

148TH Belmont Stakes

Saturday June 11, 2016
New York, New York



Steve Asmussen

Bobby Flay

Kenny Troutt

Elliott Walden

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody. Congratulations. We have Bobby Flay.

BOBBY FLAY: The best thing I've seen all day.

THE MODERATOR: We have NYRA CEO and president Christopher Kay.

Q. Bobby, can you explain, what gave you the foresight to purchase an interest in this horse just a few days ago?

BOBBY FLAY: The truth was that I had planned to bring about 15 to 20 people to the Belmont Stakes, which I do every year, and I had a horse named America, a filly, who was going to run in the Ogden Phipps, but I retired her just last month. So I really had nothing to run.

So I wanted to make sure my guests had a very enjoyable experience. So I wanted to purchase a horse to run, not necessarily in the Belmont Stakes -- and there were a couple of other horses that we were looking at.

And then Mr. Walden next to me told us that we could get involved in Creator. It's not really the thing I usually do because I usually buy fillies. But having a chance to be involved with a horse like that, with a farm like that, and the people that are involved in it, just it was a no brainer for me.

I shouldn't even be sitting here. I mean, really. I just -- the only thing I did was I certainly was cheering the loudest in the entire racetrack, and maybe I gave that last little head bob, but that's about it.

THE MODERATOR: We also have Elliott Walden, the president of WinStar Farm. And I'm sorry?

KENNY TROUTT: Kenny Troutt. The guy who makes all the difference.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations,

KENNY TROUTT: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Steve Asmussen on his way in. Everybody needs a towel. This is sort of like being soaked with a Gatorade bucket after the game, I guess.

So from left to right, we have Steve Asmussen.

KENNY TROUTT: Kenny Troutt.

THE MODERATOR: Elliott Walden, president of WinStar, and Bobby Flay, world renowned chef and horse owner/breeder, and a recent investor in Creator. So congratulations, all.

Steve, I guess we'll start with you. This has been an incredible year so far. You've been elected to the Hall of Fame this summer. Over 7,300 wins, second all time. Where would you rank this among those wins?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: It's the best feeling right now. The great thing about racing is you have a bad day, bad week, bad month, they don't put you behind the gates, they line you up even and give you a chance to prove yourself.

Obviously, want to thank for the opportunity with a horse like him that can prove he's good enough to win the Belmont Stakes.

THE MODERATOR: Does this take some of the sting out of Curlin getting beat in 2007?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: Curlin didn't ever do anything but make us happy. But being a victor of the Belmont Stakes will look good on that plaque.

THE MODERATOR: What did you think of the ride that Irad put up?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: I thought Irad gave him a perfect trip. I thought he saved yards and won by inches. He made the difference.

THE MODERATOR: It looked like he was -- him and the 1 horse were going for the hole there in midstretch, when Gettysburg was tiring and, just kind of beat him to it.

STEVE ASMUSSEN: Saved a lot of ground going into the first turn. Gettysburg did his job. Great call by Elliott, there at 48.4 for a half allowed Creator to show who he is. I thought quite a bit of traffic around the quarter pole. Irad was beautifully patient. Went through a lot of traffic very smooth (Spanish audio overlapping), he stayed focused through the traffic and did all he could to get up and win a great race.

THE MODERATOR: And he was one of five horses that's ran in the Derby and took the five weeks. Do you think that benefited him in terms of freshness?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: I think that today was perfect for us by inches. That's how you have to be on race day.

Q. This is for Steve. Steve, in the Derby, you said that Creator really didn't get a chance to run. How anxious were you to be able to get him to be able to run in a race like this?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: Well, going up to the Derby, I thought that he had a wonderful chance. Just the progress the horse had made through the spring, the confidence level he was at. We were extremely confident Derby week, and I thought traffic that day obviously didn't allow him to show it.

Elliott came and observed him following the race. We watched him, monitored his weight, and thought that he bounced back to where he'd give us another chance to prove it. We're very fortunate to be in this position because there's just a couple chances to prove you're a Classic winner.

Q. For Elliott, please, could you tell us what led you to name this horse Creator.

ELLIOTT WALDEN: Faith in God. We are a Christian farm, and the Troutts are Christians, and faith is very important to them, and their relationship with Christ is very important to them. So we look for opportunities to name horses after religious themes at times. We've named a horse New Testament. We've named a horse Benediction.

We like this horse an awful lot as a 2-year-old, and I don't know, God might have given me a sign. I don't know.

Q. Elliott, you talk about faith in God, but what gave you faith in Steve Asmussen to give him a horse like this for the first time?

