

NTRA

NTRA Communications Road to the Triple Crown 2018

April 10, 2018

P R E S E N T A T I O N

Operator:

Please stand by as we are about to begin. Good day ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the NTRA Road to the Triple Crown 2018 Conference Call. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode. Following the presentation, we will conduct a question and answer session. At that time, participants are asked to press star one to register for a question. As a reminder, this conference is being recorded. It is now my pleasure to introduce your host, Mr. Jim Mulvihill. Please go ahead Sir.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright, thanks Amy and thanks everybody for joining us. Once again, this week, we have got four guests to catch up with. We are going to preview both the \$1 million Arkansas Derby at Oaklawn and the \$200,000 Stonestreet Lexington at Keeneland. After we organized this call last week, we got word that My Boy Jack would run in the Lexington to try to add to his Derby points. So we added trainer Keith Desormeaux to the line-up. My Boy Jack won the Southwest Stakes at Oaklawn in February and last time out, he ran third in the Louisiana Derby. If you saw that, he made an incredible move into the stretch, but extremely wide. That move suggested that he is a very exciting prospect for the Kentucky Derby, but the way the points have fallen this year, he still has to make it into the starting gate. So we are going to talk a little bit about that now with Keith Desormeaux. Keith, thanks for joining us.

Keith Desormeaux:

Oh, you are welcome, thank you.

Jim Mulvihill:

We really appreciate you coming on. Talking first about that Louisiana Derby, when you think about that trip, if Kent had been able to save as much ground say as he did in the race at Oaklawn, what would have been the difference in the Louisiana Derby?

Keith Desormeaux:

Well, you know, when you get this Derby fever thing, you really got to try to put a practical spin on things and not get too excited about what you see. And that's what I have tried to do in this situation. Yes, it was a phenomenal move and that's where the problem lies, in my opinion. It wasn't the fact that he went too wide. It was the speed of the move. He needed to move more gradually. In other words, he went from zero to 60 in one-eighth and he didn't need to do that. I think he could have remained steady and picked up the horses as he needed to in the longest stretch or the second longest stretch in the country. Kent seemed to have forgotten that fact and that's what cost us the race. But you know, those things happen, Kent has given me more genius rides than questionable rides so we know those things happen. We would prefer if we didn't have to run again, but, you know, I am going to look at this Lexington race as a building block, not a race that will cause us to regress. My horse is very sound, very healthy and hearty, so, I am going to look at it as an advantage. We are going to get to Kentucky, we are going to have a race while we are there and then we will have three weeks to freshen up for the Derby.

Jim Mulvihill:

Interesting. Now, I want to talk a little bit more about what you just said because I don't think I have ever heard a trainer express concern that their horse had accelerated too quickly. So can you just talk a little bit more about that? I mean, should Kent have been able to I guess hold him back a little bit longer or how would he have been able to ration an explosion like that?

Keith Desormeaux:

You know, their way of thinking is that, yes – and I am talking about a jockey's thinking – is let's get around the pack as quickly as possible so we can dive back in and save ground. And yes, maybe that works in some situations, but again, he went – and Kent will tell you this himself, he accelerated way too fast and Kent didn't expect that. And I think that's when he blew his energy. You know, just like in car racing, horseracing is much the same. You have to conserve that gas pedal in order to have fuel for the finish. That's a very practical way of putting it. And we didn't do that, we mashed the gas pedal all the way and that's why he levelled out the last eighth. If he would have made a gradual progression, I really believe we would have seen a different outcome. And hopefully, we get to prove that in the Lexington. You know, none of this stuff is written in stone but, again, I try to look at this stuff practically and I think that's what's going on here with the analysis of the Louisiana Derby.

Jim Mulvihill:

Got it. And now, looking at this weekend, with the Lexington, you would have to win to make the Derby field most likely. If you finished second, you would have 40 points and then you would probably have to wait out the Arkansas Derby result. So why this race as opposed to going to Oaklawn?

Keith Desormeaux:

Again, I don't even need to think about that. If I can't win the Lexington, this horse has got no business in the Derby. These are serious, serious horses this year, even more than in years past; I think the talent this year is off the charts. If he can't win the Lexington, and do it decisively, then he has no business in the Kentucky Derby.

Jim Mulvihill:

Understood. So Keith, hang on and we will see what questions – oh, go ahead.

Keith Desormeaux:

[Inaudible]. Yeah, go ahead. No, I was just going to say that the points thing is inconsequential to me because he has to win and win decisively and that takes care of the points.

Jim Mulvihill:

Got it. Alright. Well, let's see what questions the media have for you there on the call here and we are going to ask Amy, the operator, to check with them.

Operator:

Absolutely. And if you would like to ask a question today, please signal by pressing star one on your telephone keypad. If you are using a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Again, press star one to ask a question and we will pause for just a moment to allow everyone an opportunity to signal for questions. And we do have a question from Jason Frakes with the Courier-Journal. Please go ahead, sir.

Jason Frakes:

Hey Keith, thanks for taking the time. I was just curious, you know, was the plan all along to sort of move him to the dirt as a three-year-old? Or he raced so much on turf too, I was kind of curious about that transition and whether this was the plan all along, or you saw –?

