



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs



JOHN ASHER: Dr. Keith Latson with the American Association of Equine Practitioners is good enough to come do this as he did have an episode -- I don't know a better way to put it -- involving a horse in the race, Thunder Snow, No. 2. Broke poorly. Basically, didn't contest the race after that. We brought Dr. Latson around to explain what happened as far as we know. Doctor, thank you for being here.

DR. LATSON: As far as we know, you're right. He didn't break well. He was picked up immediately by the outrider and galloped very, very comfortably back to the paddock where he was examined by Dr. Jennifer Kaak. She found no injuries on the legs. So the horse was allowed to walk back to the barn under his own power, and he did so comfortably.

JOHN ASHER: That's what happens with 170,000 people. Dr. Latson is our on-call practitioner for the AAP.

Kentucky Derby 143 and the victorious Always Dreaming. (Applause)

JOHN ASHER: And Todd Pletcher, his second Kentucky Derby.

We were talking in the paddock a couple days ago. And you had your horse out there, Always Dreaming. And you were looking at him. And you said, "I'm a little concerned. He was active in the morning. I think, if he's on his race, we might see something really special." And it worked out, didn't it?

TODD PLETCHER: It did. There were a few anxious moments earlier in the week. For whatever reason, he was ready to run upon arrival. He had trained brilliantly all winter. Mr. Bonomo, Mr. Viola, and all of us had talked about a game plan a long time ago back before we decided to run him in a main race in Tampa. It wasn't like we were going there because we were cherry picking a spot. We were going there with a plan of, hopefully, ending up here. As you know in this business, sometimes it works out. A lot of times it doesn't. So when you kind of have a vision four or five months in advance, then it all comes together, it's especially rewarding.

JOHN ASHER: He was never a secret. You look at the past performances. He was a favorite or close to it in every start. But lost those first couple. At what point did you feel he took the step that sent him in this direction?

TODD PLETCHER: We actually -- when Mr. Viola and Mr. Bonomo went partners, this horse was part of the package they had put together. We picked the horse up right at the beginning of September and decided, after we all talked about it, that a little freshening would be good for him. So



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

Jim Crupi who had prepared the colt as a yearling, we sent him back to him. He gave him some time off. It paid off. When he sent him back to us, he was in great form, looked fantastic. We could see right away, as soon as we were breezing him, that he had extra special talent.

From that point on, it literally everything went exactly like we wanted to until we got here. And he was just super aggressive and way more forward in the morning's gallop, much stronger. So we got the big breeze in. Johnny breezed him a week ago yesterday. And he did what I see a number of horses that run well in the Derby do. He put in a huge workout and gallop out. And we were excited. He came out of it so well. He was aggressive every morning and made a couple of equipment changes and exercise rider change and that seemed to help. We also felt like he was setting on go when -- almost to the point our main focus was just trying to deliver it at 6:45 on Saturday and not 6:45 on Thursday morning.

JOHN ASHER: Can you talk a little bit about -- it's your second win, ironically both on wet tracks here. But how does this one at this point -- I know it's all awfully fresh in the rearview mirror -- compare to that first one?

TODD PLETCHER: Well, I mean, our Derby record has been talked about a lot. And like we talked about, I felt like about the first 25 starters I had to defend my Derby record. I felt like this week people were defending it for me for some reason.

You know, when you look at it now, we have been here -- I think this was our 17th Derby. To be fortunate enough to have two wins in two seconds and I think three thirds, it looked a little better. To me, it felt like I really needed that second one, you know? One more. And the first one was extra special. I have a tremendous respect for the race, tremendous respect for how difficult it is to win.

But I felt like we needed another one as a team to put it together. And I felt like Johnny and I needed one together as well. (Applause.)

We have had a great relationship for a long time now, and we have won a lot of races together. This one we hadn't, and this is the one we wanted to win together. And I'm glad we could do it.

