del Mar Nov. 4 after setting the pace, had distinguished himself during his very successful as a quality speed horse. Ridden for the first time by Javier Castellano, Sharp Azteca rated kindly for the Hall of Fame jockey before surging to the lead entering the stretch and romping to victory.

“With that, I’m confident that we belong in this race coming up, the Pegasus. Not having to go to the lead, that’s perfect,” Navarro said.

Sharp Azteca’s willingness to rate in the one-turn Cigar has given his trainer added confidence that he will excel around two turns and the 1 1/8-distance of the Pegasus.

“The night before (the Cigar) I watched the replays when we tried that, he was throwing his head. The first thing I said to Castellano was, ‘I’m not going to get in your way, Castellano. You’re one of the best jockeys in the world. Do what you think is right. All I’m going to ask of you is when they open that window to you, just go,’” Navarro said.

When asked for his run, Sharp Azteca offered an explosive kick that somewhat surprised even his trainer.

“I never had run him that close to a race. There’s always thoughts on your mind –the trip to California, the trip to New York, the weather – but the one thing about him is that he’s always showing up,” Navarro said. “You have to give this horse a lot of credit.”

**Stewart duo training as if both will run in Pegasus**

Breeders' Cup Distaff winner Forever Unbridled and her Grade 1-winning stablemate Seeking the Soul are being prepared to run in Gulfstream Park's \$16 million Pegasus World Cup on Jan. 27, though there has been no final determination as to which will actually run in horse racing's most lucrative race, said trainer Dallas Stewart.

Stewart, who is stabled for the winter in New Orleans, said it's possible both horses will run, with each Pegasus starter requiring a \$1 million buy-in.

"I think one will be a definite, which one I don't know yet," he said. "I don't know if it will be two; I'm thinking one. But plans could change. They're both training up to the race. We're going to have to have a thought process about it to see if it works to have two."

Forever Unbridled, three for three this year and who almost assuredly locked up the Eclipse Award as champion older filly or mare with her Distaff triumph at Del Mar, could have her first work since the Breeders' Cup later this week.

"She's doing well. We just gave her a little bit of time after the race, just jogged her a little bit," Stewart said. "But she's back to full galloping. She's healthy, looks good and I'm very happy."

Seeking the Soul won Churchill Downs' Grade 1 Clark Handicap on Nov. 24 for his first stakes victory. Both horses are owned by breeder Charles Fipke, with Hall of Famer John Velazquez their most recent rider.

"They're both such nice horses, very accomplished," Stewart said. "Seeking the Soul is just coming into his own. He's a very tough horse. She's just been great all year. You can't really compare them, but you can enjoy both of them, for sure."

The trainer acknowledged it's appealing to see how the standout mare, now 5, matches up with the best dirt horses in the world, such as Breeders' Cup Classic winner Gun Runner.

"Also, it's a big purse. We know that she's very good," he said. "You have to see...throw everything on the table and see how you match up, see what it's going to cost you to run. These big races, they do cost you to run; you don't get to run for free. A lot of things have to add up."

*Gulfstream Park is a Stronach Group company, North America's leading Thoroughbred racetrack owner/operator. The Stronach Group racetracks include Santa Anita Park, Gulfstream Park & Casino, Golden Gate Fields, Portland Meadows, Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course, home of the world-famous Preakness. The company owns and operates the Palm Meadows Training Center in Florida, and is one of North America's top race horse breeders through its award-winning Adena Springs operation. The Stronach Group is one of the world's largest suppliers of pari-mutuel wagering systems, technologies and services. Its companies include AmTote, a global leader in wagering technology; XpressBet, an Internet and telephone account wagering service; and Monarch Content Management, which acts as a simulcast purchase and sales agent of horseracing content for numerous North American racetracks and wagering outlets. The Stronach Group is also a leading producer of social media content for the horseracing industry. For more information contact David Joseph at [david.joseph@gulfstreampark.com](mailto:david.joseph@gulfstreampark.com) or call [954.457.6451](tel:954.457.6451).*