Keith Desormeaux:

Oh, yeah, I have answered that question several times, not that it's a problem. But the reason he was originally put on turf is because turf is the surface that was offered with the distance. I don't know if I am explaining that correctly. There were no races at two turns, or at an elongated distance on the dirt offered in Southern California at all. The first distance race on dirt in Southern California is not until late August, mid-to-late August at Del Mar. This horse is bred and he is trained for distance. So I wanted to get him into one of those races as soon as possible, sooner the better, and we had a two-turn seven-and-a-half furlong turf race offered here at Santa Anita in June. So that's why we jumped on it. We jumped on that race because of distance first, not surface. So we always had the intent – or let me just put it this way, because he ran so well on the turf, why would you take him off? So that is why he remained on the turf, but of course the dirt was always in the back of our minds. And obviously he has taken to it.

Jason Frakes:

Thank you.

Keith Desormeaux:

Yes Sir.

Operator:

And next we have from horsingracingscoop.com, Danny Brewer.

Keith Desormeaux:

Danny Brewer, I talked to him enough, I talked to this guy. Do I have to again?

Danny Brewer:

Well, yes, you have to again. You should go buy a lottery ticket, man, this is your lucky day, I am telling you.

Keith Desormeaux:

Alright, alright. Hillbilly Brewer.

Danny Brewer:

I know this wasn't the original game plan, but how has Jack responded to, you know, you cueing him up to get ready for the Lexington?

Keith Desormeaux:

I wouldn't even attempt it if the horse wasn't 100% capable and showing me the signs of a horse that can handle it. Like I said before, he is very sound and very hearty, so I think he is going to relish more work. As you can see, I am not the type of trainer that – you don't see my horses working every five or six days, 48s. I am just not the type. I use races to build fitness most of the time and I have really taken that

aspect to another level when we decided to run in the Lexington. Of course, I have done some work with him in the morning, but not the same as I would usually. So we are going to let this race build them instead of the morning works builds his fitness.

Danny Brewer:

What did the Louisiana Derby tell you about this horse?

Keith Desormeaux:

Well, again, the first fact that I was wanting to see from the Louisiana Derby was his perceived affinity for the dirt. We didn't know for sure. We talk about this turf/dirt question. I think true turf horses will give you one good effort on the dirt, but the second time, they are like, uh-uh, I am a turf horse, dude. So, by seeing his performance in his second dirt race, it solidified my opinion that that dirt surface would not be a problem.

Danny Brewer:

Awesome. I wish you the best of luck, man. Keep up the good work.

Keith Desormeaux:

Alright, alright Danny, thank you.

Debbie Arrington:

Hi, good morning Keith, thank you very much for coming on. You have been all over the country this year with your horses. How do you think this Derby crop is shaking out? You know, because we never really know until later down the line, but how does it look to you?

Keith Desormeaux:

You know, I am sure people say it every year, the Derby scene is always a fresh batch of horses, right, and everybody always has their opinions. And it seems you forget what's gone by so quickly. But it sure seems to me like this year's crop is exceptional across the board. There is not one standout, there's three or four standouts and My Boy Jack, who is an exceptional horse in himself, is actually at another level compared to the ones that have won these Derby preps. The Mendelssohns, the Justifys, the Good Magic who is the champion two year old, and the horse that won the Florida Derby, Audible, all exceptional horses. So I think across the board, this year's crop is as good as I have ever seen.

Debbie Arrington:

And is there anyone in particular, such as Justify, that you have been impressed with?

Keith Desormeaux:

I would say, yes, I agree that Justify performance in the Santa Anita Derby was ultra impressive, especially given the fact that it was only his third start. Plus he has the looks to boot, so, yeah, I agree, he would be my pick. Of course, I haven't seen Mendelssohn in person yet, so it's pretty cool that both of those horses are by Scat Daddy. But yes, I would rank Justify at the top. It is going to be a lot of fun taking those guys down.

Debbie Arrington:

And what kind of horse is Jack like around the barn? Is he an easy-going horse and has he matured a lot this spring?

Keith Desormeaux:

Oh, yeah, he is fun to be around. I mean, he is not necessarily the lovey-dovey type, but he will let you pet on him and visit with him and very calm in his stall, just like most good horses are. Good horses know how to rest. They eat well, they rest and they don't become rattled by circumstances going on around them. And we get pretty intense here in the morning, you know, 30 horses in a barn and men and ladies running everywhere. You know, it gets pretty intense and he handles it well, like most good horses do.

Debbie Arrington:

And did he travel well also?

Keith Desormeaux:

Sorry, I was actually watching a horse walk out here and lost my –

Debbie Arrington:

Oh, I am sorry.

Keith Desormeaux:

You said did he – did he –

Debbie Arrington:

You are multitasking. Does Jack travel well?

Keith Desormeaux:

Does Jack travel well? Yes, let's see, he flew to Oaklawn for the Southwest and then to New Orleans. So he has been on a plane two times. Yes, he does not, again, get rattled. A lot of horses stress out from travel and different locations but, no, he again, he fits that mold of the personality of a good horse, which is the ability to accept the circumstances – different circumstances we put him in.