JOHN ASHER: He has been essentially been introduced, but John Velazquez has joined us now after two Kentucky Derby wins. Winning today on Always Dreaming. Talk about your thoughts from the gate on this guy. You knew he was doing well coming in.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Out of the gate we didn't have any trouble. The first step, I wasn't too happy with. The second step I had to ask him to break. And he got into a good rhythm right away. Once I



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

was going forward, for the first time, I was happy where I was. And so the other horse, obviously, showed some speed. So I let him go into the first turn. I eased away from him. On the back stretch, I took a hold of him. And, as soon as I got it in the back stretch, he was going really comfortable.

The horses just out of -- kind of going a little sooner than I expected in the back stretch, but he was going really well. That's all I did, just waiting for the competition. They were pressing a little bit. After that, the quarter poll, when I asked him, he switched the lead and got down. And he started running really nice. I was very happy when he switched down. And I felt the way he was running, I said, "They will have to run really fast to get him," because he was going definitely.

JOHN ASHER: Were you concerned -- Todd had mentioned earlier, when he first got here, he was pretty active in the morning and then settled right down.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: We watched him. Todd and I talked about it. Once I worked him, he worked really good. I was very impressed the way he worked. The way the horses came in prior Derbies and the way he worked out, he was really impressed. After that, he was fresh. I asked Todd, "How was my horse?" And he was, like "He's ready to run." And I was happy with that. That's what I needed to hear.

JOHN ASHER: Can you talk about the winning moment with Todd?

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Very special. Todd mentioned earlier that we had won important races. But winning this one is definitely a big one. And I really think being behind me for 24 years together, something like that, a long time for him to still trust in me and give me the opportunity, it's not very often it happens in this business.

JOHN ASHER: These two gentlemen (Todd Pletcher and John Velazquez) had the experience of winning at Kentucky Derby before today. Mr. Viola, Mr. Bonomo have not until now. But you are Kentucky Derby winners. Can you talk about the experience and what this day means to you?

ANTHONY BONOMO: Well, you know, growing up as kids, we've won a lot of Kentucky Derbies, but never in reality. (Laughter.)

You know, I think we just knew, when we got together, something special was going to happen. And then, you know, Johnny and Todd have been great. And the horse has been super. And it's been a family affair. Look at that over there.



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

We have so many people to thank, because there's so many people that were involved in this. Jim Crupi and his farm broke the horse. The guys who picked him out, Steve Young, Chris brothers, my son who overspent, who I really, really love now.

You know, it's just been a family affair for both of us. And so to be sitting up here, as I said, it's been done thousands of times I know in my mind. But to have it in reality, it's amazing.

VINCENT VIOLA: Someone asked me on the way in, is this the greatest feeling you have ever had? And I said yes. And he said, the best? Well, besides the birth of my children and meeting my wife.

But for me, Anthony and I, I think, represent everybody who went to the racetrack for the first time with their dads and were just astonished by the brilliance of these athletes, these equine athletes. Never fell out of love with the sport.

And to sit up here, we have to say, really, we are two kids still in our heart from Brooklyn, New York, Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, who always dreamed. And this is one of the dreams to come true.

And I want to make sure I take the time to thank Todd and Johnny and Jimmy Crupi who broke this horse and really, really put this horse into shape that it needed to be to go back to Todd and win. So thank you, Jimmy.

And very blessed that Anthony and Mary Ellen allowed my family to join in the partnership of this horse. We want to thank you all. And all I can say is, go Dreaming!

JOHN ASHER: Just talk about how the relationship came about, the ownership relationship.

VINCENT VIOLA: I'll take this one. I know Anthony since I was maybe 9 or 10. He was maybe 7 or 8. And he's always been a larger-than-life champion guy. Didn't matter if it was stick ball or punch ball, he was always going to fight until he won. And there's a long story about how we reacquainted when I was a cadet at West Point and he was pitching for Saint John's. I will let him tell that story at another time.