ELLIOTT WALDEN: Well, Steve -- I don't think it's any secret that Steve is a Hall of Fame trainer. I know he's getting in this year, but like when you've won 7,300 races, and we try to align ourselves with trainers that are Hall of Fame trainers. So Steve's done extremely

well with some Tapits. They can be a little difficult.

I know Steve loves me saying this because he wants to train every Tapit in the world.

STEVE ASMUSSEN: Thank you, Tapit.

ELLIOTT WALDEN: He did extremely well with Untappable. This horse was a little fiery as a 2-year-old. I felt like he would just not -- we sent a lot of our horses to Todd Pletcher and Belmont, and I just felt like Saratoga and the pressure that 2-year-olds are under there, this horse wouldn't really thrive in that environment. Gave him to Steve, gave him the opportunity to take him to Saratoga if he wanted, and he said, no, let's leave him out of the Saratoga Fray.

And he just trained him beautifully as a 2-year-old to kind of cultivate what you saw today, and that's a confidence horse that went through horses. Every race he's improved upon himself, except for the Derby where he got stopped, and I'm really excited about his future.

Today just validated his whole career to this point. If he didn't win today, you'd think, well, maybe the Arkansas Derby was just a fluke, but the fact that he won today validates everything that he's done, and he's going to be a horse that's going to be a lot of fun.

Can I buy that percent back, Bobby?

BOBBY FLAY: Sure.

Q. Kenny, Elliott, can you reflect on the decision earlier in the week to run Gettysburg? It looked like that was the tactical move that probably won this race for you.

KENNY TROUTT: Well, we talked about it, and so we needed some -- a fast pace up there as much as we could get, and Gettysburg did a great job, and then Creator could run his race, along with a lot of other horses in that race that could run the race too.

And then Creator was just ready, and he fired big.

Q. When they were coming to the wire, did you have flashbacks two years ago to Commissioner?

KENNY TROUTT: I did.

Q. Only that was the reverse. He was on the lead and got caught, and this time you're trying to get up.

KENNY TROUTT: Yeah, I still haven't gotten over that loss.

ELLIOTT WALDEN: Steve Davison is a really good

friend with Twin Creeks. We own Constitution with him. So it's tough to win, beating him an inch like that.

Destin, we broke him at the farm, so we have ties to him. It was just nice, and Steve was the first guy to come up and congratulate us. So it was real nice.

Q. Did you talk to Todd Pletcher after the race at all?

ELLIOTT WALDEN: I haven't.

Q. Todd, of course, was the trainer of Commissioner.

ELLIOTT WALDEN: Yes.

Q. This is for Steve and Elliott and if you guys want to jump in, you can too. When Creator was coming, did you think (Spanish audio overlapping) at the wire, did you think you had won?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: Loved where he dropped him over in the first turn. Just felt very good about his chances, knew that he had a chance to run his race. Just focusing on him when he got a little daylight at the head of the stretch, here he came. Just rooting on him. When he got to the wire, you thought he won. We were waiting for him to put up the number to turn loose.

ELLIOTT WALDEN: I thought he was going to win at the eighth pole easier than he did. I thought Destin showed a courageous effort to hang in. He had momentum. He was coming.

You think back to the Arkansas Derby, and he went whoosh, like that. He couldn't get by Destin. I don't know how many lengths, it was two or three lengths back to the third horse. Both horses ran a winning race.

I did have flashbacks to Commissioner about four jumps before the wire.

KENNY TROUTT: It was -- where we were sitting was right on the finish line, and we could see when he went by we won. So we all headed out very quickly. (Spanish audio overlapping).

ELLIOTT WALDEN: He was pumping his fist as it came down to the wire four or five times.

Q. Steve, in your mind is Irad the difference?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: It made the difference. There was a spot where he was almost hung about four wide over one horse. He made the exact right decision there. I thought his patience from the quarter pole without (Spanish audio overlapping) and it showed itself.

Q. Can you talk about what it's like to win.

KENNY TROUTT: Yeah, Tapit's big.

BOBBY FLAY: It's amazing. (Spanish audio overlapping).

KENNY TROUTT: I do want to say we're very excited with Bobby being a partner on this. It's really exciting and everything. So thank you.

BOBBY FLAY: My pleasure.

Q. Elliott, can you speak about when you bought him as a young horse.

ELLIOTT WALDEN: David Hanley, who's a great judge of a horse, this was David's favorite horse. He was a horse that we had seen on the farm. We came by at the sale, when they had the sale on the farm at Gainesway, and came back and saw him and just really liked his balance, his athleticism. He's just got a beautiful walk, walks like a cat. Very efficient in his movement.