Debbie Arrington:

Very good, best of luck.

Keith Desormeaux:

Alright, thank you.

Operator:

And there are no further phone questions at this time.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright Keith, I will just follow up with you one more time before we let you go.

Keith Desormeaux:

Alright.

Jim Mulvihill:

You were talking about how you wouldn't even try this race if Jack hadn't come out of the Louisiana Derby so well and didn't enjoy the work. Is the same true of the possibility of wheeling back in the Kentucky Derby in three weeks after this race, which nowadays we would consider to be short rest? I mean, would there be any concerns about that with this horse?

Keith Desormeaux:

Well, yes, like I said before, if there were concerns, I won't run him. If he is dropping weight, his attitude becomes sour, his appetite goes south, you know, those kind of things, I wouldn't abuse him. He has been great to us and he has got – there is plenty of racing down the line, you know, the Kentucky Derby is not the end-all. But if he is thriving on this three-week schedule, like he is now, and continues after the Lexington, then I have no doubt that he will be able to handle that wheeling back in three weeks. And again, I repeat, my training is adjusting to the new schedule. I won't train him as hard in the morning, and let these races do the building. So a little bit different angle on how we approach the Derby, but I think he is going to thrive on it.

Jim Mulvihill:

Is it easier for a closer to run back or to run more frequently? Are they maybe not as hard on themselves in the races?

Keith Desormeaux:

Now, at surface, you would think so, you know, the speed horses seem to strain gate to wire whereas a closer, yes, at least in the first part of the race, he seems to be galloping instead of straining as hard. So yeah, maybe on the surface, you would think so, but, you know, you could also look at it like a speed horse is on the lead and not having to be pounded with sand. And so yes, I agree on the surface, it does seem like a closer would regain his strength quicker than a horse that is straining to set the pace.

Jim Mulvihill:

Keith, thanks for all this great info. We appreciate your candor as always and good luck this weekend.

Keith Desormeaux:

Okay, man, it will be fun, thank you.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright. Keith Desormeaux, who is going to have My Boy Jack in the Lexington and says if he can't win the Lexington, he doesn't belong in the Derby. Well, now we get to shift to the biggest prep race of the weekend and that of course is the \$1 million Arkansas Derby that has got 100 points for the winner. The Rebel winner, Magnum Moon, will be there and the Tampa Bay Derby winner, Quip. And also Combatant, who hasn't won since breaking his maiden in October, but he has got 22 points and he could make the Derby field if he hits the board. But we still don't know how good Solomini is, the Breeders' Cup Juvenile runner-up. He got shut off looking to come up the rail in the Rebel. That was his first start of the year. He is currently 19th on the Derby points leader board, but we got to see how these races go this

weekend to see if he stays within that Derby field. We are delighted to be joined now by Zayat Stables racing manager, Justin Zayat. Justin, thanks for coming on.

Justin Zayat:

Hey Jim, how are you, thanks for having me.

Jim Mulvihill:

Of course, I am doing great and always glad to talk to you. First of all, just tell us what you thought of the effort in the Rebel by Solomini?

Justin Zayat:

Yeah, so as you say, you know, I thought he ran a good race. You know, we were coming off, you know, a little bit of a lay-off since the Los Alimitos Futurity. We put him on the plane for the first time and shipped him. He handled it well. He was a little – Jimmy told us he was looking around a little on the paddocks, so he was showing a little greenness when he got there and you know, saddling in the infield there. So it's a lot for a horse, you know, just to take in to shipping there, so you know, overall, he did handle it well. And you know, one thing about Solomini is he always shows up in every single race he runs. So you know, it's pretty remarkable about him and I thought his first race – we hoped to, you know, actually be pretty close. And, you know, he didn't get off as smoothly as we wanted. And, you know, he kind of missed the break there and got pinned on the inside, which, you know, I guess for him, you know, he prefers maybe to be a little bit on the outside and maybe got like a little, you know, agitated being on the rail there, being pinned in. But you know, turning for home, you know, I was like wow, you know, maybe it looks like he is backing up a little. And then, you know, he still comes with that, you know, that Solomini run that he has at the end, where, you know, he just keeps grinding it out, grinding it out. And, you know, it looked like – I think it was Title Ready, the one horse with Jose Ortiz, if we got through the rail, you know, maybe we could have made it even closer on Magnum Moon. I don't know if we, you know, we would have beat him that day, but I thought we ran a very good race and we are looking forward to a rematch. Hopefully, we could turn the tables on him.

Jim Mulvihill:

Yeah, it was a very strong effort, especially coming off the layoff. You know, with the way he has worked the last few weeks, he has had, on paper, some impressive workouts, which is not a surprise for a Bob Baffert horse. But just tell us what you have heard from Bob in the subsequent weeks about these bullet works at Santa Anita.

