

NTRA
NTRA Communications
Road To the Triple Crown 2018
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CONFERENCE CALL PARTICIPANTS

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Frank Angus, *Bloodhorse Magazine*
Art Wilson, *Southern California News Group*
Dawn Jensen, *Tampa Bay Times*
Bill Finley, *Thoroughbred Daily News*
Pat Forde, *Yahoo Sports*
Jonathan Lintner, *Horse Racing Nation*
Ed McNamara, *Newsday*
Larry Stumes, *San Francisco Chronicle*
Mike Spector, *RacingDudes.com*
Danny Brewer, *Horseracingscoop.com*

PRESENTATION

Operator:

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, thank you Michelle. And thanks everyone for joining us. If you haven't heard, I just want everyone to know we've had one change to our line up today. Adan O'Brien was going to come on, but his people e-mailed a little while ago, saying something came up and he had to cancel. Not anything to do with Mendelsohn of course. Just a scheduling conflict. We're sorry not to have Adan, but that just gives us a little more time with our three original guests, who I think most would agree are the three most successful trainers in American racing.

Coming up later, we'll get to visit with Bob Baffert and Chad Brown, but first, we're delighted to have two-time Kentucky Derby winner Todd Pletcher, who absolutely dominated the final laps this year. He's set to start four in the derby, which marks the sixth time he saddled four or more and will surpass Wayne Lucas with the most career Derby starts. Currently, they're tied with 48 apiece. Todd, thanks for joining us.

Todd Pletcher:

Thank you.

Jim Mulvihill:

Congratulations on all of your success throughout this Derby prep season. For starters, just to maybe run through them, perhaps you could give us top of mind thoughts on each of your four, if you don't mind? Can we just start with the Arkansas Derby winner, Magnum Moon?

Todd Pletcher:

Well, as, he's a colt that we've been very high on since literally my dad broke him as a yearling in September, after he was purchased by Jacob West for the lows, we kept him on September sale and I remember seeing him back in December, when he first started galloping. He's a natural athlete that always had a tremendous presence about him, a great way of moving. They originally brought him in at Saratoga in May. He had a couple minor baby issues that we just felt like, being a May foal and a horse with a lot of promise, we would give him some time off and send him back to my dad's training center in Nokawa and he freshened him up nicely for us. He hasn't been beat since he came back. And it's just been a tremendous development for him, to go from a six-strong maiden on 13th January to now being four for four and winning the Arkansas Derby in his four start just tells you a lot about the quality and the natural ability that he has.

Jim Mulvihill:

Well, absolutely. There were a lot of questions about his bearing out of the stretch in the Arkansas Derby. I am just curious how you interpreted that and just what that means to you.

Todd Pletcher:

Well, he's a very curious colt. He's very smart and he looks around quite a bit and he's drifted out a little bit in all of his starts. But the one thing that has been consistent is he only does it when he is kind of clear of the fields. And he's been fortunate enough to be clear of the field an all four of his races inside the 16th pole. And so I really think if he has a target, or if he has horses around him that it will not be an issue. And it hasn't been an issue and I don't expect it to be a problem tomorrow morning when he breezes. It's just that, it tends to happen when he gets by himself and he's just looking around and taking everything in.

Jim Mulvihill:

Excellent. And now just some thoughts on Audible.

Todd Pletcher:

Another very talented colt that has just really, really blossomed this winter and spring. And we felt like early on, that he was a very nice colt, but I think his Holy Bull was kind of the breakthrough performance that we were hoping for. Actually exceeded expectations. And for him to follow that with an authoritative win in the Florida Derby and handle the stretch out to a mile and eight I think is just – I love the way that he attended pace in the Holy Bull and he way he dropped off the very fast pace of the Florida Derby, so it shows his versatility. And I loved the way he finished those two races and really showed a turn of foot there, which is not always easy to do in dirt races.

Jim Mulvihill:

Excellent. Vino Rosso seems to be coming to hand at the right time.

