

DEL MAR, CALIFORNIA – NOVEMBER 06: Jockey Joel Rosario rides Knicks Go to win the Breeders' Cup ... [+] Classic at Del Mar Race Track on November 06, 2021 in Del Mar, California. (Photo by Rob Carr/Getty Images)

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In his blazing gate-to-wire victory in the 2021 Breeders' Cup Classic at Del Mar on Saturday evening, five lengths and pulling away from his nearest rival, Knicks Go ran through almost every pundit in racing's doubts about his abilities to carry his speed the distance in the company of Medina Spirit and Essential Quality, who placed and showed, respectively. His winning time was a blistering 1:59.2, a very respectable entry into the Breeders' books. Going off at 3-1, he paid \$8.40 at the track.

As most in the industry expected, it was very much Knicks Go's race at the start, as he broke easily and assumed the lead into the first turn. Up the backstretch he seemed well within himself, a length or two ahead of, at times, some surprising also-ran names on his heels, Art Collector, for one, who was in second for about a second.

DEL MAR, CALIFORNIA – NOVEMBER 06: Jockey Joel Rosario reacts after riding Knicks Go to win the ... [+] Breeders' Cup Classic at Del Mar Race Track on November 06, 2021 in Del Mar, California. (Photo by Sean M. Haffey/Getty Images)

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For his part during these furious first fractions, the highly favored Essential Quality was, as per habit, steadily in contention if a shade more toward the back than his connections would arguably have liked him to be, slowly working his way up from fifth, which is to say, in the second half of a nine-horse field. But all the way up the backstretch, the conventional wisdom that Essential Quality and/or Medina Spirit would overtake Knicks Go remained in full working order — things were more or less as they should be, and the fun was supposedly about to start between Medina Spirit and Essential Quality somewhere in or around the far turn.

That bit of fun never happened. Instead, late in the turn for home and out into the stretch, Knicks Go slid a couple of lanes wide and, basically, floored the accelerator. Instead of having Knicks Go fade as expected at this point, Medina Spirit and Essential Quality found themselves in the position of having to run him down, and in the face of Knicks Go's late burst of speed, the project of running him down within the last furlong quickly became a lot harder than they liked or were able to pull off. Essential Quality moved inside and did finally take what looked like a reasonable shot at the frontrunner, getting to within a couple of lengths of Knicks Go, but then, suddenly, had to work harder than he wanted to be just to keep up as Knicks Go pulled away. As the field faded resolutely into the background, Knicks Go strode out, pulling to the wire eight-tenths of a second under two minutes. It was all that Medina Spirit and Essential Quality could do to hold on to what they had.

It was a disappointing result for Bob Baffert and Medina Spirit, who, still operating under the thunderheads of positive drug tests from the spring in Kentucky, were hoping for a shard of redemption. The only favorite who lived up exactly to his billing was Hot Rod Charlie, who ran fourth.

Source: [Breeders' Cup Classic 2021 Results: Knicks Go Breezes To An Easy Win, Medina Spirit Places, Essential Quality Shows](https://news-wire.com/breeders-cup-classic-2021-results-knicks-go-breezes-to-an-easy-win-medina-spirit-places-essential-quality-shows/)