Justin Zayat:

For sure, so you know, Bob's horses, you know, typically always work fast, you know. If I'm seeing a horse and Bob, you know, going 1:02, I am a little concerned. You know, typically, you know, we tend to see faster works from Bob. You know, Solomini is not the type of horse who is going to wow you in the mornings. You know, he has his idiosyncrasies here and there, you know, switching leads, sometimes he is a little goofy, but that is, you know, just who he is. You know, that's who's he's been since he has been on the farm as a yearling, from the time we had him as a two year old and, you know hopefully, you know, he is maturing a bit every day. And, I don't know if you know right now he is at his absolute peak and his best in his career, you know. You know, Curlins, especially out of a Storm Cat mare, you know, tend to develop over time, so we are really optimistic. But, you know, especially now he is doing everything right. He is training well. Bob is happy with his work. He has been, you know, putting him on the inside, putting him on the outside of the horses, you know, sometimes working off the pace, sometimes being on the lead. That's one thing, you know, you love about Bob, you know, he really, you know, tests every horse in every circumstance. He trains them hard. You know, the good ones will sustain his training and

Solomini, you know, he is happy, healthy, knock on wood, a very, very sound horse and he looks great and you know, all signs for the weekender. And you know, he ships out early tomorrow morning with Jimmy and, you know, they told me he is doing super good, so they are excited and, you know, we are in good hands over here.

Jim Mulvihill:

You mentioned that Bob has been training him inside of horses and outside of horses. Is that related at all to – you know, Bob mentioned last week that the horse has been a bit of a challenge. You said that he has been a challenge for Bob, but I haven't read exactly what those challenges are. So are there specific quirks that you guys have been working on or what makes him a challenge for Bob Baffert?

Justin Zayat:

I mean, I should think Bob likes the challenge, you know, but Solomini is the type of horse that sometimes, you know, he either just doesn't like to switch leads or he hangs on his wrong lead. And he tends to do that sometimes in his work, sometimes he doesn't and he works perfectly and, you know, lately, he has been working like a gentleman. But in the race, if you actually look in the Rebel, coming down the stretch, he was on the wrong lead, so he does it in his races too. The Los Alamitos Futurity, he switched back both times in the stretch. One, he was on the wrong lead when all the bumping came along and then he switched to his right lead. So he is the type of horse that is a little funnier to his leads and I don't know if he has exactly figured it all out yet, but he is definitely improving every single work. He actually worked this past week with a horse named Dabster who is also coming I think it is for the race, the Oaklawn Handicap, or the Razorback, whatever the race is that day. And he is actually – they remind me a lot of each other in a way, you know, he is also a big Curlin colt. He is kind of like a big Solomini in a way, where I think as a two year old also he kind of had some weird idiosyncrasies. And you know, he has really straightened up his games, you know. Maybe Solomini learned from him and his works a little over there, but he has been working well every single week and Bob's happy and we are excited. So all systems go as I said and I guess here, we will see on Saturday what he's got, but we are bullish about him and we are excited. You know, one thing about Bob is, you know, Bob wouldn't put him on a plane and ship him if he didn't think they are going to run a big race. So when he does that, it gives me the confidence.

Jim Mulvihill:

Yeah, that's for sure. Well, Justin, hang on, and we will see what the media has for you. Amy, do you want to check with the folks in the queue?

Operator:

Absolutely, and again as a reminder, it is star one if you would like to ask a question from your phone line. And we have Debbie Arrington with the Sacramento Bee.

Debbie Arrington:

Hi, good morning Justin and thank you very much for coming on here. How long have you guys been working with Bob?

Justin Zayat:

Well, we have been with Bob since I would say 2007, we started with Bob. And Pioneer of the Nile is a notable horse, one of our big time horses we had early on in 2009 with the Kentucky Derby. We have Bodemeister, actually our first grade one winner ever; Point Ashley named after my sister, trained by Bob, our first graded stakes winner ever; Easy Warrior, trained by Bob. So you know, our families, you know,

have come really close together. Bob is just, you know, not just a trainer to us, for me, he is a friend, he is a mentor, for our family, we are all close. Jill and my mom are friends, you know, I am friends with his boys and it's just, really when we had American Pharoah, we even all came, you know, closer together, so you know, it's like a happy family at this point.

Debbie Arrington:

Yeah. Well, I was thinking it was just about 10 years and what a decade it has been, you know.

Justin Zayat:

Unbelievable, unbelievable.

Debbie Arrington:

Yeah, yeah, and well, what do you think are some keys to Bob's success with three-year-olds?

Justin Zayat:

I mean, it's not only just three-year-olds, it is two year olds too he excels in. You know, Bob is a guy that – I have worked with a lot of trainers and Bob is a guy that really, early on, he just has a really good feel for a horse and he knows early on if the horse is, you know, counted or not counted. I mean, I am not saying that he has never been fooled before – of course, he has like we all have, you know. But he really knows and he always like – he works them once or twice. And he says, "Justin, this horse is good" or "This horse is not too good" and he just has – he is just so in tune with his horses, he is so detailed about every single horse. His barn is run so fluidly, you know, every single guy knows exactly what they are doing. The riders – his exercise riders are really, really top notch, you know, they really understand, you know, how to develop a horse. It is not only about, you know, just a ride in the afternoon and the jockey that rides them, but really the guy that's on them every single morning and they are really riding the horses, the guy that's really making the difference at the end of the day. And, you know, so he has got the top-notch staff and him too, you know, he has gone from quarter horses, being a quarter horse champion trainer to, you know, thoroughbreds, you know. And maybe that helped him. If you look at Wayne Lukas, it seemed to help him also. Bob's horses, I don't know if you realize, they all genuinely show speed and, you know, they are usually pretty close to the pace, most of these horses. That's one thing I believe too is that, you know, speed wins races. Maybe, through his training methods, the way he trains a horse hard and really sends out a fit horse, because – you know, one thing also about Bob is, you don't really see his horses really ever backing up in the stretch. Sometimes – you know, I am not saying they always win races, but they don't get really tired. He sends out a fit horse when he is running and, you know, it's just, you know, a tribute to him, his team and his skill. He is just a talented, talented individual.

