

Upstart DQ'd in FOY, Itsaknockout Wins

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Courtesy BloodHorse.com

[February 21, 2015 9:48 PM](#)



Photo: Coglianese Photos/Lauren King

Itsaknockout (right) finishes second to Upstart in the Fountain of Youth, but is awarded the win.

Holy Bull Stakes (gr. II) winner and 4-5 favorite [Upstart](#) was disqualified after crossing the wire first in the \$400,000 [Besilu Stables Fountain of Youth Stakes \(gr. II\)](#) Feb. 21 at [Gulfstream Park](#), with lightly-raced [Itsaknockout](#) elevated from second to his first graded win ([VIDEO](#)).

Upstart, with Jose Ortiz in the irons, closed steadily in the 1 1/16-mile Fountain of Youth to take control from 7-2 second choice [Frosted](#) in the final sixteenth. But he bore out under steady left-handed urging from Ortiz against Starlight Racing's Itsaknockout in deep stretch, causing not only a stewards' inquiry, but a jockey's objection by Itsaknockout's rider, Luis Saez.

Itsaknockout, a 3-year-old son of [Lemon Drop Kid](#) , won his first two races and stepped into stakes company in just his third start Saturday. He now has a 3-for-3 record at Gulfstream and will target the March 28 Besilu Stables Florida Derby (gr. I).

"That was a tough decision," Saez said. "I did think (Upstart) would get taken down, because he really bothered me. When we came into the stretch, I felt like my horse wanted to run, so I thought we'd win the race. But the other horse came out and bothered me. I couldn't ride my horse. He's a little better on the outside. Today there was a little speed outside of us, so we had to play with that. At the three-eighths he really responded."

Todd Pletcher trainee Itsaknockout rated just off the leaders early on, as [Bluegrass Singer](#) went a quarter in :24.27 and a half in :47.87 while tracked by [Frosted](#), the second choice at 7-2. Frosted

ranged up to take the lead as three-quarters went in 1:11.65. But a determined Upstart was closing to his outside with Itsaknockout off his right hip.

"(Frosted) came out on me and I bumped (Itsaknockout) after that," Ortiz said. "I bumped him just a little, but I don't think enough to take me down."

The stewards thought otherwise. Although Upstart eked out the advantage through a 1:38.98 mile and then drew ahead by 2 3/4 lengths to finish in 1:46.28 on a fast track, the way he drifted out under Ortiz's steady stick while doing so caused them to place him second despite his finish ahead.

"I feel bad for the connections of the other horse," Pletcher said. "He crossed the finish line first, but definitely we got impeded a bit and Luis (Saez) had to stop riding for a couple strides. I don't know how it would eventually affect the outcome."

"Bad call," trainer Rick Violette said of the Upstart disqualification. "(The stewards) have to understand that when the horse gets hit behind the girth, the only place the horse can go is to the right. It's disappointing. The horse ran great, we just don't get credit for it. Don't know what's next, but we might have to go to New York."

The Fountain of Youth is worth 50 points to the winner for a spot in the starting gate of the May 2 Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I), with 20,10, and 5 going to the second-through fourth-place finishers. Itsaknockout jumped to the second spot on the leaderboard with his tally.

With 71 points, [International Star](#) tops the leaderboard after winning the \$400,000 Risen Star Stakes (gr. II) at [Fair Grounds Race Course & Slots](#). Upstart, with 36 points, is now third.

Itsaknockout paid \$12.80, \$5, and \$4 at odds of 5-1. Upstart paid \$2.60 and \$2.10. The late-closing [Frammento](#) got up over Frosted to return \$12.80. [Gorgeous Bird](#), Bluegrass Singer, [Juan and Bina](#), and [Danny Boy](#) completed the order of finish.

"The thing I'm most proud of is for this horse to run this well in his third lifetime start, first time around two turns and first time in a (stakes)," Pletcher said. "It was a very, very good effort. He was in between horses in a situation he hasn't been in before, so it was a big effort."

Itsaknockout was bred in Kentucky by Brookfield Stud out of the Cherokee Run mare Stormy B. He was a \$350,000 purchase by agent Frank Brothers from the consignment of Dromoland Farm, agent, at the 2013 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga yearling sale after being pinhooked for \$130,000 by Black Cherry Farm from the Elm Tree Farm consignment at the Keeneland November breeding stock sale in 2012.

"We knew he had the talent, but you have to always wonder until they do it," said Starlight managing partner Don Lucarelli. "This sealed it. We had never won this race and naturally it gives us a lot of aspirations for going to the Derby. We're just excited for all the partners. We had a big crowd here today. We really rolled the bones and it paid off."