

SENIOR BUSCADOR WINS GRADE 1 SAUDI CUP

By Michael Cusortelli

Joe R. Peacock Jr.'s Senor Buscador, a Kentucky-bred son of Mineshaft with strong New Mexico roots, won the world's richest Thoroughbred race, the February 24, \$20-million Saudi Cup (G1) at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Ridden by Junior Alvarado for New Mexico-based trainer Todd Fincher, Senor Buscador went a one-turn mile and an eighth in 1:49.50 while defeating Ushba Tesoro (JPN) by a head bob. The 6-year-old stallion earned the \$10 million winner's share of the purse from his fifth stakes victory and first Grade 1 score.

Senor Buscador was bred by Joe Peacock Jr. and his father, the late Joe R. Peacock Sr. The stallion is the fifth winner from as many starters foaled by Rose's Desert, a multiple stakes winning New Mexico-bred Desert God mare bred by Joe Peacock Sr.

"My parents started racing horses about 55 years ago, so I grew up around (racing)," said Peacock Jr. at the post-race press conference. "This is the last horse my father and I bred together. It's very, very special. We couldn't be more excited about the result."

While she was racing, Rose's Desert was the leading New Mexico-bred distaffer. From 2010-13, Rose's Desert earned \$626,035 from 15 starts and won seven restricted stakes at Sunland Park and Zia Park. The mare has also been a prolific producer, as she's foaled a total of four stakes winners from five starters, including Runaway Ghost, the winner of the 2018 Sunland Derby (G3), multiple stakes winner Sheriff Brown, and stakes winner Our Iris Rose.

As for Senor Buscador, he began displaying his talent right off the bat, as he won the listed 1-mile, \$180,000 Springboard Mile Stakes for 2-year-olds at Remington Park in just his second lifetime start. He's won three graded stakes since then, including the 2022 Ack Ack Stakes (G3) at Churchill Downs and last year's 1 1/16-mile, \$302,000 San Diego Handicap (G2) at Del Mar, and less than a year ago -- before he began his U.S. and world tour --

Senor Buscador scored a four-length victory in the mile and a sixteenth, \$75,000 Curriobot Handicap at Sunland Park.

All told, Senor Buscador has won seven of 18 outs and has banked \$11,496,427. He entered the Saudi Cup off of his second-place finish, a short neck behind winner National Treasure, in one of North America's richest horse races, the January 27, \$3-million Pegasus World Cup Invitational Stakes (G1) at Gulfstream Park near Miami, Florida.

Senor Buscador won the Saudi Cup by employing his usual late stretch kick.

"Todd said early on that he thought this race would set up perfectly for him, and that it was a good distance," said Peacock. "We thought the one turn would be beneficial for his running style. He's got a big heart, and he always tries hard. He doesn't always get there, but we knew that -- given enough time -- he'd put it all together and win a big one."

"We started thinking about this race a couple of weeks before the Pegasus," said Fincher. "It's a big purse, and it draws the best horses in the world. I don't think this horse has ever gotten the credit he deserves. We wanted him to prove how good he was, and he finally did."

"All the credit goes to Todd and his team," Peacock Jr. said. "He had the horse at his peak performance level, and today we got to see what that looks like."