Debbie Arrington:

How many horses do you have with Bob right now?

Justin Zayat:

Right now, currently we have five. You know, we usually range from five to ten –

Debbie Arrington:

Five horses, yeah.

Justin Zayat:

– depending on the time, but we send them, very, very good horses. I always, you know, when I have my best horse, as long as it's a dirt horse, Bob is my man.

Debbie Arrington:

And does he decide which horses he gets from you guys or do you make out the decision or how does it work?

Justin Zayat:

I make them – it's my dad and I who really make the decision together. You know, I typically know the type of horse that Bob likes. It's always funny, because I always say to him, you know, either come to the farm or tell me, you know, what horse you like or something. And he always says, "I know you know which horse you want to send me. Don't worry about it. I trust you." That's what he always says, you know, "Let Justin pick the horses for me." And he is just you know, he just knows that, you know, I have that special place for him in my heart. I am not going to send Bob a horse that runs, you know, a mile and a half on the turf. You know, it's just not the type of horse that, you know, he excels with and things like that, you know. I know what kind of ticks his boxes.

Debbie Arrington:

Yeah. And how many horses and trainers do you guys have overall right now?

Justin Zayat:

Well, I think we have maybe ten trainers and overall horses, we are, you know, 150 plus horses.

Debbie Arrington:

Wow, yeah, that's what I thought is that you were well over 100. Wow.

Justin Zayat:

We were lucky, at least I am fortunate enough. I get to speak to Bob Baffert, Wayne Lukas, Todd Pletcher, Bill Mott, trainers of all these levels that train for us. So for a guy like me who is only 26 years old and grew up only basically ten years in this sport, I get to kind of learn from them. And I work with them side by side which is also – it's like working with LeBron James and Michael Jordan, you know, it's like a dream come true.

Debbie Arrington:

Yeah, and going back to Arkansas this week, does it bring a lot of memories back to you?

Justin Zayat:

For sure. Arkansas, Oaklawn happens to be just one of my favorite tracks in general. I've actually only been there one time and I do plan to be there this weekend. But when I went there I was just so, you know, taken back by not only the amount of people that go to the races there, because it's – I even think it's more people show up to the races than are even in the population of Hot Springs. But it's just the amount of knowledge you know, the amount of knowledge that these actual horse fans have. You know, they're not just the guys who are going to watch races, you know. These people actually understand races. They read the form, you know, they're in tune. They know the connections, you know, so it's a lot of fun going to – you know, I could compare it in a way kind of Saratoga. When you go to Saratoga it's a

true, you know, horse town. And Keeneland, obviously Lexington is exactly that feel, but I think other than those two, it's like Hot Springs is that place that kinds of gives you that feel. The racing fans are wild there. And obviously going back to Oaklawn, we've had a lot of success. And especially in the Arkansas Derby, you know, I think we've run it I think four times. We've had two runner-ups and two wins with Bodemeister and American Pharoah with Bob, so it brings back good memories and looking forward to being back and excited.

Debbie Arrington:

Very good. And does Solimini remind you of any of your other top three year olds you've had? Because Pioneerof the Nile and Bodemeister, you've had quite a few good ones here.

Justin Zayat:

Yeah, so they're – thank you – he's different than all of them in a way. You know, Pioneerof the Nile happened to be a horse that was – I think his race record was totally under appreciated. Because I think it was earlier than the Twitter times. But if Pioneerof the Nile was today a horse that, you know, won the won the Robert Lewis, won the San Filipe, and won the Santa Anita Derby, that would set this racing media crazy right now. Justify just won the Santa Anita Derby and look how he did it. But, you know, imagine sweeping all the preps, pretty underrated for a horse, you know. He was a kind of a horse that never wowed you in all his races, you know, he just typically - he just got it done. Bodemeister and American Pharaoh were horses that had brilliance. Everyone knew – when they were running, it was like wow, you know. They both – Solimini has got a task to live up to because our two Arkansas Derby winners I think won by 10 plus lengths. So he's got to live up to the standard over there. I'm just kidding, but you know... So he doesn't really remind me in a sort of way, you know, he reminds me in a way he's just such a hard-knocking horse. I don't remember having a three year old of ours to this point. Nehro was very hard knocking. He ran, you know, a lot. Divine Fortune was a pretty hard-knocking horse, but, you know, a horse like Solomini who, you know, from the time he was a two year old running against every single top – he's in all the top races. And he's showing up, so he's just a pleasure to have. And he holds a special place in our hearts because he's actually named after my sister's first son, who's my parent's first grandchild named Solomon. His name's Solomon David.