Todd Pletcher:

Vino Rosso is one that we were very, very high on the way he was training all winter and we're a little bit perplexed by two of his races at Tampa. He had a pretty easy time of it in the second start when he won the Lounge Race at Tampa, but the next two races, the Sam Davis – we felt like he just sort of lost his attention in the far turn and then rallied. So, blinkers were something that we had discussed, and John Valascus had mentioned that he thought at some point blinkers might be on the cards. And so, after the Sam Davis, we decided to put them on and he trained very well. We were confident that that was going to take care of his loss of ground in the far turn in the Sam Davis when we ran him back in the Tampa Derby. Unfortunately, it did not. And after just kind of piecing everything together, we just felt like maybe it was the Tampa surface that he wasn't handling. So, he came back and trained very well. And in the Wood Memorial, I think we got to see the real Vino Rosso. And I think part of that is getting back on a surface he liked and probably even a bigger part of it was stretching out to a mile and eight. And we always felt strongly that more distance is going to be in his favor and he should relish in the mile and a quarter. I think he'll stay a mile and half as well. So, we're excited about giving him that opportunity to stretch out a little more.

Jim Mulvihill:

Excellent. And real quick, I want to remind everybody that if you have a question for Todd, you can go ahead and start queuing up now. Go ahead and hit star one and we'll start lining up the questions. But first, [inaudible] won all their final prep races in dominant fashion. Noble Indy though really had to gut it out.

Todd Pletcher:

He did. And I was proud of him for doing that. And I don't think you see too many horses, regardless of how many experience they have, that can get past a neck or half a length and then reengage and fight back. And able to put his head back out front, I thought was showed a lot of courage on his part and he's a horse that's sort of flying under the radar a little bit at the moment. I guess, maybe because the Louisiana Derby was six weeks before the Kentucky Derby, but he's put together a very strong resume and he's lightly raced. But very talented as well.

Jim Mulvihill:

Undoubtedly. Well, Michelle, do you want to see what quick questions our media has for Todd?

Operator:

Thank you. If you would like to ask a question, please signal by pressing star one on your telephone keypad. If you're using a speaker phone, 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. We'll pause for just a moment to allow everyone an opportunity to signal for questions.

Our first question comes from David Grenning of *The Daily Racing Form*. Please, go ahead.

David Grenning:

Hey Todd. I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about Johnny's input for this group of horses and how instrumental he has been in maybe sort of directing you in what to do, what not to do, equipment wise or whatever else with this particular group of horses?

Todd Pletcher:

Well, he's actually – he's been on all four of them, including Magnum Moon before his debut. And he was actually before, I think, at the fairgrounds on 13th January to ride Wonder Gadot on the Silver Bullet Day, I

think it was. So, that's kind of how Luis Saez ended up on Magnum Moon. He knows all four horses very well. And I think in particular, the most conversations we've had were about Noble Indy and Vino Rosso, and the similarities a little bit in their personalities. And they both had a tendency to kind of look around and both had a tendency to idle when they make the lead. And most of the conversations with Johnny on those two have been about whether or not we wanted to put blinkers on them and, so he's instrumental in that decision. And ultimately, we decided in both cases to go ahead and do that. And I think it certainly helped both of them just to focus in a little bit more and maintain that focus through the finish line.

David Grenning:

Do you think his sticking with Vino Rosso is confirmation in what you've been seeing in this horse all winter and spring?

Todd Pletcher:

Well, I think he's always been very keen on Vino Rosso and he's always liked him. He's been on him a lot and he's worked him a lot. He's ridden him in all of his races, but I think it was a very tough decision. He just won the Florida Debry on Audible and just won the Wood Memorial on Vino Rosso, so it's a tough decision. But it was his call and I know it's those situations are never easy.

David Grenning:

Okay and one last question, have you got Noble Indy's rider?

Todd Pletcher:

Florent Geroux is going to breeze him tomorrow and assuming all goes well and we're all pleased and everything kind of holds true with all the horses, we're going to use Florent.

David Grenning:

Thank you very much. Good luck.

Todd Pletcher:

Thank you.

Operator:

Thank you. Our next question comes from Frank Angus of *Bloodhorse Magazine*. Please, go ahead.

Frank Angus:

Hey Todd, how are you?

Todd Pletcher:

Great. Thank you.

Frank Angus:

Hey. The Florida[?] Derby's had a nice run in the last few years in terms of Kentucky Derby performance. Beyond some good horses, do you think that there's some factors that are also in its favor? I was thinking along the lines of the timing of the race and some of the nice training facilities down there.

