

# FIRENZE FIRE GRINDS OUT JEROME STAKES VICTORY

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but everybody is on the same terms. Jason and his staff did a good job of keeping him active and moving as much as they could, and he breezed well. We were happy where he was and he showed it today."

Lombardi said the one-mile Gotham Stakes (Grade 3, March 10 at Aqueduct) would most likely be next for Firenze Fire, followed by the New York oval's April 7 Wood Memorial Stakes (G2). The New York Racing Association announced earlier in the day that if a grade 1 winner runs in the Wood there would be a \$250,000 bonus, pushing the purse to \$1 million. Firenze Fire fits that description.

"The bonus didn't change anything," Lombardi said. "We staying here. We're not going south. This is fantastic, especially since he's a homebred and people kept telling me, 'Why are you getting into breeding?' It's a dream right now. I've been in this game for nine years and had some good horses but this is something special."

The victory was fourth in six career starts for the son of the Langfuhr mare My Every Wish and the \$90,000 winner's share of the purse pushed his earnings to \$539,100.

"He didn't have the easiest of trips ... but it's nice when things work out," Servis said. "They don't usually, but when they do it's nice."

Seven Trumpets, making his stakes debut for West Point Thoroughbreds, set fractions of :50.81 and 1:16.72 for six furlongs and enjoyed a two-length lead at the eighth pole before he drifted in and gave way in the final yards under jockey Paco Lopez.

He finished 5 1/4 lengths ahead of Coltanmississippi.

"We are thrilled with his performance. He ran well in his first race (since Nov. 25)," said Tom Bellhouse, West Point's chief operating officer. "We re-engaged the winner after the wire and that's something you like to see."

Bellhouse said the decision would be made by trainer Dale Romans and West Point president and CEO Terry Finley, who were not on hand, but said the Gotham and Wood were likely targets for Seven Trumpets. **BH**

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