

GLOBEFORM'S BREEDERS' CUP SERVICE

Previews and ratings by Geir Stabell



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BREEDERS' CUP CLASSIC CONTENDER

FOREVER YOUNG IN FOCUS



FOREVER YOUNG is set for a second crack at the Breeders' Cup Classic, having finished third behind **SIERRA LEONE** and **FIERCENESS** last year. That was a strong performance but he was even better when winning the 9-furlong Saudi Cup in February, a race he captured by outstaying the Hong Kong champion Romantic Warrior to beat him by a neck. The two drew over ten lengths clear of another highly rated Japanese horse, Ushba Tesoro, and it was some race. Romantic Warrior, a turf horse coming off eight straight wins, looked all over the winner as his rider unleashed him at the top of the lane - but Forever Young rallied late to deny him. Romantic Warrior was held at the world's best horse by the (Euro / Hong biased) official handicappers. I'm not so sure about these World Rankings, by the way; this year they are telling us that Ombudsman is a better horse than Sovereignty, and US based runners are all too often underrated.

That the Saudi Cup was rated too highly may or may not have become evident when Forever Young and Romantic Warrior ran at Meydan in early April; Forever Young finished third behind Hit Show and Mixto in the Dubai World Cup and Romantic Warrior lost to Soul Rush as the 2/5 favorite for the Dubai Turf. It was probably a case of finally revealing what Romantic Warrior was all about - but when it comes to Forever Young it was different story. His trainer opened up about what had happened a few weeks later, telling the media that his horse had been subjected to highly unsatisfactory treatment leading up to the race, and that he had sent a letter of complaint to the Emirates Racing Authority.

In his letter, trainer Yahagi raised concerns over Forever Young's pre-race treatment, specifically an episode where the horse was confined in a dark room for approximately 40 minutes for urine sample collection. According to Yahagi, the ERA staff assigned to the task gave conflicting instructions, resulting in confusion and disarray at the scene. Ultimately, no urine was collected, and with minimal time left before heading to the saddling area, the horse became agitated, exerted undue effort, and depleted his energy reserves. Yahagi wrote candidly, "I deeply regret that he ended up being the greatest victim of this incident."

Forever Young was the only horse in the Dubai World Cup lineup asked to provide a urine sample prior to the race. In light of the unique burden placed on his horse, Yahagi questioned the legitimacy of such treatment and also stressed the ERA's duty to provide clear explanations to the Japanese public, international fans, and media, given the global wagering on the event. The letter urged the ERA to provide a clear, non-misleading account of the situation and requested an apology, emphasizing the need for constructive dialogue to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

The horse ran so far below his true form that it's easy to accept that something had affected him in a negative way. Having been beaten a short head when third to Mystik Dan in last year's Kentucky Derby and 2 3/4 lengths when third to Sierra Leone at the Breeders' Cup, he is much better than Hit Show and Mixto, that's for sure. He performed to GF 121 at Del Mar last year and he moved up to **Globeform 124** in the Saudi Cup. Whether he can improve again is hard to say but this son of Real Steel has been specifically trained for the Breeders' Cup Classic, he comes here a fresh horse and he comes here with a chance. He bypassed the Japan Dirt Classic this year (a race he used as a Breeders' Cup prep in 2024) and instead ran in the Nippon TV Hai, a 9-furlong race where he met vastly inferior rivals and won readily. Coming from off the pace, he took it by 2 1/2 lengths from minor stakes winner Revontulet. Forever Young idled through the last half-furlong, with more up his sleeve. He ran to approximately GF 115+ and it was a fully satisfactory comeback.

Forever Young / Saudi Cup: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2haO-qdfj8>

Forever Young / Nippon TV Hai: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICTz8xP3jOs>