Todd Pletcher:

I think both of those are one point. I love where it's positioned, five weeks out and I think it's an ideal. It gives you the opportunity if you're based in Florida to not ship for that final round. And I think that can be an advantage as well. And between Gulf Stream and Palm Meadows and Palm Beach Downs, where we stable and pace and park, there's some very good facilities and everyone goes down there for a good climate and good weather and a reliable training schedule. I think all of that is very important to the development of successful three-year olds. But, the other thing is, there's just a lot of good young horses, three-year olds in Florida for the winter and some powerful stables. And so that's probably the single most important factor.

Frank Angus:

Yeah. How big has Palm Beach Downs been for your operation?

Todd Pletcher:

It just seems to work really well for us. It's a very quiet facility but the surface has been very safe for us. And it just seems like horses do well there. And they not only do well while training there, it seems they can leave their and go to Gulf Stream, or go to Aqueduct or a bit of Fairgrounds, or go to Oak Lawn and Tampa and generally run well, regardless of where you ship them. So, it seems to prepare them for just about any surface.

Frank Angus:

Got you. Thanks Todd.

Todd Pletcher:

You're welcome.

Operator:

Thank you. Our next question comes from Art Wilson, *Southern California News Group*. Please, go ahead.

Art Wilson:

Yeah, Todd, can you just talk a little bit about the so-called Apollo jinx or curse, what have you? Of course you have one of the horses this year that could end that drought. Do you think that's just some kind of a wacky wild stat or do you think there's anything to it, maybe having a lack of foundation, [inaudible]?

Todd Pletcher:

Well, I mean, it's lasted long enough that I guess there has to be something to it. But I feel strongly that at some point someone's going to reverse the curse. But, if it's this year, I wouldn't be surprised. Obviously Justify by the tremendously talented and Magnum Moon does as well, so there's probably a number of reasons for it and any experience could be part of it. And it always helps in these situations to have a little bit of seasoning experience and overcome adversity. But I think when the right horse comes along, it will happen.

Art Wilson:

And my last question. You've had a number of years where you've saddled three or more horses in the derby. Does that add any more pressure to you, having to worry about two, three, four, five more horses rather than just one?

Todd Pletcher:

I think it goes both ways. In some ways it adds a little pressure, more pressure because you've got more horse that you're trying to prepare and hoping that everything goes smoothly. And with that comes some added pressure. I also think that when you only have one, that's pressure too, because if something happens, you're out of the race, period. So, I think it kind of goes both ways.

Art Wilson:

Thanks. Good luck.

Todd Pletcher:

Thank you.

Operator:

Thank you. The next question comes from Dawn Jensen[?] of *Tampa Bay Times*. Please, go ahead.

Dawn Jensen:

Thank you. Todd, I want to hear this more towards the Tampa Foundation and the track itself. Your first two Kentucky Derby winners, Super Saver and Always Dreaming, came through Tampa before they won the derby. And this year you had Vino Rosso coming up, one of [inaudible] performances in the stakes, and also Magnum Moon came up to win an allowance race. Can you talk about why you put Tampa in his plans and what Tampa offers for you as far as preparation down the road?

Todd Pletcher:

Well, first of all, I think Allison Luca does a tremendous job as racing secretary there, so she's been very helpful in accommodating some of our horses in some allowance races. And at the same time I think it's been great for Tampa to have some derby winners to come through there. But first, logistically, it's a fairly short trip from our Palm Beach Downs headquarters and secondly, in a lot of cases, it's a two-turn opportunity and to gain some experience in education of these horses. It's a very safe surface and reliable surface and I think one that gets horses get ready to go onto bigger races down the road. But, it's been a great outlet for us over the years to take horses through there, where it's in some cases like Always Dreaming a maiden race, or the two horses you mentioned in the allowance races or Super Saver in the Tampa Derby. And we've had some other horses that are gone that route that didn't win the derby, but I think getting races at Tampa Bay Downs has helped move them forward.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright. Well, I think that's all the questions for Todd. Todd, we're going to let you go. I really appreciate your time as always and we'll see you out at the barn soon enough.

Todd Pletcher:

Okay, thanks very much.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright. Todd Pletcher. Always appreciate his time. He'll saddle four in the Kentucky Derby. And now, we've got to move onto our next guest and as always, we're happy to welcome back four-time Kentucky Derby trainer, Bob Baffert. He's going to saddle the undefeated San Anita Derby Winner, Justify, and the Breeder Juvenile's Cup winner, Solomini of course as well. Bob, thanks for coming on.

