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Jockey Brian Hernandez Jr., seen here with Embellishing Bob after winning a Churchill Downs race in 2014, guided Florida-bred Xtra Luck to victory in Saturday's \$100,000 Louisville Handicap at the famed track.

Xtra Luck needed no such thing in Louisville

Bred in Florida by Julio Bozano's Haras Santa Maria de Araras, S.A., Xtra Luck didn't need any as he stalked the pace of grade-one winner Majestic Harbor in second place before moving to the lead on the far turn and galloped to a 1½-length win in the \$100,000 Louisville Handicap (G3) at a distance of 1½ miles.

After moving to the lead, the son of the son of Exchange Rate blasted home running the last quarter-mile in :23 2/5 seconds. The win was Xtra Luck's third in a career spanning 20 starts, but it was a big one for owners Michele and Cliff Love of Houston. The winner's share of \$59,520 raised their horse's career earnings to \$154,644.

For Greater Glory, a son of Afleet Alex, finished second, while Golden Soul, runner-up in the 2013 Kentucky Derby (G1), finished third. Patrioticandproud, a grade-two placed trainee of Ocala native Mark Casse finished fourth.

Xtra Luck broke his maiden in his third start going a mile-and-70-yards on the main track at Fair Grounds in New Orleans on Jan. 3, 2014.

The dark bay or brown gelding did not win again until March 2 this year when he won an allowance race going about 1 1/8 miles also at Fair Grounds, but this time on the turf course.

In between those wins, his



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and improving distance horse.

Part of the slow realization that Xtra Luck might be attributed to his sire Exchange Rate, a son of Danzig which was campaigned as a sprinter by D. Wayne Lukas even though he won the 1 1/16-mile Risen Star Stakes (G3) early in his three-year-old year.

Another perspective on Exchange Rate would be his strong female side, something that didn't escape the folks at Haras Santa de Araras. The sires of his first three dams are Seeking the Gold, Spectacular Bid and Nijinsky 2nd. In addition, this is the immediate family of Sunshine Forever, the 1988 champion turf horse, and a son of Roberto.

For the Loves, this is their first stakes win, and they didn't need extra luck. In races going a marathon distance like 1½ miles, there is not a lot of speed or these horses would be running a shorter distance.

In the case of the Louisville Handicap, Xtra Luck was one of the few horses in the race to be first or second at every call in his two

connections learned that he preferred turf to the main track, and surprisingly, he wanted more distance. When he ran second at 1 3/8 miles to Golden Soul in November last year, they knew they had a distance horse,

previous races.

In Saturday's race, Xtra Luck staked out his place behind leader Majestic Harbor, which had shown speed in previous races but had not won in two starts on the turf. As a result Xtra Luck and his jockey Brian Hernandez Jr. were able to track the slow fractions of the leader, and then speed by the leader in the stretch. Majestic Harbor finished last.

Meanwhile in Albuquerque at the Downs, Florida-bred African Rose won the \$55,000 Albuquerque Distaff Handicap for fillies and mares three-years-old and up. The six-year-old daughter of Bwana Charlie won the one-mile race in 1:36 1/5 by 3 3/4 lengths.

The top three finishers went one-two-three all the way around the racetrack with African Rose going wire-to-wire. Running for trainer Justin Evans, African Rose won for Judge Lanier Racing. She was bred in Florida by Heiligbrodt Racing stable.

Just a brief reminder — the Belmont Stakes is just 12 days away. It appears that Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes winner American Pharoah will face as many as 10 challengers in New York.

The son of Pioneerof The Nile will be bidding to become the 12th Triple Crown winner in history. There has not been a Triple Crown winner for 37 years when Florida-bred Affirmed won in 1978.