I don't know. It was just a natural -- when I decided to get back into horse racing, I called him and said, "What do you think I should do?" He said, "Get off the phone and call Jimmy Crupi." The rest is history. That's my take.

Always thought he was a champion as a kid, and we have always got along very well naturally. And I think it's typical of our neighborhood.



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

ANTHONY BONOMO: I just love seeing him in that West Point uniform. He actually represented everything I wasn't. Orderly, disciplined. I wasn't.

But, even when we don't speak, we do speak. And our wives and kids get along so well together. So it was pandemonium once Dreaming went -- I don't even know who was on my back, who was on your back.

But, you know, for me, it's just a dream. And my wife picked out the greatest name. How do you pick out a name, attach it to a horse and this happens? You know, it's -- you can use the word "destiny," whatever you want to say. We have been fortunate. The rest is now up to Todd where we're going. It's amazing.

JOHN ASHER: Just one more quick question because there may have never been a better name of a Kentucky Derby horse than this name. What was the inspiration?

ANTHONY BONOMO: You got to ask her. It wasn't mine. It was my wife's. What was the inspiration?

MARY ELLEN BONOMO: I just always daydreamed -- I probably daydream a little too much. I kind of live in Xanadu sometimes. And I said, "Why don't we just name it Dreaming?" Everybody dreams of something whether it's a big event or special day, the birth of their child, winning the Kentucky Derby. So I just said, Always Dreaming. It just took off. And now I said, when this horse has its first baby, we will name it Keep on Dreaming. We're overwhelmed. It's just a great day.

Q. Todd, you have won \$60 million more than any other trainer. And, yet, you felt like you needed this for validation. Is that the case? And do you feel relieved or joy or both or what right now?

TODD PLETCHER: A little bit of everything. I don't know if validation -- I don't think I'm any better trainer right now than I was an hour ago. I felt like another one would solidify it. Been taking a lot of criticism for our Derby record, so we were hoping to improve on that. That's what you do. That's what I try to inspire my kids with, that you can have challenges and you are not always going to do as well as you want, but you got to get up and work hard at it and you got to keep trying. When it doesn't work, figure out why and keep going.

So I thought this one -- I was hoping there was another one and thankful that there was.



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

Q. Johnny, did you -- taking him just off the lead, was there any trouble keeping him where you wanted him? Did he show any signs that he wanted to take off? Just how much control over it -- how much were you and the horse in sync?

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Once I got the position I wanted, I was comfortable where I was. I didn't want to be -- obviously, he wanted to take the lead. It made it easy for me to get back from behind him and get into the clear instead of being down in there. Once I got him to the outside, he relaxed really well. Before they came to me in the back stretch and he got into the bridle, pass the horse that was in the lead, I went right back to the rail. And I held him together whatever he was comfortable. He was doing it really well. And he was taking me, and he had a nice rhythm. He had a good hold with me. After that, it was pretty easy.

Q. Vinny mentioned going to the track when you were kids. I assume it was Aqueduct and Belmont. Can you talk about going to the races with your dad when you were a kid and how that led to your lifetime in it?

VINCENT VIOLA: Briefly, just magical being next to your dad as he was really committed to a sport he loved. And my dad handicapped and bet, quite frankly, every day of his life.

And I remember so distinctly the crowds, Saturday afternoon crowds. And I remember distinctly that the men would respect each other because they would fold their newspapers and put them in the seams of the seat. As a young man, I thought, wow, that's really cool. These guys are pretty impressive men at the track.

I tell the story my dad taught me about betting, because he let me stand in front of the tote board. And I had to tell him what numbers moved while he was gone. It wasn't until I was much older I realized he was going to get a shot of Scotch in the bar, but that's a whole other story. (Laughter.)