Bob Baffert:

Well, thanks for having me.

Jim Mulvihill:

Of course, we're always happy to have you on. Let's just get right to Justify, he might be a super horse. We've all seen the talent and he'll almost certainly go favorite next weekend. How do you feel about him right now?

Bob Baffert:

I mean, we're excited about it. Everybody's on pins and needles this time of year, and so, we have a really good horse, but there are really good horses out there this year. I think it's pretty – probably the most competitive derby I've seen in years.

Jim Mulvihill:

Well, the talent lining up against you is one of the concerns. What else is going to keep you up at night the next ten days or so?

Bob Baffert:

Oh, just training[?]. We're there day by day with these horses. But I think a lot of it is just – we're prepped in and we got to – we're almost there and so we'll just go through the paces. So far, we know we have a good horse but you still need a lot of racing luck. You need to draw well, and there's a lot of – I've been there. I've been there with the best horses that God made, and I know what it's like. You can never take anything for granted, you just got to go day by day and get there and hope everything goes your way. Like I've said I've been there with a lot of good horses that didn't get the right breaks and it didn't happen. So, I don't take anything for granted.

Jim Mulvihill:

Well, one time you were there with perhaps the best horse who got beat. You also won the race. So let's not ignore Solomini either. Just tell us if you think, can Solomini win this race?

Bob Baffert:

Well I think Solomini is a horse that's – he's – he actually won a great one and he got taken down. So we know the talent is there. But you just have to – he's going to have to get some breaks go his way. Last race he was there. He really didn't – he didn't bring his A game with him for some reason but he came out of the race really well. And he's been training well. He looks happy. He came out that race well. So you never know. I mean, these things, crazy things happen in the derby. When you have 20 horses, crazy things happen. So it was 12-horse gate and all your – the race really usually runs the way it's on paper. On paper he's a bit slower than some of those horses in there. But he's – as long as he's doing well but just, they all deserve a chance.

Jim Mulvihill:

Very good. Well I want to give everyone a chance to ask a question to you Bob. So I'll let Michelle check with the media.

Operator:

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen if you do have a question please press star one at this time. The first question comes from Bill Finley of *Thoroughbred Daily News*. Please go ahead.

Bill Finley:

Hey Bob if you run down the Derby field this year between yourself, Mark Casse, Kiaran McLaughlin, Todd and Chad, ten of the twenty starters are in those hands. You throw in Aidan O'Brien, that's number eleven. And it seems that's emblematic of the trend that's happened in racing where the so-called super trainers are dealing and handling more and more of the good horses. Why do you think this is happening? Why are owners gravitating so much more now to the Pletchers, Bafferts, Chad Browns of the world than maybe they did five or six years ago.

Bob Baffert: Well, I mean, I think it's all due to success. I mean it's like anything. It's like if you have a successful program, people are going to – that's why they hire us. I mean, if I had a very low win percentage I don't think that I'll be getting any horses. But I think a lot of it – I think a lot of those barns that you mentioned, it's like the bigger outfits. And the young horses – they have a lot of two-year olds. And so when you start out with a good bunch of two-year olds and everybody wants to be at the derby.

And I just think it's like – we're all trying to win. We're all trying to win at the top level. But I think that's what it is. Just hard work and people trying to be – trying to play at that level. But it all comes down to having – if you get lucky and have a nice two-year old it turns into a three-year old. But everything is success. You win, you're going to get horses. If you don't win, you're just not going to get the horses.

Bill Finley:

And as a follow-up some people among them, smaller trainers who are struggling and not getting a lot of good horses and even some racing secretaries are arguing this is not necessarily good for the game to have so much power in so few hands. Is there anything to that argument or do you think it's a [inaudible] way the world. I am sorry. Could you repeat that one?

Bob Baffert:

What did you say?

Bill Finley:

Yeah particularly from the smaller trainers, guys who are struggling a little bit, and even from some racing secretaries, people are saying this is not necessarily the best thing for the sport to have so many good horses in so few hands. Do you think they have a valid argument or do you think that it's just like you said, hey I do well? What am I supposed to do? I do good. People give me horses.

Bob Baffert:

Well, I mean I think if you look at all those big trainers they all started out small. They were all small. I started out with one horse. I had to struggle. We all struggled. It didn't happen overnight. So it's like a doctor. You're going to go to a good doctor or... I think it's just – it just happens that way where if you

work really hard and as a trainer I'm sure all these trainers, Todd and me, we did it seven days. I mean, we worked at it. We worked hard.