Debbie Arrington:

Oh wow.

Justin Zayat:

Yeah, and my sister always said to me, "When I have a kid, you better name a good horse after my son." So I had the pressure. I chose this colt, we called him Solomini, like mini Solomon, and he's turning out, thank God.

Debbie Arrington:

Wow, that is so cool. And what's your sister's name?

Justin Zayat:

Ashley.

Debbie Arrington:

Ashley. Oh that's right yes. But she had a horse too.

Justin Zayat:

Yeah exactly. Point Ashley... All the Ashleys –. this is how it goes in the family. All the Ashleys are the good runners, the Emmas are the producers, like Littleprincessemma, she produced America Pharoah, she's a producer. And Justins are kind of – sometimes – most of them are disappointments, but we had Justin Phillip which he's my bragging right – he's my bragging rights to the family for that one.

Debbie Arrington:

That's great. Well, best of luck, and thank you so much.

Justin Zayat:

Thank you.

Operator:

And if you do have a question for this presenter, it is star one. There are no further questions at this time.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright, well, Justin, thank you as always for your time and your insights.

Justin Zayat:

Pleasure.

Jim Mulvihill:

Hope for a clean trip this weekend and best of luck.

Justin Zayat:

Thank you very much.

Jim Mulvihill:

Thanks for your time.

Justin Zayat:

Thank you.

Jim Mulvihill:

You got it. Anytime. Justin Zayat, he'll have Solomini in the Arkansas Derby this weekend.

And another top contender in there will be Quip who was the upset winner of the Tampa Bay Derby last month. That was his first start as a three year old. It was also the first graded stakes win for his trainer, Rodolphe Brisset, who struck out on his own only a year ago after ten years working for Bill Mott. Now Quip shipped to Oaklawn from Keeneland last weekend and he's already comfortably in the Kentucky Derby field. He's got 50 points, but we'd still love to see him run big this weekend. Rodolphe, thanks for being on our call.

Rodolphe Brisset:

Hi guys, thank you for having me.

Jim Mulvihill:

You got it. Thanks for waiting patiently there. You are at Oaklawn already and you gallop Quip, so you've got a great feel for how all your horses are doing, being that you're on their backs in the mornings. Just tell us how Quip has trained since the Tampa Bay Derby and also how he's settled in to Hot Springs.

Rodolphe Brisset:

Well, everything is good, you know, we ship him. We kept him in Tampa for a couple of weeks because the weather in Keeneland was not great, and then we got him home in Keeneland at the end of March. And we were looking at the Blue Grass but of course, like everybody knows now, we came out. And we've got two works over the surface in Keeneland and we were able to ship him before the bad weather last Saturday. They have him in Kentucky and then he settled very good. So all good.

Jim Mulvihill:

Very good. And I'd love to just hear a little bit more about your barn, how many horses do you train, how many people do you employ? I imagine it's a small operation being that you've only been out on your own a short while.

Rodolphe Brisset:

Well, actually that's more – I mean, we are – we're not scared about number, so we actually – we were able to get – we got around a little bit more than 20-odd horses and we are expecting to get between 20 and 25 babies. I already have two assistant trainers. Lee Bentley, she was the whole winter in Tampa for me, and then I have a new assistant trainer, Dave Lively, who is working with me at Keeneland. So hopefully we are on the verge to get a good number of horses and then I guess you can hopefully make a lot of winner.

Jim Mulvihill:

Terrific. And just tell us what it meant to you to have Winstar send this horse to you. I know you knew those folks very well through your association with Bill and you galloped a lot of their top horses over the years. But what does it mean when they send you a horse of this quality and show that confidence in you?

Rodolphe Brisset:

Well, you know, the story is a little bit more – it's more than just send me the horse. I mean, you know, I got lucky enough to get a barn at Rice Road at Keeneland and WinStar were having some stalls in December. So again, they approached me and we talked, and we have a very clean and simple understanding about me having horses for them and get them forward and then send them to [other trainers]. But in that deal, there was – they did say to me, you will be able to keep a couple. And then Quip came around, he was not very two years old. And I guess, me getting on him and then we click with each other pretty nicely, you know. The horse knows me, I know him, and then Mr. Walden told us we can run the horse. So that was a good surprise, but you know, he was a very raw, two years old. So we put a lot of work into him, and then he pays us at one point.

Jim Mulvihill:

Excellent, well, I'm going to step aside and we'll see what questions the media has for you. Amy?

Operator:

Thank you. Again that is star one. And we'll now hear from Danny Brewer, with horseracingscoop.com.

Danny Brewer:

Okay, so this is kind of been whirlwind year for you, I mean, you left Bill Mott and now we're going to be starting in the Kentucky Derby. Talk a little bit about what it's been like for you over the last 12 months or so.

Rodolphe Brisset:

We tried to set up the business the best we can, and we got a lot of offers right off the bat when we started 1st April last year. But, you know, it's not easy every day. You have to walk out and find the people to – find the right help and then – so it took a little while to get everything together, but it's – all that work really pays off, you know. I've got to be honest, when Quip crosses the wire in the Tampa Derby you can't remember the last month when he wasn't here every day and... It's very rewarding and you enjoy it.