ANTHONY BONOMO: My dad used to like to watch the race. We didn't go as much as we would like because he worked so much in the day. He was a laborer, a bricklayer. Where I really got into it is when I met my wife. Her dad, who, unfortunately, isn't here anymore, but he loved racing and just loved being at the barn. So to a large degree he was here today. I think they were all riding that horse with Johnny. I don't know if you felt any extra weight. I used to have some great times with my father-in-law. And, you know, the inspiration came from him loving it and then my wife loving it. I wasn't much of a big fan. I used to like to sneak into a track occasionally with him, and we would have \$3 between us. And we would beg some older man to put a bet on it for us. He said, "How old are you?" I would say, "24." It is surreal.



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

This race, I have played the race in my mind all week, and it came out the way I was dreaming about it. But until today, well, I guess dreams do come true.

MARY ELLEN BONOMO: Amen.

Q. I have heard you describe that race all week. I notice you keep looking at the replay, but you also keep looking at your phone and probably hearing from back home. What do you anticipate the reception in Brooklyn will be when you go back?

ANTHONY BONOMO: I was looking, because I didn't know your phone could store 267 messages.

(Laughter.)

And I'm trying to figure out how the hell am I going to return all these? But I begged Vinny on the way over to have a party at the restaurant that he's paying for. So all these messages maybe we can return them in person, because that's what our neighborhood is about.

They carry you in times like this that are great. But, more importantly, when they are not as great is when you really know the value that your friends are friends forever. So we are thrilled about it.

Q. Are you, in fact, now undefeated with the goatee, and do you plan on keeping it throughout the Triple Crown season?

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Keep it, Todd. Keep it.

TODD PLETCHER: I can assure you I'm not undefeated. There has been plenty of losers since I have grown it. But I think I will have a tough time shaving it now.

Q. Todd, you are saying how your horse was pretty excitable in the mornings, so it's kind of hard to get him to relax. How did you manage to go about that? And were you concerned that maybe he had run his race a few days before he actually ran it?

TODD PLETCHER: Well, my biggest concern was I wasn't completely sure why, because the horse had galloped on a daily basis exceptionally well all winter. You know, he was into his training, but he wasn't rank like he was when he first got here. And it was literally the first day. You could see a difference in his personality.

We had shipped him to Gulfstream twice to run, and we shipped him to Tampa, although he didn't



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

train at Tampa. Both times we shipped to Gulfstream before the Allowance race and the Florida Derby, we shipped him over a couple days early because I wanted to school him in the paddock. And we left him at Gulfstream from our home base of Palm Beach Downs. And he galloped nicely there. I didn't anticipate he would be any different here. And he shipped in before, you know, I would say it gets real crazy around here. The last couple of days leading up to it, Wednesday and Thursday, I think, are especially highly attended, a little bit hectic training hours and a lot of people on the backside. You can almost sometimes having trouble getting to the track.

It wasn't that. I think he really came in here and he knew it was game time, and he was ready to go. So our challenge was keeping him on the ground for ten days. And he galloped twice before Johnny breezed him on Friday and decided not to give him a day off because he wanted him to, hopefully, calm him down off the breeze.

And the first day he was pretty good. The second day he was too strong. And that's when we decided to make the equipment change, put the draw reins on and switch exercise riders. And -- Nick Bush did a heck of a job. Adele (Bellenger) did a heck of a job galloping him all winter. I can tell you, I was nervous watching him gallop. Because he was so ready to go, that I just felt like if he ever built up ahead of steam, he was going to go. We were trying to keep him relaxed. I felt really good when he paddock schooled him this week. Tuesday he was good. Wednesday he came over. And we couldn't ask him to behave any better than he did. He was perfectly calm and relaxed. And felt much better after I saw that.

Of course, the weather all week has been crazy. And so you worry about all those things and what you're going to do with the rain and the track is sloppy.

But the most important thing is to bring the best horse to the Derby, and I think that's what we were able to do this year.

Q. Todd, continuing along the changes you made leading up to the Derby with the equipment and with the exercise rider, have you done that before leading into a big race? Is that at all like a calculated risk?