We make a lot of sacrifices. And now we're – that's why, if you make those sacrifices you're going to be rewarded. And so I think a lot of it just – it's the American way. If you work hard, you're going to be successful. It's like any business. But I really can't speak for the other. But I think for me it's just – I really work hard at it. I mean, I don't take vacations. I don't go anywhere. I just... And that's why I'm successful. And it's just a lot of hard effort and I am rewarded with good horses. But I think it comes down at the end of the day...

I know a lot of trainers out there that work hard at it, but you just have to – I've always been – I've always since I was training quarter horses, I was successful in quarter horses. Wayne Lukas same thing. They just – we want to be – we're very competitive. And I think that's our competitive nature and wanting to be at the top. And that's why we're there. I couldn't go halfway on it and be where I was. You have to go full, full steam.

Bill Finley:

Very good. Bob, thanks for your time. Good luck in the Derby.

Bob Baffert:

Sure.

Operator:

Thank you. The next question comes from Pat Forde, *Yahoo Sports*. Please go ahead.

Pat Forde:

Hey Bob, I'm just wondering – I know you always have a lot of talented young horses in your barn. But I'm wondering when Justify first kind of started to make himself known as a real talent and what he did to do that to show that to you?

Bob Baffert:

Well, when he came in from Kentucky he had been at Keeneland and he was up to a half a mile. And they said he was a really nice horse. And when we got him to Los Alamitos, we worked him a few times there and he always looked impressive there. And when I got him over to Santa Anita, the first time I worked him here I knew he was something really special. He worked 5,8 and just did it just – usually they get a little tired because the track at Santa Anita, it's really deep.

It's a different track now and it was really deep. And he just went around there and just did it effortlessly. And that's when I knew he was really cut above the rest. To me he was – like McKinsey was that way. They are just really good ones. It was to really separate themselves. They get ready quickly. They do things effortlessly. So you didn't have to really work at it. Like some of these other horses they have to really – they struggle through it.

And so but he handled his first work really well. And he had a couple of [inaudible] works, never really turned him loose. He worked 12/4, 13 just doing it in hand. And first out, with the way he ran it first out it was just incredible. The way he went really [inaudible] fractions and just rebroke. So he showed us right there how special he was.

Pat Forde:

And did he had any hiccups along the way or it just kind of unfolded the way you'd hoped?

Bob Baffert:

No, I just – he just bottom of the well[?]. I haven't heard anything, in regard to me, I never – he came with a clean bill of health. So I was never – I've never heard anything say he had this or that or whatever so.

Pat Forde:

Okay, thank you. We'll see you next week.

Bob Baffert:

You got it.

Operator:

Thank you. The next question comes from Jonathan Lintner of *Horse Racing Nation*. Please go ahead.

Jonathan Lintner:

Hey Bob, thanks for taking a few minutes to do this. I was talking to Wayne Lukas the other day. He had started with the Curse of Apollo and Justify and all that, and he said that if anybody who can do that it's Bob Baffert. And for me it seems like for a long time people wanted to make you all out to be rivals. But it seems like there's a really good friendship there and he mentioned that you had even written a forward for a book that he's putting together of quotes. I was just wondering, was there a rivalry at any point between the two? And maybe what has allowed this friendship to blossom in the last few years it would seem?

Bob Baffert:

Well, I mean, Wayne and I were really good friends. We come from the same background of quarter horses. So and when he was at the quarter horse, he was the king there. And everywhere he went he just became – he changed quarter horse racing in California. And he came at the [inaudible], he did the same thing. He changed - everywhere he goes he's just changed it. He's just – not only is he a great horseman and great trainer but he's a great organizer and he thinks outside the box.

And he just really – he's probably one of the hardest workers I've ever seen. His work ethic is just incredible. And even at this age, he doesn't slack off at all. But he's very smart and at one time we were both training for Bob Lewis. And Bob Lewis would sort of pit us against each other. But it was – we were always trying to get there and they would throw us – the quarter horse guys going up against each other.

And to me Wayne Lukas was always the bar. He was always the bar to me. And I wanted to get there and he still is the bar because he will go down as one of the greatest trainers ever. So he's just – I have the utmost respect for him. And he's just – he's a positive guy. He just always thinks positive and he's just – but he's sharp. He knows what's going on. And he'll see horses training, he knows. So he's still a great horseman.