Danny Brewer:

Now Jim mentioned something about you working your horses and everything. Do you feel like that gives you any kind of an advantage because you're working them every day?

Rodolphe Brisset:

Not really. I mean, I've been – that question got asked – people asked me that question pretty much every day for the past two weeks. And I will say, many people won grade one training from the grandstand so I don't think it doesn't give me a big advantage. I will say maybe, you know, the fact that I used to be a jockey and I breeze a lot of good horses, maybe that can give me maybe a little bit more security, like the job get done the closest the way I want, you know. But all around, it's – I mean they won, all those very good trainers won sitting on the pony or sitting in the grandstand so I don't think it's really a big deal.

Danny Brewer:

I certainly do wish you the best of luck on Saturday in the Arkansas Derby. Thanks for your time.

Rodolphe Brisset:

Thank you sir, appreciate it.

Operator:

Again, if there's any comments or questions for this presenter, that will be start one from your phone please. And we'll next hear from Jay Privman with Daily Racing Forum.

Jay Privman:

Hey Rodolphe, how are you?

Rodolphe Brisset: Hi Jay, I'm good, you okay?

Jay Privman:

Very well thank you. I had two questions for you. The first was, just last fall when you had a lot of those WinStar two year olds, one of them was Justify. I just wondered what your memories were of him back then?

Rodolphe Brisset:

Well he's been a pleasure to be around since day one. You know, he's very athletic horse. He was a little bit babyish, but never – I wouldn't say green, I won't say green, I think just acting a little babyish. Mr. Walden was very, very high on him from the get-go. So he just sent me the horse and asked me to do, you know, my job. And we got him pretty forward, up to I think I breezed him four times. But he was showing some ability, you know. I could never guess what he became. You know, you can – you see that when you really – when you go forward after a couple of months. But I know he was a cool horse to be around.

Jay Privman:

Then when you were working for Bill and had WinStar horses, who would you say were some of the better horses you galloped for them? Like, you know, Drosselmeyer, Tourist, like who were some of the better ones that you would list on that roster please?

Rodolphe Brisset:

I think you just said both names. I mean Drosselmeyer, he won a couple of grade one and won, of course, the Breeders' Cup Classic. He was – and I wasn't really – I wasn't his regular rider, like galloping every day. I raced him a couple of times, but Tourist was a very good horse. He was very emotional for me, Tourist, because that was my last Breeders' Cup for Mr. Mott. That was our last runner in the Breeders' Cup and the fact he came on the inside like this, and just it was very emotional for me. And that horse was training like a beast, for the last two weeks. Before the Breeders' Cup, he was really showing every sign of he was doing good, you know.

Danny Brewer:

Well, best of luck on Saturday and thank you for your time.

Rodolphe Brisset:

Thank you again, I appreciate it.

Operator:

And again if you'd like to comment on the speaker's presentation, that is star one. And there are no further questions.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright Rodolphe, we appreciate the time. I think that's all we got for you now, but best of luck on Saturday and also in the Kentucky Derby.

Rodolphe Brisset:

Thank you, I appreciate it guys. Have a good day.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright, thanks so much. And now we shift back to Keeneland for our last guest to talk about the Lexington Stakes. The Lexington only offers 34 Derby points overall. 20 to the winner, but there's no shortage of intrigue. We talked about My Boy Jack earlier and he can perhaps secure a Derby spot, but Greyvitos could also give himself a chance to maybe draw into the Derby with some defections. And if that doesn't happen he could also have an impact further down the line in the classics. Greyvitos is coming back from surgery in December to remove bone chips. And before that he won the Bob Hope at Del Mar and the Springboard mile at Remington. Now let's check in with his trainer, Adam Kitchingman, thanks for joining us.

Adam Kitchingman:

Thank you for having me.

Jim Mulvihill:

We appreciate the time. Now before we get to the Lexington, would you mind just taking us through this colt's story and everything you've dealt with in the past year, you know, the fire, and surgery, and, you know, Jay Hovdey had a great column about it recently. Just all that he's dealt with, if you could summarize it for everyone on the call.

Adam Kitchingman:

If I could summarize it, it's been a hell of a trip. No, it's been very exciting. This horse has gone through a lot. Even before I got the horse into training, he went through colic surgery, recovered from that. We got him up in training. His first race we tried him on the grass and he ended up hurting himself a little bit behind, I think just strained a – you know, just tore his tibia a little bit. So we backed off on him for that. We got him in his first race on the dirt, sprinting. He got caught behind horses, was climbing all over the place. But when he got out, he showed a huge turn of foot. So I thought we still won that race that day. So I said to the owners, I said I think we should run him in the grade three Bob Hope at seven furlongs. I really think he could win the race. So they let me do my thing and we ended up winning the Bob Hope, which was pretty exciting. And then a few weeks later we have the fire at San Luis Rey and we had to evacuate it. And we got out of there unscathed. Went up to Santa Anita, flew over to Remington Park, had a bad trip there and we still won pretty easy I thought.