TODD PLETCHER: Well, I mean, we have to make adjustments all the time in training. That's what we do. And I think -- I don't recall having to do it in a high-profile situation. Certainly not with the likely Derby favorite. Never had to do it like that.

You know, part of what we do as trainers is we observe how things are going with the horse, how they're galloping. And sometimes we'll make adjustments. Sometimes we'll make equipment



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

adjustments. Sometimes we will have to make rider adjustments. But the focus is always to do what's best for the horse. It was clear that we needed to make a few adjustments to get it right. And, thankfully, we did.

Q. Todd, continuing on that, with the draw reins, what were you trying to accomplish? And how important did that turn out to be?

TODD PLETCHER: I don't think we were going to get to the race in as good a shape as we did without them. He was just -- he's an intelligent colt. And, you know, he was aggressive. He was wanting to run. The rider tried to restrain him, and he put his head up in the air to break the rider's hold. We felt the draw reins would control him better, bring his head down, give the rider better control. The main thing is I wanted to control the pace of his gallops. He was, essentially, wanting to run the race in the morning, and we couldn't do that.

It paid off. I think it was a big part of why he was successful today. We're thankful we did it. Glad it paid off.

Q. (Question and answer by Johnny Velazquez in Spanish.)

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: I can say it faster in English. The question was how I felt winning my second Derby. To tell you the truth, it's not just winning the second Derby. It's like you still have the feeling looking for the next Derby. Todd had one before. And, obviously, you come back to the Derby looking for another one. You are always hungry for it.

And missing it with Todd, basically, it was missing it. And winning with him is special. With the owners as well. They have been really good to us.

Part of the question was what about the track. We didn't know anything about the track and how he was going to handle it. He has never run on the sloppy track. And I said to him, it didn't seem like it bothered him. He seemed to love the track. I loved the way he ran.

Q. In a race that has just an unpredictable history with 50-1 Giacomo and 20-horse fields, why do favorites on the run that they're on in the last five or six years, the favorites performing that well in such a big race where so many factors are in front of you?

TODD PLETCHER: John, how many years has this been --

JOHN ASHER: Five straight favorites.



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

TODD PLETCHER: How many years have they recharged the point system?

JOHN ASHER: Five years.

TODD PLETCHER: I mean, I wouldn't be positive that that's the reason. But, I mean, I think evidence would suggest that could have some influence. I know that it's likely to have some pace influence on the race when graded stakes earnings at six and seven furlongs aren't awarded points for the Kentucky Derby. So I think there could be a role in that.

Everyone wants to analyze short-term trends in racing. And I think, when you look at it over a longer period of time, who knows, the next five might be 40-1 or higher.

But I think you could make a case that these races are a little more honestly run with the point system. And it gives the better horses the best chance to get in and, you know, maybe not deal with strictly a sprinter to set up the early part of the race.

And I think during that five years you have seen horses come from all kinds of different positions in the race to do well. I would say that's a little bit to do with it.

Q. Todd, you have had a lot of success not coming to Baltimore and waiting for the Belmont. Do you anticipate definitely running in the Preakness? If it plays out that way, do you think the horse is well-suited to do the three in five weeks?

TODD PLETCHER: My initial impression is he finished the race great. He galloped out well. He came back to the winner's enclosure and seemed like he caught his breath pretty quickly. And I've gotten texts from the barn that he's back there already in good shape and looks well.

So, you know, I think, if he's doing well, we're going to go to Baltimore. I don't think I'll have to twist anybody's arm on the other side of the table here to do that. We'll hope.

Q. Can you just describe what it's like to work with Todd as the trainer of your horses? And, also, for Todd, what time would be a good time for media to come to your barn tomorrow?

ANTHONY BONOMO: I think it's terrific to work with Todd. He is the consummate professional. He's business. But he has a personality that, until you really get to know him, he's just a gentleman. Forget about his talent with horses. But, as a human being, he's great. You can ask him anything you want even when he probably doesn't want us to ask him anything, because I know we're probably



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

annoying Italians.