Pat Forde:

Okay, thank you. And one of the things I wanted to ask you about Solomoni working three furlongs. It's been a while since he had shortened up to that distance. I was wondering what you were trying to get out of that breeze at this point.

Bob Baffert:

No he just ran. And so I don't want to go very far with him. So I just went three-eighths with them. And just to sharpen him up a little bit. And he worked really, really well. And so he came out of that. He's a happy horse right now, so. He just ran a little flat at Arkansas. He just really – he ran – he didn't really put in his A game. But he came out of the race really well. So he was a little tired the first time he ran this year. But this time he looks really sharp. So I just want to sharpen him up a little bit just to get him – and he did it on his own – he did it willingly. He was supposed to go like 36-37, but he just really did it in hand, nicely the right way. So that's – I wanted to see that he – and he switched lanes, did everything perfect.

Pat Forde:

I appreciate it. Thank you for the time.

Bob Baffert:

Sure.

Operator:

Thank you. Our next question comes from Ed McNamara of *Newsday*. Please go ahead.

Ed McNamara: Bob I read a number of times that when Cavonnier got nosed in the '96 derby you were devastated. And you thought that maybe that was your last chance. Now looking back at that, I mean, could you possibly have envisioned the success you've had and all the great horses you've been able to train?

Bob Baffert:

Yeah, I'll never forget that. When I got beat, I really thought I'd won the Derby that year. But like where I was sitting I think I really – had really – I was way before the wire and I really thought he had held on. And then the long photo and then – and people used to ask me, 'Well, what do you – how does it feel like?' I said, well, I know for about eight minutes, I felt like I knew what it felt like to win the Kentucky Derby. I really felt like I won it. And then when they hung up the numbers, it really – it hit me that night, like wow. I'll never get another chance.

This is it. I'll never get – it's so hard. There are so many great trainers that have never won it. That really just – if you don't have the right horse. But I really thought that was it. And I remember that somebody wanted me to go look at the Derby Museum to see the show in there. And I said I really don't want to go in there. And I remember going in there the week of Silver Charm and I watched it and where he got beat.

And I left and I just felt really – it just really bothered me for a year. And then so for Silver Charm to come back and win it, it was like – I felt it just – I lost that. It just felt like a heavy – it feels like a kicker missing a field goal for the win or something, or it's just something that was just – I just felt like I missed my opportunity. And I would never get another chance. So it just made me hungrier. And look, but I had the right horse.

So the thing about Kentucky Derby you have to have the right horse. It just happens. You can't force it. You can't make it happen. It's just going to happen. And all of a sudden you have good horses and you're there. So I've been really fortunate to have some really good horses. I've had some – Point Given, I thought he couldn't lose. He ran fast, didn't win. That was so disappointing. Because I really thought he could win the Triple Crown.

And then Real Quiet get beaten by Silver Charm in the Triple Crown. I was just left there like thinking, wow, man I just can't – three times I couldn't do it. And then here comes American Pharoah. He comes along and just does it all. So it's just – I just got to – I feel I'm just really blessed to have had those opportunities. And when you get an opportunity like that just do the right thing. And you got a good horse like that. And I've had other horses that were – West Coast, Air Gait[?] they were a little bit late. But I just took my time with them and developed on their own. So if it's going to happen it's going to happen. And that's the way it is. Just like usually though by March, you know if you've got a derby horse or not.

Operator:

Thank you. Our next question comes from Larry Stumes of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Please go ahead.

Larry Stumes:

Hi, Bob how are you doing?

Bob Baffert:

Doing good, thanks.

Larry Stumes:

Bob, yeah okay. Obviously Justify is talented enough, he's fast enough to win the Derby. Can just the lack of seasoning get him beat? I'm referring to that long Apollo Curse?

Bob Baffert:

I don't really – the Apollo thing, I mean, it comes up a lot. But I think it's – back in the day people used to run their horses much earlier. And I think it's changed. Trainers they take their time. They don't run them as early two year olds anymore. And there's really not that many races to run them in so early. I remember we used to run two-year-old races here really early. And they don't run them until later now. There are just not that many two-year-old races early. So I think the game has changed. And that's why you don't probably don't see it as often. But I mean it's going to happen. Whether it happens this year or whatever, but it will happen because Bodemeister almost got away with it. But the pace got to him a little bit. But he was a really outstanding individual. So it's going to happen. But I don't really worry about that.