And then a day or two later, I noticed a little bit of heat in his knees. And I said to my vet, let's go ahead and x-ray those knees. He said, "I don't know what you're talking about. He's just had a hard race." And I said let's just be safe, and just go ahead and do it. And when it came back he had a couple of little chips in his knees that needed to come out. So I knew it was going to be tough if we were going to make the Derby, and I knew that I had to give him the most possible time and the easiest prep race possible. And it just happened to be the Lexington that offered the most time, and it's not a grade one race. And all the big horses will be gone to Arkansas, you know, Santa Anita, Florida. So I thought, you know, that will be the logical place to run him in. So everything is going good, everything is going great. And now here we are.

Jim Mulvihill:

Excellent, and, you know, most years with the points that you have already, a win in the Lexington would probably get you into the Derby field. But this year there's a spot committed to Europe and the top three year olds have been pretty consistent. So that might not actually be the case this time. But assuming you got the 30 points and a spot was available, you would want to give it a go. Is that the whole reason for running in the Lexington?

Adam Kitchingman:

I would say it's every trainers dream. And it's a big dream right now. I could have opted to run in Arkansas and go for more points. I just didn't feel it was in the horse's best interest, for what he's gone through. And if it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen. But if it does, then it does. So, you know, I said all along, you know, when he had the surgery, that the horse's best interest will always come first. And that's why I'm going to Lexington. You know, the horse is training great. I just felt like it was a softer competition, it's a little shorter in distance. So if we do win that, and that opportunity does arise, and the horse is doing great, we'll definitely consider going to the Derby.

Jim Mulvihill:

Excellent. And can you just tell us a little bit more about how he's trained, how he's matured since December? I mean he's had plenty of works to get fit to this point. Just tell us your impressions of him.

Adam Kitchingman:

You know, we did the surgery in December, and he came out of the surgery great. Within a few days, I mean, he was just biting at the bit and walking great. Ryan Carpenter did the surgery, did an amazing job. Very invasive surgery, so with technology and advances in medications and stuff, I think it's different than it was a few years ago. So we treated him aggressively, we did a lot of IRAP on him, a lot of therapeutical work. A lot of supplements. And a big credit to the grooms and my assistant, icing him three times a day, hand-walking him, and he's a big strong horse. So he's not the easiest horse to walk and try keeping him quiet. So my groom and assistant have done a great job with him.

So yes, so we did that. We've x-rayed him and my vet said he's good. So about 45 days after we did x-rays and the vet said those x-rays look really good, really surprised on how well they looked. And so we just started back on him and he hasn't missed a beat. He's been to the track every day, he's galloped, he's worked every five to six days, and he's looking better and better every week.

Jim Mulvihill:

That's great to hear. I'm just wondering if you could talk more about how this horse has handled everything. And I don't know if anybody knows how much a horse notices what's going on around them all the time. But if you had your choice you'd want to have them in a routine and have them in the same place. Being able to deal with going from San Luis Rey to Del Mar, to Santa Anita, to Remington and then also surgery and such and just everything that he's dealt with, and then winning a race like the Springboard just, you know, after dealing with the fire within a couple of weeks. Does it say anything about his mental constitution or something like that? Or do you think he's not even aware of these things?

Adam Kitchingman:

No he's a very, very strong horse, mentally and physically. He definitely rules the roost. He's not a type of horse that you go into the stall with and expect him to love on you. He's very coltish, I should say. But once you get him on the track he's a puppy dog. He just loves what he does and it doesn't seem to bother him too much. As far as nervousness when he goes to a different place, or different track, he actually gets probably a little bit too excited. So that's something that we have to work with every day. But he's, like I said, he's completely different horse when he's in the barn to when he's on the track. He loves going out there, he'll stand out there all day and look around and nothing really bothers him. But he's one strong horse though, and a very happy horse.

Jim Mulvihill:

Very cool. And is he in Lexington already?

Adam Kitchingman:

No, we fly out tomorrow morning so hopefully everything goes smooth and we'll be out there tomorrow afternoon.

Jim Mulvihill:

Great, and who's going to ride?

Adam Kitchingman:

I believe we've got Joel Rosario. Yeah, that's been scramble on that decision.

Jim Mulvihill:

How so? Anything you can share about that? I mean, you know, Victor has been riding him, but that would be a long way for him to come.

Adam Kitchingman:

Yeah, I mean it's just – it's been one minute Victor, next minute somebody else. And we thought we had a different jockey and, look, I love Joel, he rode out in California and is a great jockey. So I'm thrilled to have him, and we'd have to go from there.

Jim Mulvihill:

Awesome.

Adam Kitchingman:

Thank you very much for having us on and hopefully everyone has a happy and healthy and safe trip.

Jim Mulvihill:

Excellent. Well, thanks so much Adam and yeah, best of luck Saturday. We look forward to seeing you here in Lexington.

Adam Kitchingman:

Alright, well, thank you very much.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright, Adam Kitchingman, that will wrap up today's teleconference. As always we'll have the audio file up later today and then a transcript up posted tomorrow. Thanks to Keith and Justin and Rodolphe and Adam, and thanks to all of you for coming on these calls. We'll be back on the 26th of April, and that's a Thursday, not our usual Tuesday slot. That will be for our Kentucky Derby preview call. So mark that on your calendars