He's wonderful. He's professional. He does what he has to do. He has that game face on, and that goatee that's going to last for a long time. (Laughter.) It's just been fantastic. He's just the best.

VINCENT VIOLA: He's a superstar. He's a superstar.

Q. Todd, that decision you made about Fountain of Youth when you said you wanted him to have more foundation, more education, where does that fit in the context of this? That was just two months ago.

TODD PLETCHER: It was part of the game plan that we had discussed. You know, the one thing that we wanted to do was have the horse peak today, not in the Florida Derby or not in the Fountain of Youth. There was some risk with that plan. Because by not going in the Fountain of Youth, he had no points at that stage of his career.

But we felt like we were all comfortable taking our best shot at the Florida Derby as his only point-eligible prep. And we all were comfortable with the fact that if something happened and he didn't earn enough points, that we were willing to live with that decision.

Biggest concern, honestly, after the Allowance race that we decided to go in on Fountain of Youth day was that he won so easily and the fractions were so slow, we were a little bit concerned that maybe he didn't get enough out of it. And really, when Johnny and I were talking about race strategy prior to that race, we were hoping that maybe we could have him sit behind a couple horses and educate him and move forward. As it worked out, first of all, it was a very slow track that day. And so the fractions are probably a little bit deceptive.

He, basically, won so easily that Johnny asked him to finish up the last 1/8 of a mile and gallop out. But it was more or less an afternoon workout.

So it seemed to do fine for him once we got to the Florida Derby. And he showed us that he could handle multiple different types of tracks. The day he won the Allowance race at Gulfstream, I would have considered the slowest track Gulfstream had this meet. And I would say the Florida Derby day was arguably the fastest.

But any time you have a 3-year-old break 148 April 1st, it's pretty special. And I think his time that day in the Florida Derby, even though the track was fast, was the fastest Florida Derby since Alydar and did it the right way, finished up great.



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

We were pretty high on him from the very beginning. But he kept showing us over and over again every breeze this winter, every race we ran him, he just -- he was special every time.

Q. Todd, interested in the opposite end of the dynamics. Somebody asked earlier what it's like for them working with you. I wonder what it's like for you working with this ownership team.

And for, Johnny, I wouldn't say you are not the most demonstrative jockey. But to see a celebration like that from you is a little different. Just wonder what's going on inside here and up here during those final strides?

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Obviously, like I said before, he's still hungry. I'm not getting any younger. Let's put it that way. Winning it with Todd, it was very special. Like I said, with the owners, very special. Not getting any younger. The feeling that you get is actually you are hungry, you are still here, you still have it. Get an opportunity to ride a horse like this, I guess you got to enjoy it.

TODD PLETCHER: One of the great things about being a trainer is you get to deal with some really smart people and some really successful people. And these guys have been very successful in their lives.

And so, you know, when you get an opportunity to learn from those guys and then communicate with them, we had some really positive discussions about what we thought the horse could potentially do and some good discussions about what the game plan was. And, like I said, that they were willing to take a shot at letting us bring the horse along, develop him the way we wanted to, and not be tempted by some of the earlier stake races and comfortable with taking, you know, a shot at the Florida Derby.

So it's great when you have a good line of communication and you are on the same page and you have the same goals. So it's been a pleasure for us and our whole team to work with all of them.

JOHN ASHER: Along with the joy of winning Kentucky Derby and taking some roses home, Todd also gets a large Dodge Ram truck as the winning trainer.

(Applause.)

TODD PLETCHER: I will definitely take the truck, because it has significant sentimental meaning to me to do that. But I'd like to donate the value of the truck to Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance and New Vocations.



143rd Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands

Post-Race News Conference
Saturday, May 6, 2017
Churchill Downs

Very important cause for us to take care of our retired race horses. And so, like I said, I want to keep the truck. But I'm happy to make that donation.