To me it doesn't even enter the – I mean, a lot of people have told me, 'Please get a start in my horse before so we can get that thing out of the way.' Just like if you won the Breeders' Cup you couldn't win the Derby and [inaudible]. He got rid of that really quick. So it's – I think it's just something, to add to the conversation. But I think I don't – it's not – I'd rather have a really talented horse over a horse at season that's just par with the rest of them.

Operator:

Thank you. Our next question comes from Mike Spector of *RacingDudes.com*. Please go ahead.

Mike Spector:

Bob you've shipped in a little bit earlier in the past for the derby. What went into the decision to breeze Justify at Santa Anita this last breeze, and ship in for the week of the derby?

Bob Baffert:

Well I think this track at Santa Anita, he's worked well here. It's a very deep demanding track. So they get really fit here and we've shipped everywhere, all over. And I've shipped into Kentucky before. And I don't think there's a big difference. I used to go in there a few weeks early and work out and hang around there. But now it's – I don't think it makes a difference. Last year we went in there that week and we won the Kentucky Oaks California, Chrome in there a week before. And a lot of horses in California had gone in there. So I don't think it makes a big difference.

Mike Spector:

Okay my last question, can you talk a little bit about your preparation for Raya[?] for the Oaks and also how Abel Tasman's coming along for the La Troienne?

Bob Baffert:

She worked well the other day. And she's doing really well. So I mean, it's going to be a good test for her. I mean, she came from Dubai. So I'm asking her to do something that's impossible. Run in Dubai, come here and then run in the Kentucky Oaks. But so far she looks – she came over in really great shape and she looks healthy. And she's happy and so you just – it's a different group. Last time she got beat by Mendelssohn who just freaked that night. Nobody's going to beat him that night. And so I mean she beat the rest of the boys there. So she's definitely a tough filly. And I expect her to run a big race.

Mike Spector:

And how's Abel Tasman coming along for the La Troienne?

Bob Baffert:

She's doing well. She's coming off a layoff. She looks good. So it's going to be a good starting spot for her. So we're really looking forward to it. We know she likes to chill down.

Mike Spector:

Okay, thanks a lot, Bob.

Bob Baffert:

Sure.

Operator:

Thank you. We do apologize for not being able to get to all the questions due to time constraints. I will now turn it back to Jim Mulvihill.

Jim Mulvihill:

Bob, thanks so much for your time. As always we'll see you at Churchill Downs in a few days.

Bob Baffert:

Thank you, alright.

Jim Mulvihill:

Alright, that's Bob Baffert. And now we're happy to be joined by Chad Brown. Chad's the winner of the last two Eclipse awards as the nation's outstanding trainer. And the last few days he's had a lot of very positive things to say about Good Magic, the Bluegrass winner and the Champion two year old male of last year. Chad, thanks for joining us.

Chad Brown:

Thanks for having me.

Jim Mulvihill:

You got it. We're always happy to get a few minutes with you. I've been really interested in some of your remarks about Good Magic. The last few days I saw you that you said around the barn that you've never seen a horse look so good. And regardless of whether that's hyperbole. it still says something about how you feel. Just tell us why you're feeling that way?

Chad Brown:

He's just – he's a picture of health right now and I've never seen a horse doing better. So it's quite a relief to coming into a race like this. And yeah, he's always been a nice horse and he had a terrific season last year. He was champion and all. And then, this winter didn't start off quite the way we wanted. He fell a little behind in his training and came up a little short in the Fountain of Youth. And he just wasn't quite at his best that day from a fitness standpoint. And looking at it now he wasn't travelling quite as good as he is now. I am so relieved to see him moving so, so well now, particularly here at Churchill.

Jim Mulvihill:

And that schedule could turn out to work in your favor, right? I mean, I know that you like when a horse is making its third start off a layoff and this could end up being the right timing for you.

Chad Brown:

Yeah, that was the plan all along. I mean, of course we'd love to win through all of the preps leading in, while still moving forward. But that's okay, we set this plan up. And hopefully it works and the third race of the year is his best.

Jim Mulvihill:

I see. So it was always going to be three races, the derby being the third race. You just wish he had been a little bit tighter for the first one.