I did like that side of things because I think Tapit, as brilliant as he is, now in the quarter mile and a half is something that -- before Tonalist, especially he wasn't known for. I felt she was a second in the grade 1 at a mile and a quarter, the Santa Margarita, and in the Apple Blossom, I think he was third. Her name is Marina.

Her father is privately held. So it goes back to a great Phipps family and Private Account. He does have some American influences in the bottom side of his pedigree down in there. It was attractive to us as a yearling. He was very attractive to us this year.

Q. I take it you were happy with the textbook way it played out during the course of the race?

ELLIOTT WALDEN: It did. It was not an easy decision because there were two trainers involved as well. And my hat's off to Todd. Todd's won a lot of big races for us. I spoke to Todd about this about a week ago. I felt like it was the right thing to do was to realign the camps because Todd had the second and third choice in the race, and I just felt like it would be easier on him to answer to his other owners, it would be easier on us if we realign the camp for this race.

I assured him that he would get Gettysburg back after the race, and he likes Gettysburg an awful lot. Gettysburg ran pretty credible. I think he hung in there for fifth or sixth.

Todd was great to work with. It's hard when you have owners that Steve and Todd both have a lot of horses, and sometimes they have to run separate entries in the race for different owners, and that's hard. But I've

always had a feeling that's worked for me. If you do what's right for the horse, you'll do what's right for the owner. If Todd had two horses in the race that were different owners and he picked the spot because it was the right thing to do for the horse, then the owners would come along and eventually the decision would be right for the horse.

That was really what I stuck to today. It was right for Creator. I did worry about how Todd would receive it. Todd received it with the class that he has. He understood. We have a great relationship. So there's nothing about the decision that had anything to do with just the game plan that was set up, and it did work today.

Q. He is getting the horse back?

ELLIOTT WALDEN: Yes.

Q. Is it more fun to win with an owner or a trainer?

ELLIOTT WALDEN: It's great to win any time. The Troutt family has been extremely good to my family and great for racing. Kenny and Lisa have come into this. We were here with Drosselmeyer in 2010 with Lisa sitting up here and Kenny at a basketball game. To win these kinds of races, however you win them is special. I can't really differentiate between the two, and it's just great to share this with the Troutt family. They have been special in my family and treated me like family. They have everything that God could give a person, and they treat you like normal people, and it's really special.

Q. Anyone can answer this. Plans for the horse? Does he stay here in New York and go up to Saratoga? And next target for him?

KENNY TROUTT: You guys want to talk it over?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: The focus was today. This was his chance to win a Classic. I think we really need to respect his effort from today, observe the horse and do what's best for him. And I think that we -- we had a little frustration after the Derby. Hats off to the winners all the time, nothing but congratulations, but I thought today the focus was for him to be on this stage to prove how good he was. With him doing that, we'll definitely observe how much it took out of him and what's best for him for the second half of the year.

With Bobby just in on the horse, well aware of the focus being the Belmont today, and we will do what's right for him from here on out.

ELLIOTT WALDEN: He'll get a little break. Might get a break at WinStar and back to Steve. That's what we talked about before the race. I don't know if anything changed with it. The great thing is this horse is -- to me, like he said, he validated his form up to this point,

and I think the sky's the limit with this horse going forward. It's special with two grade 1s as a horse. It's a little easier to win one, but when a horse wins two, they've got to be a great race horse.

That's what exciting for me, and not only this year, but maybe next year. There's a lot of big purses around. We might have to get Bobby to go find a friend that has one of those spots in the Gulfstream race. But it's just fun, and it's great. So we'll get a little break and then come out.

Q. Steve, what kind of week did Creator have coming into today?

STEVE ASMUSSEN: We trained him at Churchill off of the Derby, observed him in familiar surroundings. Elliott came out and watched him go a few times. We watched the breeze about 12 days before this, kind of validated his readiness. We were happy with his energy level, how he was traveling, his weight.

And then at that point, Elliott wanted to get Irad for him. We secured Irad for the mount and made arrangements for him to get here, let him have a little look see at the place, but we felt that he came here ready.

ELLIOTT WALDEN: I will say one other thing about that. Steve told me a week after the Derby that he didn't want to come here unless he felt like he could win. So he watched one work, and it was just okay, a half and 51. And then like Steve said, we watched the second work together. But hats off to Steve for really not just wanting to be participating, he wanted to come with a chance to win. That's why he's a Hall of Famer.

STEVE ASMUSSEN: The confidence we had going into the Derby, we wanted to be sure we had that going again, not just out of frustration. That was just to hold off that feeling. So we waited to make sure that he was the same horse and just very proud, very proud of the whole team that he proved who he is today.

THE MODERATOR: With that, congratulations. Steve, Kenny, Elliott, Bobby.