Chad Brown:

Well if we have success in the derby, it won't matter. For the horse's sake coming in as a two-year old champion you don't look to lose any race. You try to have them ready to win. And like I say, he came up a little short but we're also looking at the big picture. And I wouldn't change anything that as far as what races we pick to run him in.

Jim Mulvihill:

Very good. Well I'm going to turn it over to Michelle and she can cue the media to line up for some questions.

Operator:

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen if you do have a question please press star one on your touchtone phone at this time. Our first question comes from Danny Brewer of *horseracingscoop.com*. Please go ahead.

Danny Brewer:

Chad, how are you?

Chad Brown:

Good, yourself.

Danny Brewer:

Quite well, thank you. Listen, do you think – the two races that he's won, the Juvenile and the Blue Grass both have large fields. And of course we got 20 horses coming up 5th May. Are there any factors that help him, tell you anything about him or what your thoughts on that?

Chad Brown:

It's a good question. Hopefully it helps him. He's definitely had – he had good trips in those races. But they were a large group of horses and I hope that gives him some experience. If you look at Blue Grass, his last race in the first turn, he was getting tight there on the first turn. And I was really proud to see the horse kind of elbow his way and keep his spot, so to speak, and really fight for his early position on the cue of his jockey. And the horse really showed some grit there and he got banged around a little and he took it well and he still went on to win the race. And I am hoping that experience in itself right there really serves him well in the Derby.

Danny Brewer:

Man, you flat torn it up at Keeneland as far as – so I mean being on that kind of role obviously you've got to feel pretty good as you are heading into the Kentucky Derby?

Chad Brown:

Yeah, everything's been going terrific with our stable. So the winter was really rest and planning, trying to aim for the race, the meets like Keeneland. And we recently concluded the Aqueduct meet where we did quite well. So the horses are really running well and it does give you a lot of confidence coming into a big weekend like Oaks and Derby.

Danny Brewer:

Chad, I appreciate your time and wish you the best of luck.

Chad Brown:

Thank you.

Operator:

Thank you. Once again ladies and gentlemen if you do have a question please press star one at this time. Our next question comes from Ed McNamara of *Newsday*. Please go ahead.

Ed McNamara:

Chad, where would you anticipate Good Magic will be in the Derby pay scenario?

Chad Brown:

Of course, judging on his post and such, I mean, all things being equal, I'd like to see that horse get a forward position just behind the first group of speed horses, stalking them, and definitely in the first half of the field and maybe a little bit better than that hopefully.

Ed McNamara:

Okay, thank you.

Operator:

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, if there are any further questions please press star one on your touchtone phone at this time. There are no further questions at this time. I'll turn the conference back to Mr. Mulvihill.

Jim Mulvihill:

All right, Chad before we wrap up, I just wanted to ask you about the preparations in terms of arriving at Churchill Downs, when you did getting the work over the track. I mean some of these trainers in the race would rather stay where they were and come in after their last work? Just talk about coming to Churchill Downs and the plans for the next few days?

Chad Brown:

Yeah, I don't think there's any right or wrong answer there. Just based on history, I just felt like I was already in Kentucky with the horse. And he was very comfortable at Keeneland. But only being an hour away now why not go to Churchill and give him some experience over the track. It's proven not to be necessary to win. But I just don't see a scenario where it will hurt you. So we decided to come to Churchill and get one work over the track. It'll probably happen on Saturday. And hopefully it works to his advantage.

Jim Mulvihill:

Excellent. Well Chad we love the way you are looking and we wish you luck over the next ten days. And we'll see you at Churchill.

Chad Brown:

Thanks a lot. Take care. Thank you.

Jim Mulvihill:

All right, that was Chad Brown. He's got the two-year old champion of last year, Good Magic. And we got to talk about a lot of very good three-year olds today between those three trainers. I'd like to thank them all again for being on; Todd Pletcher, Bob Baffert and Chad Brown. I'll be at Churchill Downs from now through the derby. So if there's anything that I can do for you or that the NCRA can do for you to

help your coverage, just let me know. I am always happy to help. There will be a transcript of this call up tomorrow and an audio file later today. And I think that's all. So I'm going to give it back to Michelle to wrap up. Thanks everybody for joining us.

Operator:

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, this does conclude the conference call for today. You may now disconnect your line and have a great day.